# Anchorites in Shropshire:
# An Archaeological, Historical, and Literary Analysis of the Anchoritic Vocation

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## Abstract

This thesis uses my original archaeological methodology to study surviving anchoritic features, resulting in a more comprehensive perspective on medieval anchoritism. Chapter One demonstrates that current scholarship places textual anchoritic sources in a literary framework, leaving archaeological evidence undervalued. Anchoritic archaeology is often assumed to be rare and difficult to interpret without textual evidence, and antiquarian references to anchoritic features are dismissed.

Chapter Two develops my archaeological typology and methodology, which allows anchoritic archaeology to be identified and interpreted based on the archaeological evidence alone for the first time. This methodology also separates data from interpretation in antiquarian sources, ensuring that the data can be used effectively.

Chapter Three focuses on a case study of seven parish churches with surviving anchoritic archaeology in Shropshire. Anchoritic archaeology is present from the Norman period until the Dissolution; even in churches where only the squint survives, an archaeological methodology focusing on wider context still provides important data about the lived experience of anchorites.

Chapter Four re-evaluates the model anchorite cell and male anchorite-priest. Documentary and archaeological evidence indicates that the same features were present in male and female cells, and that cells are characterised by variety instead of conformity. An archaeological framework shows that gender is one factor of many that impacted lived experience, and focusing on wider context emphasises the importance of analysing the relationship of a particular cell to a specific church building.

Chapter Five concludes with a case study of the grave slab lintel at Ellesmere, Shropshire, which shows that anchoritic archaeology impacts wider discussions, such as the nature of anchoritism in the Welsh Marches and the concept of liminality. An archaeological methodology allows the archaeology to speak and also integrates historical and literary analysis, thereby offering a more complex perspective of medieval anchoritism, and providing new research possibilities.

Table of Contents

List of Figures, Maps, and Tables

**Figures**

**Maps**

**Tables**

Chapter 1:

A New Perspective on Medieval English Anchoritism

I. Introduction

Medieval religious recluses known as anchorites lived strictly enclosed in cells attached to churches or in the churchyard to gain a close and intense connection with God, and were highly respected by the wider community for their devotion and commitment to prayer.[1] Anchoritism was popular in England throughout the medieval period, although the vocation changed over time as anchorites became more strictly enclosed.[2] Anchorites took inspiration from the Desert Fathers, who practised Christian ascetic living in Egypt and Syria from the third century CE.[3] Numbers of anchorites had dwindled by the eve of the Dissolution, and although they were not specifically targeted by Dissolution edicts or the 1547 Chantries Act, social and religious changes during this period ultimately ended the practice in England.[4] However, the popularity of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century ornamental hermits installed by the wealthy in elaborate gardens demonstrates a fascination with a romanticised version of the ascetic ideal embodied by medieval anchorites and hermits.[5] Amateur eighteenth- and

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[1] Ann K. Warren, *Anchorites and their Patrons in Medieval England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), p. 2. Eddie A. Jones, 'Anchorites and Hermits in Historical Context', in *Approaching Medieval English Anchoritic and Mystical Texts*, ed. by Dee Dyas, Valerie Edden, and Roger Ellis (Cambridge: Brewer, 2005), pp. 3-18 (p. 13).

[2] Tom Licence, *Hermits & Recluses in English Society: 950-1200* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 67-72. Roberta Gilchrist, *Contemplation and Action: The Other Monasticism* (London: Leicester University Press, 1995), pp. 160, 183. Jones, 'Anchorites and Hermits', pp. 7-8.

[3] Gilchrist, *Contemplation*, p. 160. Jones, 'Anchorites and Hermits', p. 5.

[4] Warren, *Anchorites and their Patrons*, p. 20 (see Table 1.1., 'Numbers of Anchorites and Sites: 1100-1539'). Eddie A. Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites in England, 1200-1550* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019), pp. 176-77.

[5] Gordon Campbell, *The Hermit in the Garden: From Imperial Rome to Ornamental Gnome* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 1-20.

nineteenth-century researchers, called antiquarians, began assessing the archaeological

and historical background of anchorites, and Rotha Mary Clay built on their research to

publish *The Hermits and Anchorites of England* (1914), now widely considered the

seminal study on anchoritism.[6] Even today, anchoritism continues to attract interest

through visitors viewing modernised cells at Norwich and King's Lynn.[7] Currently, a

strong feminist and literary focus characterises the field of anchoritic studies, and

occasional references to anchoritic archaeology are interpreted within this framework

dominated by textual sources.

This thesis argues that archaeology plays a vital role in understanding the

anchoritic vocation, and provides a unique view into the lived experience of anchorites,

distinct from the descriptions provided by disparate church records or prescriptive texts

such as *Ancrene Wisse*, a thirteenth-century guide to anchoritic living written for a

group of female anchorites. The archaeological evidence is crucial to a comprehensive

evaluation of the anchoritic vocation. The literature review in this chapter places the

lack of current interest in anchoritic archaeology in context, and highlights the

importance of an archaeological perspective. This historiographical reassessment also

emphasises the pervasiveness of a gender theory that privileges women's experience;

such a narrow focus limits research questions and solidifies assumptions about gendered

experience. This review shows how antiquarian research continues to shape the

development of the field of anchoritic studies, and also indicates the value of

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[6] Rotha Mary Clay, *The Hermits and Anchorites of England* (London: Methuen, 1914). Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites*, p. 7. Catherine Innes-Parker and Naoë Kukita Yoshikawa, 'Introduction', in *Anchoritism in the Middle Ages: Texts and Traditions*, ed. by Catherine Innes-Parker and Naoë Kukita Yoshikawa (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2013), pp. 1-8 (p. 1).

[7] Sarah Salih and Denise Baker, eds., *Julian of Norwich's Legacy: Medieval Mysticism and Post-Medieval Reception* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

antiquarian research as a starting point for locating and assessing anchoritic archaeology.

Chapter 2 introduces the archaeological theory underpinning my original methodology. This theoretical framework demonstrates how to examine archaeological and textual evidence within an archaeological, instead of literary, framework. A typology developed from this theory articulates the key archaeological features indicative of anchoritic activity. My new archaeological methodology based on this theory and typology, which allows an archaeological perspective to effectively shape the discourse in this field for the first time, includes a detailed description of how to assess anchoritic archaeology and related textual sources. This methodology incorporates the critical assessment of data within antiquarian sources and dating anchoritic archaeology. Case studies evaluating features that have been interpreted as anchoritic archaeology at Norwich, Norfolk; Faversham, Kent; Hartlip, Kent; and Fishergate, York illustrate both how archaeology can be misinterpreted without an archaeological methodology, and also how using this new methodology results in innovative perspectives.

In Chapter 3, this archaeological methodology is put into practice through analysing a core case study of eight churches with remains of anchorite cells in the Shropshire area. Most of these cells have not been studied from a modern archaeological perspective, despite offering valuable data, indicating the timeliness and importance of original research into anchoritic archaeology. *Ancrene Wisse* was written in the Shropshire area, and historical records indicate many other female anchorites were also enclosed in the region, making it ideal for study because of the availability of

both documentary and archaeological data.[8] This chapter offers conclusions both about cell design and the lived experience of anchorites based on the archaeological assessment of these cells and other comparative cells in different areas of England.

Intersections between the documentary and archaeological records will be considered in Chapter 4, demonstrating not only that archaeological data complements and nuances documentary research, but also that archaeology prompts new considerations and 'speaks' where documentary sources cannot. The archaeological data demonstrates the need to re-evaluate common assumptions about the anchoritic experience, such as gendered differences between male and female anchorites, or the design of the anchorite cell assumed from descriptions in *Ancrene Wisse*. Ultimately the archaeological evidence, alongside a close reading of textual sources with architectural descriptions, shows that the concept of the model anchorite cell is flawed, as no such model existed.

Chapter 5 will draw final conclusions about the physical design and placement of anchoritic cells and squints, as well as the lived experience of the anchoritic vocation. The anchoritic archaeology at Ellesmere, Shropshire is a case study for examining how archaeological evidence provides new interpretations that challenge a narrative shaped exclusively by textual sources. Moreover, the Ellesmere squint recess lintel highlights the importance of acknowledging corporeal, physical experience, as opposed to metaphorical analysis. After summarising the new archaeological approaches

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[8] Catherine Innes-Parker, 'Medieval Widowhood and Textual Guidance: The Corpus Revision of *Ancrene Wisse* and the de Braose Anchoress', *Florilegium,* 28 (2011), 95-124 (pp. 96-97). Yoko Wada, 'What is *Ancrene Wisse*?', in *A Companion to 'Ancrene Wisse',* ed. by Yoko Wada (Cambridge: Brewer, 2003), pp. 1-28 (p. 15). G. C. Baugh and D. C. Cox, *Monastic Shropshire* (Shrewsbury: Shropshire Libraries, 1982), p. 6. David Challoner, 'Shropshire and her Anchorites: Men and women who lived alone in cells until they died', *Shropshire Magazine*, April 1974, p. 17. Henrietta M. Auden, 'Shropshire Hermits and Anchorites', *Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological & Historical Society*, 9 (1909), 97-112.

introduced in this thesis, opportunities for further study are explored. Public engagement is essential to the success of an archaeological approach, and this chapter shows how interacting with local communities also helps to bridge the gap between antiquarian and scholarly sources.

Geographically this study is focused on England; temporally, the main focus is on the mid- to late-medieval period, beginning in the thirteenth century and concluding definitively in the fifteenth century before the Dissolution. Archaeological studies often facilitate a long-term perspective, and the data from my case study of Shropshire churches range from the Norman period to the fourteenth century. This thesis argues that the anchoritic vocation cannot be understood without a thorough consideration of the archaeological context, which also requires critically evaluating antiquarian sources. Archaeological analysis prompts the re-evaluation of long-held common assumptions about cell construction and the experience of living in these cells, thereby challenging and nuancing the current literary framework that shapes the field of anchoritic studies.

II. The Anchoritic Vocation

Anchoritism was considered the most prestigious form of Christian spiritual practice during the medieval period because of the extreme demands placed upon the anchorite; not only was the anchorite meant to voluntarily live an ascetic lifestyle enclosed in a cell with no personal possessions and no worldly pleasures, but he or she also had only limited opportunities to interact with people in the outside world through a few small windows.[9] One of these windows—the squint—allowed the anchorite to view the Eucharist being performed; participation in the Eucharist was a key devotional

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[9] Warren, *Anchorites and their Patrons*, p. 2. Jones, 'Anchorites and Hermits', p. 13.

practice.[10] The importance of the sacrament spoke to both a communal experience with the rest of the church body, and also to the unique relationship of an anchorite to Christ, as Sarah Stanbury and Virginia Chieffo Raguin indicate: 'squints work something like binoculars, and…give you a sense of being an intimate participant…[like being shown] a private viewing of the Mass'.[11] Anchorites spoke to their confessors, and sometimes to visitors, but always from within the cell.[12] Before participating in the enclosure rite and entering the cell, anchorites had to go through a rigorous testing process and be approved by a bishop; part of the reason for the extended process was to ensure the anchorite's commitment to the vocation.[13] While alone, anchorites focused on devotional practices, such as prayer, contemplation, reading, and sometimes even helping with intricate needlework for ecclesiastical vestments or book production.[14] This demanding lifestyle facilitated the possibility of a unique and intense spiritual experience that was highly respected by the wider community, as reflected by communal involvement in supporting and patronising anchorites.[15]

Medieval anchorites drew inspiration from the stories of the Desert Fathers, who attracted followers and visitors drawn to their ascetic and solitary lifestyle, resulting in

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[10] Michelle M. Sauer, 'Architecture of Desire: Mediating the Female Gaze in the Medieval English Anchorhold', *Gender and History*, 25 (2013), 545-64 (p. 552). Gilchrist, *Contemplation*, p. 185.

[11] Sarah Stanbury and Virginia Chieffo Raguin, 'Introduction', in *Women's Space: Patronage, Place, and Gender in the Medieval Church*, ed. by Sarah Stanbury and Virginia Chieffo Raguin (New York: State University of New York Press, 2005), pp. 1-21; quoted p. 8. Jones, 'Anchorites and Hermits', p. 16.

[12] Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites*, pp. 82-83, 101.

[13] Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites*, p. 16. Sauer, 'Architecture of Desire', p. 545. Gilchrist, *Contemplation*, p. 183. Eddie A. Jones, 'Ceremonies of Enclosure: Rite, Rhetoric and Reality', in *Rhetoric of the Anchorhold: Space, Place and Body within the Discourses of Enclosure*, ed. by Liz Herbert McAvoy (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2008), pp. 34-49 (pp. 36-42).

[14] Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites*, pp. 65-68. Gilchrist, *Contemplation*, p. 183.

[15] Warren, *Anchorites and their Patrons*, pp. 282-84. Jones, 'Anchorites and Hermits', pp. 3-18. Gilchrist, *Contemplation*, pp. 183-84.

the formation of early monastic communities.[16] These writings, recorded in medieval

hagiographies (or *vitae*), depicted moving away from the world and into the wilderness

as a way to cultivate a deeper connection with God.[17] At first, the line between

anchorites and hermits was fluid. For instance, Christina of Markyate (c.1096-after

1155) had a long and varied career that involved running away from her parents and

hiding with a hermit, then living as an anchorite, and finally becoming abbess of her

own nunnery.[18] Certainly by the thirteenth century, roles were strictly defined: hermits

were male, could change their locations and hermitages, and could interact with the

wider world, whereas anchorites were male or female, and were enclosed in a cell

throughout their lives.[19] Anchorites viewed themselves as outside of a religious rule,

'part of the range of semi-religious or non-regular vocations' common in the late

Middle Ages, but by the thirteenth century concerns about a lack of regulation led to

standardisation of practice in terms of enclosure ceremonies, requirements for

enclosure, and best practice for daily living.[20] Solitary ascetic living as the pinnacle of

individual spirituality and as an example of devotion for the wider community has a

long and continuous history, contributing to the prestige of the anchoritic vocation.[21]

The community supported the anchorite enclosed within their parish church

through monetary donations, or through providing other practical necessities.[22] One of

the requirements before enclosure was to ensure anchorites had enough funds to at least

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[16] Marilyn Dunn, *The Emergence of Monasticism: From the Desert Fathers to the Early Middle Ages* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), pp. 11, 13-14, 19.

[17] Dunn, *The Emergence*, pp. 8, 12. Licence, *Hermits & Recluses*, pp. 12-14, 20.

[18] Licence, *Hermits & Recluses*, pp. 1-2. Gilchrist, *Contemplation*, p. 175.

[19] Jones, 'Anchorites and Hermits', pp. 7-8. Licence, *Hermits & Recluses*, p. 11. Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites*, p. 6.

[20] Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites*, pp. 5-6.

[21] Again, anchoritism in England has never fully disappeared, as the re-created cells at King's Lynn and Norwich demonstrate.

[22] Warren, *Anchorites and their Patrons*, pp. 282-84. Jones, 'Anchorites and Hermits', p. 11. Gilchrist, *Contemplation*, pp. 183-84.

initially support themselves, but contributions from members of the parish were expected.[23] In return, the community benefitted spiritually from dedicated prayer as well as materially and socially from increased income and prestige as a result of visitors seeking anchoritic counsel.[24] Supporting an anchorite was proof of a parish's material and spiritual wealth, so the cell was also a status symbol for the church and patron. Although texts like *Ancrene Wisse* forbade interactions with people outside of the cell, such as teaching children or storing valuables for parishioners, other sources mention anchorites performing these tasks, indicating that practices differed by region and over time.[25] For instance, late-medieval church records refer to anchorites storing valuables, and examples of interactions with the wider community are plentiful, including Margery Kempe's visit to the anchorite Julian of Norwich in 1413 for spiritual advice, and a fifteenth-century female anchorite in Warwick who shared her cell with a young girl who functioned as a servant and protégé.[26] Such differences in prescribed action and practice indicate that 'ideology and lived experience are very often at odds with one another', suggesting that an anchorite had a unique impact on a specific community with particular needs and expectations, and vice-versa.[27]

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[23] Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites*, pp. 16, 25-26, 45-46, 57.

[24] Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites*, pp. 16, 69, 82-83. For a case study of a particular parish community's relationship with a late medieval anchorite, see: Clare M. Dowding, '"*Item receyvyd of ye Anker*": The Relationships between a Parish and its Anchorites as Seen through the Churchwarden's Accounts', in *Medieval Anchorites in their Communities*, ed. by Cate Gunn and Liz Herbert McAvoy, Studies in the History of Medieval Religion (Cambridge: Brewer, 2017), pp. 117-30 (pp. 122-30).

[25] Elizabeth Robertson, '"This Living Hand": Thirteenth-Century Female Literacy, Material Immanence, and the Reader of the *Ancrene Wisse*', *Speculum*, 78 (2003), 1-36 (p. 18). Bob Hasenfratz, 'The Anchorhold as Symbolic Space in *Ancrene Wisse*', *Philosophical Quarterly,* 84 (2007), 1-22 (p. 17).

[26] Dowding, '"*Item receyvyd*"', pp. 125-26. Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites*, pp. 68-69; 87-89.

[27] Cate Gunn and Liz Herbert McAvoy, 'Introduction: 'No Such Thing as Society'? Solitude in Community', in *Medieval Anchorites in their Communities*, ed. by Cate Gunn and Liz Herbert McAvoy, Studies in the History of Medieval Religion (Cambridge: Brewer, 2017), pp. 1-12 (p. 7).

In England particularly, anchoritism became associated with mysticism and affective spirituality during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, alongside an increase in the numbers of female anchorites.[28] Julian of Norwich's (1342-1416) *Book of Showings* is a prime example of the emotive and intensely physical experience of spiritual contemplation.[29] Scholars have interpreted this rise of female participation in the vocation and increase in mystic spirituality as a way of women asserting authority normally denied them in ecclesiastical contexts.[30] In contrast, male anchorites are depicted as continuing their monastic career through anchoritic enclosure.[31] Although the anchoritic vocation offered women authority and autonomy despite strict enclosure, viewing mystic spirituality and anchoritism as specific to women's experience fails to consider the motivations of male anchorites. In addition, affective spirituality has earlier male antecedents, most notably in the writings of the hermit Richard Rolle (1290-1349), and men still participated in the anchoritic vocation during the height of its popularity in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.[32] This thesis challenges these two fundamental

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[28] Jones, 'Anchorites and Hermits', p. 8. Gilchrist, *Contemplation*, p. 183. Warren, *Anchorites and Their Patrons*, pp. 20, 38.

[29] Julian of Norwich, *The Showings of Julian of Norwich*, ed. by Denise N. Baker (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2005), pp. 1-125.

[30] Nicholas Watson, '"Yf women be double naturally": Remaking "Woman" in Julian of Norwich's Revelation of Love', *Exemplaria: A Journal of Theory in Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 8 (1996), 1-34 (pp. 15-29). Jones, 'Anchorites and Hermits', p. 8. Denise N. Baker, 'Introduction', in *The Showings of Julian of Norwich*, ed. by Denise N. Baker (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2005), pp. ix-xxi (pp. xi-xviii). Liz Herbert McAvoy, 'Uncovering the "Saintly Anchoress": Myths of Medieval Anchoritism and the Reclusion of Katherine de Audley', *Women's History Review*, 22 (2013), 801-19 (p. 808).

[31] Liz Herbert McAvoy, 'Gender, Rhetoric and Space in the *Speculum Inclusorum*, *Letter to a Bury Recluse*, and the Strange Case of Christina Carpenter', in *Rhetoric of the Anchorhold: Space, Place and Body Within the Discourses of Enclosure*, ed. by Liz Herbert McAvoy (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2008), pp. 112- 38 (p. 115).

[32] Richard Rolle, *English Writings of Richard Rolle, Hermit of Hampole*, ed. by Hope Emily Allen (Oxford: Claredon Press, 1931). Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites*, pp. 74-75. Warren, *Anchorites and their Patrons*, p. 20.

assumptions: that anchoritism was overwhelmingly female-dominated, and that male anchoritic experience was defined by monasticism.[33]

Aspects of the anchoritic vocation are sometimes mischaracterised in scholarship. Enclosure was always voluntary, and never a punishment.[34] Some *vitae* record anchorites choosing to become enclosed in part as penance for past, repented sins—however, it was always an individual's decision.[35] As already established, anchorites were prestigious individuals with reputations for personal holiness, supported by their communities. A sinner enduring forcible punishment does not meet this criterion. The anchorite was expected to remain enclosed for life, but accounts of anchorites leaving their cells show that abandonment of the vocation happened, and although Christina Carpenter was famously re-enclosed after a voluntary first enclosure and subsequent abandonment of her cell, reactions to failed attempts at the vocation varied.[36]

No skeletal remains of anchorites have been identified, with the exception of brief descriptions in a few antiquarian reports, but some scholars have suggested the physical suffering of anchorites would have been so acute that visible markers of disease would characterise skeletal remains, thereby justifying skeletal analysis if remains were discovered through excavation.[37] In Chapter 2, I show that this is not the

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[33] Liz Herbert McAvoy and Mari Hughes-Edwards, 'Introduction', in *Anchorites, Wombs and Tombs: Intersections of Gender and Enclosure in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Liz Herbert McAvoy and Mari Hughes-Edwards (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2005), pp. 6-26 (p. 7). Cate Gunn, *'Ancrene Wisse': From Pastoral Literature to Vernacular Spirituality* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2008), p. 8.

[34] Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites*, pp. 17-23.

[35] Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites*, pp. 20-21. Licence, *Hermits & Recluses*, pp. 115-19.

[36] Licence, *Hermits & Recluses*, p. 145. Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites*, pp. 91-92, 95-99. McAvoy, 'Gender, Rhetoric and Space', p. 120.

[37] For antiquarian examples, see: Walter H. Godfrey, 'Church of St Anne's Lewes: An Anchorite's Cell and Other Discoveries', *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, 69 (1928), 159-69 and M. O. Hodson, 'Anker-hold at East Ham Church', *Essex Archaeology*, 22 (1940), 344-46. A post-antiquarian example, which assumes a cramped cell and limited movement would result in osteoporosis: Lauren McIntyre and Graham Bruce, 'Excavating

case and discuss concerns with associating skeletal remains with cells in more detail; however, this assumption is exaggerated from the outset. *Ancrene Wisse* and other anchorite rules explicitly encouraged anchorites of both sexes to be moderate in practices such as self-flagellation or fasting, and some of the extremes recorded in *vitae* are part of a literary trope designed to show an unparalleled level of spirituality, suggesting that actual practice would have been less severe.[38] Anchorites were valued members of the community, and becoming an anchorite required significant investment from the anchorite and community members—for the anchorite to become dangerously ill or die was not in anyone's interest.[39] Moreover, anchorites were overseen by and in regular contact with parish clergy, who would have advised about suitable practices.[40] The anchoritic vocation, voluntarily chosen by both men and women, was characterised by extreme devotion; however, anchoritic living was also balanced by the expectations of the wider community, and the anchorite's commitment to this community.

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All Saint's: A Medieval Church Rediscovered', *Current Archaeology*, 245 (2010), 31-37 (p. 35). This excavation is discussed in more detail in Chapter 2. Another example of a scholar who claimed harsh living conditions would result in skeletal deformities: Bernadine De Beaux, 'Illness and Disease in the Anchorite's Cell', presented at the *International Medieval Congress (IMC)*, Session 105, 'Gendered Lives' (University of Leeds, 03 July 2017).

[38] Licence, *Hermits & Recluses*, pp. 136-37. Licence highlighted the role of the hagiographer in immortalising extreme practices to illustrate holiness: 'Guthlac (or his hagiographer) responded to this tale, for his daily repast was said to have consisted of a scrap of barley bread and a cup of muddy water' (p. 137). Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites*, pp. 66, 75. Jones' examples of anchorite rules urging moderation include the thirteenth-century *Dublin Rule* and Richard Rolle's fourteenth-century *The Form of Living* in addition to *Ancrene Wisse*, among others. Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, *Saints' Lives and Women's Literary Culture c.1150-1300: Virginity and its Authorizations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 107-09. Sarah Salih, *Versions of Virginity in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge, Brewer: 2001), p. 99.

[39] Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites*, pp. 99-100.

[40] Gilchrist, *Contemplation*, p. 184. Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites*, pp. 16-17.

III. Anchorites, Archaeology, and Antiquarians

Post-medieval scholarly interest in anchorites began with antiquarians, who often focused on the archaeological remains of anchoritic cells. The term 'antiquarian' or 'antiquary' refers to a diverse group of individuals with differing methodologies and approaches. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, an 'antiquarian' was often defined as a certain kind of researcher who studied the classical past (especially Greece and Rome), and 'antiquities' referred to 'all the remains of the ancient past'.[41] However, as history and archaeology developed as separate and distinct disciplines, and as researchers discovered prehistoric and Roman archaeology in England and investigated the ruins of medieval monastic buildings destroyed during the Dissolution, this term became more specific—after all, as F. J. Falding, who wrote a series of books on Yorkshire history and was keen to present himself as a historian, stated in 1884: 'if this definition of Antiquarianism is correct, what then is left for the *Historian* to do?'.[42] Antiquarians addressed this burgeoning of fields and materials; for instance, Falding stated that 'the Historian and the Antiquary both study the past, but the one studies the past for its bearing on the present, and the other studies the past for itself alone'.[43] Still other antiquarian researchers viewed themselves as neither historians, nor antiquarians, nor archaeologists, but rather ecclesiologists—a term popularised by the nineteenth century Cambridge Camden Society.[44] The Society of Antiquaries was founded in

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[41] F. J. Falding, 'Introduction', in *Old Yorkshire*, ed. by William Smith (London: Longmans, Green & Co, Paternoster Row, 1884), pp. ix-xx (pp. x-xi).

[42] Falding, 'Introduction', p. x. Bruce G. Trigger, *A History of Archaeological Thought*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 55-56, 84-85. Margaret Aston, 'English Ruins and English History: The Dissolution and the Sense of the Past', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 36 (1973), 231-55 (pp. 254-55).

[43] Falding, 'Introduction', p. x.

[44] Philip Boughton Chatwin, *Squints in Warwickshire Churches* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 10. Philip Mainwaring Johnston, 'The Low Side Windows of Surrey Churches: To Which are Added Some Remarks Upon the Restoration of Warlingham Church', *Surrey Archaeological Collections,* 14 (1899), 83-133 (p. 85). Simon Bradley, *Churches: An Architectural Guide* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), p. 143.

London in 1572, was re-chartered in 1750, and currently operates, demonstrating the longevity of the term, despite changes in meaning over time.[45] During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries especially, terminology for researchers studying the medieval past varied, but remained grounded in what these researchers considered antiquarianism—an umbrella term for scholarly interest in the historical past.[46]

However, as the fields of history and archaeology developed, the term antiquarian became increasingly outdated, as Falding showed: 'So long as the Antiquary was satisfied with hunting up scattered remains and examining curious relics, Antiquarianism could not be called a science. It was a study, a recreation, an amusement, perhaps a hobby'.[47] This disdain for amateur research, highlighted by Falding, emphasises the increasing importance of embracing scientific approaches:

> He [the researcher] has been obliged to call science to his aid, and so
> Antiquarianism becomes Archaeology, Palaeontology, Ethnology,
> Numismatics, Sociology, etc., etc.; and he finds that Antiquarianism
> is still attaching itself to every known art and science as its basis and
> its support.[48]

Researchers during this time often focused heavily on categorisation, which mirrored methodologies in the sciences.[49] Antiquarians in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries started to collect British material culture, leading to extensive private collections and early museums, and began recording archaeological and landscape features in England;

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[45] Trigger, *A History*, p. 84. 'Home', *Society of Antiquaries of London* (2020) <sal.org.uk> [accessed 24 September 2020]. Falding, 'Introduction', pp. ix-x.
[46] Falding, 'Introduction', p. xii.
[47] Falding, 'Introduction', p. xiii.
[48] Falding, 'Introduction', p. xii. Kathleen Biddick, *The Shock of Medievalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), p. 32.
[49] Johnston, 'The Low Side Windows of Surrey Churches', 83-133.

these activities continued into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[50] Although

eighteenth- and nineteenth-century researchers defined themselves in a variety of ways,

the term now refers to sixteenth- through nineteenth-century English individuals

(usually upper-class men) who pioneered early research into fields such as history and

archaeology with a focus on material culture, broadly defined.[51] Although antiquarians

discovered and studied material culture, they viewed textual evidence as essential for

interpreting it—a legacy that this chapter shows still influences the field of anchorite

studies today.[52] From this point on, I will use this modern definition; my study focuses

specifically on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century antiquarian research.

Antiquarian research is now associated with a lack of academic rigour,

colonialist and nationalist attitudes, and biased conclusions. British antiquarians

approached English history and archaeology with a nationalist perspective, reinforced

by reactions to the severity of Dissolution destruction.[53] Margaret Aston expressed a

common view of the Dissolution as an event that marked 'the first time that religious

foundations had been thoroughly attacked and stripped with the deliberate intention of

effecting a physical and institutional break with the past', thus sparking the beginning of

English antiquarianism.[54] However, a more nuanced approach situates the Dissolution

within a longer tradition of monastic reformation and highlights the survival and

preservation of significant monastic architecture.[55] Hugh Willmott and Alan Bryson

critique Aston's focus on destruction and ruins, 'rather than the transformation of

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[50] Trigger, *A History*, pp. 84-85, 107-09.
[51] Bradley, *Churches*, p. 143. Trigger, *A History*, pp. 55-56.
[52] Trigger, *A History*, p. 118.
[53] Biddick, *The Shock*, p. 31. Aston, 'English Ruins', p. 254.
[54] Aston, 'English Ruins', pp. 231-32. Hugh Willmott and Alan Bryson, 'Changing to Suit the Times: a Post-Dissolution History of Monk Bretton Priory, South Yorkshire', *Post-Medieval Archaeology*, 47.1 (2013), 136-63 (pp. 136-37).
[55] Hugh Willmott, *The Dissolution of the Monasteries in England and Wales*, Studies in the Archaeology of Medieval Europe (Sheffield: Equinox, 2020), pp. 7, 16-17, 71.

religious houses into secular mansions, estates, farms or for parochial use'.[56] The lack of long-term studies of monastic sites post-Dissolution continues to reinforce this perspective, instead of conceptualising former monastic sites as 'transformed into new, active, and evolving roles, rather than standing simply as passive and symbolic ruins'.[57] Antiquarian perceptions of the Dissolution continue to shape current perspectives in the same way that antiquarian assumptions about gendered anchoritic experience still impact the field of anchorite studies today.[58]

As the ruins of medieval religious architecture fell into even greater disrepair, antiquarians began recording and preserving the vestiges of artefacts and buildings that remained.[59] This visualisation of the decaying past 'led to nostalgia and poetry'.[60] Matthew Holbeche Bloxam's introduction to anchoritism, written centuries after the Dissolution, still echoes these themes:

> Time is a great destroyer…he [Time] has demolished the remembrances of many practices once common, so effectually, as to hardly leave a gleam of light for our guidance in recurring to the past. The revolutions of three centuries have sunk many facts in almost hopeless oblivion, hidden beneath a tangled mass of confused and speculative notions…Surely every thing which tends to develop the religious practices and feelings of former ages, however contrary to

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[56] Willmott and Bryson, 'Changing to Suit the Times', p. 136.
[57] Willmott and Bryson, 'Changing to Suit the Times', pp. 136-37.
[58] See Chapter 4 for an in-depth discussion of gendered assumptions within the field of anchorite studies.
[59] Aston, 'English Ruins', pp. 245-53.
[60] Aston, 'English Ruins', p. 232.

our present pre-conceived ideas, furnishes a link in the history of the

Christian Church.[61]

Ruins became so popular that wealthy individuals consciously sought to integrate

picturesque ruins into gardens, sometimes even purposely weathering a structure to

create the right aesthetic; ornamental hermits who lived in garden huts also became

popular as a throwback to a simpler, more natural, and purer time.[62]  Simultaneously,

anxieties about British identity and origins prompted interest in a national narrative of

British excellence, beginning with the fictional King Arthur.[63] A physical manifestation

of this anxiety is the Gothic Revival; as a national narrative was created and articulated,

even British architecture was re-shaped to represent it, although the 'Gothic' style

advocated by influential societies and supported by government policy was a modern

construct separate from late medieval architecture.[64] The medieval past was not only

idealised, but also seen as intrinsically British, with modern British society as its natural

and superior development.[65]

Despite this evident bias, antiquarian research set the stage for the formalisation

of history and archaeology as disciplines in the early nineteenth century, and produced

ground-breaking research, as antiquarian publications about anchorites demonstrate.[66]

Most historiographies of the study of anchorites begin with Clay in 1914, but the

research of Bloxam and Archdeacon E. Churton, which discussed archaeological

remains of anchoritic cells, predate Clay by just over sixty years.[67] Their work relied

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[61] Matthew Holbeche Bloxam, *On the Domus Inclusi, or Habitable Chamber Found in Many of our Ancient Churches* (Surrey: Surrey Archaeological Society, 1853), p. 2.
[62] Biddick, *The Shock*, pp. 21-29. Campbell, *The Hermit in the Garden*, pp. 51, 96-154.
[63] Trigger, *A History*, p. 82. Bloxam, *On the Domus Inclusi*, pp. 9-10.
[64] Biddick, *The Shock*, pp. 30-37. Bradley, *Churches*, p. 143.
[65] Biddick, *The Shock*, pp. 32-33.
[66] Trigger, *A History*, pp. 166-67.
[67] Clay, *The Hermits and Anchorites*. Bloxam, *On the Domus Inclusi*, pp. 2-15; Archdeacon E. Churton, 'On the Remains of Penitential Cells and Prisons Connected with Monastic Houses', *Associated Architectural Societies Reports and Papers*, 2 (1853), 289-315.

heavily on archaeology, although they also used historical documents such as church records and literary sources like *Ancrene Wisse* to provide an interpretative framework for archaeological findings and to provide historical background for these cells.[68] Antiquarian research was often carried out by clergymen who were also amateur archaeologists and/or historians and was published largely in local archaeological society publications organized by county.[69] The frequency of cross-referencing each other's publications indicates a small but active group of specialists with impressive local knowledge who networked with each other.[70] Since standard archaeological practice now considered essential to archaeological excavation had not yet been developed, antiquarian research is characterised by varying levels of detail and expertise when excavating and recording.[71] The terms used to describe anchorites and their cells demonstrate this ambiguity: titles of anchorites include 'anchoret' and 'anchorite', and titles of cells include 'domus anachoritæ', 'domus inclusi', 'ankerhold', 'anker-hold', and 'penitential cell', among others.[72] Some cells were discovered by accident, whilst churches were in the midst of refurbishment.[73] Antiquarians were quick to record any

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[68] Bloxam, *On the Domus Inclusi*, pp. 1-15. Churton, 'On the Remains', pp. 289, 297. Although literary sources were cited, they were analysed as part of the historical record; the in-depth literary analysis now considered typical of works like *Ancrene Wisse* had yet to develop.

[69] Rev. E. Turner, 'Domus Anachoritæ, Aldrington', *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, 12 (1860), 117-39. E. S. Dewick, 'On the Discovery of an Ankerhold at the Church of St Martin, Chipping Ongar, Essex', *Archaeological Journal*, 45 (1888), 284-88. Philip Mainwaring Johnston, 'The Low Side Windows of Sussex Churches', *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, 41 (1898), 159-202. F. W. Steer, 'Chickney Church', *Essex Review*, 60 (1951), 93-102.

[70] Johnston, 'The Low Side Windows of Surrey Churches', p. 88. J. L. André, 'Compton Church', *Surrey Archaeological Collections*, 12 (1859), 1-19 (pp. 10-11).

[71] For examples of antiquarian excavations which included measurements, photographs, and detailed descriptions: J. T. Michlethwaite, 'On the Remains of an Ankerhold at Bengeo Church, Hertford', *Archaeological Journal*, 44 (1887), 26-29 and Hodson, 'Anker-hold', 344-46. For an example of a less complete antiquarian analysis: F. F. Komlosy, 'The Parish and Church of Chickney', *Essex Review*, 36/144 (1927), 161-63.

[72] Turner, 'Domus Anachoritæ', 117-39. Bloxam, *On the Domus Inclusi*, pp. 2-15. Godfrey, 'Church of St Anne's', 159-69. Churton, 'On the Remains', 289-315. Dewick, 'On the Discovery', 284-88. Hodson, 'Anker-hold', 344-46. Baugh and Cox, *Monastic Shropshire*, p. 6.

[73] Micklethwaite, 'On the Remains', p. 27. This period was marked by major rebuilding and restoration projects focused on medieval churches: Komlosy, 'The Parish and Church', p.

evident traces of these cells and stressed the need for more archaeological and historical research.[74] Although the majority of antiquarian researchers focusing on anchorites were men, women also contributed, including Henrietta M. Auden and Clay.[75] A fascination for anchoritism is evident in many of these sources; anchorites represented an antique aspect of church history, and a nostalgic view of a simpler and purer past idealised by the great spiritual fortitude of anchorites, male and female alike, drove this research forward.[76]

Anchoritic archaeology was often related to research of low side windows in churches, as anchoritic squints were considered one category of these windows.[77] Low side windows varied in size, placement within the church, and shape, and terms for these windows varied, including 'hagioscope', 'lychnoscope', 'squint', and 'aperture'.[78] Different terms were linked to various theories about the uses of low side-windows, such as the 'sanctus-bell theory', the 'leper squint theory', and more; a more detailed discussion follows in Chapter 4.[79] These theories have now been debunked, although at

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163 and Steer, 'Chickney Church', p. 102. Although done with good intent since churches were falling apart, these 'restorations' often resulted in destroying important medieval features.

[74] Bloxam, *On the Domus Inclusi*, p. 15 and Churton, 'On the Remains', p. 289.

[75] Clay, *The Hermits and Anchorites.* Auden, 'Shropshire Hermits', 97-112.

[76] Bloxam, *On the Domus Inclusi*, pp. 2-3. Bloxam considered this research important because anchoritism is part of the history of the Christian church. Traces of this attitude are prevalent in all the works cited here; the fascination with the anchorite being traditionally buried within the cell also points to this interest in what was seen as behaviour outside of the Christian norm—see also Micklethwaite, 'On the Remains', p. 29. In fact, Auden claimed that literary accounts of recluses in the thirteenth century are so unusual that she is somewhat doubtful of whether the accounts are 'literal fact' and that they 'remind us of [the lives of] those of Hindoo devotees'. Auden, 'Shropshire Hermits', pp. 100-01.

[77] Johnston, 'The Low Side Windows of Surrey Churches', 83-133. Philip Mainwaring Johnston, 'The Low Side Windows of Sussex Churches', *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, 42 (1899), 117-79. Archdeacon Edward Trollope, 'Low Side Windows in Dodington Church.—Letter from Archdeacon Trollope', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, 9 (1874), 236-39. Chatwin, *Squints in Warwickshire.* Even Chatwin's monograph is organized by county. Other notable archaeological monographs relating to anchorites were also organized by county: David Herbert Somerset Cranage, *An Architectural Account of the Churches of Shropshire: Volume I*, 2 vols (Wellington: Hobson & Co., 1901).

[78] Johnston, 'The Low Side windows of Surrey Churches', pp. 88, 119-33. André, 'Compton Church', pp. 10-11.

[79] Johnston, 'The Low Side Windows of Surrey Churches', pp. 124-133.

the time with less scholarly work available, they seemed more plausible than they appear today. Despite the ambiguity of antiquarian reports, this research is an essential and overlooked starting-point for exploring the anchoritic vocation, as regular and sometimes very detailed reports of archaeological evidence were published from 1853 until Clay published in 1914.[80] Moreover, some of the data recorded by antiquarians is now no longer accessible due to later church alterations, making sketches, early photography, paintings, and written descriptions of previously visible features essential. Numerous factors led to decreasing interest in local anchoritic archaeology from clergymen and members of the church community during the twentieth century, including a steady decline in religious belief and church participation in England, and the development of architecture representing a nationalistic secular identity (albeit developed from the moral background of Christianity) following the Gothic Revival.[81]

Clay's groundbreaking *The Hermits and Anchorites of England* (1914) compiled the anchoritic research completed at that point in a single source (including some archaeological data), in addition to original historical research into church records

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[80] From 1853: Bloxam, *On the Domus Inclusi*, pp. 2-15; Churton, 'On the Remains', 289-315. Other examples, other than those already mentioned: J. H. Parker, 'Architectural Notes of Churches in the City and Neighborhood of Norwich', in *Memoirs Illustrative of the History & Antiquities of Norfolk and the City of Norwich*, ed. by Royal Archaeological Institute (London: Office of the Archaeological Institute, 1847), pp. 157-97 (p. 166). 'Anchorites in Faversham Courtyard', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, 11 (1877), 24-39. W. Bazeley, 'Notes on the Manor and Church at Daglingworth—2', *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*, 12 (1887-88), 60-69. Johnston, 'The Low Side Windows of Sussex Churches' (1899), 117-79. J. F. Hodgson, 'On Low Side Windows', *Archaeologia Aeliana*, 23 (1902), 43-235. F. T. S. Houghton, *The Low Side Windows of Warwickshire Churches: A Paper Read to the Birmingham Archaeological Society, Mar. 21st, 1906* (Walsall: W. Henry Robinson, 1907). Philip Mainwaring Johnston, 'An Anchorite's Cell at Letherhead Church', *Surrey Archaeological Collections*, 20 (1908), 223-28. J. C. Cox, *County Churches: Cornwall* (London: George Allen & Company, 1912), pp. 168-69. David Herbert Somerset Cranage, *An Architectural Account of the Churches of Shropshire: Volume II*, 2 vols (Wellington: Hobson & Co., 1912).

[81] Alasdair Crockett and David Voas, 'Generations of Decline: Religious Change in 20th-Century Britain', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 45 (2006), 567-84. Biddick, *The Shock*, pp. 30-38.

mentioning anchorites, which were organized and tabled.[82] Clay also supplemented this

book with articles published in 1953 and 1955.[83] This work deserves the recognition it

still receives, for this level of comprehensive analysis had hitherto not been attempted,

and the historical research Ann K. Warren published just over seventy years later, also

considered an essential text, was heavily influenced by Clay's initial research.[84] Francis

Darwin Swift Darwin's slim volume, *The English Mediaeval Recluse* (1954), has

received little critical attention, but this source built on Clay's research and is a key text

bridging the gap between Clay and Warren.[85] These twentieth-century monographs

demonstrate a shift away from the archaeological and towards a historical perspective.

Analysing Clay's methodology demonstrates the importance of engaging with

historiography in current research, as historiographical assessment shows the

archaeological origins of the field and invites the development of an interdisciplinary

approach utilising all available sources, including the artefactual, historical, and textual.

Clay structured the discussion of anchorite cells by first considering literary and

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[82] For examples of archaeological and architectural exploration: Churton, 'On the Remains', 289-315. Cranage, *An Architectural*, both vols. Matthew Holbeche Bloxam, *The Principles of Gothic Ecclesiastical Architecture, with an Explanation of Technical Terms, and a Centenary of Ancient Terms: Vol. II*, 2 vols (London: George Bell and Sons, 1882), pp. 181-83. Clay, *The Hermits and Anchorites*.

[83] Rotha Mary Clay, 'Further Studies on Medieval Recluses', *The Journal of the British Archaeological Association,* 3rd ser., 16 (1953), 74-86 (p. 74). Rotha Mary Clay, 'Some Northern Anchorites: With a Note on Enclosed Dominicans', *Archaeologia Aeliana*, 33 (1955), 202-17.

[84] Warren, *Anchorites and their Patrons*. Warren's research also focused on church records, specifically alms and wills; this original approach produced data that is still used in recent sources, albeit with some caveats (two often cited tables suggesting numbers of anchorites overall as well as numbers of the gender of anchorites can be found on p. 20 and p. 38, respectively). The essential nature of these two texts by Clay and Warren has been stressed in numerous current sources: Anneke B. Mulder-Bakker, 'Foreword', in *Anchorites, Wombs and Tombs: Intersections of Gender and Enclosure*, ed. by Liz Herbert McAvoy and Mari Hughes-Edwards (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2005), pp. 1-5 (p. 4). Innes-Parker and Yoshikawa, 'Introduction', p. 1. Gilchrist, *Contemplation*, 162.

[85] Francis Darwin Swift Darwin, *The English Mediaeval Recluse* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1954). For an overview of the connections between Clay, Darwin, and Warren, see: Mari Hughes-Edwards, 'Anchoritism: The English Tradition', in *Anchoritic Traditions of Medieval Europe*, ed. by Liz Herbert McAvoy (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2010), pp. 131-52 (p. 133).

historical sources from England and Europe.[86] A short list of English churches with anchoritic archaeology followed at the end of the section, described as 'architectural features [that] confirm the records'.[87] This makes explicit a methodology that fit the archaeological evidence into a narrative defined by textual sources. Although technically post-antiquarian, Clay's source material and methodology are thoroughly antiquarian; Gilchrist described Clay's work as 'sometimes anecdotal'.[88] Neither Darwin nor Warren dedicated a section to archaeology, and the rest of this chapter demonstrates how Clay's intrinsically antiquarian methodology, which relies on a literary framework to interpret the archaeological evidence, is still perpetuated in the field of anchorite studies today.

IV. Post-Antiquarian Anchoritic Research

During the period between the historical works of Clay (1914) and Warren (1985), literary research proliferated, including the major works of Janet Grayson, E. J. Dobson, and Linda Georgianna, who explored textual and literary aspects of *Ancrene Wisse*.[89] Other important twentieth-century publications include J. R. R. Tolkien's 1929 essay about the language of *Ancrene Wisse* and an associated text, *Hali Meidenhad*, and Geoffrey Shepherd's 1963 edition of Parts Six and Seven of *Ancrene Wisse*.[90] The first

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[86] Clay, *The Hermits and Anchorites*, p. 79.

[87] Clay, *The Hermits and Anchorites*, p. 82.

[88] Gilchrist, *Contemplation*, 162. Eddie A. Jones, 'Hidden Lives: Methodological Reflections on a New Database of the Hermits and Anchorites of Medieval England', *Medieval Prosopography*, 28 (2013), 17-34 (pp. 17-21, 25-26). Jones provided a brief biography of Clay's life and work, showing her antiquarian foundations.

[89] Janet Grayson, *Structure and Imagery in 'Ancrene Wisse'* (Lebanon: University Press of New England, 1974). E. J. Dobson, *The Origins of 'Ancrene Wisse'* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976). Linda Georgianna, *The Solitary Self: Individuality in the 'Ancrene Wisse'* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981).

[90] J. R. R. Tolkien, '*Ancrene Wisse* and *Hali Meidenhad*', *Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association*, 14 (1929), 104-26. This is another text continually referenced and described as pivotal in current research, although its flaws are also discussed: Richard

translation of *Ancrene Wisse*, titled *The Ancrene Riwle*, was published in 1956 by Mary

B. Salu, and was reprinted in 1990.[91] With the publication of the first edition of *The*

*Book of Margery Kempe* in 1940, literary scholarship about the mystic Margery Kempe

and women's spirituality more generally flourished.[92] At the end of the 1980s, Caroline

Walker Bynum published a pivotal work on medieval women and religious experience

that utilized a literary approach; this brought particularly female modes of religious

expression into mainstream scholarly discourse.[93] This period, from the 1910s until the

1980s, was characterized by the creation of fundamental historical and literary research

that continues to resonate in anchoritic studies today, and a shift away from

archaeological evidence towards historical or literary approaches.

Antiquarian-style archaeological reports about anchorites continued to be

published regularly until the 1960s, and occasional reports were still published in the

1970s and 1980s.[94] Publications about the archaeology of anchorite cells continued to

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Dance, 'The AB Language: The Recluse, the Gossip and the Language Historian', in *A Companion to 'Ancrene Wisse'*, ed. by Yoko Wada (Cambridge: Brewer, 2003), pp. 57-82 (pp. 60-61). Geoffrey Shepherd, ed., *'Ancrene Wisse': Parts Six and Seven* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1963).

[91] Mary B. Salu, trans., *The Ancrene Riwle* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1956). Mary B. Salu, trans., *The Ancrene Riwle* (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 1990).

[92] Albrecht Classen, *Handbook of Medieval Studies: Terms—Methods—Trends*, 3 vols (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), vol. 2, pp. 1133-34.

[93] Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

[94] Ray Silver, 'The Anchorite's Cell at Kingston Buci', *Sussex County Magazine*, 1 (1927), 144. Godfrey, 'Church of St. Anne's', 159-69. Komlosy, 'The Parish and Church', 161-63. G. M. Benton, 'Archaeological Notes: Discovery of an Anker-hold at Lindsell Church', *Transactions of the Essex Archaeological Society*, 19 (1937), 316-20. Cecilia Boston, *Guide to the Church of St. Nicholas, Compton, Surrey* (Guildford: Biddles, the City Press, 1930). R. H. Flood, *A Description of St. Julian's Church, Norwich and an Account of Dame Julian's Connection with It* (Norwich: The Wherry Press, 1936). A. J. Walker, *Staplehurst Church* (Kent: The Eagle Printing Works, Cranbrook, 1938). F. C. Elliston-Erwood, 'Plans of, and Brief Architectural Notes on, Kent Churches', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, 61 (1948), 57-67. Hodson, 'Anker-hold', 344-46. Clay, 'Some Northern Anchorites', 202-17. J. H. Gibson, 'Compton Church: The Oratory', *Surrey Archaeological Collections*, 51 (1950), 154-55. Steer, 'Chickney Church', 93-102. Chatwin, *Squints in Warwickshire*. Challoner, 'Shropshire and her Anchorites', p. 17. J. Phillip Dodd, 'The Anchoress of Frodsham 1240-1280', *Cheshire History*, 8 (1981), 30-51.

follow an antiquarian format for various reasons. Clay's work was often cited and exerted considerable influence on interpretation and style, and the only earlier templates for anchoritic archaeology were pre-1914 antiquarian examples. Moreover, brief descriptions of archaeological features continued to be published in regional sources by local individuals, often amateurs, and reports usually concluded with a romantic narrative placing an anchorite within the context of a particular local church. For instance, Ray Silver referenced an earlier antiquarian report in a one-page article for *The Sussex County Magazine* about anchoritic archaeology at Kingston-by-Sea and concluded by describing the anchorite's final moments in the cell: 'When his last visitor, Death, approached, he lay down in the grave he had made with his own hands in his cell, and thus passed away a religious zealot. The cell was then pulled down, and the grave filled in'.[95] Publications focusing on the archaeology and geography of the Welsh Marches—of great importance to anchoritic studies since *Ancrene Wisse* originated near this area—also continued until 1980; these in-depth monographs published by academic geologists and archaeologists analysed multiple sites and/or artefacts to draw more far-reaching conclusions than single-site descriptions of anchoritic archaeology offered.[96] While anchoritic studies formalised into a rigorous academic literary and historical field in the twentieth century, archaeological approaches to anchoritic features in particular remained antiquarian in style and ultimately peripheral, as the lack of engagement with archaeological sources in twentieth-century literary and historical research shows.

But why did archaeological reports about anchorites remain marginal, even as authors such as Clay specifically asked for more archaeological study, and why did

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[95] Silver, 'The Anchorite's Cell', 144.

[96] Dorothy Sylvester, *The Rural Landscape of the Welsh Borderland: A Study in Historical Geography* (London: Macmillan, 1969). A. J. Bird, *History on the Ground: An Inventory of Unrecorded Material Relating to the Mid-Anglo-Welsh Borderland, with Introductory Chapters* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1977). Stanley Charles Stanford, *The Archaeology of the Welsh Marches* (London: Collins, 1980).

scholars in the burgeoning field of anchoritic studies fail to consider the archaeological record?[97] After all, my research demonstrates that many anchoritic archaeology features are visible without intrusive excavation practices that could disrupt a still-functioning parish church. The disjunction between history and archaeology in particular was famously stated by British archaeologist Ivor Noël Hume in the title of his 1964 article, 'Archaeology: Handmaiden to History'.[98] Hume asserted that the historian had a respected place within the community, but that archaeologists were often lumped in with 'the small but ubiquitous groups of pot-hunters and collectors of Indian relics', suggesting that at best archaeologists were viewed as illustrators of historical study, and at worst as amateur treasure-hunters.[99] Although Hume's comments originally referred specifically to a North American context, this critique of archaeology as often being used as 'handmaiden to history' resonated across the field of archaeology. Just when historical and literary research was flourishing, archaeological theory was in flux as the field coped with transitioning from a culture-history approach—characterized by studying people as cultural groups fitting into political-historical narratives, and heavily influenced by anthropology—into New or Processual Archaeology, which stressed a more scientific approach to archaeology and explicitly asserted itself as a discipline independent from history.[100] Even with this new approach, tensions between history and

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[97] Clay, *The Hermits and Anchorites*, p. 84.

[98] Ivor Noël Hume, 'Archaeology: Handmaiden to History', *The North Carolina Historical Review*, 41 (1964), 214-25. Note the date of this article in relation to Chatwin, *Squints in Warwickshire*—Hume's article was published just as archaeological anchoritic research began to decline.

[99] Hume, 'Archaeology', p. 214.

[100] For a succinct overview of archaeological theory and developments: Guy Halsall, 'Archaeology and Historiography', in *Companion to Historiography*, ed. by Michael Bentley (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 805-24. For more information particularly about the relationship between archaeology and history: pp. 817-24. For an overview of the cultural-history approach and its transformation into New Archaeology (and eventually into post-processualism): pp. 807-15. For the pivotal text in the New Archaeology or Processual Archaeology movement: Lewis R. Binford, *In Pursuit of the Past: Decoding the Archaeological Record* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1983).

archaeology persisted, and as late as 1997 Guy Halsall was still advocating for archaeology to have 'an equal and independent explanatory voice'.[101] These issues within the discipline of archaeology served not only to discourage more archaeological interest in anchorites, but also to allow historical and literary frameworks of the anchoritic vocation to take precedence.

The period from Warren's historical monograph in 1985 until the 2000s was characterized by research focusing on gendered experience, largely from a literary perspective. Feminist academic studies were a major catalyst for this shift in the research framework, and authors such as Bynum continued to pioneer research focused specifically on women's experience.[102] Although Bynum's research was not directed primarily towards anchoritic studies, a continued focus on *Ancrene Wisse*—and particularly the women the text originally addressed—as well as the rekindling of interest in Julian of Norwich's fourteenth-century anchoritic writing, provided a perfect background for anchoritic studies to follow this larger literary trend.[103] Warren's evidence that female anchorites outnumbered their male counterparts from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries (and most dramatically in the thirteenth century, when *Ancrene Wisse* was written) also created a hyper-focus on women's anchoritic experience.[104] However, these statistics are not without methodological bias; namely, that Warren's sources for these numbers are unclear, that the large number of anchorites of indeterminate gender are underrepresented in current scholarship, and that these figures are based on what has survived in the historical record and what has been discovered by

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[101] Halsall, 'Archaeology and Historiography', p. 824.

[102] For a very brief but succinct explanation of feminist research in anchoritic studies: McAvoy, 'Uncovering', pp. 808-09. Bynum, *Holy Feast*. Bynum's research was a forerunner of the kind of feminist research being discussed above. For more of her research in the same framework: Caroline Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Zone Books, 1992).

[103] McAvoy, 'Uncovering', pp. 808-09.

[104] Warren, *Anchorites and their Patrons*, p. 20.

researchers, and therefore may not be truly representative (Table 1.1).[105] An exception

to this gendered focus in a historical study is Eddie A. Jones' reevaluation of Clay's

research and critical appraisal of Warren's, resulting in a new survey of Oxfordshire

hermits and anchorites that included some discussion of archaeological analysis

(although Jones also stated that 'a conclusive identification' of anchoritic activity was

impossible from archaeological remains alone).[106]

**This table has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.**

**Table 1.1.** Warren's table, demonstrating the distribution of the sexes of anchorites over

time. Chapter 4 demonstrates how some church records did not note the gender of

individual anchorites, resulting in the 'Indeterminate' category above. If even half of

these indeterminate anchorites in the fourteenth century in particular were male, the

distinction between male and female anchorites would be significantly diminished

(Warren, *Anchorites and their Patrons*, p. 20).

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[105] Warren, *Anchorites and their Patrons*, p. 20. For a recent discussion of Warren's work: McAvoy and Hughes-Edwards, 'Introduction', pp. 9-10 and Jones, 'Hidden Lives', 17-34 (p. 32, footnote 70). For another recent challenge to this hyper-feminine focus: Gunn, *'Ancrene Wisse'*, pp. 8-9.

[106] Eddie A. Jones, 'The Hermits and Anchorites of Oxfordshire', *Oxoniensia*, 63 (1998), 51-77. This article is impressive in its ability to assess multiple kinds of evidence within a concentrated area, although a preference for particularly literary and historical evidence is clear. Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites*, p. 7.

Literary research concerning the construction of both masculinity and femininity influenced the field of anchoritic studies, resulting in critical analysis of the literary context of *Ancrene Wisse* during the 1990s. Scholarship examining the construction of gender utilised a literary framework easily adopted by researchers focusing on anchoritism.[107] Research on masculinities analysed the disjunction between secular and clerical performances of masculinity; in response, some researchers suggested the concept of a 'third gender', indicating that clerical men were not only separate from women, but also separate from other men.[108] This reinforced perceptions of male anchoritic experience as separate from their female counterparts because of contextualising male anchoritism as part of the monastic system regardless of status, whereas female anchoritism remained outside of it; in this framework, distinctions between laymen and secular and ecclesiastical clerics, all of whom participated in anchoritism, are ignored.[109] *Ancrene Wisse*'s influence, and the possibility of more

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[107] Jeffrey Jerome Cohen and Bonnie Wheeler, eds., *Becoming Male in the Middle Ages* (New York: Garland, 1997). Roberta Gilchrist, *Gender and Archaeology: Contesting the Past* (London: Routledge, 1999). Elizabeth Robertson, *Early English Devotional Prose and the Female Audience* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1990). Robertson's work is now considered outdated in its harsh assessment of *Ancrene Wisse*'s male author, but was a pivotal text at the time.

[108] This idea of a 'third gender' has now been refuted (see Section VI in this chapter), but at the time this was significant for gender studies. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen and Bonnie Wheeler, 'Becoming and Unbecoming', in *Becoming Male in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Jeffrey Jerome Cohen and Bonnie Wheeler (New York: Garland, 1997), pp. vii-xx (pp. vii-xxii) demonstrated how studies of masculinity are the result of feminist and queer theory, and also stressed the importance of the intersectionality inherent in medieval studies. For other examples: Jo Ann McNamara, 'The "Herrenfrage": The Restructuring of the Gender System, 1050-1150', in *Medieval Masculinities: Regarding Men in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Clare A. Lees and others, Medieval Cultures, 7 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), pp. 3-29 and Robert N. Swanson, 'Angels Incarnate: Clergy and Masculinity from Gregorian Reform to Reformation', in *Masculinity in Medieval Europe*, ed. by Dawn Hadley (London: Addison Wesley Longman, 1998), pp. 160-77. The 'third gender' also included women, but since women anchorites are not considered part of the monastic system, this did not impact interpretation in the same way: Jo Ann McNamara, 'Chastity as a Third Gender in the History and Hagiography of Gregory of Tours', in *The World of Gregory of Tours*, ed. by Kathleen Mitchell and Ian Wood, Cultures, Beliefs and Traditions: Medieval and Early Modern Peoples, 8 (Leiden: Brill, 2002), pp. 199-210.

[109] See the next section in this chapter (V). This will also be discussed in more depth in Chapter 4.

literary research through the inclusion of two related groups of texts—the *Katherine Group* and the *Wooing Group*—became even more markedly pronounced with the publication of Bella Millett's survey, which included a historical overview, a discussion of methodology, and a bibliography of secondary literature.[110] The publication of a translation and commentary of *Ancrene Wisse,* the *Wooing Group*, and other related texts including *Hali Meiðhad* in one volume during this period underscores the importance of this corpus.[111] At the turn of the twentieth century, anchoritic research was not only literary, but also explicitly gendered, in perspective.

V. Gender Theory and Anchoritic Archaeology

Roberta Gilchrist's *Contemplation and Action: The Other Monasticism* (1995), is a major and surprising exception to the overall trend towards literary perspectives, but unfortunately this research did not result in an influx of new archaeological scholarship.[112] Although Gilchrist brought an archaeological view back to the forefront of anchoritic studies, her work did not challenge the overt focus on purely women's experience due to her reliance on a literary framework, nor critically assess statistics about the number and gender of anchorites, nor create a distinctly archaeological framework for understanding anchoritism. This reduced the archaeology to illustrations in an already determined historical narrative reliant upon a literary, gendered, and specifically women-focused experience of anchoritism.[113] Gilchrist published two

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[110] Bella Millett, *'Ancrene Wisse', the Katherine Group, and the Wooing Group* (Woodbridge: Brewer, 1996), p. 1. This is another text still cited regularly that remains impressive for its scope and thoroughness.

[111] Ann Savage and Nicholas Watson, trans. and intro., *Anchoritic Spirituality: 'Ancrene Wisse' and Associated Works* (New York: Paulist Press, 1991). Earlier in this chapter, I cited Tolkien's essay about *Hali Meiðhad*, which he titled *Hali Meidenhad*.

[112] Gilchrist, *Contemplation,* pp. 182-93. This was the first attempt to comprehensively address anchoritic archaeology since Clay, *The Hermits and Anchorites*.

[113] Gilchrist, *Contemplation*.

related works within a year of each other; *Gender and Material Culture: The Archaeology of Religious Women* set out a theory and methodology to 'examine how gender works in relation to material culture through a detailed archaeological case study; and…to introduce the archaeology of medieval religious women'.[114] This methodology was further articulated in *Contemplation and Action*. Since this was the first scholarly study comprehensively evaluating archaeology since Clay in 1914, Gilchrist referenced Clay and other antiquarian sources.[115] No other archaeologist has since published on anchoritic archaeology, and the few literary or historical scholars who have utilised archaeological material, such as Michelle M. Sauer, have relied heavily on Gilchrist's work.[116] Therefore, the problematic gendered conclusions Gilchrist drew about the nature of anchoritism through using archaeological evidence, which will be examined in further detail in later chapters, have reverberated across the field of anchoritic studies, and continue to have a marked impact on scholarship.

Although Gilchrist articulated an awareness of the pitfalls of using gender theory—including viewing archaeological evidence through modern preconceived notions of gender performance and activity—the way she structured her argument about anchoritism shows a bias towards female experience.[117] Despite naming male and female anchorites, Gilchrist claimed that 'the anchoritic institution was particularly important for women' by the second paragraph of the section dedicated to anchorites, signalling a focus on women's experience that continued throughout the chapter.[118] From the very beginning, then, male anchoritic experience was deemed *less* important. Moreover, in the same paragraph Gilchrist continued that 'women drawn to this

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[114] Gilchrist, *Contemplation.* Roberta Gilchrist, *Gender and Material Culture: The Archaeology of Religious Women* (London: Routledge, 1994).
[115] Clay, *The Hermits and Anchorites.* Gilchrist, *Contemplation*, p. 192.
[116] Sauer, 'Architecture of Desire', 545-64.
[117] Gilchrist, *Gender and Material Culture*, pp. 3-4, 8.
[118] Gilchrist, *Contemplation*, p. 183.

vocation seem to have come mainly from a secular background, whereas men more often had some existing clerical status, enabling them sometimes to serve as anchorite-priests'.[119] Gilchrist's volume sought to 'redress the imbalance' by focusing on marginalised religious vocations and communities, and particularly laywomen anchorites fit this remit, as the dismissal of women from monastic communities who became anchorites demonstrates. In contrast, characterising male anchorites as clerics and priests not only failed to acknowledge differences between laymen and secular and monastic clerics, but also effectively removed them from her analysis by placing them back into a framework of the hegemonic male monastic system.

By defining male anchorites as part of the monastic system and female anchorites as outside of this system, Gilchrist assumed separate experiences for male and female anchorites. In *Gender and Material Culture*, Gilchrist discussed binary oppositions and argued that they 'imply a universal contradiction between male and female culture categories, and exclude the possibility of other gender constructions'.[120] Despite Gilchrist's awareness of the issue, her arguments reinforced the view that male and female anchoritic lived experience was starkly different and defined by gender and monastic- or non-monastic status. Gilchrist cited textual rather than archaeological sources. For instance, in describing the cell at Chester-le-Street, Gilchrist noted that male anchorites were recorded as living in what she described as a two-story, four-room cell complex.[121] Since Gilchrist had already established that men were anchorite-priests, she claimed a link between this comparatively spacious cell and masculine experience. However, it is vital to stress that these are the only records *to survive*. Scholars know from the documentary record that male anchorites lived at Chester-le-Street, but it is

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[119] Gilchrist, *Contemplation*, p. 183.
[120] Gilchrist, *Gender and Material Culture*, p. 6.
[121] Gilchrist, *Contemplation*, p. 190.

probable that other anchorites were in residence at this cell over time, and there is no indication in documentary sources or in archaeological sources that this cell was exclusively for male anchorites.[122] In this case, Gilchrist used documentary sources to interpret the archaeological record, and also assumed implicit differences in gendered experience would be expressed through the archaeological record.

Since Gilchrist's methodological framework focused on women's experience, much of the archaeological data was interpreted through this lens. For instance, Gilchrist argued that cell placement was related to the gender of the anchorite, and linked the 'greater incidence of female recluses' to the greater number of cells placed on the north side of churches, which 'would have held particular significance' for female anchorites because nunnery cloisters were also often placed in a similar position.[123] One reviewer, Jane Schulenburg, praised the work overall, but also considered some of Gilchrist's conclusions 'rather unconvincing'.[124] For instance, in critiquing a claim about female monasteries, Schulenburg clarified that 'this gender-based association appears to be a real "stretch"; one would need more evidence to make this connection'.[125] In the same way, Gilchrist's claim about the siting of anchorite cells does not take into account myriad other factors, including: the architecture of specific churches; the re-use of pre-existing structures; and the preferences of patrons. This argument, like many others, is ultimately not grounded in the archaeological data, but in modern assumptions about anchoritic experience that are reflected in gendered readings of medieval documentary sources.

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[122] Victoria Yuskaitis, 'Archaeology and Medievalism at Julian of Norwich's Anchorite Cell', *Studies in Medievalism*, 29 (2020), 123-54 (p. 146-50).
[123] Gilchrist, *Contemplation*, p. 190.
[124] Jane Schulenburg, 'Review. Contemplation and Action: The Other Monasticism', *Archaeological Journal*, 153.1 (1996), 389-90 (p. 389).
[125] Schulenburg, 'Review', p. 389.

Anchoritic archaeology has not received a gendered analysis, then, but a female-focused analysis. Although some scholars have mentioned well-known examples of anchoritic archaeology, Sauer is the first scholar since Gilchrist to make archaeology a central part of her thesis concerning anchorite squints—and indeed, Gilchrist is cited throughout.[126] Sauer claimed that examining 'the intersection of archaeology and gender' required 'forcing an encounter between gender constructs and architectural structures to produce a reading of the anchoritic space, which is simultaneously a church building and the anchorite's body'.[127] In the next paragraph, however, Sauer clearly stated that her research would focus on particularly female experience, not on gender more broadly: 'Here the anchorhold is specifically tied to the status of the anchoress's hymen'.[128] Sauer further claimed that 'as extensions of the body of the inhabitant, they [cells] are gendered spaces, and are feminine in nature'.[129] These introductory claims were not evidenced through archaeological sources, but again through gendered readings of medieval sources. For instance, Sauer connected the hymen and the cell in her interpretation of a passage from *Ancrene Wisse*:

> Yes, you too will go out of both your anchorhouses as he [Jesus] did,
>
> without a break, and leave them both whole. That will be when the
>
> spirit goes out in the end, without break or blemish, from its two
>
> houses. One of them is the body, the other is the outer house, which
>
> is like the outer wall around a castle.[130]

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126 Sauer, 'Architecture of Desire', 545-64. Other authors mentioning anchoritic archaeology: Licence, *Hermits & Recluses*, pp. 87-89. Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites*, pp. 47-49, 92-94.
127 Sauer, 'Architecture of Desire', p. 547.
128 Sauer, 'Architecture of Desire', p. 547.
129 Sauer, 'Architecture of Desire', p. 547.
130 Sauer, 'Architecture of Desire', p. 547. *Ancrene Wisse*, ed. by Robert Hasenfratz (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publication, 2000) <https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/publication/hasenfratz-ancrene-wisse>, [accessed 10 June 2020], Part Six, Lines 372-75.

Sauer's claim not only requires something of an interpretative leap, but also fails to engage with the way *Ancrene Wisse* was adopted for a wide audience, including male anchorites.[131] Just as with Gilchrist's argument, Sauer also set up a framework of a gendered view privileging female experience based on documentary sources, and then used archaeology—in Sauer's case, squints specifically—to illustrate this view.

Unfortunately, most recent scholarship has uncritically relied upon Gilchrist's archaeological analysis, especially since it is the only attempted systematic overview since Clay, resulting in a continued underutilization of archaeological resources.[132] The approaches taken by Gilchrist and Sauer have prioritised gender—and specifically female gender expression—over other factors that could have played a greater or equal role in cell design and construction, and therefore anchoritic lived experience. Moreover, these methodologies have also failed to consider male anchoritic experience, and have assumed differences in gendered experiences because they place male anchorites within the monastic system, and female anchorites outside of it. For both Gilchrist and Sauer, the archaeology was examined within a literary framework, and this affected how the archaeology was interpreted. Even though Gilchrist seemed to be introducing a new element to anchoritic studies through a focus on archaeology, her analysis ultimately demonstrates the same literary, feminist framework used by other

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[131] Gunn, '*Ancrene Wisse'*, pp. 91-92.

[132] My MA dissertation included a comprehensive survey of all anchoritic archaeology, from antiquarian sources through to current research: Victoria Yuskaitis, 'Anchorites and the Archaeological Record: A Reconsideration of Structure and Experience' (unpublished master's thesis, University of Sheffield, 2014). Other current research has mentioned anchoritic archaeology, but not comprehensively and often with caveats about the difficulty of using archaeological data: Hasenfratz, 'The Anchorhold', pp. 6-9. Licence, *Hermits & Recluses*, pp. 87-89. Hughes-Edwards, 'Anchoritism: The English', pp. 142-43. Examples of current scholarship uncritically using Gilchrist's analysis include: Hasenfratz, 'The Anchorhold', pp.7-8. Sauer, 'Architecture of Desire', 545-64. Jones, *The Hermits and Anchorites*, pp. 47-49, 92-94.

literary scholars during this period, and set the stage for future research to continue to use archaeological source material in this way.

## VI. Current Research: The Importance of an Archaeological Perspective

The early- to mid-2000s demonstrated not only an increasing volume of scholarship associated with anchoritism, but also a continuing interest in examining women's spirituality, and in defining female spiritual experiences as profoundly different from their masculine counterparts.[133] Scholarship on male or female identities continued to evolve separately from each other, although P. H. Cullum acknowledged somewhat drily that gender studies especially in regards to medieval religious studies largely functioned 'as a euphemism for women's studies'.[134] *Ancrene Wisse* remained a popular and influential text, and during this period Yoko Wada published an essential essay collection, which brought together pioneering *Ancrene Wisse* research from literary perspectives.[135] The continued predominance of *Ancrene Wisse* and other associated texts highlights how anchoritic rules originally written to men have received comparatively little scholarly analysis.[136] Interest in *Ancrene Wisse* ranged from its

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[133] For examples not specifically linked to anchorites, but to religious studies in general: John W. Coakley, *Women, Men, and Spiritual Power: Female Saints and their Male Collaborators* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006). Stanbury and Raguin, *Women's Space*. For a monograph focused on anchoritism: Liz Herbert McAvoy and Mari Hughes-Edwards, eds., *Anchorites, Wombs and Tombs: Intersections of Gender and Enclosure in the Middle Ages* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2005). Wogan-Browne, *Saints' Lives*. Liz Herbert McAvoy, 'Uncovering', p. 808.

[134] P. H. Cullum, 'Introduction: Holiness and Masculinity in Medieval Europe', in *Holiness and Masculinity in the Middle Ages*, ed. by P. H. Cullum and Katherine J. Lewis (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2004), pp. 1-7 (p. 1) (see the rest of the introduction for an excellent overview). For another example of masculinity studies: Ruth Mazo Karras, *From Boys to Men: Formations of Masculinity in Late Medieval Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003).

[135] Yoko Wada, *A Companion to 'Ancrene Wisse'* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2003). This is still an essential text.

[136] Hughes-Edwards, 'Anchoritism: The English', p. 137. Jones includes examples from many of these less well-known rules: Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites*.

depictions of female virginity, to semantics and language influences, to the concept of

an anchoritic community, to how space was utilized and conceived in the cell—and the

majority of these studies retained a decidedly woman-focused perspective.[137] Indeed,

some *Ancrene Wisse* research directly explored the possibility of allusions to lesbian

interactions within the text.[138] Dee Dyas *et. al.* responded to this boom of interest in

mystical and anchoritic texts of the later medieval period by discussing how to approach

these varied and complex works methodologically and contextually, and also how to

introduce and teach these works to students effectively.[139] One of the most important

developments of this period for the perception of *Ancrene Wisse*, and by extension other

anchoritic or mystic texts, was the growing conviction that what appeared to be

misogynist language by male authors to female readers could be interpreted in more

positive and even empowering ways by the women themselves; as Sarah Salih argued,

'The Katherine Group legends do focus on violence done by men to naked virgins,

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[137] For research relating to feminine virginity and *Ancrene Wisse*: Anke Bernau, 'Virginal Effects: Text and Identity in *Ancrene Wisse*', in *Gender and Holiness: Men, Women and Saints in Late Medieval Europe,* ed. by Samantha E. J. Riches and Sarah Salih, Routledge Studies in Medieval Religion and Culture, 1 (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 36-48 and Sarah Salih, *Versions of Virginity*, pp. 51-99. For an example of semantic research: Andrew Breeze, '*Deale* "take note" in *Ancrene Wisse*', *Selim: Journal of the Spanish Society for Mediaeval English Language and Literature*, 13 (2007), 259-60. For an example of a discussion of language: Nicholas Watson and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, 'The French of England: The *Compileison*, *Ancrene Wisse*, and the Idea of Anglo-Norman', *Journal of Romance Studies*, 4 (2004), 35-59. For an example of research relating to community: Michelle M. Sauer, '"Prei for me mi leue suster": The Paradox of the Anchoritic "Community" in Late Medieval England', *Prose Studies*, 26 (2003), 153-75. For examples of discussions of space: Hasenfratz, 'The Anchorhold, 1-22. McAvoy and Hughes-Edwards, 'Introduction', pp. 6-26.

[138] Jane Bliss, 'A Fine and Private Place', in *The Erotic in the Literature of Medieval Britain*, ed. by Amanda Hopkins and Cory James Rushton (Cambridge: Brewer, 2007), pp. 155-63. Sarah Salih, 'Queering *sponsalia Christi*: Virginity, Gender, and Desire in the Early Middle English Anchoritic Texts', in *New Medieval Literatures*, V, ed. by Rita Copeland and others (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 155-75.

[139] Dee Dyas, Valerie Edden, and Roger Ellis, eds., *Approaching Medieval English Anchoritic and Mystical Texts* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2005). See pp. xiii-xvi for a discussion of key texts, which included *Ancrene Wisse,* Julian of Norwich's *Book of Showings*, and Aelred's *De Institutione Inclusarum*, among others. Note also the relationship of these works to Middle English mystics; the proliferation of female anchorites is often linked with a rise in mysticism.

but…such scenes are always mediated, so that the reader watches someone else

watching the torture, and is asked to reflect upon their own interpretative position'.[140]

As anchoritic studies continued to be shaped by literary and gendered

(specifically woman-focused) models, scholars critiqued antiquarian research that

included references to anchoritic archaeology. The antiquarian archaeologist and/or

historian was envisioned as theologically biased (in the sense of personal Christian

belief affecting interpretation) and also incapable of evaluating female anchorites

independent of the misogynistic-laden concept of the 'Victorian Ideal'.[141] The historic

perspective of secular historians and anthropologists was viewed as superior to the

'framework of church history and dogma'.[142] Indeed, Liz Herbert McAvoy and Mari

Hughes-Edwards suggested that before Clay and Warren, anchoritic research was

clouded by 'traditionalist and masculinist intellectual thought' (although they do fairly

criticize Warren in particular for still playing into these kinds of gender tropes).[143] Some

of these criticisms are valid to an extent—it is of course necessary to evaluate the biases

of a particular author, and there is no doubt that antiquarians wrote within the cultural

milieu of their time. However, this should not result in a complete dismissal of the

important work that these early researchers pioneered, as much relevant data has been

simply ignored due to the unavoidable factor of bias.[144] Indeed, Bob Hasenfratz's

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[140] Robertson, '"This Living Hand"', 1-36. This publication is associated with Robertson, *Early English Devotional*, pp. 44-76. In her earlier work, Robertson strongly indicated that *Ancrene Wisse* is an inherently misogynist text; however in her later work, she refuted her earlier statements and argued for the opposite, suggesting her original work had been misinterpreted. Nicholas Watson, '"With the heat of the hungry heart": Empowerment and *Ancrene Wisse*', in *Gendering the Master Narrative: Women and Power in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Mary C. Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), pp. 52-70. Salih, *Versions of Virginity*, p. 99.
[141] Mulder-Bakker, 'Foreword', p. 1.
[142] Mulder-Bakker, 'Foreword', p. 2.
[143] McAvoy and Hughes-Edwards, 'Introduction', p. 7.
[144] This is especially galling considering that Clay, *The Hermits and Anchorites* still retained aspects of antiquarianism (see section III of this chapter). Research is always evolving, as Robertson's changing views demonstrate (see footnote 140). An outdated view does not

discussion of the anchorhold as symbolic space explicitly seeks more archaeological evidence, but he concludes that 'clearly, anchoritic cells have not been the object of serious archaeological study…[and] we cannot extrapolate much about the interior arrangements of anchor cells from archaeological evidence alone'.[145] Even though occasional archaeological reports referencing anchoritic archaeology also appealed for further investigation, such as a Willingham, Cambridge report following repairs to the parish church chancel, archaeological contributions remained peripheral in part because of negative scholarly attitudes.[146] This 2005 report referenced Clay extensively, as well as other sites known through antiquarian reports, indicating that antiquarian archaeological research remained influential in amateur publications—but this influence did not result in scholarly engagement.[147]

At the same time, research of the Shropshire region and the Welsh Marches continued to develop, which provided the initial framework for connections to *Ancrene Wisse*. Regular archaeological work in Shropshire which utilized modern techniques and methodologies continued to be undertaken throughout this period; some material culture dating to the medieval period was discovered, although there were no direct links to anchorites.[148] Historical analyses of the Marcher area also proliferated, although

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mean its role in shaping current discourse should be discounted, or that the data used to formulate an argument (perhaps misused due to flawed methodology) is worthless.

[145] Hasenfratz, 'Symbolic Space', pp. 6-7.

[146] Jeremy Lander, 'The Sacristy, the Church of St. Mary & All Saints, Willingham, Cambridgeshire: The Case for An Anchorhold', *Freeland Rees Roberts Architects* (2005) <http://www.frrarchitects.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/Anchorhold-at-Willingham-Church_Jeremy-Lander.pdf> [accessed 24 September 2020]. Note that Lander stated the idea of the sacristy formerly being an anchorite cell was based on a chance encounter from a visitor, Randolph Miles; his wife, Laura Miles, studied anchorites at Selwyn College Cambridge ('Laura Saetveit Miles', *University of Bergen* ([n.d.]) <https://www.uib.no/en/persons/ Laura.Saetveit.Miles> [accessed 09 December 2020]).

[147] Lander, 'The Sacristy'. This is in part an issue of access; antiquarian material is easier to access than many academic monographs and journals.

[148] Hugh Hannaford, 'Archaeological Investigations in Shropshire in 2000', *Shropshire History and Archaeology: Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Historical Society*, 76 (2001), 94-100. Hannaford's first summary of archaeological work occurred in 1995-6, and he published every year following until 2002; all are published in the same journal

without explicit links to anchoritism.[149] Because of the liminal nature of the Marches,

research on identity and otherness found a focal point in this area, shaping the context

Shropshire anchorites operated within.[150] Emma Cavell brought this work together in an

article about the experience of aristocratic widows in Shropshire, which not only broke

new ground but also set the stage for later research into Shropshire widows who became

anchoresses and had connections to *Ancrene Wisse*.[151] By 2011, links between

liminality, anchorites, and the unique environment of the Welsh Marches were

explicitly recognised in anchoritic scholarship.[152] Of course studies of liminality

represent just one framework for understanding the complexities of this region, and care

must be taken not to place modern emphases upon medieval sources; nonetheless, the

concept of liminality has proved particularly relevant for studying the political and

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with the same title format. After 2000, other authors in the same journal continued to publish about local archaeological excavations and artefact discoveries, including this summary report following the same title format referenced above; in 2019, the report was written by Giles Carey.

[149] Brock W. Holden, 'The Making of the Middle March of Wales, 1066-1250', *Welsh History Review/Cylchgrawn Hanes Cymru*, 20 (2002), 128-32. David Stephenson, 'Welsh Lords in Shropshire: Gruffydd ap Iorwerth Goch and His Descendants in the Thirteenth Century', *Shropshire History and Archaeology: Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Historical Society*, 77 (2002), 32-37. Gruffydd Aled Williams, 'Welsh Raiding in the Twelfth-Century Shropshire/Cheshire March: The Case of Owain Cyfeiliog', *Studia Celtica*, 40 (2006), 89-115.

[150] Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Hybridity, Identity, and Monstrosity in Medieval Britain: On Difficult Middles* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), pp. 77-108. Patricia Clare Ingham, *Sovereign Fantasies: Arthurian Romance and the Making of Britain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), pp. 77-106. Jason O'Rourke, 'Imagining Book Production in Fourteenth-Century Herefordshire: The Scribe of British Library, MS Harley 2253 and His "Organizing Principles"', in *Imagining the Book*, ed. by Stephen Kelly and John J. Thompson, Medieval Texts and Cultures of Northern Europe, 7 (Notttingham: Brepols, 2005), pp. 45-60.

[151] Emma Cavell, 'Aristocratic Widows and the Medieval Welsh Frontier: The Shropshire Evidence', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 17 (2007), 57-82.

[152] Innes-Parker, 'Medieval Widowhood', 95-124. Liz Herbert McAvoy, *Medieval Anchoritisms: Gender, Space and the Solitary Life*, Gender in the Middle Ages, 6 (Woodbridge: Brewer, 2011), pp. 144-77. Michelle M. Sauer, 'Introduction: Anchoritism, Liminality, and the Boundaries of Vocational Withdrawal', *Journal of Medieval Religious Cultures*, Special Issue: Anchoritic Studies and Liminality, 42 (2016), v-xii. Matthew Siôn Lampitt, 'Networking the March: The Literature of the Welsh Marches, c.1180-c.1410' (unpublished doctoral thesis, King's College London, 2019), pp. 48-49.

social attributes of the Welsh Marches, and, by extension, the anchorites who lived in this area, as I discuss further in Chapter 5.

By the late 2000s, anchoritic research remained firmly literary in perspective, with a strong focus on women's experience; to a great extent, this trend continues into the present. New developments from this period broadened the scope of research to include international perspectives; for instance, the members of the Japan Society for Medieval English Studies became major contributors to anchoritic studies.[153] Similarly, an analysis of the nature of anchoritism across Europe offered a succinct overview of current research and also demonstrated an interest in establishing wider contexts of anchoritism.[154] This volume was crucial in terms of bringing together diverse research on anchoritism from various areas of the world, including Spain, France, and Italy, in one source and in English; this immediately made European scholarship more accessible.[155] Two articles broke new ground by focusing on the identities of individual female anchorites through close studies of historical and literary sources, giving valuable insight into the reality of anchoritic living and reasons behind choosing the vocation (however, the women in these studies were educated nobility, suggesting that their experiences may not be typical).[156] Recent research has compared *Ancrene Wisse* not to other anchoritic or mystical texts, but to courtly romance.[157] Studies of masculinity reassessed and refuted the concept of a 'third gender', and also asked, 'if men sometimes adopted 'feminine' modes of devotion, can we also see women, on

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[153] Innes-Parker and Yoshikawa, 'Introduction', pp. 1-2. Chiyoko Inosaki, 'The Intention of Cleopatra Scribe B: What was the Purpose of his Additions to Latin Incipits in Part 1 of *Ancrene Wisse*?', *Studies in Medieval English Language and Literature*, 26 (2011), 1-22.

[154] Liz Herbert McAvoy, ed., *Anchoritic Traditions of Medieval Europe* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2010).

[155] McAvoy, ed., *Anchoritic Traditions*.

[156] Innes-Parker, 'Medieval Widowhood', 95-124. McAvoy, 'Uncovering', 801-19.

[157] Susannah Mary Chewning, 'Intersections of Courtly Romance and the Anchoritic Tradition: *Chevelere Assigne* and *Ancrene Wisse*', *Journal of Medieval Religious Cultures*, 42 (2016), 79-101. Also see: Christopher Cannon, *The Grounds of English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

occasion, adopting 'masculine' ones, and if so, why?'[158] Cate Gunn's research on

*Ancrene Wisse* explored the text's influence on the lay population and in particular its

use by men as well as by women.[159] Other novel approaches include arguing that

developments in English anchoritism are closely linked to and follow historical

developments of the Cistercian Order.[160] *Ancrene Wisse* was not the only key literary

text being studied; an essential essay collection focusing on Julian of Norwich was also

published during this period.[161] Jones' translation of *Speculum Inclusorum* is another

example of interest in other anchoritic texts; in addition, the introduction discusses male

anchoritic experience.[162] A monograph focusing on early modern garden hermits

demonstrated how a romanticised version of anchoritism and hermiticism survived in

England and Europe, even after medieval anchorite cells and hermitages ceased

functioning.[163]

Two archaeological excavations using updated techniques and citing current

experts in the field demonstrated a continued interest in the archaeological evidence for

anchoritism—unfortunately, the archaeological evidence at both sites was sparse and

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[158] Quote from P. H. Cullum and Katherine J. Lewis, 'Introduction', in *Religious Men and Masculine Identity in the Middle Ages*, ed. by P. H. Cullum and Katherine J. Lewis, Gender in the Middle Ages, 9 (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2013), pp. 1-15 (p. 10). For the refutation of a 'third gender': Jacqueline Murray, 'One Flesh, Two Sexes, Three Genders?' in *Gender and Christianity in Medieval Europe: New Perspectives*, ed. by Lisa M. Bitel and Felice Lifshitz (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), pp. 34-51 (p. 36). Ruth Mazo Karras, 'Thomas Aquinas' Chastity Belt: Clerical Masculinity in Medieval Europe', in *Gender and Christianity in Medieval Europe: New Perspectives*, ed. by Lisa M. Bitel and Felice Lifshitz (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), pp. 52-67 (p. 53). This source discussed homoerotic anxiety from a masculine and feminine perspective: Michelle M. Sauer, 'Uncovering Difference: Encoded Homoerotic Anxiety Within the Christian Eremitic Tradition in Medieval England', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 19 (2010), 545-64.

[159] Gunn, *'Ancrene Wisse'*, pp. 4-10.

[160] Wolfgang Riehle, *The Secret Within: Hermits, Recluses, and Spiritual Outsiders in Medieval England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014). Although an intriguing thesis, ultimately I find the focus on solely Cistercian influence limiting.

[161] Liz Herbert McAvoy, ed., *A Companion to Julian of Norwich* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2008).

[162] Eddie A. Jones, *Speculum Inclusorum/A Mirror for Recluses: A Late-Medieval Guide for Anchorites and its Middle English Translation*, Exeter Medieval Texts and Studies (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013).

[163] Campbell, *Hermits in the Garden*.

interpretation relied heavily on literary and historical medieval records. A 2010

excavation uncovered an unusual skeleton underneath the apse at the Church of All

Saints, Fishergate, Yorkshire, which the excavators identified as the remains of an

anchoress; however, the reasoning behind this interpretation again suggests a desire to

fit the burial into a preconceived narrative of this church's history, instead of an

independent analysis of the burial itself.[164] Gunn published a significant and unusual

archaeological report about a potential anchorite cell at Colne Priory in 2011.[165] Gunn's

interest in the site stemmed from watching a *Time Team* episode about Colne Priory; a

mysterious room discovered to the north of the chancel was conjectured to be an

anchorite cell.[166] The small room did not survive above ground.[167] The discussion of the

potential cell is ultimately not based on archaeological evidence, but on documentary

evidence associated with the priory. Archaeologically, the space could not definitely be

identified, and other possibilities for its function were also raised.[168] Especially when so

many other sites first identified by antiquarians retain anchoritic features *in-situ*,

focusing on these sites is baffling; in both cases, limited archaeological evidence was

fitted into a preconceived narrative based on a literary framework.

    Jones pioneered new methods of historical analysis during the late 2000s,

building upon Clay's data; this is the first attempt at a major historical work since

Warren, whose contribution is downplayed in Jones' research.[169] Upon Clay's death in

1961, her assorted notes, meant to result in further work upon the topic of anchorites,

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[164] McIntyre and Bruce, 'Excavating', 31-37. See Chapter 2 for a more in-depth analysis.

[165] Cate Gunn, 'Was there an Anchoress at Colne Priory?', *Transactions of the Essex Society for Archaeology and History* 4 (2011), 117-23. Cate Gunn, 'The Anchoress of Colne Priory: A Solitary in Community', in *Medieval Anchorites in their Communities*, ed. by Cate Gunn and Liz Herbert McAvoy, Studies in the History of Medieval Religion (Cambridge: Brewer, 2017), pp. 37-52.

[166] Gunn, 'Was there an Anchoress', p. 117.

[167] Gunn, 'Was there an Anchoress', p. 117.

[168] Gunn, 'Was there an Anchoress', p. 117.

[169] Jones, 'Hidden Lives', 17-34. For the first footnote referring to Warren, see p. 20; see also p. 22.

were held by Basil Cottle at the University of Bristol, but remained largely unstudied.[170]

Jones utilized these resources in addition to his original research to attempt a more

comprehensive database of anchorites and hermits.[171] A model database would

acknowledge that 'the project is not one that could ever with any confidence be declared

complete; this is no closed corpus prosopography'.[172] For this reason, Jones suggested

that an online database, where new entries could be added regularly from a variety of

sources, would be ideal.[173] Low-side windows or squints are dismissed in favour of

textual sources, showing a distrust of archaeological evidence.[174] Although this article

introduced important insights, the website Jones started has unfortunately not been

updated since 2010, and the article itself focused more upon the methodology behind

the database than the data itself.[175]

Although anchoritic research of the late 2000s to the present has produced

compelling results, the research is still largely literature based, with little to no new

information from archaeological sources; in addition, women's experience still takes

precedence. Sources discussing the context of anchoritism demonstrate an intriguing but

literary-based and largely female view of the vocation.[176] A recent overview of

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[170] Jones, 'Hidden Lives', p. 20.

[171] Jones, 'Hidden Lives', p. 21. Jones, 'The Hermits and Anchorites of Oxfordshire', 51-77.

[172] Jones, 'Hidden Lives', p. 20.

[173] Jones, 'Hidden Lives', p. 21. The pilot website: Eddie A. Jones, 'Hermits and Anchorites of England', *Hermits and Anchorites* (2009-2010) <http://hermits.ex.ac.uk/> [accessed 24 September 2020].

[174] Jones, 'Hidden Lives', p. 28.

[175] Registration at the website (Jones, 'Hermits and Anchorites of England') is not being accepted at this time. There are some entries but the database is far from comprehensive. As a whole Jones, 'Hidden Lives', 17-34 is valuable for giving an excellent overview of the difficulties involved in using historical data; even with all the uncertainties with textual references, archaeological data is still dismissed (pp. 28-34).

[176] Joshua Easterling, '"Look to Your Calling": Reclusion and Resistance in Medieval Anchoritic Culture', *Mediavalia*, 35 (2014), 51-82. Lara Farina, 'Money, Books, and Prayers: Anchoresses and Exchange in Thirteenth-Century England', in *Women and Wealth in Late Medieval Europe*, ed. by Theresa Earenfight (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 171-85. Denis Renevey, 'Looking for a Context: Rolle, Anchoritic Culture, and the Office of the Dead', in *Medieval Texts in Context*, ed. by Graham D. Caie and Denis Renevey (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), pp. 192-210. Mari Hughes-Edwards, *Reading Medieval Anchoritism: Ideology and Spiritual Practices* (Cardiff: University of

medieval solitaries continued this trend, concluding the chapter with considering why

women were particularly drawn to anchoritism in the high and late Middle Ages.[177]

Historical approaches also focused almost solely upon Shropshire, due to its connection

to *Ancrene Wisse*, the availability of primary evidence in the area, and the plethora of

secondary source material relating to the Marches.[178] Interest in the March of Wales

continued, creating a rich pool of sources from which to discuss the particulars of

anchoritic experience in the area; indeed, some anchoritic sources directly borrowed the

language of liminality used to describe the Marcher territory.[179] Although there are

some exceptions, presently the majority of anchoritic research remains literary, with a

focus both on women's experience and the area of Shropshire in particular.

Some recent research has incorporated archaeological perspectives; although in

some ways these inclusions are still incomplete, these publications offer a glimpse of

how the field is developing, and also suggest possibilities for future research. Tom

Licence used historical evidence (such as place-names) in addition to mainly literary

sources (such as hagiography), but he also included a detailed, albeit short, section

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Wales Press, 2012). Liz Herbert McAvoy, ed., *Rhetoric of the Anchorhold: Space, Place and Body Within the Discourses of Enclosure* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2010). Margaret Hostetler, 'The Politeness of a Disciplining Text: Ideal Readers in *Ancrene Wisse*', *Journal of Historical Pragmatics*, 13 (2012), 29-49.

[177] Paulette L'Hermite-Leclercq, and Lochin Brouillard (trans.), 'Reclusion in the Middle Ages', in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Monasticism in the Latin West*, ed. by. Alison I. Beach and Isabelle Cochelin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), pp. 747-65 (pp. 762-64).

[178] McAvoy, 'Gender, Rhetoric and Space', pp. 112- 38. McAvoy, *Medieval Anchoritisms*, pp. 147-77. Innes-Parker, 'Medieval Widowhood', 95-124. McAvoy, 'Uncovering', 801-19. Note both the connections to Shropshire, and also the focus on space. In discussing space, what is more suitable than an archaeological perspective? Much of the data is largely based upon Warren's research.

[179] Max Lieberman, *The March of Wales, 1067-1300: A Borderland of Medieval Britain* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2008). Max Lieberman, *The Medieval March of Wales: The Creation and Perception of a Frontier: 1066-1283* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). John F. Potter, 'A Geological Review of Some Early Borderland Churches', *Shropshire History and Archaeology*, 80 (2008), 1-16. For works borrowing the language of liminality: Dorothy Kim, 'Rewriting Liminal Geographies: Crusader Sermons, the Katherine Group, and the Scribe of MS Bodley 34', *Journal of Medieval Religious Cultures*, Special Issue: Anchoritic Studies and Liminality, 42 (2016), 56-78. McAvoy, *Medieval Anchoritisms*, 147-77. Lampitt, 'Networking the March', pp. 48-49.

about archaeological insights into the anchoritic vocation.[180] This succinct overview is by no means comprehensive, but presents the first modern research since Gilchrist to attempt to use archaeology as a distinctive source in its own right, capable of informing and not just illustrating the wider discussion of anchoritic activity. Jones' 2019 monograph picks up where Licence's monograph ends, focusing on 1200-1550.[181] Jones structured the source book by providing short introductions to primary sources, followed by a translation of these sources. Archaeological sources were treated in the same way, and the monograph included multiple references to well-known anchoritic sites such as Compton, Surrey, and even reprinted a plan of this site.[182] These clear and thoroughly researched works provide an excellent overview of the anchoritic vocation from the Anglo-Saxon period to the sixteenth century, and the use of archaeological examples in both Licence's and Jones' work as independent sources is encouraging.

Other recent sources also utilized archaeological elements, but for illustrative purposes in a larger literary narrative. Sauer's 2016 article discussed how surviving anchorite cells have been repurposed, and continued to depict the cell as inherently gendered based on a literary framework.[183] A 2017 collection edited by Gunn and McAvoy addressed the paradox of anchorites being central to their medieval communities, while at the same time living set apart; the chapters written by Gunn and Sauer also mentioned anchoritic archaeology, although issues with their approaches have already been discussed.[184] This body of current research demonstrates that there is

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[180] Tom Licence, *Hermits & Recluses*, pp. 87-89. For his summary of source material, see pp. 16-21.

[181] Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites*, p. 5.

[182] Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites*, pp. 47-49, 92-94.

[183] Michelle M. Sauer, 'Extra-Temporal Place Attachment and Adaptive Reuse: The Afterlives of Medieval English Anchorholds', *Studies in Medievalism*, Medievalism and Modernity, 25 (2016), 173-96.

[184] Cate Gunn and Liz Herbert McAvoy, eds., *Medieval Anchorites in their Communities*, Studies in the History of Medieval Religion (Cambridge: Brewer, 2017). Specific chapters include Gunn, 'The Anchoress of Colne Priory', pp. 37-52 and Michelle M. Sauer, '"*In anniversaries of ower leoveste freond seggeth alle nihene*": Anchorites, Chantries and

scholarly interest in the archaeological analysis of anchorite cells. However, methodological approaches to using archaeology effectively in the context of anchorite studies are still lacking, showing the importance of introducing my new archaeological methodology distinct from the literary framework currently dominating the field.

VII. Conclusions

Medieval anchorites embodied contradiction: they were simultaneously enclosed and cut off from the world and at the same time essential to the communities they served. The anchorite cell is key not only to gaining a deeper understanding of how this dynamic functioned, but also to glimpsing the lived experiences of anchorites. Antiquarian research focused on anchoritic archaeological features, but this research corpus has not been re-evaluated in current scholarship, as most historiographies begin with Clay. The field is now dominated by a literary framework with a strong gender studies (specifically woman-focused) influence. Anchoritic experience is often assumed to be implicitly gendered, despite a lack of medieval textual or archaeological evidence; for instance, male anchorites are viewed as part of the monastic structure, whereas female anchorites are outside of it. The area of Shropshire has received concentrated study from the perspective of textual sources, but the anchoritic archaeology has not been addressed in recent scholarship, even though antiquarian sources describe anchoritic features. Innovative research has been published within this literary framework, and to highlight gaps in research is not to suggest that the research already done is inconsequential. However, it is only through an interdisciplinary approach that seeks to utilize all available sources—including archaeology—that researchers can

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Purgatorial Patronage in Medieval England', in *Medieval Anchorites in their Communities*, ed. by Cate Gunn and Liz Herbert McAvoy (Cambridge: Brewer, 2017), pp. 101-116.

comprehensively evaluate the anchoritic vocation, and my new archaeological

methodology offers a framework that includes archaeology on its own terms, in addition

to integrating historical and literary medieval sources.

Chapter Two:

An Evaluation of English Anchorite Cells Using Archaeological Theory and

Methodologies

I. Introduction

To view anchoritism through an interdisciplinary perspective, it is necessary to

rethink the current literary and woman-focused framework. As Chapter 1 shows, this

framework explicitly downplays the potential of archaeological contributions in favour

of documentary sources—especially when archaeological approaches are associated

with antiquarian research. An archaeological methodology, based on archaeological

theory, is particularly valuable not only to address the longstanding lack of research into

archaeological data and the dismissal of antiquarian sources, but to supply an innovative

approach to anchoritic studies that will introduce new questions and ways of

understanding lived experience. For instance, the archaeological data is not explicitly

gendered and leads to considerations of experience apart from gender. This is a

necessary perspective notably different from that offered by the current framework, and

demonstrates the importance of allowing the archaeology to 'speak' for itself. My

original typology for anchoritic archaeology provides a way to refute claims that

anchoritic features such as squints are too similar to other chancel architectural features

to be categorised independently for the first time. This section outlines the theory

underpinning my methodology, followed by a discussion of my typology; next, I set out

my methodologies for evaluating anchoritic archaeology and antiquarian sources,

concluding with a discussion of how to date anchoritic archaeology.

In the following chapters, churches with anchoritic archaeology are referred to

by the town or city name, followed by county name (for example: Ellesmere,

Shropshire). Frequent subsequent references within each chapter refer only to the town or city name. For current dedication names for individual churches, and to view all the churches discussed according to county, see Appendix A: Churches with Anchoritic Archaeology Features.

II. Archaeological Theory

In 2013, Jones claimed that 'It is a brave historian who postulates the presence of an anchorite on architectural evidence alone…In such cases documentary evidence is the "gold standard", without which the architectural testimony is only doubtfully admissible'. [185] This statement is not just a reaction to the antiquarian nature of the majority of available archaeology in anchoritic studies, but also exposes the theoretical bias reinforced by the various fields making up anchoritic studies—including English, History, and Archaeology—that ultimately privileges written sources. Gilchrist stressed the importance of utilising both documentary and archaeological sources to 'appreciate the inbuilt biases of each source' in her introduction to monastic archaeology.[186] However, as described in Chapter 1 section V, Gilchrist used a documentary-based framework, then supplied archaeology to illustrate ideas derived from written sources; in this way, the archaeology served to '*complement* the information provided in written sources'.[187] Even by archaeologists, anchoritic archaeology is ultimately seen as too fragmented and too influenced by antiquarian perspectives to give insight into the past without the framework provided by written sources.

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[185] Jones, 'Hidden Lives', 17-34; quoted p. 28. See also Hughes-Edwards, 'Anchoritism: The English', pp. 142-43.

[186] Gilchrist, *Contemplation*, p. 5.

[187] John Moreland, *Archaeology and Text* (London: Duckworth, 2003), quoted p. 17. Gilchrist, *Contemplation*, pp. 157-208.

In *Archaeology and Text*, John Moreland elucidates why this assumption is so problematic. Central to Moreland's critique of archaeological theory is the concept that people in the past shaped their societies and were in turn shaped by three discourses: 'The Voice, the Object, and the Word'.[188] The question is not whether each of these discourses communicated, but whether the voice of each discourse can now still be 'heard'.[189] Moreland argued that because of a very recent shift towards viewing text (the Word) as the primary and most trustworthy mode of communication, and because archaeologists internalise this view and project it onto the past, the discourse of the Object is effectively silenced; however, he argued that this can be rectified by adopting a new theoretical position.[190] This position 'recognises that artefacts and texts are more than just sources of evidence about the past; that they had efficacy in the past; and [this position] seeks to determine the ways in which they were used in the construction of social relationships and identities in historically specific circumstances'.[191] Archaeological and documentary sources alike should be viewed as biased artefacts that actively shaped the past. Documentary sources did not provide a framework against which material artefacts reacted; instead, a framework must recognise the dynamic interplay of these discourses.

The disjunction between these discourses is a systemic problem in anchoritic studies, and is perpetuated by archaeologists, literary researchers, and historians alike.[192] The overt focus on texts partly stems from the field's antiquarian legacy; during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a 'continuing dependence on written records' resulted in assuming that archaeology could only be imperfectly understood through

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[188] Moreland, *Archaeology and Text*, p. 37.
[189] Moreland, *Archaeology and Text*, pp. 29-30.
[190] Moreland, *Archaeology and Text*, p. 75.
[191] Moreland, *Archaeology and Text*, p. 111.
[192] Moreland, *Archaeology and Text,* pp. 15-16.

archaeology alone.[193] Instead of demonstrating how to use material culture effectively,

and how to use material culture evidence in conjunction with other kinds of literary and

historical evidence, archaeologists have referenced material culture connected to

anchoritism as illustrations within a literary and historic framework.[194] It is no surprise,

then, that other disciplines also continue to view anchoritic archaeology as illustrative at

best, and not worth exploring because the features defy interpretation at worst.[195]

Indeed, Gilchrist should be recognised for being the only archaeologist (aside from

antiquarian researchers) to discuss anchoritic archaeology; other researchers who built

directly upon her work, such as Sauer and Hasenfratz, as well as researchers who briefly

address anchoritic archaeology, such as Jones and Licence, are historians or literary

scholars.[196] If the archaeological community cannot demonstrate effective

archaeological methodologies, then how can interdisciplinary researchers be expected to

use archaeology in any way other than illustratively?

     The interplay between two equally important discourses—the Object and the

Word— must be recovered in order to develop a more complete understanding of

medieval anchoritic experience; however, because of the extreme asceticism of

anchorites, artefacts (Objects) are rarely discovered in anchoritic archaeological

contexts.[197] In the context of anchoritism, the cell or its features, such as squints or

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[193] Trigger, *A History*, p. 118.

[194] Gilchrist, *Contemplation*, pp. 157-208.

[195] Hasenfratz, 'The Anchorhold', pp. 5-7.

[196] Sauer, 'Architecture of Desire', 545-64. Staff profiles: 'Professor Roberta Gilchrist', *University of Reading* ([n.d.]) <https://www.reading.ac.uk/ archaeology/about/staff/r-l-gilchrist.aspx> [accessed 24 September 2020]. 'Bob Hasenfratz', *University of Connecticut* ([n.d.]) <https://english.uconn.edu/person/bob-hasenfratz/> [accessed 24 September 2020]. 'Professor Eddie Jones', *University of Exeter* ([n.d.]) <https://humanities.exeter.ac.uk/ english/staff/ejones/> [accessed 24 September 2020]. 'Dr Tom Licence', *University of East Anglia* ([n.d.]) <https://people.uea.ac.uk/t_licence> [accessed 24 September 2020]. 'Michelle M. Sauer', *University of North Dakota* ([n.d.]) <https://und.edu/directory/ michelle.m.sauer> [accessed 24 September 2020].

[197] Gilchrist, *Contemplation,* p. 192. See also Chapter 3 for in-depth assessments of anchoritic archaeology sites, none of which include artefacts.

recesses, are almost always the only material culture available. Artefacts and features both make up material culture—and Moreland's Object applies to either. As Moreland argued, the meaning of an Object is derived from context: an Object's relationship to other Objects.[198] The meaning of the cell, then, can be derived from its relationship to the larger church building, indicating that the cell can 'speak' of past experience. The lack of surviving artefacts is fitting to the anchoritic vocation, in that the cell literally defined the anchorite's material experience. To recover the 'voice' of the Object in anchoritic studies, it is essential to evaluate anchoritic archaeology within an archaeological framework first, instead of through a framework already determined by the 'voice' of the Word.

In this sense it is also important to consider how valuable communication other than verbal communication was to parishioners and clergy alike, particularly in churches: 'in a number of senses, and to different degrees, churches were built to be read'.[199] When discussing the rich variety of images found within churches, Richard Taylor clarified that assuming images were meant for the illiterate is simplistic; an understanding of a larger story from an image alone necessitates first knowing the story.[200] After all, a symbol's ability to 'express concepts that language alone cannot', to 'bridge gaps where language is simply too trouble-making', and to 'touch us at a depth that a wordy exposition does not' show that symbols perform unique functions distinct from literature that can be appreciated by the literate and illiterate.[201] Church architecture functioned in a similar way, and communicated in a very immediate sense, since architectural and design choices were also physically experienced. An example is

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[198] Moreland, *Archaeology and Text*, p. 82.
[199] Richard Taylor, *How to Read a Church: A Guide to Images, Symbols and Meanings in Churches and Cathedrals* (London: Rider, 2003), p. 2.
[200] Taylor, *How to Read*, p. 2.
[201] Taylor, *How to Read*, pp. 2-3.

the lofty Gothic arch, popularised in England in the thirteenth century: this 'new aesthetic of soaring volumes enclosed by structurally expressive, linear forms' demonstrated the glories of heaven.[202] When researchers fail to consider the architectural details of a church, and how these details were experienced, 'read', and understood by various members of the church body, both visually and physically, a key component of communication is silenced. Archaeology plays a powerful role in returning a voice to the discourse of the Object and to exploring interactions between various discourses in new and dynamic ways.

Because an anchorite's vocation was so reliant upon separation from the world, the anchorite's voice and physical presence was deliberately constricted. Martin Hall's search for 'subaltern voices' and the 'third space' within archaeology relates to this, and can help recover the voice of an anchorite—a voice that in the medieval period had been intentionally curtailed and curated through enclosure.[203] Hall's concern to discover the voice of the 'underclass'—i.e., those lacking authority or autonomy within power structures—despite historical archaeology's history of colonialist approaches, caused him to 'concentrate on contradiction rather than consistency'.[204] This meant looking for areas where the domination of those in power (which is reflected in material culture just as much as in the documentary record) is not explicit and absolute.[205] Researching the space anchorites lived within, and specifically the apertures that allowed and also controlled their few interactions with the larger church building and fellow church members, offers a unique way of understanding the experience of the anchorite from the anchorite's perspective. The anchorite cell can be considered a third space, and the

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[202] Bradley, *Churches*, quoted p. 40. Taylor, *How to Read*, p. 1.
[203] Martin Hall, 'Subaltern Voices? Finding the Spaces Between Things and Words', in *Historical Archaeology: Back From the Edge*, ed. by Pedro Paulo A Funari, Martin Hall, and Sîan Jones (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 193-203.
[204] Hall, 'Subaltern Voices?', p. 193.
[205] Hall, 'Subaltern Voices?', p. 193.

voice of the anchorite a subaltern voice. For instance, the variety of squint design in the archaeological record is an example of contradiction within consistent features, and it is within these contradictions—or, distinctive qualities—that individual lived experience can start to be grasped. The narrowed passage leading to the squint at Chester-le-Street, Durham is unique in style, although the feature includes key indicators of an anchorite squint. Still, focusing on what is different about the Chester-le-Street squint leads to considering the individual lived experience of the anchorite, instead of viewing the squint through the lens of *Ancrene Wisse*, which was written to formalise the anchoritic vocation from the perspective of an outside monastic power structure. The archaeological record will inform a dialogue between those who were part of the monastic structure which enclosed anchorites, and the anchorites themselves, who developed their own authority through their vocation, as well as the complex power dynamics that existed between them.

An analysis of the relationship of the cell to the church also needs to take into account changes over time—the final iteration of the cell viewable now is not necessarily the way the cell always looked, and in fact during its period of activity the cell may have changed appearance or even function.[206] In this sense, the idea of an archaeological object biography is instructive. Object biographies trace the life of an object from its creation to its discovery in the present and its current use, and 'show that material objects were indeed imbued with meaning and were active in the construction of social and personal relationships *in* the past'.[207] These biographies emphasize the fact that objects are not just acted upon, but help create the social environment they operate within, and that the meaning of an object changes over time as its context changes.[208] In

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[206] Barbara J. Little, *Text-Aided Archaeology* (London: CRC Press, 1992), pp. 135, 143.
[207] Moreland, *Archaeology and Text*, p. 28.
[208] Chris Gosden and Yvonne Marshall, 'The Cultural Biography of Objects', *World Archaeology,* 31 (1999), 169-78 (pp. 169, 172).

the case of the anchoritic cell, these elements are clear: the cell shaped the anchorite's

experience and was hardly a passive aspect of the anchorite's existence, and the

significance of these cells and their function has varied over time. An example of this

change of function includes the conversion of many cells into vestries, and an example

of a change of significance includes the emergence of popular ideas behind what

purpose openings like squints may have served, including the *sanctus* bell theory and

the leper's squint theory.[209] These theories are antiquarian interpretations posed as

possible uses for low-side windows that have been discounted by more recent academic

scholarship; however, they still feature in non-academic publications written by amateur

historians, such as church pamphlets.[210] Barbara J. Little's warning that 'the tendency to

put one's faith first in written sources can combine with a faith in what one can *see*

standing as ruins to dangerously prejudice the archaeologist's approach to a site' is

especially apt for the anchorite cell, as my methodology specifically addresses the need

to consider the cell's development over time, which requires focusing on the larger

context of the cell and church from an archaeological instead of literary perspective.[211]

Archaeological approaches to material culture are essential to understanding

how the cell shaped the anchorite and how cell use and perception changed over time.

Small side windows, including squints, that were no longer in use were often filled in

and plastered over during the medieval period, and only uncovered either during the

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[209] Johnston, 'The Low Side Windows of Sussex Churches' (1899), pp. 168-78. Hasenfratz, 'The Anchorhold', p. 6. For more information about these theories, see Chapter 4.

[210] For instance, pamphlets available at Ellesmere, Shropshire and Acton Burnell, Shropshire describe anchorite squints as leper squints. *What to See in the Parish Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Ellesmere*, Church Pamphlet ([n.p.]: [n. pub.], [n.d.]). *Welcome to St. Mary's Acton Burnell: Short Guide for Visitors*, Church Pamphlet ([n.p.]: [n. pub.], [n.d.]). Also see a squint described as a leper squint and reliquary at St. Peter's Church, Barnburgh: *St Peter's Church Barnburgh (The 'Cat and Man' Church): A Guided Tour of the Church and Churchyard*, Church booklet ([n.p.]: St Peter's District Church Council, [n.d.]), p. 14. Chapter 4 discusses this in further detail.

[211] Little, *Text-Aided*, p. 135. This quote addresses the way texts often shape specifically medieval archaeology.

stripping of valuable materials from churches following Dissolution edicts or through destructive renovations undertaken by some antiquarians, which helps explain the sudden fascination and enthusiasm for the meaning behind low side-windows in churches.[212] The survival of medieval squints, whether preserved within vestries or because of outdated theories behind their function, and the survival of partial or complete cells, demonstrates their continued importance in the church and its history— even if that importance is defined differently now than how it was in the past. In anchoritic studies the 'voice' of archaeology has been all but drowned by the presumed authority of written sources, but the Object can 'speak', through object biographies and/or archaeological analysis. My case study in Chapter 3, which focuses on churches with only archaeological evidence of anchorite cells, will demonstrate not only that archaeology can be evaluated independently, but that this analysis is essential to achieve a more complete understanding of the anchoritic vocation.

III. An Anchoritic Archaeology Typology

Identifying the presence of a past anchorite cell through archaeological evidence alone is possible, despite claims by scholars that corroborating written evidence is necessary for such an identification.[213] This view stems from criticisms of antiquarian source material that mentions anchoritic archaeology. For instance, the antiquarian enthusiasm for low side-windows, and for using the terms 'squint' or 'hagioscope' for a myriad of varied features, some anchoritic and some not, makes evaluating anchoritic features difficult; indeed, these terms themselves are not medieval, but as Francis Bond bluntly stated in 1916, 'it is unnecessary to invent a long Greek term when a short and

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[212] Warwick Rodwell, *English Heritage Book of Church Archaeology*, 2nd edn (London: Batsford/ English Heritage, 1989), pp. 20-30.
[213] Hasenfratz,'The Anchorhold', p. 6; Jones, 'Hidden Lives', p. 28.

expressive English term can be found'.[214] Even though other archaeological features are also connected to anchorite cells, the squint remains the focus of antiquarian and current archaeological research. Since an archaeological definition of the characteristics of an anchorite squint, never mind of other cell features, has never been articulated, a confident assessment of whether a small niche or side window was an anchorite squint or served some other purpose—known or unknown—becomes problematic.

Admittedly, certain openings that could be confused with anchorite squints are common in chancels, in similar areas as a squint would be placed, such as certain types of piscinas and aumbries.[215] A piscina was used to wash the sacred vessels necessary for Mass, and includes a basin and drain, usually recessed into the wall, for this purpose.[216] An aumbry is a small cabinet with a lockable door, used to store these vessels.[217] Piscinas, aumbries, and sedilia—vertically divided seats used by the clergy, and usually recessed into the south chancel wall—became more common and elaborate during the thirteenth century.[218] A rood screen separated the 'western end of the chancel [from the rest of the church], making a firm physical division between the priest's domain and that of the laity in the nave'; rood screens could be made of wood or timber, and were not solid structures, but designed with openwork tracery allowing a limited view.[219] These screens were particularly popular in the later medieval period, and anchorite squints are almost always placed inside of the rood screen, and thus located within a

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[214] Francis Bond, *The Chancel of English Churches: The Altar, Reredos, Lenten Veil, Communion Table, Altar Rails, Houseling Cloth, Piscina, Credence, Sedilia, Aumbry, Sacrament House, Easter Sepulchre, Squint, etc.* (London: Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press, 1916), pp. 242-54; quoted p. 242. Johnston, 'The Low Side Windows', 117-79. Gilchrist, *Contemplation*, p. 192.

[215] Bond, *The Chancel*, pp. 143-63 (piscinas); pp. 204-19 (aumbries).

[216] An earlier version popular in the 12th century called a pillar piscina situated 'the basin…on a shaft rather than cut into the wall' (Bradley, *Churches*, p. 50).

[217] Bradley, *Churches*, p. 51.

[218] Bradley, *Churches*, p. 50. Colin Platt, *The Parish Church of Medieval England* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1981), p. 40.

[219] Bradley, *Churches*, p. 52.

sacred area; piscinas, aumbries, and sedilia are also found within this space.[220] Caution

must be exercised in determining anchoritic origins for these openings; however, by

carefully evaluating potential squints and observing commonalities across squints, firm

conclusions can be drawn, especially since anchorite squints *do* exhibit certain features

that set them apart from other, similar openings.

My original anchoritic archaeology typology is integral to implementing my

methodology, and consists of two parts: describing characteristic features of the

anchorite squint, and describing other archaeological features related to anchorite cells,

which may or may not exist alongside a squint. A typology is a way to classify objects

or features based on key indicators, and the development of typologies for various kinds

of material culture such as pottery is essential to date and categorise especially pre-

history artefacts.[221] Typologies are useful for assemblages of material culture because

they allow researchers to 'sort large amounts of data into groups in order to make them

in the first place comprehensible and, above all, comparable'.[222] My analysis is

grounded in a significant assemblage of anchoritic features, found in churches

throughout England, as described in detail in Chapter 3. By articulating characteristics

unique to anchorite squints, but not to other common features such as aumbries, this

typology acknowledges and refutes current criticism suggesting that squints are either

too varied or too similar to other features to have common characteristics. Chapter 4

demonstrates that medieval documentary sources offer little information about the

physical construction of anchorite cells; therefore, this typology is based not on literary

sources but on surviving material culture. The anchorite squint is the feature most often

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[220] Sauer, 'Architecture of Desire', p. 552. An unusual exception is the squint at Chester-le-Street, Durham. See A., 5. in this section for further detail.

[221] Trigger, *A History*, pp. 106-10. Christian Hörr, Elisabeth Lindinger, and Guido Brunnett, 'Machine Learning Based Typology Development in Archaeology', *ACM Journal on Computing and Cultural Heritage*, 7 (2014), 1-23 (pp. 12-20).

[222] Hörr, Lindinger, and Brunnett, 'Machine Learning', p. 2.

recognised and identified as specifically anchoritic, but the example of the surviving

cell at Much Wenlock demonstrates that even without a squint, the presence of enough

other signifiers can provide strong evidence for anchoritic activity.[223]

Examples cited in the forthcoming list of archaeological features indicative of an

anchorite cell were chosen to provide clarity, but are not exhaustive, and will be

discussed in further detail in Chapter 3. Most sites used as examples are cited in Chapter

3, Table 3.1: Anchoritic Archaeology Research; any sites not included in this table are

cited in this section. The appendices also include church plans (Appendix B: Church

Plans) as well as photographs and feature sketches (Appendix C: Anchoritic Features).

A. Squints

The squint is the feature of an anchorite cell most likely to survive

archaeologically, as even if the cell was dismantled or remodelled beyond recognition,

the blocked-up or intact squint is sometimes still visible. Archaeological data shows that

squints are diverse and exist in a variety of sizes, placements within the church, and

styles, but they have common features:

1. *Splays.* Splays at an oblique angle around the aperture are a key

   characteristic of anchorite squints. These splays vary in design from a

   few centimetres on the edge of the aperture, such as the splayed squint at

   Stanton, Shropshire, to an extension into a deep recess, sometimes with a

   shelf inside the recess where the anchorite would kneel to look through

   the squint. Example of recesses extending from the squint with internal

   shelves are still visible at Compton, Surrey and Ellesmere, Shropshire.[224]

   The splaying usually occurs on the side of the squint facing the church

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[223] For more detail, see Chapter 3.
[224] The cell at Compton, Surrey, is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

instead of the cell; accompanying splayed recesses are built into what would have been the cell. Although aumbries and niches can be similar in design, they lack this characteristic splaying, which is unique to anchoritic architecture.

2.   *Simple Shape and Design.* Common shapes are squares, extended rectangles, or crosses; dimensions vary. In some cases, squints are so small that using the aperture as an aumbry is not a feasible interpretation. A strong indicator of an anchorite squint is a simple opening, most likely to survive internally. For example, piscinas and wall niches often have decorated lintels (and some wall niches are undecorated but lack splaying), whereas anchorite squints are unadorned except for splaying.

3.   *Rebated for a Shutter.* Squints are sometimes rebated, or grooved, for a shutter on the side of the anchorite cell, which would allow the anchorite to cover the squint when not in use.[225] An example can be seen at Ellesmere, Shropshire. Although aumbries were also closed with a shutter, the rebate would be on the other side if the feature was used for storing goods in the chancel.

4.   *Blocked In from the Outside.* Most squints have been filled in fully or partially (often roughly) from the outside wall of the church, and this is evident from looking into the squint from the internal wall. In comparison, niches and piscinas are smooth and polished. Occasionally squints are unblocked, such as at Acton Burnell, Shropshire—and this is an obvious indication that the aperture was not designed as a niche.

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[225] Chapter 4 references this practice in anchoritic rules in further detail.

5.    *Access to the Medieval Altar.* Since the purpose of the squint was to provide a clear sight-line to the altar, an opening cannot function as a squint without this access. Two considerations must be explored: 1) whether the chancel has been enlarged, or the church structure has otherwise been changed, and 2) whether the squint has been oddly placed due to unusual church architectural choices during the medieval period.[226] Chancel elongation or other changes to church structure may initially make it seem as though the altar would have been inaccessible to the anchorite, but in some cases, the squint would have been able to function at the time it was inserted (i.e., before post- or later-medieval changes). In some cases a squint may at first appear in an unexpected place, but upon further research a sight-line to the altar and a reason behind the placement becomes clear. For instance, at Church Preen, Shropshire, the chancel is unusually long, which at first makes the squint appear to be located in the nave; however, further archaeological and archival research demonstrates the original uncommon chancel design, and indicates the squint was instead placed inside the chancel, close to the nave but behind the rood screen. Occasionally in larger parish churches the altar the squint faces will be a side altar in a transept, as at Chester-le-Street, Durham, or Faversham, Kent.[227] At Chester-le-Street, the squint is placed outside of the chancel and rood screen in the tower opposite the chancel, but the squint offers a clear view of a side altar, and would no doubt have coordinated with an open space in the top part of the rood screen. At Faversham, the squint is placed in the transept

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[226] Chancel enlargements were a popular medieval trend (Rodwell, *English Heritage*, p. 120).
[227] These examples are discussed as case studies in further detail later in this chapter.

instead of the chancel, but would still have been located behind the rood screen.

6. *Strategic Placement.* The majority of squints are placed within the chancel, although they are situated at varied heights and in different proximities to the altar. However exceptions are not uncommon; for instance, as stated above, the squint at Chester-le-Street, Durham is placed in the north wall of the tower, and the squint at Faversham, Kent is placed in the north transept, indicating that a view of the altar was of greater importance than the cell being physically attached to the chancel. Scholars have claimed that cells are usually placed on the north side of the chancel to enforce the asceticism of the anchoritic lifestyle, as the north side of the chancel would be colder and darker; moreover, cells placed on other sides of the chancel are usually attributed to male anchorites, as female anchorites are often interpreted as living harsher, more restricted lifestyles.[228] However, this perspective is not only inconsistent with the available evidence, but also overstates the prominence of cells being located on the north side of the church; for instance, a particularly well-known cruciform squint at Compton, Surrey, is placed in the south side of the chancel. To summarise, the placement of squints varies greatly, but an anchorite squint will also meet the other characteristics discussed above.

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[228] Gilchrist, *Contemplation*, p. 190. Roberta Gilchrist and Marilyn Oliva, *Religious Women in Medieval East Anglia: History and Archaeology c1100-1540* (Norwich: The Centre of East Anglian Studies, University of East Anglia, 1993), pp. 76-77.

B. Arched Recesses

Arched recesses of varied sizes and styles around anchorite squints are strong indicators of anchoritic activity. The recess at Acton Burnell, Shropshire, is still open, whereas the one at Ruyton, Shropshire is now blocked, but the outline remains clearly visible. Sometimes these recesses are smaller and extend from the splayed anchorite squint, resulting in a niche directing the gaze to the squint; in other cases, the squint is placed within a larger recess set into the outer wall. Regardless of design, these recesses result in a hyper-focus on the squint and create a sense of having to enter into a more private space to access the squint.

C. Timber Slots

Not all cells were built of stone, such as the cell at Chester-le-Street, Durham. Especially in the early Middle Ages, many were made of materials that were cheaper and easier to construct and customise in accordance with the needs of the anchorite and the church. These wooden or wattle and daub structures, most likely with thatched or tiled roofs, can still be seen archaeologically in the form of timber slots placed around a squint.[229] An antiquarian example is visible at Chipping Ongar, Essex.[230]

D. Floor and/or Wall Foundations

Remains of flooring or wall foundations discovered by small-scale excavations around squints are further evidence for anchoritic activity, as these foundations suggest the presence of a structure in connection with the squint. Most of these reports are from amateur antiquarian excavations and require careful analysis.[231] Dating of the foundations and the squint demands caution, as they may not necessarily be of the same

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[229] For more detail about how these wooden cells were built: Licence, *Hermits & Recluses*, pp. 87-89.

[230] Dewick, 'On the Discovery', 284-88.

[231] Walker, *Staplehurst Church*.

date.[232] However, floor or wall foundations linked to a squint provide more evidence of a cell.

E. Former Roof Lines

Traces of a roof above the cell also serve as an indicator of anchoritic activity. These traces would have been covered in plaster or rendering in the past, but the lack of plaster or other types of facing sometimes makes these marks startlingly visible.[233] For instance an early photograph of the external wall of Acton Burnell, Shropshire, shows clear traces of a former roof connected to the anchorite squint, now blocked by a tower.

F. Vestries

Many cells were converted into vestries as the anchoritic vocation dwindled, and in this process the squint was often blocked, as discussed earlier.[234] However, sometimes the squint has not been blocked and can still be seen from inside the vestry, as is the case at Ellesmere, Shropshire. The vestry at Much Wenlock, Shropshire lacks an anchorite squint because of later renovations, but includes many other examples of anchoritic architecture, including squint-style windows set into outer walls.

G. Complete survival

A handful of cells survive intact in England: Chester-le-Street, Durham; Compton, Surrey; and Much Wenlock, Shropshire. These are the exception rather than the rule, but they serve as valuable starting-points for further analysis, because their features can be used as comparisons to other potential cells throughout England. Significant modern changes to some of these cells, like the creation of the Anker's House Museum at Chester-le-Street, must be considered.

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[232] Rodwell cautioned against assuming a wall and foundation are contemporaneous and explained why in more detail; the same considerations apply in this context (Rodwell, *English Heritage*, pp. 121-23).

[233] Rodwell, *English Heritage*, p. 76.

[234] Gilchrist, *Contemplation*, p. 187.

H. Skeletal Remains

Human skeletal remains are occasionally discovered within the confines of a cell. This can be another strong indicator of the presence of an anchorite, as being buried within the cell has been referenced in archaeological and textual evidence.[235] For instance, *Ancrene Wisse* famously stated that the anchorite should kneel in her grave each day to look through the squint, and contribute to digging the grave by scraping away the earth before kneeling. [236] Although the link between anchorites being buried in the cell is well attested, there is debate as to how literally the metaphor of a 'living death' was taken.[237] In a practical sense, it would be difficult to house multiple anchorites in the same cell if they were all being buried within it, unless exhumation occurred upon the death of the original anchorite. Even if just skeletal remains were buried, re-use of the cell could eventually result in a lack of space. Since there would be no particular defining physical feature associated with anchoritism, and since anchorites were not associated with distinctive artefacts, it is impossible to tell from skeletal evidence alone whether a burial is of an anchorite. Activity patterns and diet can impact bone structure, but studies focusing on monastic communities have shown that these factors are complex, and that skeletal data linked with the effects of monastic life are also seen in lay burials.[238] Churchyard burials are also notorious for being regularly disturbed and for being stratigraphically complex, especially in a high-status place such

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[235] Antiquarian accounts of anchorite burials: Hodson, 'Anker-hold', p. 346. Godfrey, 'Church of St Anne's', p. 167.

[236] '…ha schulden schrapien euche dei þe eorðe up of hare put þet ha schulen rotien in' (*Ancrene Wisse: A Corrected Edition of the Text in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 402 with Variants from Other Manuscripts*, ed. by Bella Millett, Early English Text Society, No. 325-326, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005-2006), Part Two, lines 1034-35, p. 46).

[237] Jones, 'Anchorites and Hermits', pp.11-12. See Chapter 4 for further discussion.

[238] Simon Mays, 'The Osteology of Monasticism in Medieval England', in *The Social Archaeology of Funerary Remains*, ed. by Rebecca Gowland and Christopher Knüsel, Studies in Funerary Archaeology, 1 (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2006), pp. 179-89 (pp. 182-86).

as next to the walls of the church.[239] Therefore, a burial found near a squint requires careful evaluation, and may not be related to the squint or other anchoritic archaeology features.

Nevertheless, in some cases human skeletal remains have been conclusively associated with anchorite cells, as demonstrated by the anchorite cells at Lewes, Sussex.[240] The current vestry includes the remnants of three separate anchorite cells, in use at different points in the medieval period, and the two later cells include striking evidence of graves.[241] One grave functioned as the floor of a deep squint recess, which would have required the anchorite to stand or kneel atop the grave when looking through the squint. The skeletal remains of what antiquarian researchers deemed an anchorite have been re-interred.[242] Part of another much shallower, empty grave has been preserved and is linked to an earlier cell; it is too shallow to accommodate burial.[243] Therefore, this grave served a performative, symbolic purpose, showing the development of cell design and function over time.[244] This demonstrates that attitudes toward burial within the cell were not static, and that burial practices varied significantly, sometimes within cells, and sometimes outside of them.

The more archaeological indicators of a cell are present, the more likely the features were part of a cell; the fewer indicators, the less likely. This is a sliding scale, and with some potential squints, especially those that are very debased, the most researchers may be able to say is that an anchoritic squint is one possible interpretation

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[239] Rodwell, *English Heritage*, pp. 146-47.

[240] Godfrey, 'Church of St Anne's', 159-69. This site is also mentioned by Gilchrist, *Contemplation,* p. 185, and Licence, *Hermits & Recluses*, pp. 88-89. My 2020 article revised these initial assessments: Victoria Yuskaitis, 'Performative Anchorite Grave at St. Anne's, Lewes, Sussex', *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, 158 (2020), forthcoming.

[241] Yuskaitis, 'Performative Anchorite', forthcoming.

[242] Godfrey, 'Church of St Anne's', p. 167.

[243] Yuskaitis, 'Performative Anchorite', forthcoming.

[244] Yuskaitis, 'Performative Anchorite', forthcoming.

but that there is not enough evidence to make an unequivocal decision based on archaeology alone. However, a negative assessment of a potential squint is often assumed because of the lack of a clear typology; considering these characteristics when evaluating a potential squint can result in a definitive conclusion. Without the identification of a squint or a squint recess, linking archaeological features to an anchorite cell is difficult, as features such as timber slots and former roof lines are not distinctly anchoritic. However, occasionally other architectural features are compelling enough to argue for anchoritic activity even when the squint has been demolished; this includes the examples of Much Wenlock, Shropshire, where external squint-style windows distinct from other chancel architecture are still extant, in addition to other evidence, and one of the cells at Lewes, Sussex, where the squint was destroyed to create a hallway, but the remains of a squint recess still survive in front of the shallow grave, with the later cell including the deeper grave created immediately to the north.[245] This typology shows that anchoritic architecture is distinct from other, similar architecture, and therefore suggests that evaluating apertures, recesses, and other associated features for anchoritic activity is both possible and necessary.

IV. Archaeological Methodology

My archaeological methodology introduces a new framework for considering the features described in the typology above. Instead of focusing on literary attestations, and fitting the archaeological record into this narrative, an archaeological methodology allows the archaeology to 'speak' independently. This perspective is essential at sites that lack medieval documentary evidence of anchoritic activity, but retain anchoritic

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[245] Yuskaitis, 'Performative Anchorite', forthcoming.

archaeology features, as the case study in Chapter 3 demonstrates. However, using an archaeological methodology also benefits sites with medieval documentary evidence referencing anchoritism. This methodology facilitates a consideration of the documentary and archaeological evidence through an archaeological instead of literary lens, allowing new questions and interpretations to come to the forefront. This original methodology is implemented as follows:

A. Anchoritic Typological Features

The first step in utilising an archaeological methodology is to evaluate potential anchoritic archaeological features through using the typology outlined in section III. If archaeological features match typological characteristics indicative of anchoritic activity, they should be recorded following modern archaeological procedures. This includes sketching, measuring, and photographing internal and external features.

B. Immediate Internal and External Context

As established in section II, archaeological context is crucial to assessing archaeological features, as they cannot be understood without examining relationships to other features and artefacts. This component is missing in antiquarian and modern archaeological scholarship, as Chapter 1 demonstrated. Recording archaeological features is not enough, as this simply describes surviving features, and cannot offer further analysis without a consideration of wider context, reducing the archaeology to illustrations within a literary framework.

The next step in an archaeological methodology, then, is to study and record the immediate archaeological context around surviving anchoritic archaeology. This includes considering medieval as well as modern features. For instance, the squint and squint recess at Acton Burnell, Shropshire, was intentionally preserved when significant external changes were made to the north side of the chancel, and this preservation

involved modifying these features; for instance, by adding a foundation alongside the outer wall of the chancel that continues across the bottom of the squint recess. The modifications also entailed replacing the stonework around the chancel arch where it met with the new foundation. The medieval design and use cannot be understood without considering how other more modern features have effected and shaped the presentation of the features today. Analysing immediate context requires using phasing plans to understand connections between anchoritic features and the features surrounding it.

C. Church Building Internal and External Context

An archaeological approach focusing on phasing and the relationships between features will naturally lead into considering these features within an even wider context—in this case, the parish church. Analysing the anchorite cell as part of the medieval church as a whole is essential to understanding its function. The interaction between the cell and the rest of the church building is unique to each church, and provides insight as to the lived experience of the enclosed anchorite. This level of analysis also often helps answer questions about unusual placement or other anomalies, as the case study of the cell at Faversham, Kent, will demonstrate. As with immediate context, this step will involve phasing plans, sketches, photography, and measurements. My case study focuses on parish churches for reasons described in Chapter 3, but this approach could also be utilised if a squint was discovered within a cathedral or a church within a monastic complex, although the analysis would be more complex because of the continued use and significant renovations that characterise these types of buildings.

D. Preliminary Interpretation

At this stage, the features and their context have been assessed from an archaeological viewpoint. In reality, archaeological analysis of this kind is fluid and

dynamic, and immediate and wider context must be integrated more organically than these steps suggest. To understand complicated phasing, research about how the church developed over time will also be necessary. Good archaeological practice encourages preliminary interpretations as research is undertaken—so, for instance, after sketching, measuring, and photographing the anchoritic archaeology, a researcher should record their first impressions of the features and any questions or matters to research further. At this point, when the archaeological evidence is fully recorded, the next step is to articulate a preliminary interpretation based solely on the archaeological evidence, including a potential date range for the anchoritic features.

E. Medieval and Antiquarian Documentary Research

The key to using an archaeological methodology is to evaluate anchoritic archaeology *in their own right* as a first step. Links with anchorites and churches from historical and literary evidence are undeniable—Julian of Norwich is a well-known example. Still, the temptation to make archaeology and the textual record 'fit' should be resisted. Just because there is a historical or literary attestation associated with a certain church does not mean that any archaeological remains have survived, but the lack of survival does not suggest there was no anchorite. At the same time, the lack of a historical or literary attestation does not mean an anchorite did not exist at a certain church, and does not invalidate potential archaeological findings that suggest there was an anchorite. These deductions seem rudimentary, but the assumptions noted above about anchorites, the written record, and the historical record are repeatedly demonstrated in current research. With these cautions in mind, if a squint with anchoritic characteristics is identified in a church that is also associated with a written attestation of an anchorite, this should be taken into account in the final interpretation; however, it is vitally important not to shape the archaeological interpretation to 'fit' the written record.

F. Excavation

In the majority of cases, archaeological excavation will not be necessary. In most cases, new buildings or burial vaults now stand where the anchorite cell would have been placed, and even if an anchorite cell did not survive and excavation was possible, an archaeologist would have to strongly consider if the cost and effort of excavation would reveal enough to be justified. An application for permission to excavate is unlikely to be successful without intensive archaeological and documentary justification. Careful consideration must be given to the benefit of an excavation based on the archaeological assessment—for instance, if wall foundations are discovered, would these foundations show something the current archaeological features do not?

G. Final Interpretation

Once all the evidence—material and textual—has been gathered and assessed, a final interpretation should be articulated which takes into account these varied perspectives. Intentionally viewing the archaeological evidence on its own terms, instead of as part of a literary framework, will ensure that the voice of the Object is not lost in this process, but is given equal consideration to other voices. Moreover, this emphasis on archaeological context will promote new ways of thinking about archaeological features; instead of viewing the squint in isolation, it will be viewed as part of the church building as a whole, and will foster new questions about how the cell interacted with the rest of the church. This will also promote viewing textual sources through a new lens, and will encourage a more integrated approach that does not assume the superiority of written source material.

Two case studies of anchorite cells at Norwich, Norfolk and Faversham, Kent demonstrate the importance of using this methodology to assess anchoritic archaeology independently, instead of using archaeology to illustrate a narrative framed by textual

sources. Literature at the famous cell, or shrine, of Julian of Norwich in Norfolk

describes the current shrine as being located in the same place as Julian's original cell,

albeit with modern alterations to accommodate visitors, and visible fragmentary remains

of a medieval foundation wall are described as part of the original cell.[246] However, this

is the only archaeology that survives, and there is not enough specifically anchoritic

archaeological evidence to definitely link an anchorite cell with these foundations.[247]

The strong literary and historical record connecting Julian to this church does not

mention where the cell was built.[248] Without the textual record, the remains of the

foundation would very sensibly be interpreted as a vestry or chapel.[249] At the same time,

claiming the archaeology supports the identification of a cell authenticates the shrine

and reinforces it as a long-standing sacred place.[250] In this case, flimsy archaeological

evidence has been used to bolster a narrative from medieval textual sources—even

though the archaeology offers no indication of anchoritic activity.

Sauer argued that a cruciform squint at Faversham, Kent is placed unusually far

from the chancel, within the north transept, and in view of a painted pillar with edifying

images, as a way to purify the polluted female gaze.[251] Crucially, the squint at

Faversham would have provided a distant view of the altar (although a modern organ

now blocks this view), and the squint would face a side altar in the transept, while still

being inside the rood screen.[252] Before discussing the archaeological evidence, Sauer

included a lengthy discussion of medieval textual sources referencing the dangers of

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246 Yuskaitis, 'Archaeology and Medievalism', pp. 131-41.
247 Yuskaitis, 'Archaeology and Medievalism', pp. 140-41.
248 Yuskaitis, 'Archaeology and Medievalism', pp. 141-42.
249 Yuskaitis, 'Archaeology and Medievalism', p. 140.
250 Yuskaitis, 'Archaeology and Medievalism', pp. 140-41.
251 Sauer, 'Architecture of Desire', pp. 556-57. To see the literary framework underpinning
    Sauer's arguments: pp. 545-54.
252 Sauer, 'Architecture of Desire', p. 556. After seeing this cell in person in October 2017, I
    agree with this assessment.

sight, including anchoritic rules, and focused specifically on passages criticising the female gaze.[253] Sauer's thesis that cruciform squints were inherently gendered and used for women anchorites, then, is based not on archaeology, but on textual evidence. However, a brief consideration of other features within this church suggests that a gendered reading is not appropriate. Faversham is an unusually large parish church, and its chancel is elaborate—it contains an Easter Sepulchre, another aperture associated with a former chapel, a piscina with an aumbry, and a sedilia.[254] This plethora of sacred architectural features suggests the squint may have been placed farther than usual from the chancel not because of concerns about gender, but because of a lack of space; the chancel is crowded, with no room for a squint, and the squint in the transept is still sited in a sacred space inside the rood screen. Furthermore, other pillars that would also have been painted during the medieval period are visible from the anchorite's squint, suggesting the painted pillar currently stands out due to the lack of decoration on the other pillars, not because of its relevance to the anchorite. Even this brief consideration demonstrates the value of using my archaeological methodology to evaluate a squint with full awareness of its archaeological context.

## V. An Archaeological Methodology for Using Antiquarian Sources

Before making a case for using antiquarian sources, the issues inherent in accessing and utilising antiquarian research must be acknowledged. Antiquarian ideological views of gender, religion, and church history remain problematic, and although these beliefs are not always explicitly stated, these perceptions still implicitly affect the interpretation of data.[255] In addition, antiquarian research is difficult to

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[253] Sauer, 'Architecture of Desire', pp. 545-52.
[254] See the appendices for church plans and photographs of the features discussed.
[255] Mulder-Bakker, 'Foreword', pp. 1-2. See Chapter 1, sections III and IV.

evaluate comprehensively. Search terms are inconsistent, citing of other sources is often

incomplete or missing entirely, comparison between geographical areas is not always

possible because of gaps in research coverage, and the kinds of information researchers

now consider important are often not the same as those antiquarians valued.[256] Current

standards of academic rigour were not yet instituted, resulting in gaps in the recorded

evidence.[257] Often, even if the sources are of direct relevance, the task of sorting

through and finding antiquarian sources is in itself challenging and time-consuming for

the researcher, due to a lack of modern indexing and the obscure locations of some of

these antiquarian publications.[258]

However, antiquarian sources also present many unique opportunities to the

modern researcher that outweigh these problems. Antiquarian data—not necessarily the

interpretation of this data—is valuable and irreplaceable. Sometimes an antiquarian

reference is the only indication left of a structure or feature that has now disappeared

due to modern changes.[259] Antiquarian sketches or watercolours of buildings or features

also establish a timeline of change or consistency to a building over time; researchers

can compare the antiquarian data—recorded either visually or in written form, or both—

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[256] See Chapter 1, section III for an overview of inconsistent terminology. Issues with citing: H. B. Pim, 'Some Notes on the Origin and Uses of Low-Side Windows in Ancient Churches', *Archaeological Journal*, 62 (1905), 19-35 (p. 19). Some areas lack systematic research; Johnston's research is typical of well-represented areas: Johnston, 'The Low Side Windows of Sussex Churches' (1898), 159-202. Antiquarians often catalogued specific features instead of focusing on context.

[257] See Chapter 1, section III. An example of an antiquarian report lacking detail: Komlosy, 'The Parish and Church', 161-63.

[258] Although academic libraries hold a majority of antiquarian journals and records, some of these sources are only located in private or county archives and require a personal visit to the archive or a special request from an academic library. Some archives will send material for a fee. Once a source has a full citation and is located, accessibility is sometimes still an issue.

[259] Boston, *Guide to the Church*, pp. 15-16. The archaeological cell at Compton, Surrey was widely discussed by antiquarians, but some details have not been mentioned in recent work. An example from Boston is her description of five male skeletal remains discovered underneath a nameless tomb visible from the squint, which Boston posited were related to the cell.

to what is now visible.[260] Furthermore, antiquarian data may never have been re-considered since first recorded, and this reassessment may produce innovative results.[261] To posit a complex and nuanced interpretation that includes the totality of available evidence, antiquarian data must be used.

Since antiquarian research in anchoritic studies often features archaeological evidence, using an archaeological methodology to analyse these sources is vital. The methodology proposed in section IV is suitable for anchoritic features discovered through first-hand observation, but features found through antiquarian research require a further initial step, which this section outlines. However, these two methodologies can easily be used together in cases where antiquarian research has led to an awareness of anchoritic archaeology on site, and consciously mirror each other. The process of separating data from interpretation, essential to this methodology, will allow the archaeology to be analysed independently. The following methodology focuses on how to use the archaeological data recorded in antiquarian sources:

A. Separating Data from Interpretation

Although antiquarian interpretations may be outdated, the data itself is valuable. In terms of anchoritic archaeology, the antiquarian may have originally interpreted a squint as a different feature, such as a leper's squint. However, a researcher should compare the description of the feature with the key characteristics of anchorite squints,

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[260] The sketches throughout Johnston, 'The Low Side Windows of Sussex Churches' (1898), 159-202 are good examples, as is an antiquarian watercolour of Acton Burnell painted in 1786 before major renovations in the 1880s (Shrewsbury, Shropshire Archives, 6001/372/1/16, 'St Mary's Church, Acton Burnell' (1786), watercolour by Rev Edward Williams) and drawings of Ruyton referencing both the current condition of the church and proposed alterations (Shrewsbury, Shropshire Archives, P234/B/4/1, '3 drawings of church' (August 1859), drawing by Henry Littler).

[261] For instance, the possible cell at Erith, Kent has only been mentioned in one antiquarian source: John Harris, 'Monumental Inscriptions in Erith Parish Church, *Archaeologia Cantiana*, 16 (1886), 209-24.

and should evaluate the data to see if the antiquarian description of the feature matches any typological characteristics. Alternatively a feature considered anchoritic by an antiquarian may not have anchoritic characteristics; again, the description of the feature should be evaluated independently of the antiquarian interpretation (see section IV, A).

B. Preliminary Site Visit

This initial assessment of the data must be followed by an in-person site visit, if the feature still exists. A comparison between the detail of the original description and what now survives provides valuable context for the reliability of a particular antiquarian's observations. Some details may not have been recorded, or may have been recorded incorrectly. When viewing the feature, it is imperative to record all details according to modern archaeological standards, including taking detailed measurements, sketching and photographing the feature, and recording the find in detail. Especially if the original archaeological report failed to assess the squint's context, it is essential to also consider how the individual feature interacts with the rest of the church building (see section IV, B-C).

C. Preliminary Interpretation

Once the feature is confirmed as having typological characteristics typical of anchoritic archaeology, and once the context of the anchoritic archaeological features has been adequately assessed, a preliminary interpretation based on the archaeological evidence and wider archaeological context should be indicated (see section IV, D).

D. Medieval and Antiquarian Documentary Research

A definitive interdisciplinary interpretation inclusive of documentary and archaeological evidence must be articulated. If the feature in question was originally mentioned in an antiquarian context, it is essential to trace its antiquarian

historiography, as antiquarian interpretations often continue to influence later perceptions and current research. Local archives are often vital for understanding the antiquarian context and for discovering older photographs, drawings, or descriptions of the church in question, which could provide important context for architectural changes and renovations to the church over time. Textual medieval sources related to the feature, including literary and historical documents, must also be considered, along with any relevant current scholarship. The key to an interpretation which gives equal weight to all 'voices' is to ensure an archaeological analysis independent of documentary sources is completed first. In this way, all strands of evidence can be considered equally at the final analysis, instead of documentary sources overriding the archaeology (see section IV, E).

E. Final Interpretation

Once all archaeological and textual research is complete (including excavation if necessary), a final interdisciplinary interpretation of the archaeological features must be articulated (see section IV, F-G).

Following this methodology is essential to ensure that the vital data in antiquarian sources is accessed, without problematic antiquarian interpretations impacting the data. An example of how antiquarian interpretations continue to affect modern analysis is the often cited 'cell' at Hartlip, Kent; although a historical record exists of an anchorite at this site, the current 'cell' lacks a squint, has been heavily renovated, and is located at the furthest possible point from the chancel.[262] Although the structure now used as the vestry has been referred to as a cell since its first antiquarian

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[262] Yuskaitis, 'Archaeology and Medievalism', pp. 144-45. The 'cell' is mentioned in Gilchrist, *Contemplation*, p. 190 and Licence, *Hermits & Recluses*, p. 88 (footnote). Antiquarian sources mentioning the 'cell' include Clay, *The Hermits and Anchorites*, p. 82 and Johnston, 'The Low Side Windows of Sussex Churches' (1899), pp. 176-77.

mention, there is no archaeological evidence to support this view, and the historical

reference mentions a pre-Norman anchorite, which is inconsistent with current claims of

a fourteenth-century-style two-storey anchorhold.[263] Therefore, the vestry at Hartlip is

not a repurposed anchorite cell. In this case, antiquarian researchers linked a pre-

Norman anchorite to a small room with low side-windows at Hartlip, and assumed the

room functioned as a cell. Current scholarship has not explored the antiquarian

foundation of this claim, and continues to assume anchoritic activity on the basis of

presumed archaeological evidence—even though there is nothing specifically anchoritic

about the archaeology at the site.

Current scholarship also reinforces a double standard in terms of how evident

bias is viewed and treated in antiquarian and modern sources, thereby emphasising the

importance of my methodology. The 2010 archaeological excavation of an 'anchoress'

at Fishergate, York by Lauren McIntyre and Graham Bruce, briefly mentioned in

Chapter 1, illustrates both how modern sources can also reach problematic

interpretations through justifying preconceived narratives, and also how the

archaeological data used to create this narrative is still applicable if evaluated

properly.[264] The section discussing the burial is titled, 'The "Anchoress', suggesting an

interpretative framework to the reader before the burial is even described.[265] The brief

description of the skeletal remains of a middle-aged woman emphasised the skeleton's

crouched position and also the unusual place of burial within the apse of the church; this

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[263] The historical reference to an anchorite, mentioned by both Johnston and Clay, is from the *Registrum Roffense* and indicates an *inclusus* named Robert lived at Hartlip before the arrival of the Normans: *Registrum Roffense: or, A Collection of Ancient Records, Charters and Instruments of Divers Kinds, Necessary for Illustrating the Ecclesiastical History and Antiquities of the Diocese and Cathedral Church of Rochester*, ed. and trans. by John Thorpe Esq. (London: T. Longman, 1769), p. 124. For associating two-storey cells with the fourteenth century: Licence, *Hermits & Recluses*, pp. 87-88.

[264] McIntyre and Bruce, 'Excavating', 31-37.

[265] McIntyre and Bruce, 'Excavating', p. 34.

sacred placement suggested high social status.[266] Although the following paragraph

stated that an anchoress represents 'one possibility' for interpretation, the rest of the

section is dedicated to exploring only this position and to providing general information

about anchoritism.[267] The linchpin of the argument did not utilise archaeological data,

but instead relied on textual evidence of a female anchorite named Lady Isabel German

who is recorded as occupying a cell at Fishergate between 1428 and 1448.[268] No

mention was made of any archaeological findings suggesting a cell at the site, and other

archaeological examples of surviving cells were only mentioned cursorily.[269] The

researchers also failed to address the clear textual and archaeological evidence that

anchorites were buried within their cells, as discussed earlier, and not within the apse.[270]

The archaeological analysis focused solely on the skeletal remains, which

showed signs of severe osteoporosis as well as venereal syphilis, suggesting that the

anchorite was 'severely disabled'; McIntyre and Bruce argued that osteoporosis resulted

from the restriction of movement caused by the cell.[271] The report linked syphilis and

leprosy (a potential misdiagnosis) to sexual transgression.[272] Therefore, McIntyre and

Bruce argued that the woman may have become an anchoress because she was

presented with two choices for an illicit sexual experience: 'doing penance as an

anchoress, or some other suitably macabre Medieval punishment for wantonness'.[273]

The argument concludes by acknowledging 'it is difficult to even begin to

speculate…whether she retired from the world willingly or under duress', even though

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[266] McIntyre and Bruce, 'Excavating', p. 34.
[267] McIntyre and Bruce, 'Excavating', pp. 34-35.
[268] McIntyre and Bruce, 'Excavating', pp. 34-35.
[269] McIntyre and Bruce, 'Excavating', pp. 34-35.
[270] McIntyre and Bruce, 'Excavating', pp. 34-35. See section III, H. in this chapter for a review of this evidence.
[271] McIntyre and Bruce, 'Excavating', p. 35.
[272] McIntyre and Bruce, 'Excavating', p. 35.
[273] McIntyre and Bruce, 'Excavating', p. 35.

there is no indication that enclosure was ever involuntary.[274] In this flawed analysis,

archaeology was used to fill an interpretative position already held by the authors,

which is the same issue present in antiquarian archaeology. *Current Archaeology* is 'the

UK's only independent consumer magazine aimed at the archaeology enthusiast', and

the fact that this interpretation has not since been repeated in a peer-reviewed journal is

telling.[275] Without further evidence, this burial at Fishergate can hardly be linked to the

historically attested anchoress, but the raw data is still valuable if considered in an

appropriate methodology. Antiquarian archaeological research must be offered the same

kind of analysis.


VI. Dating Anchoritic Archaeology

Definitively dating features within churches is always a difficult task; even a

small parish church is more archaeologically complex than it first appears, due to

centuries of renovations and structural changes.[276] Some of these changes are visible

above ground, but often a full understanding of various phases can only be achieved

through a thorough archaeological excavation, and such excavations in parish churches

are uncommon, especially when the sheer number of parish churches in England are

considered.[277] None of the churches in Shropshire discussed in this thesis have received

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[274] McIntyre and Bruce, 'Excavating', p. 35. See Chapter 1, II.

[275] 'About Current Archaeology', *Current Archaeology* (2020)
   <https://www.archaeology.co.uk/about-us> [accessed 24 September 2020], quoted. The
   findings from Fishergate have been discussed in other peer-reviewed sources, but the focus
   remains on multiple mass graves discovered on the site, not the lone burial in the apse; the
   lone burial has not since been associated with anchorites. Sirpa Niinimäki, 'The
   Relationship between Musculoskeletal Stress Markers and Biomechanical Properties of the
   Humeral Diaphysis', *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, 147 (2012), 618-28 (pp.
   619-20). Rebecca C. Redfern and Andrew T. Chamberlain, 'A Demographic Analysis of
   Maiden Castle Hillfort: Evidence for Conflict in the Late Iron Age and Early Roman
   Period', *International Journal of Paleopathology*, 1 (2011), 68-73, (p. 72).

[276] Rodwell, *English Heritage*, p. 114.

[277] Rodwell, *English Heritage*, p. 142.

this kind of detailed excavation. Ultimately churches are usually roughly dated from written sources, which vary in level of detail and sometimes omit renovations or changes that may have greatly affected the visibility of other phases of construction.[278]

The date of an anchorite squint based purely on archaeological data, then, will usually be a somewhat broad measure, but a *terminus post quem* and *terminus ante quem* can be obtained. In antiquarian sources, the age of a squint was assumed to be the same age as the wall it was inserted within.[279] In general, this is a good starting point, but antiquarians often failed to appreciate the complexity of church walls: for instance, later walls can be built upon much earlier foundations, and early walls sometimes continued in use while later renovations occurred in other parts of the church.[280] In addition, medieval builders sometimes incorporated earlier medieval features into a renovation.[281] In other words, a squint inserted into a wall deemed Norman based on structural evidence and other defining features may not have been built then, but later in the medieval period, or an earlier squint may have been re-set at a later period. Methodologies to assess these variations can be utilized to determine the phasing of a church, but again without detailed archaeological investigation such in-depth analysis is difficult. An overall guide is to date not the building itself (because the building is such a conglomeration of various periods and phases), but to date the features within a building; it is more appropriate to state that a nave includes a thirteenth-century

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[278] Rodwell, *English Heritage*, p. 183. Medieval documents recounting the building of a church in the later medieval period may simply leave out details of an earlier wooden structure, for instance; however, this can sometimes be recovered through excavation. Alternatively, a 'minor' repair may be glossed over, but the repair may have effectively wiped out a level of phasing (as with many re-flooring initiatives). See pp. 85-113.

[279] See Cranage's dating methodologies: Cranage, *An Architectural*, both vols.

[280] Rodwell, *English Heritage*, pp. 121-23.

[281] Rodwell, *English Heritage*, pp. 139-41.

window, which is its earliest original feature, than it is to state the church itself is a

thirteenth-century structure.[282]

Because parish churches and cells are unique and have varied excavation and/or

documentary histories, it is difficult to create a blanket methodology that would suit

them all. Ideally, parish churches with anchoritic squints should receive a full

archaeological evaluation, but this is impractical for a variety of reasons.[283] However,

two basic principles should be applied when dating a cell, as follows:

A. Consistency with Other Features

Every effort should be made to determine whether a squint was part of the

original fabric of a wall, or a later insertion. Again, in this case, context is key, and

researchers should consider other features and the relationship of the squint to these

features to determine if the squint is consistent or inconsistent with other features

marking the wall.

B. Squint Material

In some cases there is a clear difference or similarity between the squint material

and the surrounding wall. If the materials are the same, this suggests a date concurrent

with the wall itself, whereas different materials suggest a later insertion. This

assessment must be used with caution, as walls were routinely made of varied materials;

for instance, local stone may be used for the wall core, while finer, worked material

imported from a distance may be used for decorative elements.

This will be discussed in more detail with individual cases in Chapter 3, but

examples of assessing whether a squint was a later insertion, or part of the original

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[282] Rodwell, *English Heritage*, pp. 64, 75.
[283] Rodwell, *English Heritage*, p. 142. Cost and resources end up being major factors.

structural fabric of the wall, as well as articulating a date range for anchoritic features, demonstrate how the principles above can be put into practice.[284] The arched recess at Acton Burnell, Shropshire is part of the original fabric, as shown by its consistency with other original features, whereas the arched recess at Ruyton, Shropshire is a later insertion, demonstrated by its awkward placement between two Norman windows, and different architectural attributes. Evaluating a *terminus post quem* and *terminus ante quem* is best illustrated with an example from Ellesmere, Shropshire. The squint is placed within a squint recess that opened into the former cell and what is now the vestry, and a Welsh grave slab forms the lintel of the recess. The grave slab is weathered, but can be dated to the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century. The lintel extends over the sides of the recess, showing that this grave slab is integral to the original design. Therefore, the *terminus post quem* of the squint recess is the late thirteenth century. The *terminus ante quem* is harder to articulate, as the grave slab could have remained in the church graveyard for a significant period of time before being re-used; however, since the architecture is clearly related to anchoritic activity and since this feature has parallels to other late medieval cells in the area, a pre-Dissolution *terminus ante quem* in the fifteenth century is reasonable. Dating anchoritic archaeology is possible through careful observation of anchoritic features within a wider context, despite the difficulty of archaeologically evaluating parish churches.

V. Conclusions

The historical, literary, and archaeological records all have roles to play in understanding the anchoritic vocation, and to undervalue anchoritic archaeology is to

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[284] Rodwell, *English Heritage*, p. 139. To add a feature to an existing wall, an opening slightly bigger than the feature would be cut, followed by the feature being placed, and then filled in.

silence an important 'voice' of the past. The archaeological methodologies outlined in this chapter both allow the archaeology to 'speak' by assessing anchoritic features through an archaeological framework, and also engage other 'voices' through an integrated analysis of textual evidence. Archaeological theory emphasises the importance of interpreting specific features within a wider context, and this is reflected in my original methodologies. This approach invites discussion of various factors influencing anchoritic experience, including those that have received little scholarly focus, such as the architecture and design of specific churches, the funding for building cells offered by anchorites and their patrons, the needs of individual church communities, and the cell as a status symbol for the wider church community. Although gender also influenced anchoritic experience, the archaeological record is not explicitly gendered, and these methodologies do not reinforce an artificial gender division between male and female experience. Evaluating anchoritic archaeology independently before assessing documentary evidence is essential to ensure that the archaeology does not merely become an illustration within a literary narrative. My original archaeological methodologies demonstrate how to achieve this, thereby producing fresh insights in the field of anchoritic studies based on archaeological evidence and approaches.

Chapter 3:

Anchoritic Archaeology in Shropshire

I. Introduction

Seven churches make up my case study of anchoritic archaeology in the Shropshire area: St Mary's, Acton Burnell; St John the Baptist, Church Preen; The Blessed Virgin Mary, Ellesmere; St Andrew's, Great Ness; St John the Baptist, Ruyton-of-XI-Towns; Holy Trinity, Much Wenlock; and St Andrew's, Stanton-Upon-Hine-Heath. Anchoritic features at these churches have almost exclusively been described by antiquarians, and lack modern assessment. This chapter provides an in-depth discussion of the anchoritic archaeology at these key sites, with an emphasis on links between churches. I have chosen this group of cells as a case study because significant scholarly historical and literary analysis featuring anchorites has focused on Shropshire, and medieval sources like *Ancrene Wisse* originated in the area.[285] In addition, my previous research of potential anchorite cells, discussed further in Section II, showed a high proportion of likely surviving archaeology in Shropshire. Therefore, Shropshire is an ideal geographical area to discuss the interactions between textual and archaeological sources. This discussion follows my typology and methodology laid out in Chapter 2. Section II addresses the antiquarian descriptions of these sites, which provided the foundation for my dataset. In section III, I show how each case study site fits the typological characteristics discussed in Chapter 2. My methodological evaluation of each site follows in section IV, with sites that have similar typological features

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[285] Chapter 5 explores the wider influence of the Shropshire area on the field of anchorite studies as a whole; see also Chapter 1, sections IV-VI. *Ancrene Wisse* is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

discussed together. Section V provides final interpretations of these sites, after the archaeological evidence is evaluated independently of the textual record.

References to other examples of anchoritic archaeology from various parts of England are also included, as appropriate. Since no comprehensive surveys of anchoritic features have been attempted, this Shropshire case study should not be viewed as exhaustive, as more anchoritic features are likely to survive but currently remain undocumented in Shropshire and throughout England. Unattributed photographs are my own. Further details of my original archaeological research are available in the appendices (Appendix B: Church Plans and Appendix C: Anchoritic Features). Appendix C includes measurements, photographs, and feature sketches. Below, Map. 3.1: Shropshire Parish Churches with Anchoritic Archaeology indicates the location of all Shropshire parish churches discussed in this chapter.
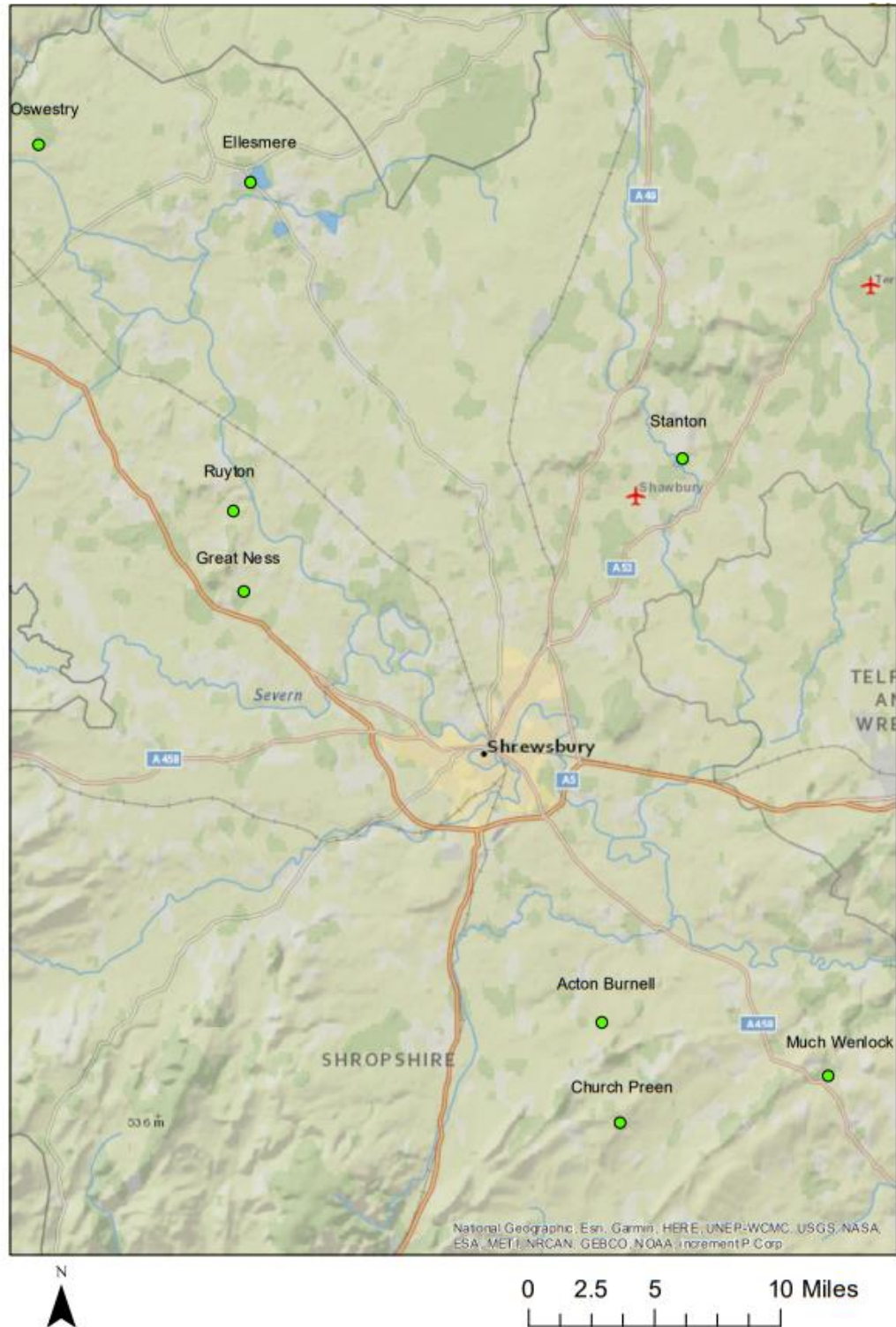
**Map 3.1:** Shropshire Parish Churches with Anchoritic Archaeology. Sites listed by town name (shortened if feasible). Created by author using ArcMap.

II. Antiquarian References

I formed this dataset of Shropshire churches by compiling data from antiquarian sources referring to typological characteristics indicative of anchoritic features.[286] David Herbert Somerset Cranage, who published two volumes about the architecture of Shropshire churches in 1901 and 1912, described all of the churches in my dataset.[287] Cranage lived in Much Wenlock, and Vivien Bellamy described Cranage's volumes as 'the most comprehensive and authoritative account of the churches of Shropshire'.[288] He served as Dean of Norwich and as curate at Much Wenlock, Holy Trinity.[289] Cranage is still well-known among amateur local historians and members of local heritage societies, and questions at public talks I delivered often referred to his work. Other antiquarian-style publications also referred to anchoritic archaeology at these sites, but usually only briefly. The anchoritic features at Ruyton and Acton Burnell alone are mentioned in post-antiquarian research—and Acton Burnell only in a popular local magazine, rather than in a scholarly context.[290]

As stated in Chapter 1, twentieth-century research into anchoritism continued to remain antiquarian in style, format, and content, and therefore especially early twentieth-century authors such as Cranage are considered antiquarian in this context. Even though Philip Boughton Chatwin published in 1965, he still directly cited Cranage, demonstrating a clear antiquarian interpretation.[291] Church pamphlets used as guides within churches to architectural points of interest are usually undated. Although they are undoubtedly post-antiquarian, they are usually written by amateur historians

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[286] Yuskaitis, 'Anchorites and the Archaeological'.
[287] Cranage, *An Architectural*, both vols.
[288] Vivien Bellamy, *A History of Much Wenlock* (Self-Published: WINICICAS, 2018), p. 98.
[289] Bellamy, *A History*, p. 98.
[290] Challoner, 'Shropshire and her Anchorites', p. 17.
[291] Chatwin, *Squints in Warwickshire*, p. 13.

and the reliance on antiquarian source material is evident from the interpretation of features. In the table at the end of this section, church pamphlets are included in the category 'Popular Post-Antiquarian References' for this reason.

No surviving medieval textual sources record anchoritic activity in these Shropshire churches, showing the importance of interpreting the archaeological record. Church Preen is a possible exception, as antiquarian Arthur Sparrow linked Church Preen with the anchorite mentioned in *The Chronicle of Lanercost*, but in section IV of this chapter, I show that this link is unlikely.[292] A. J. Walker mentioned similarities between a squint at Staplehurst, Kent, and multiple churches in the Shropshire dataset in 1938, showing both a perceived link by antiquarians among these sites, and also that interpreting features within Shropshire churches described by Cranage as anchoritic was well accepted by other antiquarian researchers.[293] In addition to researching antiquarian and medieval documentary sources, I also researched other archaeological features in the area that proved important for an assessment of wider church context. For instance, a similar grave slab at St Martin's near Oswestry is vital to understanding the grave slab re-used as the lintel of the squint recess at Ellesmere.

This data is summarised below in Table 3.1: Shropshire Anchoritic Archaeology References. The sources listed here described features that could be connected with anchoritic archaeology, thereby allowing me to separate archaeological data from interpretation. For instance, David Challoner's reference to Church Preen is not included in this table, since he did not describe any architectural features for this site.[294] Once I identified potential anchoritic archaeology features, I visited the sites in person,

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[292] Arthur Sparrow, F.S.A., *The History of Church Preen, in the County of Salop*, ed. by Ernest Arthur Ebblewhite (London: Printed for Private Circulation, 1898), pp. 137-41 (Appendix D), pp. 110-111.
[293] Walker, *Staplehurst Church*, p. 13.
[294] Challoner, 'Shropshire and her Anchorites', p. 17.

as my methodology stipulates. This allowed me to assess the features recorded by these sources independent of antiquarian interpretation or other documentary sources. Once I clarified if these features matched my typology, I continued with my methodological assessment by evaluating archaeological context, followed by a close analysis of any documentary records, medieval or modern, related to these sources.

| Table 3.1: Shropshire Anchoritic Archaeology References | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Name of Church** | **Antiquarian and Antiquarian-Style References** | **Popular Post-Antiquarian References** | **Post-Antiquarian References** |
| Acton Burnell, St Mary's | Auden (1909), p. 100. Cranage, Vol. II (1912), pp. 459-60. Chatwin (1965), p. 13. | *Welcome to St. Mary's…*, Church Pamphlet. Challoner (1974), p. 17. | |
| Church Preen, St John the Baptist | Sparrow (1898), pp. 110-111 and pp. 137-41 (Appendix D). Cranage, Vol. II (1912), pp. 470-72. | | |
| Ellesmere, The Blessed Virgin Mary | Cranage, Vol II. (1912), pp. 750 and 1073. Walker (1938), p. 13. For the gravestone lintel, see Gresham (1968). | *What to See…*, Church Pamphlet. | For the gravestone lintel, see Gittos (2012), Gittos (2019), and Butler (2014) (mentions only St Martin's fragments). |
| Great Ness, St Andrew's | Cranage, Vol. II (1912), pp. 768-69 and 1073. Walker (1938), p. 13. | | |
| Much Wenlock, Holy Trinity | Cranage, Vol. I (1901), pp. 215-18. Cranage, Vol. II. (1912), pp. 1013 and 1075. | | |
| Ruyton-of-the-XI-Towns, St John the Baptist | Auden (1909), p. 100. Cranage, Vol. II (1912), p. 820. Walker (1938), p. 13. Chatwin (1965), p. 13. | Challoner (1974), p. 17. *Guide and Short History*...Church Pamphlet (2010, rev. 2015). | Hughes-Edwards (2012). |
| Stanton-Upon-Hine-Heath, St Andrew's | Cranage, Vol. II (1912), pp. 725 and 1074. | Leighton and Shufflebotham, *St Andrews Church*, Church Pamphlet. | |

III. Typological Characteristics

The seven Shropshire sites all have typological characteristics indicative of

anchoritic activity, as my on-site research demonstrates. Evaluating features against the

typology for anchoritic archaeology is the first step in my archaeological methodology described in Chapter 2. This section will outline key typological features that indicate further assessment at each site is warranted. Comparisons with other anchoritic archaeology features from sites outside Shropshire will also be included where appropriate.

A. Squints

All of the Shropshire sites, with the exception of Much Wenlock, include squints with characteristics unique to anchorite cells. The squints are all either narrow rectangles or square in shape and are simple in design (Fig. 3.1). Most of the squints are splayed on the side looking into the chancel, although the squint at Church Preen is heavily degraded, making splaying difficult to determine. The majority have been blocked in roughly from the outside, with the exceptions of Acton Burnell, Church Preen, and Ellesmere. The squint at Acton Burnell has been preserved and is now glazed, allowing visitors to look through it. At Church Preen, internal church alterations including wholescale plastering have now blocked signs of the squint, but the squint is open externally, and has been roughly filled in; either the feature was always partially filled, or some of the fill was removed at a later date. At Ellesmere and at Acton Burnell, the squint is set into an open recess; therefore, in both cases, the squint is not blocked in.

**Fig. 3.1.** Anchorite squints, from left to right. Top: Acton Burnell; Church Preen; Ellesmere. Bottom: Great Ness; Ruyton; and Stanton.

At Ellesmere, the rebate for a shutter covering the squint that would have opened into the cell is evident, although the wooden shutter now in place is modern and has been replaced multiple times in recent years due to vandalism (Fig. 3.2).[295] Cranage also recorded traces of a bolt-hole before this shutter was fitted.[296] A shutter closely following the Ellesmere design has also been affixed at Ruyton, although there is no sign of a rebate. Cranage described the door as 'modern' but placed on 'old' hooks.[297] The lack of a rebate suggests that this door is a modern addition, as at Ellesmere, and the two sites may have collaborated on design; it is unlikely that the hooks Cranage described survived from the medieval period. The Ruyton shutter opens into the chancel, and the door would have blocked a view to the altar when fully opened,

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[295] I was informed of the vandalism in person when visiting the church in April 2018.
[296] Cranage, *An Architectural…Volume II*, p. 1073.
[297] Cranage, *An Architectural…Volume II*, p. 1073.

offering more evidence of its modern design. Although roughly blocked in from behind, a small, rough alcove remains, and a plastic container with assorted crosses and rosary beads have been placed inside, along with a note that reads: 'These belonged to the parents of [redacted] and are placed here for safe keeping. Entrusted to [redacted] 2012'. This space has been repurposed as a storage area for personal devotional items—and this reuse strongly indicates that the wooden door is a modern addition, made to block the unsightliness of the rough recess inside, and also to offer private storage (Fig. 3.3). The squint at Stanton also contains a sacred object—a small wooden cross—but lacks a shutter or rebate.



**Fig. 3.2.** The rebate for the wooden shutter, integrated into the medieval build.



**Fig. 3.3.** The inside of the squint recess at Ruyton, with the plastic container enclosed.

All the Shropshire squints are placed in the chancel on the north side of the church, and offer a line of sight to the altar. As will be discussed in section IV, in some cases the chancel has been altered since the medieval period, and so the anchorite squint would have been even closer to the medieval altar than the modern one. For instance, my first observation of the squint at Church Preen left me doubtful, as the squint is placed in what now appears to be the nave. However, after I researched the context of the church, I realised the squint was actually situated in an unusually long chancel, showing that the placement of the squint would still have been behind the rood screen and in view of an altar.

Much Wenlock lacks a squint, as the construction of a modern doorway in the chancel wall has obscured any sign of where it would have been placed. However, a distinctive squint-style window survives in the first storey of the east wall of the cell (Fig. 3.4). This window is splayed, rectangular, simple in design, and is set into a recess, and the chancel lacks any similar architectural design. This site will be discussed in more detail later in this section, but the survival of this squint-style window, along with others in the second storey, suggested that further research was reasonable in this case, even without a squint.



**Fig. 3.4.** The splayed squint-style window in the first storey of the eastern wall at Much Wenlock.

B. Squint Recesses

The squints at Acton Burnell and Ruyton are set into larger arched recesses that extend to the ground level, while the squints at Ellesmere and Great Ness extend into rectangular recesses that do not reach the ground level. The squint-style windows at Much Wenlock are also set within rectangular recesses. The arched recess at Acton Burnell is open, but has been significantly altered by post-medieval restoration work, as will be discussed in detail in the next section. The arch at Ruyton is blocked, and the modern raised burial vault placed in front of it makes it appear shorter than it would have been during the medieval period. In both cases, the square squint is set against the eastern wall of the recess. At Acton Burnell, the inside of the arch is further indented in the section around the squint as well. These examples would have required the anchorite to enter the recess in order to look through the squint (Fig. 3.5).



**Fig. 3.5.** The arches at Acton Burnell (left) and Ruyton (right).

The squints at Ellesmere and Great Ness extend into recesses that functioned slightly differently, although all these recesses would accentuate the position of the squint and create a more private viewing of it. At Ellesmere, the squint and squint recess

are unblocked. The squint is set within a deep splay opening into the cell, designed for

the anchorite to kneel and place his/her elbows on the splay to look up towards the

squint. The splay resembles the 'prayer-desk' visible in the cell at Compton, Surrey, but

on a larger scale.[298] The lintel of the squint recess is a reused grave slab—a unique

construction. At Great Ness, the blocked squint recess, and especially a prominent lintel

stone, is still visible. The recess is rectangular, and like the Ellesmere recess would have

required the anchorite to lean inside the recess to look through the squint (Fig. 3.6).



**Fig. 3.6.** The recesses at Ellesmere (left), Compton (middle), and Great Ness (right).

At Much Wenlock, the squint-style window preserved on the east wall of the

cell is also set within a rectangular recess that is splayed towards the squint; the floor of

the recess is covered in thick medieval tiles. This design has strong parallels to the

squints at Ellesmere and Great Ness, especially since these squints are also narrow and

rectangular in design. The interior of the second storey of the vestry has been badly

preserved, since this floor is no longer used and can only be accessed via a sliding

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[298] Sauer, 'Architecture of Desire', p. 555.

ceiling panel reached with a ladder, but two blocked-up windows on the south and east wall of the same design as the first storey squint-style window are evident (Fig. 3.7). The blocked second-storey squint-style window on the east wall is also still visible externally, although the window on the south side is only visible internally. A first-storey squint-style window in the west wall is faintly visible externally, but cabinets added to the interior have blocked any surviving internal features. This demonstrates that each floor had two narrow squint-style windows opposite each other in the east and west walls. These features are especially striking since they lack parallels with other chancel architecture, and are such small windows for a large two-storey building.



**Fig. 3.7.** One of the blocked squint-style window recesses in the second storey (left), and a view of the sliding panel allowing access to the second-storey, with a massive bird's nest blocking the entrance just visible (right).

### C. Timber Slots, Foundations, and Former Roof Lines

Indications of foundations and former roof lines survive at Ruyton and Acton Burnell; in addition, some timber slots are visible externally at Ruyton, although they are not linked to the anchorite cell. A full discussion of these features follows in the next section, since they make up aspects of the external wider context of these squints.

Cranage mentioned an old wall foundation was used to help build part of a raised burial vault now located in front of an arched squint recess at Ruyton, and an assessment of the wider context suggests it is very likely that this foundation marked the farthest wall of the anchorite cell, which would have extended from the then-easternmost point of the chancel.[299] Although the foundation wall is now underground, the post-medieval wall of the burial vault built atop this older wall is still visible (Fig. 3.8). Cranage also described potential postholes or indentations around the squint recess which are still visible today (Fig. 3.8).[300] Although it is tempting to relate these features to the cell, after a consideration of the wider context, these features are evidently remnants of putlog holes, improperly filled in after scaffolding was removed.[301]



**Fig. 3.8.** The raised burial vault at Ruyton (left), and one of the indentations described by Cranage not related to the cell (right).

[299] Cranage, *The Architectural…Volume II*, p. 820.
[300] Cranage, *The Architectural…Volume II*, pp. 820-21.
[301] Nikolaus Pevsner, *Pevsner's Architectural Glossary*, 2nd edn (London: Yale University Press, 2016), p. 102: 'Putlog Holes: Holes in a wall to receive putlogs, the horizontal timbers which support scaffolding boards; sometimes not filled in after construction is complete.'

At Acton Burnell, the remains of a corbel table extending from the transept next to an arched squint recess are still visible at the northernmost end of the transept, but a modern tower mostly blocks this feature. However, an 1888 photograph discovered when researching the wider context of this site shows that before the tower was added, two steeply-pitched roof-lines were visible on the north chancel wall, with the western roof-line extending from a line of protruding masonry above the corbel table marking a former roof level on the eastern side of the north transept wall (Fig. 3.9).[302] In the following section, I argue that these features mark the outline of the anchorite cell.



**This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.**

**Fig. 3.9.** The corbel table, as still seen today along the transept at Acton Burnell (left), and the 1888 photograph depicting the corbel table and roof lines (right). Shrewsbury, Shropshire Archives, P2/W/2/1-13 (7b). A close-up of the photograph is included in the next section.

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[302] Shrewsbury, Shropshire Archives, P2/W/2/1-13 (7b), 'Acton Burnell Church, 1888/89 Restoration' (1888-89), photograph by Charles Serjeanston.

D. Vestries

Most churches in this dataset have post-medieval vestries built independently of the anchoritic archaeology, indicating that the cell was taken down instead of re-used into the modern period. However, the squint recess at Ellesmere opens into the current vestry, and the cell at Much Wenlock is also now used as the vestry. The post-medieval Ellesmere vestry has been remodelled and expanded repeatedly, and so the current structure cannot be linked to the size of the medieval cell. However, this is a clear example of cell re-use (Fig. 3.10).



**Fig. 3.10.** The post-medieval vestry at Ellesmere, with the medieval squint and squint recess preserved.

E. Complete Survival

The cell at Much Wenlock still survives as the modern vestry, and the original walls are intact. The medieval space was clearly two-storey, but the second storey is now blocked. A striking feature is the lack of a medieval doorway, either into the chancel or the churchyard. Both doors entering the chancel and exiting into the churchyard are modern replacements or additions, and are discussed in further detail in the next section. The squint-style windows have already been discussed. The only other medieval window is now blocked and is set in the second storey of the north wall. This

window is different in design than the squint-style windows: it is not recessed, and is a larger rectangular opening. The features that survive from the medieval cell, then, are four squint-style windows, and one larger rectangular window in the second storey; modern additions to the vestry include two doors and blocking off the second storey (Fig. 3.11).



**Fig. 3.11.** The east (left), north (middle), and west (right) sides of the vestry, with the signs of windows circled in red.

F. Skeletal Remains

Skeletal remains were not found at any of these sites by antiquarians, and my investigations did not discover evidence of graves associated with cells. The feature that could most closely be related to this category is the squint recess at Ellesmere, which includes a reused grave slab as the lintel (Fig. 3.12).

**Fig. 3.12.** A close-up of the grave slab lintel at Ellesmere.

These findings are summarised below in Table 3.2: Typological Characteristics. All of the sites in this dataset include at least one feature indicative of anchoritic archaeology, and the majority of these sites have multiple indicators. Squints are the most common features, and squint recesses are also typical. Church Preen and Stanton are the only sites with a single indicator; in both cases, this is a squint. Since each site has at least one indicator of anchoritic activity, further assessment using my archaeological methodology is essential.

| Table 3.2: Typological Characteristics | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Name of Church** | **Squints** | **Postholes, Foundations & Roof Traces** | **Squint Recesses** | **Vestries** | **Complete Survival** | **Skeletal Remains** |
| Acton Burnell, St Mary's | x | x | x | | | |
| Church Preen, St John the Baptist | x | | | | | |
| Ellesmere, The Blessed Virgin Mary | x | | x | x | | x |
| Great Ness, St Andrew's | x | | x | | | |
| Much Wenlock, Holy Trinity | x | | x | x | x | |
| Ruyton-of-the-XI-Towns, St John the Baptist | x | x | x | | | |
| Stanton-Upon-Hine-Heath, St Andrew's | x | | | | | |
| Key to Related Features within Categories | | | | | | |
| x = Squint-style windows not facing into the chancel | | | | | | |
| x = Reused grave slab in squint recess | | | | | | |

## IV. Methodological Evaluation: Archaeological Context

This section discusses the immediate internal and external context of the features described above, as well as the internal and external context of the church buildings as a whole. A preliminary interpretation for each site, based solely on archaeological

evidence, is articulated at the end of each subsection. Subsections are arranged

thematically for clarity and to highlight connections between features. To fully

understand the archaeological context of these features, archival research at the

Shropshire archives was crucial. Archival material demonstrates how church buildings

and anchoritic features have changed over time. This section has been split into

subsections that emphasise connections between sites: A) Arched Squint Recesses; B)

Rectangular Squint Recesses; C) Complete Cell with Squint-Style Recessed Windows;

and D) Squints.

Discussions of dating may include architectural terms mainly used by

antiquarians, as appropriate. To make references as clear as possible, see Table 3.3.,

Architectural Dating System Used by Antiquarians. In my final analyses, I will indicate

a date range instead of referring to these terms where possible.

| Table 3.3. Architectural Dating System Used by Antiquarians* | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Architectural Title** | **Corresponding Period** | **Associated Architectural Features** | **Other Architectural Titles/Further Information** |
| Anglo-Saxon | 7th to mid-11th c. (pre-Norman) | Distinguished from churches on the Continent by masonry techniques including long-and-short-work | N/A |
| Transitional | *c.* 1060-1100 | Details of the E.E. style often used on general Norman forms | Saxo-Norman, Transitional Romanesque |
| Norman | 11th to 12th c. (after Norman conquest of 1066) | Large stone churches with massive masonry, round-headed arches, vaulting, and stylized ornament | English version of Romanesque style |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gothic | later 12th c. into the Renaissance (17th c.) | Fully developed pointed arch, the rib-vault, and a skeletal masonry structure for churches with large glazed windows | Gothic Revival (17th-19th c): 'The self-conscious and often scrupulously accurate use of *Gothic* architecture for its historical or religious associations.' (p. 67) |
| Early English (E.E.) | *c*. 1180 to *c*. 1250 | Pointed arches, vaulting, lancet style windows and plate tracery, multiple and heavily undercut mouldings, stiff-leaf ornament in high relief, and compound piers | Phase of English Gothic architecture |
| Geometric | *c*. 1240 to 1290 | Bar tracery (with stone mullions), set in geometric patterns | Phase of English Gothic architecture |
| Decorated (Dec.) | end of 13th c. to later 14th c. | Elaborate window tracery, resulting in reticulated and flowing tracery composed of trefoils, quatrefoils, and dagger shapes; lierne and tierceron vaults; and three-dimensional wall surfaces marked by canopy work, sculpture, and designs with diagonal axes | Phase of English Gothic architecture |
| Perpendicular (Perp.) | 1320s into the early 16th c. | Large windows with grid patterns of mullions and transoms, panel tracery, and fan vaults (all with mullions continuing to the head of the arch) | English version of late Gothic architecture |

\* Author's Note: Modern archaeological protocol is to list the span of years within which a structure can be dated. Many of these periods overlap, and the exact dating can be unclear if sources only include the architectural title. Moreover, dating in this way relies on certain architectural forms, and these forms can be more fluid than suggested here.

Source: Nikolaus Pevsner, *Pevsner's Architectural Glossary*, 2nd edn (London: Yale University Press, 2016)

A. Arched Squint Recesses

There are significant similarities between the anchoritic archaeological features at Acton Burnell and Ruyton: not only are both squints of the same design and placed inside arched squint recesses, but they also share issues of interpreting cell placement.[303] The squint recesses at both sites are placed awkwardly, as they are situated close to a chancel window and at a height that suggests an arched roof would block these windows. Although the sites have multiple anchoritic indicators, further evaluation of context is essential to understand how an anchorite cell would have been constructed and functioned in relation to other church features.

1. Post-Medieval Alterations

The squint recess at Acton Burnell has been heavily remodelled since the original medieval construction. Currently, a 60cm high foundation circles the chancel and tower at ground level; the recess inside the arch does not interrupt this foundation, which therefore creates a 44cm deep platform within the arch (Fig. 3.13). This foundation is a post-medieval addition—it is present only around the chancel and the modern tower directly adjacent to the arch. The stones at the foundation of the arch on each side are newer, modern additions to the older stonework visible at the point of the arch, and were likely added when the foundation was built (Fig. 3.13). Some changes to the arch are not surprising, as the builders of the tower preserved the arch by adding a niche to accommodate it, and used the same stonework for the top of the niche as for the new foundation of the arch; but this preservation no doubt also involved some renovation to ensure the arch suited the church's new aesthetic (Fig. 3.13). This view is

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[303] For a succinct overview of my interpretation: Victoria Yuskaitis, 'The Archaeological Context of an Anchorite Cell at Ruyton, Shropshire', *Journal of Early Middle English*, 2.2 (2020), forthcoming. Chapter 3 of this thesis provides more detail than this short article.

corroborated by an 1888 photograph taken during a church restoration.[304] This photograph, taken before the addition of the modern tower, shows the arch reaching to ground level, and the absence of the now-prominent foundation and related platform (Fig. 3.14).



**Fig. 3.13.** The Acton Burnell arch, with the foundation creating a platform visible (left); an example of newer stonework added to the arch (middle); and the niche cut out of the tower to preserve the arch (right).

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[304] Shrewsbury, SA, P2/W/2/1-13 (7b).

**This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.**

**Fig. 3.14.** An 1888 photograph of Acton Burnell [Shrewsbury, Shropshire Archives, P2/W/2/1-13 (7b)]. I have added the red lines placed just underneath faint roof lines that correlate to the corbel table along the transept.

The 1888 photograph also shows features on the north wall of the chancel next to the arch, where the tower has now been added, as well as on the east side of the north transept. An Acton Burnell Faculty from 1884 indicates the north chancel wall next to the arch was to be extended outward to accommodate an organ, and this alcove is where the organ sits today; eventually this extension was added to, in the form of the tower currently seen (Fig. 3.15).[305] However the photograph shows the wall at an early stage of the renovation before these changes were made, and two steeply-pitched roof-lines are visible on the north chancel wall, with the western roof-line extending from a line of protruding masonry above a corbel table marking the former roof level on the eastern side of the north transept wall (Fig. 3.14).[306] Some of these corbels, as well the protruding masonry, are still visible today, beyond the tower on the east transept wall

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[305] Shrewsbury, Shropshire Archives, P2/B/4/1, 'Acton Burnell Faculty' (24 December 1887).
[306] Shrewsbury, SA, P2/W/2/1-13 (7b).

(Fig. 3.9). These features indicate a narrow, one-storey room with a steeply pitched roof extending alongside the full length of the transept. Multiple blocked windows in the same style as the double arched lancets on the south wall of the chancel are also visible above the one-storey room, but no doorways or windows are visible from within the room itself, indicating a windowless room with no internal entrance, and therefore no access to the chancel or transept (Fig. 3.9).



**Fig. 3.15.** A close-up of the corbel table and a gap between the post-medieval tower and the medieval transept (left); a view of the post-1888 tower—note that the design of the door arch complements the squint recess (right).

Another arch underneath the corbel table is still visible, in front of the modern tower at the end of the north transept; however this arch is rounded and also curiously low to the ground, and far too wide and low for a doorway (Fig. 3.16). The 1888 photograph does not have enough scope to check if the arch was present at the time of the renovation, but the placement of the arch in relation to the tower and the cellar underneath it indicates that the arch was constructed before the tower. There are no

signs internally of these features on the eastern wall of the north transept, as a massive

Elizabethan tomb monument to Sir Richard Lee (d.1591) now takes up most of the wall

(Fig. 3.17).[307] However, a piscina, now blocked by the funeral monument, is still

partially visible and indicates that other features may be visible underneath the plaster

or behind the monument. Internally, the northernmost side of the east wall of the

transept is blank—this suggests that earlier features may have been plastered over when

the post-medieval funeral monument was added (Fig. 3.17). Multiple fourteenth-century

features survive in the north and south transepts, including a chest tomb with a brass of

Sir Nicholas Burnell (d. 1382) in the north transept, and a wide niche in the south

chancel wall interpreted by Cranage as a tomb recess and Pevsner as simply a recess in

the south transept (3.18).[308] This suggests that major renovation occurred during the

fourteenth century. The chest tomb was probably moved to its current position in the

late sixteenth century to make room for the funerary monument. The south transept

niche is particularly interesting as a potential comparison for the external rounded arch,

although more research is needed to compare the functions of both features (Fig. 3.18).

The external rounded arch may have been used as a shrine, with an individual kneeling

to fit underneath the head of the arch, but its purpose, as well as potential earlier

medieval features underneath the plaster and behind the funerary monument, require

further research outside the scope of this thesis.

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[307] Cranage, *An Architectural…Volume II*, pp. 455-56. Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Shropshire* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1958)*, p. 50.

[308] Cranage, *An Architectural…Volume II*, pp. 456-58. Pevsner, *The Buildings*, p. 50.

**Fig. 3.16.** The rounded arch at the end of the transept, below the corbel table. Note also that the raised foundation ends at this point.



**Fig. 3.17.** The post-medieval tomb monument placed against the eastern wall of the northern transept. Note the partially covered piscina, and that the space where the arch now stands has been left blank, with plaster covering it.

**Fig. 3.18.** The fourteenth-century niche in the south transept wall, reminiscent of the low niche visible externally on the east wall of the north transept (left); and the fourteenth-century tomb chest of Sir Nicholas Burnell underneath the north window in the north transept (right).

The Acton Burnell squint recess that survives today, then, has been significantly altered by post-medieval changes to the church fabric, including the addition of a raised foundation wall, replacement of stonework around the arch, and the building of a tower against the north transept. The tower now mostly blocks key evidence for a long, low medieval building that used to extend along the north transept—only the northernmost part of the corbel table is still visible. These features, however, clearly demonstrate the existence of a building that was no doubt impacted by the fourteenth-century renovations that have left traces in both the north and south transepts, with the former cell probably repurposed or demolished at this time. The windows above the cell may have been kept open during the fourteenth century, but they would have been blocked by the sixteenth century at the latest to accommodate the funerary monument. The proximity of the squint recess to this medieval building is striking, and the relationship between these features must be explored further.

At Ruyton, the squint and squint recess have also been preserved and altered by post-medieval renovations. Although the anchoritic features are not specifically mentioned, they were most likely rediscovered when plaster and whitewashing was removed from the internal and external walls, as recorded in an 1861 report.[309] In an 1859 plan, the new vestry was added on the opposite side of the chancel.[310] Between the drawing of the plan, and the discussion in an 1861 letter about the most appropriate place for the vestry, these features must have been uncovered.[311] The modern vestry was probably moved to its current position on the northern chancel wall with the squint and arch in mind, to offer further support to the northern side of the building (a primary reason for originally adding the vestry on the south wall of the chancel).

The squint recess also used to be open, like Acton Burnell, but was filled in during the later 1800s when a raised burial vault was added in front of the arch on the outside of the chancel, next to the modern vestry.[312] The vault cuts short the arch, making it appear squatter than it would have been when the cell was in use. Cranage even mentioned a stone ledge inside the arch, facing towards the squint and allowing an individual to sit and view the altar; although Cranage assumed the ledge was medieval, it is now impossible to know if this seat was medieval or a later insertion, and no other details have been recorded.[313] It is likely that the seat was added as a way to make the

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[309] Shrewsbury, Shropshire Archives, P234/B/4/3, 'Report on Church' (01 May 1861), by [Samuel] Poutney Smith about Ruyton Church renovations.

[310] Shrewsbury, Shropshire Archives, P234/B/4/1/2, 'Ground Plan of Ruyton Church' (01 August 1859), drawing by Henry Littler.

[311] Shrewsbury, SA, P234/B/4/3.

[312] Cranage, *An Architectural…Volume II*, p. 820. The vault currently contains the remains of Mr. J.R. Kenyon and his wife (d. 1880 and 1903, respectively), as Cranage stated. However this vault may have been made earlier, for a different occupant: Frances Anne Minton (d. 1864) and her parents. The Faculty described creating a family vault at Ruyton and moving Frances's remains from Saint Mary's in Birkenhead to a vault in Ruyton. See Shrewsbury, Shropshire Archives, P234/B/4/7, 'Faculty for Removing Remains…to a Vault in Ruyton Church' (09 February 1880).

[313] Cranage, *An Architectural…Volume II*, p. 820.

newly uncovered feature more picturesque. The shutter would have been added by the time the recess was filled, if not before. At both Acton Burnell and Ruyton, the medieval features that survive are not in the same form as they would have been when they were in use—however, by continuing to assess context at these sites, how these features functioned in the medieval period can be reconstructed.

2. Context within Chancels

To understand how the squint recess and nearby building relate to one another at Acton Burnell, and also to assess the squint recess at Ruyton, the internal and external context of the chancels at both sites must be evaluated. The internal and external string coursing around windows and other features in the chancel at Acton Burnell are distinct to the chancel alone—continuous string coursing is not used in the rest of the church building (Fig. 3.19, 3.20). For instance, internally the piscinas and windows in the transepts also include string coursing above the tops of the arches, but notably, the string coursing does not continue between features. At first glance, the current placement of the external string coursing around the squint recess at Acton Burnell suggests that the arch was meant to be open, without a roof (Fig. 3.19). A roof would not only interrupt the clean line of coursing from the windows to the arch, but also would not have been constructed on top of string coursing.

**Fig. 3.19.** The continuous external string coursing around the squint recess and windows (left); the continuous internal string coursing around the squint, windows, and piscina (right).



**Fig. 3.20.** A comparison view of the south transept—although the piscina and window have individual string coursing, the coursing does not link features and continue in a line around the transept.

Internally, the string coursing stands out against the white-washed wall, creating an impression of connectivity between the windows and squint directly below it (Fig. 3.19). There are three distinct window styles in the chancel: 1) the grand lancets and circles of the East window; 2) the double arched lancets on the south wall; and 3) the

series of rounded-top lancets on the south and north walls. The string coursing for the tops of the windows on both sides of the chancel is not identical, because the windows are different in style; these two window styles suggest different building phases in the chancel. Furthermore, there are multiple areas where the string coursing is not perfectly straight—on the south wall of the chancel, the string coursing is raised just before continuing at the east wall; there is an indentation created around the door in the south wall that corresponds with the stonework left exposed from the whitewashing, and helps address a larger gap between the door and the window on that side; and also the string coursing meeting at the east wall from the piscina in the north wall is noticeably lower than the level of the string coursing connecting the squint and windows in the north wall (Fig. 3.21).



**Fig. 3.21.** Examples of the irregular continuous string coursing in the chancel at Acton Burnell, circled in red.

These inconsistencies in the chancel suggest that the string coursing connecting all the chancel features—including the squint, piscinas, door, organ alcove, and windows—was a later addition intended to create a sense of symmetry among these varied features. This indicates the continuous coursing was added to the chancel at a later date, building on earlier string coursing at the tops of features, as a way to bring together features of various styles (notice also that the two piscinas are built in different styles) (Fig. 3.21, 3.22). String coursing became popular in the Early English period (*c*.1180-1250) and continued into the thirteenth century; the original individual coursing was most likely added during this time.[314] The external continuous string coursing was in place by 1888 (Fig. 3.14). However, the continuous string coursing was added in the later medieval period after the cell was no longer in use, possibly at the same time as the renovations associated with the tomb in the transept; this gave a sense of cohesiveness to the chancel despite multiple remodels and various styles.



**Fig. 3.22.** Piscina in the south wall of the chancel (see the piscina in the north wall in Fig. 20).

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[314] Bradley, *Churches*, p. 43.

Ruyton and Acton Burnell share a similar squint and squint recess, but the context around these features is unique to each site. The Ruyton squint is placed between two Norman windows, with the squint recess closer to the eastern window (Fig. 3.23). This placement complicates the construction of an anchorite cell, as a cell roof would most likely block one of these windows. On the external north wall of the chancel, a clear break in the stonework, emphasized by a vertical line, indicates a chancel extension (Fig. 3.24). This extension is also visible internally, as will shortly be discussed. This suggests that when the cell was in use, the church's chancel would have been much shorter, and the squint would have directly faced the medieval altar.



**Fig. 3.23.** The blocked squint recess at Ruyton, set between two Norman windows.

**Fig. 3.24.** The chancel extension at Ruyton, visible externally.

Internally, the squint faces other features in the south chancel wall, including a now blocked piscina. Two piscinas—simple in form, especially compared to the examples at Acton Burnell—are visible, although only one is currently open. The smaller, rudimentary piscina, now filled in with a single stone, is placed directly across from the squint (Fig. 3.25). The larger piscina to the east is placed within the new chancel extension, along with sedilia (Fig. 3.25). This suggests the cell was in use before the chancel extension since it was built to correspond directly with the original piscina, and was no longer in use by the time of the extension. When the cell was in use, the closeness of the squint, the piscina, and altar would have created an extremely intimate experience of viewing the Eucharist.

**Fig. 3.25.** The two piscinas and the sedilia in the south wall of the chancel at Ruyton.

The burial vault in front of the squint recess offers further evidence for an anchorite cell. The vault is an L-shape, and the horizontal part of the vault lines up with the external indication of a chancel extension (Fig. 3.24, 3.26). Cranage recorded an old wall foundation which was used to help build part of the vault, and it is very likely that this foundation marked the farthest wall of the anchorite cell, which would have extended from the then-easternmost point of the chancel.[315] At the time of the chancel extension, the external cell wall would have been dismantled, and the piscina and squint blocked.

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[315] Cranage, *An Architectural…Vol. II*, p. 820.

**Fig. 3.26.** The L-shaped raised burial vault at Ruyton.

Cranage recorded more details about anchoritic archaeological features at Ruyton than at other churches in this dataset, and his views still shape perceptions of this site; therefore, I will briefly summarise points of agreement or disagreement. Cranage described other architectural elements he thought may have been connected to an anchorite cell in this area, including: the external string-coursing stopping from the easternmost window in the north chancel wall to the easternmost point of the north chancel wall; some unusual external stonework; and an external indentation in the window to the west of the squint.[316] The abrupt end of the string coursing suggests a building used to stand next to the easternmost window in the northern wall of the chancel (Fig. 3.27). The stonework Cranage focused on includes a shallow square indentation on the stone above the sill to the east side of the eastern window, as well as another more circular indentation beside this first. There is also a deeper indentation in the sill of the western window, which has left a pronounced right angle (Fig. 3.28). Although these are curious features, they are not connected with the anchorite cell; for

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[316] Cranage, *An Architectural…Vol. II*, pp. 820-21.

instance, Cranage interpreted the right angle under the sill of the Norman window as evidence for a beam to support the cell, but this would have blocked the view of the window because the roof would have had to be pitched to accommodate the arch of the squint recess. Moreover these small indentations would be too shallow to rely upon for a structurally sound cell. Instead, they are remnants of putlog holes, improperly filled in after scaffolding was removed, or scarring left from later construction.[317]



**Fig. 3.27.** Before the chancel extension was added, the continuous string coursing between the Norman windows stopped with a now worn circular decoration.



**Fig. 3.28.** Features mentioned by Cranage that he suggested may have been related to the building of an anchorite cell—but are really putlog holes or other evidence of later construction.

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[317] Pevsner, *Pevsner's*, p. 102.

Cranage also dated the squint recess to after the chancel renovation, and doubted whether the blocked piscina was medieval, or a piscina at all—both assertions I disagree with.[318] Dating the squint recess was based on the arch's segmented design, and discounted other aspects of context detailed above. The present shape of the arch has been influenced by the way it was filled, and the segmentation of the arch may have been accentuated post-medieval, especially since the bottom of the arch is made of solid blocks, whereas the top of the arch is filled in with smaller stones (Fig. 3.5). Regardless of Cranage's perspective, the evidence is overwhelming: 1) the chancel extension is clearly indicated externally and internally through wall phasing and the evident external division; and 2) the larger piscina mimics the style of the smaller, and the placement of the first piscina directly across from the squint, and the other inside the new chancel extension, demonstrates the connection between the piscinas and the chancel extension, and the link between the original piscina and squint.

At both Acton Burnell and Ruyton, squint recesses and squints still survive, but have been heavily renovated by post-medieval alterations. Context within chancels and the church building as a whole is essential to understanding how these features would have functioned in the medieval period. Evaluating context also allows a preliminary assessment of phasing—i.e., what features co-existed, or what features were built after others. This analysis moves towards articulating a date for the anchoritic archaeology on site, and for hypothesising about what the now-demolished cells may have looked like.

### 3. Dating and Interpretation

The anchorite cells at Acton Burnell and Ruyton were constructed in a similar style, as both locations had to allow the anchorite a close view of the altar without

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[318] Cranage, *An Architectural….Volume II*, pp. 819-20.

blocking chancel windows. A cell functioning as the anchorite's main living space would have extended off the chancel wall, with an annexe attached to this main building for the purpose of granting access to the squint recess. These annexes may have been made of wattle and daub, with thatched or tiled flat roofs, or may have been arched just enough to cover the squint recesses. This would meet the needs of both the anchorite and church community.

At Acton Burnell, the cohesive design of the squint recess with the rest of the architecture in the chancel indicates that the recess was not a later insertion, but planned alongside other original features. Robert Burnell commissioned the construction of the original church building in the thirteenth century; Cranage estimated construction finished by 1280. [319] Cranage claimed that 'the work was not carried on continuously', due to what he interpreted as chancel features characteristic of both the Early English and Decorated periods.[320] However, Meg Bernstein cautioned that Cranage misread the architecture, and instead argued that the chancel was completed as a 'monolithic build'.[321] The distinct lancet window styles in the chancel may indicate different building phases during the thirteenth century, especially since the double arched lancets in the south chancel wall are also seen in the south transept, and blocked in the north transept. This suggests that these arched lancets were the original intended style, and that after completing the windows in the transepts and a set of two windows in the south chancel wall, the design was changed to the rounded lancet windows that are now considered textbook examples of thirteenth-century style.[322] A full interpretation of the

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[319] Cranage, *An Architectural…Volume II*, p. 451. Pevsner, *The Buildings,* pp. 49-50.

[320] Cranage, *An Architectural…Volume II*, p. 451.

[321] Meg Bernstein, 'The Parish Church of St Mary at Acton Burnell', presented at the *British Archaeological Association (BAA) Annual Conference* (Shrewsbury, 18 July 2019). Note the overlap between the Early English and Decorated periods in Table 3.3, Architectural Dating System Used by Antiquarians.

[322] Bradley, *Churches*, p. 41. Cranage, *An Architectural…Volume II*, p. 452. Cranage argued for a change in building style marked by the double arched lancets in the chancel.

original church build as a whole is outside the scope of this thesis. However, I suggest that the differences in window design showcase Burnell's interest in displaying an array of fashionable styles within the chancel. Bernstein and Cranage agree that Burnell's intention was to create a church with sophisticated and up-to-date architectural features—and I argue that the squint recess was part of this design.[323]

The placement of the squint recess, so close to the three-light lancet windows, demonstrates the tension between ensuring that the squint is placed close enough to the altar, and also accommodating other essential church features. The lack of a doorway or other opening into the chancel in the long room extending off the transept is notable, and provides further evidence for the connection between this room and the squint recess. If multiple building stages occurred during the thirteenth century, the position of the squint and squint recess outside of the main building is reasonable, as last-minute changes to design may have impacted the original plan. However, the cohesiveness of the windows and squint recess suggests that these features, at least, were planned to complement one another.

At Ruyton, the squint recess and squint are later insertions into a Norman chancel; the dating of the earliest phase of the chancel is evident in characteristic Norman architecture that survives, such as the windows on either side of the squint.[324] The chancel extension has been dated to the Decorated period, or the late thirteenth century, based on the new architectural additions such as the larger piscina and sedilia. This extension marks a clear *terminus ante quem* for the cell, as constructing the extension would have required demolishing the eastern wall of the cell. A *terminus post quem* other than post-Norman would be too inconclusive to articulate based on available

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[323] Bernstein, 'The Parish Church'.
[324] Cranage, *An Architectural…Volume II*, pp. 818-19. Pevsner, *The Buildings*, pp. 237-38.

evidence. The cell at Ruyton was demolished by the late thirteenth century when the cell at Acton Burnell was being built; indeed, Robert Burnell may have found inspiration for his design from Ruyton. The living space for the anchorite at Ruyton would have been about 2.60m across (from the external line of the extension to the easternmost Norman window) and would have stretched into the churchyard at least as far as the raised vault; from here, a small annexe would have been built underneath the Norman window, which allowed access to the squint without obstructing the window.

These sites also have other striking similarities, such as castles built nearby both sites (the ruins are still visible in the churchyard at Ruyton, whereas at Acton Burnell the castle ruins have been restored and are visible from the church). Unfortunately, this thesis does not have the scope to explore this further. However, even though in many ways the churches are similar, there are jarring differences that would have resulted in divergent anchoritic lived experiences. Acton Burnell was a personal project of the wealthy Robert Burnell, and the cell showcased his sophisticated taste alongside other fashionable features; Chapter 4 discusses how cells functioned as status symbols, and this is especially evident in the stylish and conspicuous cell design at Acton Burnell. Conversely, Ruyton lacked such a wealthy benefactor, and the architectural style is basic in comparison—for instance, compare the piscinas at both sites (Fig. 3.21, 3.22, 3.25). The anchorites at each site had similar living spaces, but the architecture suggests that living at Acton Burnell would have been a more comfortable experience than at Ruyton, where even the chancel extension was roughly designed, as demonstrated by the external line of masonry. The archaeology at Acton Burnell and Ruyton clearly and independently articulates the presence of an anchorite, and similarities in squint and squint recess design suggest that the cell style at Ruyton may have influenced the more sophisticated construction at Acton Burnell.

B. Rectangular Squint Recesses

At Great Ness and Ellesmere, rectangular squint recesses that do not extend to ground level survive; both sites also have narrow rectangular squints. The features at Great Ness are blocked, but the squint and squint recess at Ellesmere have been preserved in the modern vestry. Anchorite cells at these sites are constructed differently from Acton Burnell and Ruyton, showing variation in the designs of squints, squint recesses, and cells. This variety emphasises the importance of not assuming similar cell design and highlights the value of assessing archaeological context.

1. Chancel Anomalies

The most striking aspect of the anchoritic features placed in the north chancel wall at Great Ness is the lack of other medieval features nearby (Fig. 3.29). The chancel at Great Ness is notably dark, and modern lighting is necessary. This is because windows are placed in the south and east chancel wall, but there are no windows in the north wall, and the only feature other than the anchoritic archaeology in the north wall is a doorway that now leads into the vestry (Fig. 3.30). A post-medieval former schoolroom, now used as a vestry, is attached to the end of the chancel, blocking any possibility for a window in that space, and the 5.50 metre gap between the vestry and the edge of the north aisle marking the beginning of the nave is blank except for the anchoritic archaeology.[325] As at Ruyton, a raised burial vault has been added in front of the squint recess and between the vestry and nave, making the squint recess look closer

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[325] Shrewsbury, Shropshire Archives, P114/B/9/1, 'Plan of Great Ness Church' (1909). This plan clearly marked the modern extension from the chancel as the vestry. However, an earlier plan of Great Ness, showing the church before a proposed renovation that included the addition of a north transept (which was never added), marks the same space as the school, and church accounts also reference holding meetings in the schoolroom during this period. Shrewsbury, Shropshire Archives, P114/B/10/1, 'Great Ness Church Ground Plan' (1835), No. 1 and 2. In plan No. 2, which includes the proposed transept addition, the space is still labelled 'school', not 'vestry'.

to the ground than it would have been during the medieval period. The blocked squint recess at Barnburgh, Yorkshire is also rectangular like Great Ness, and the raised ground level has shortened the recess like Ruyton, demonstrating parallels outside of Shropshire (Fig. 3.31).



**Fig. 3.29.** The north chancel wall at Great Ness, with the blocked squint recess outlined in red. The modern schoolroom/vestry is in view next to the blocked recess.



**Fig. 3.30.** An external view of the south chancel wall at Great Ness, with two windows (left); the doorway providing an entryway to the vestry (right).

**Fig. 3.31.** The rectangular blocked squint recess at Barnburgh, Yorkshire (left), and the internal diamond-shaped squint placed within the recess, now surrounded by post-medieval panelling (right).

The lack of windows in the north wall is a strange choice for a chancel, although Acton Burnell and Ruyton demonstrate the problems with trying to construct an anchorite cell around other features like windows. The reason for this lack of light and decorative architecture must have been important enough to sacrifice these features, and I argue that an anchorite cell constructed around the squint recess and squint along this wall would meet that criterion. Traces of an old roof line can be seen above the modern vestry, but this roof line indicates the level of the former roof of an earlier but still post-medieval vestry, as opposed to the roof of a cell.[326] No traces of this anchorite cell survive other than the blocked squint and recess, but the lack of other features along the entirety of this wall, with the exception of a doorway closer to the end of the chancel, indicates the building of a substantial cell.

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[326] Evidence for post-medieval repairs to the vestry and chancel roof are plentiful, including: Shrewsbury, Shropshire Archives, P114/B/10/4-8, 'Faculty for General Alterations at Great Ness' (21 August 1907); and Shrewsbury, Shropshire Archives, P114/B/10/15, 'Brief Specification' (8 July 1955).

## 2. Wider Archaeological Context

In addition to analysing the context of squints, squint recesses, and the church as a whole, wider archaeological context is sometimes essential to interpret anchoritic archaeology; this point is illustrated by a discussion of the squint and squint recess at Ellesmere. The impressive squint recess opens into what would have been the interior of the anchorite cell, and what is now the modern vestry.[327] The squint looks directly at the altar, and like at Ruyton, would have given the anchorite an extremely intimate view of the Eucharist. The most striking feature of the squint recess is the repurposed grave slab used as the lintel. Although feature reuse within churches during later medieval or antiquarian renovations is common, this is the only known example of the incorporation of a medieval grave slab in the context of an anchorite cell.[328] Cranage's description of this feature is surprisingly brief, and he suggested the squint and recess were late twelfth-century, based upon his dating of the lintel; however, he offered no rationale for this date, and he barely described the lintel itself.[329]

The grave slab lintel is characterised by an inscription written in Lombardic sunk-relief script, of which only a few letters are legible (Fig. 3.32). On the horizontal bar parallel to the longest part of the grave slab, the letters N I C are visible, followed by three dots in a vertical line; the rest of the line is illegible. The vertical bar begins with

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[327] Various modern alterations to the vestry are well-attested in Ellesmere church records; for example: Shrewsbury, Shropshire Archives, P105/B/5/2/1, 'Report' (1846), by George Gilbert Scott, and Shrewsbury, Shropshire Archives, P105/B/5/2/16, 'Day Report of Estimated Costs' (8 May 1849). Cranage summed up various medieval and post-medieval alterations to the church (*An Architectural…Vol. II*, p. 749), and Pevsner also mentioned the remodel by Sir George Gilbert Scott in 1849, which resulted in this first impression: 'From outside the church looks at first all Victorian' (*The Buildings*, p. 127). This major renovation is clearly laid out: Shrewsbury, Shropshire Archives, P105/B/5/3, 'Ellesmere Faculty' (17 June 1848). The anchoritic feature is visible on one of Sir George Gilbert Scott's plans, related to the restoration and enlargement of Ellesmere: Shrewsbury, Shropshire Archives, P105/B/5/2/6, 'Ellesmere Church Chancel Plan' (c. 1846-54), by Sir George Gilbert Scott.

[328] To my knowledge, there is no equivalent in England. For medieval feature reuse: Rodwell, *English Heritage*, p. 75.

[329] Cranage, *An Architectural…Volume II*, pp. 750, 1073.

some illegible letters, followed by I(?) X(?) (one dot at the top of the vertical line) (?—possibly a degraded N) Y N W. The inscription is surrounded by foliage, including leaves in the palmette style, a bunch of grapes, and a possibly humanoid figure.[330] However, the majority of the letters are degraded and worn, and the clearest aspects are the letters N I C on the horizontal bar, and Y N W on the vertical bar. The grave slab is somewhat weathered but in comparatively good shape; it may have been set in the church floor before being repurposed, or may have been in the church graveyard for a short period. Quality photographs were difficult to obtain due to dim lighting in the vestry, the squint recess being in shadow, and rounded instead of sharp feature details due to weathering.

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[330] For more information about leaf styles: Colin A. Gresham, *Medieval Stone Carving in North Wales: Sepulchral Slabs and Effigies of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1968), pp. 22-23.

**Fig. 3.32.** Photographs of the grave slab repurposed as a squint recess lintel at Ellesmere.

The style of this grave slab is distinctive, and is part of a corpus of thirteenth- to fourteenth-century Welsh sculpture called the North Wales School Style, first studied by Wilfred Hemp, whose work was collated and published by Colin A. Gresham in 1968.[331] Gresham's records indicate a sculptural style unique to Wales and distinct from

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[331] Gresham, *Medieval Stone Carving*, pp. viii-ix. Brian and Moira Gittos, 'Gresham Revisited: A Fresh Look at the Medieval Monuments of North Wales', *Archaeologia Cambrensis,* 161 (2012), 357-88 (p. 357).

English styles, characterised largely by sculptures featuring prominent inscriptions 'integral to the design' in Lombardic sunk-relief script.[332] These stone grave slabs and effigies are seen only in Wales and the border regions of the Marches; Gresham recorded multiple examples in England directly on the border, including at Llanyblodwel and Farndon, and many others in Wales but close to the border between Wales and Shropshire.[333] Other examples have since been recorded in Cheshire, Flintshire, and other border counties.[334] Since the lintel is integral to the overall design (note how the edge of the grave slab extends to either side of the recess), the squint and recess must have been built simultaneously; therefore the *terminus post quem* of the entire feature cannot be any younger than the grave slab. Even though the squint recess as a whole is sophisticated in design, the lintel is too narrow, leaving a gap between the wall and the edge of the lintel at the back of the recess (Fig. 3.32). The meticulous construction of the rest of the squint and recess shows that expertise and material availability or cost were not issues, and this suggests that the choice of the grave slab as a lintel was intentional despite not fitting perfectly, as opposed to a last-minute arrangement.

The grave slab is striking, not only because it can provide precise dating for the squint recess, but also because it has no parallel in other anchoritic archaeology examples. These factors make imperative an analysis of wider context beyond Ellesmere, focusing on other Welsh grave slabs in the area. Another example of the North Wales School Style was found in 2014 at St Martin's Church, near Oswestry, just

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[332] Gresham, *Medieval Stone Carving*, pp. 25-35. Gittos, 'Gresham Revisited', 357-88 (quoted p. 363).

[333] Gresham, *Medieval Stone Carving,* pp. 89-91, 94-96 (Llanyblodwel); pp. 151-52 154-55, 187-89 (Fardon); pp. 125-26, 156-58 (Shropshire). Gittos, 'Gresham Revisited', p. 362.

[334] Gittos, 'Gresham Revisited', pp. 380-81. Brian and Moira Gittos, 'Gresham Revisited Again: A Further Look at the Medieval Monuments of North Wales', *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, 168 (2019), 197-227 (pp. 221-23). The example at Ellesmere that I discuss here has not been added.

over six miles from Ellesmere.[335] Similarities between the fragments from St Martin's,

discovered as part of the building material in a medieval wall, and the stone slab at

Ellesmere are evident; the letter forms are the same (although the St Martin's fragments

have more preserved detail), and both also feature a bunch of grapes and iconography of

foliage (Fig. 3.33). The building of these fragments into a medieval wall at St Martin's

suggests quick reuse of the grave slab, possibly indicating the same at Ellesmere.[336]

Analysis of these sites, as well as others in the corpus, shows that re-use of Welsh grave

slabs was part of a wider pattern in the area, although the anchoritic context at

Ellesmere is unique.[337]



**Fig. 3.33.** The grave slab nearby Ellesmere at St Martin's—note the similar
iconography. Butler, 'A Medieval Tombstone', 31-34 (p. 33).

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[335] Lawrence Butler, 'A Medieval Tombstone at St Martins, Near Oswestry', *Shropshire History and Archaeology*, 89 (2014), 31-34.

[336] Butler, 'A Medieval Tombstone', p. 31.

[337] For notes on sculpture reuse and current preservation: Gresham, *Medieval Stone Carving*, pp. 59-61.

3. Dating and Interpretation

Dating the anchorite cells at Great Ness and Ellesmere is complex, especially because unlike at Acton Burnell and Ruyton, the two cells feature doorways into the chancels (Fig. 3.34, 3.35). How doors or the lack of doors functioned in anchorite cells will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4; however, examples of cells with and without doors are attested both in the archaeological and medieval documentary record, and doorways or the lack thereof are not typologically distinctive to anchorite cells (although a medieval building with a conspicuous lack of a doorway may indicate anchoritic activity if other typological indications are present). I was unable to access the inside of the locked vestry at Great Ness, so I have not been able to assess the doorway from both sides. At Ellesmere, the doorway closest to the squint recess has clearly undergone multiple post-medieval renovations: for instance, the door fits awkwardly in the frame, and the lintel and sides of the door recess have been completely replaced with post-medieval architecture.



**Fig. 3.34.** The doorways at Great Ness (left), and Ellesmere (right).

**Fig. 3.35.** A canopied chair placed in front of the doorway into the vestry at Ellesmere; other modern doorways are now used to access the modern vestry.

At Great Ness, the design of the doorway indicates it is part of a Decorated chancel renovation taking place in what was originally an Early English (c.1180-1250) church (Pevsner stressed that internal features suggest the early fourteenth century at the latest).[338] The lack of blocked-up windows or doorways in the north chancel wall shows that a substantial feature was planned as part of the original Early English build. I argue that an anchorite cell extending off of the chancel and encompassing the squint and squint recess would have been added during this period. The renovations in the Decorated period may have resulted in the door-less cell being dismantled, and the doorway would have been created for a late medieval vestry. Cranage also argued that a medieval vestry was in place for a time, then demolished, before the modern re-addition of this feature.[339] Alternatively, the cell may have been redesigned during the Decorated period, and the doorway that now leads into the schoolroom-cum-vestry may have been used as the entrance to the cell. If used this way, the door would have been locked from the chancel to ensure the anchorite remained enclosed. Regardless, the squint and squint

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[338] Cranage, *An Architectural…Volume II*, p. 768-69. Pevsner, *The Buildings*, pp. 133-34.
[339] Cranage, *An Architectural…Volume II*, p. 768.

recess indicate that an anchorite cell existed at this site, although it is unclear if it survived into the Decorated period, or if it was redesigned to include a doorway into the chancel at this point.

The doorway at Ellesmere at first appears to be a modern build, but closer analysis from the vestry side demonstrates that the doorway is coeval with the medieval squint recess. The medieval stonework has mostly been covered in plaster, but in some places it can still be seen leading into the door recess (Fig. 3.36). The doorframe and lintel has unquestionably been replaced internally and externally with Victorian designs (Fig. 3.34, 3.35). However, the squint recess and nearby door were part of the same phase of church building—and this indicates that at Ellesmere, a doorway was built into the anchorite cell. The cell would have extended off the chancel in a way similar to the current vestry; at both Great Ness and Ellesmere, there is no need for an annexe leading to the squint recess. More detail about the space of the medieval building may be possible to glean from an in-depth analysis of vestry phases from archival records, but this is outside the scope of this thesis.



**Fig. 3.36.** Close-up views of the doorframe next to the squint recess, showing the continuation of the medieval build.

Dating the original medieval doorway, squint, and squint recess relies on the date of the grave slab lintel. Gresham's original corpus and dating methodology have since been revised by Brian and Moira Gittos in 2012 and 2019, who argued that certain aspects of Gresham's dating scheme needed to be heavily reassessed due to problematic assumptions about the effect of the Black Death on sculpture carving, among other issues.[340] Still, Gresham's impression of a corpus characterised by being 'both tightly-knit and widely-separated geographically' remains accurate.[341] The fragments discovered at St Martin's were dated to the mid-fourteenth century, based largely on the style of the letter 'A' as taken from Gresham's research.[342] The style of the letter 'N' and 'W' in the Ellesmere grave slab match up with Gresham's earlier dating scheme of 1282-1350, but dating either sculpture definitively based upon Gresham's scheme should be done cautiously.[343] The grave slab was most likely made in the mid-thirteenth century or early fourteenth century, after the Welsh style was firmly established and its influence extended towards the Welsh borders. Therefore, the squint recess was built in the late thirteenth century at the earliest, with a more likely date of the beginning or middle of the fourteenth century, which would provide time for the grave slab to be repurposed after its original use. The cell at this site was not demolished, as at Great Ness, but was expanded and re-used as a vestry in the post-medieval period.

Ellesmere's status as a wealthy parish church during the later medieval period is evident in both the sophisticated architecture, and in the size of the building; the cell can be compared to Acton Burnell in terms of design and function as a status symbol. The squint, squint recess, and doorframe show that this would have been a comfortably built and comparatively lavish cell. The reuse of this feature indicates the co-existence of

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[340] Gittos, 'Gresham Revisited', p. 371. Gittos, 'Gresham Revisited Again', 197-227.
[341] Gittos, 'Gresham Revisited', p. 371.
[342] Butler, 'A Medieval Tombstone', p. 32.
[343] Gresham, *Medieval Stone Carving*, p. 29.

Welsh and English architectural and cultural traditions as well as an interest in creating a unique and visually stunning squint recess; the context of the Welsh grave slab will be explored in greater detail in Chapter 5. Although less information is available for the squint and blocked recess at Great Ness, the evidence for a substantial cell is clear. Such a surprisingly blank, featureless wall is reminiscent of the wall of the anchorite cell looking into the chancel at Chester-le-Street (Fig. 3.37). The rectangular, splayed squint recess at Chester-le-Street is also designed differently than the recesses with sloped ledges at Compton, Surrey or Ellesmere, in part to accommodate an unusual slanted squint, showing that the squint recess at Great Ness could take various forms (Fig. 3.6, 3.37). The archaeological record unequivocally includes typological features characteristic of anchorite cells at both sites, which continue to demonstrate variety in cell design.



**Fig. 3.37.** The wall of the anchorite cell, looking into the nave and then the chancel, with only the former roof-line visible (left); the splayed squint at Chester-le-Street, which lacks the sloped ledge seen at Compton or Ellesmere (right).

C. Complete Cell with Squint-Style Recessed Windows

The modern vestry at Much Wenlock is strange: two-storey, with no medieval entrance into the chancel or the churchyard, and with a series of small rectangular windows offering the only access point to outside the building. Internally, the first storey especially must have been very dark when in use; the second-storey received marginally more light through a rectangular, un-splayed window in the north wall, but regardless the space would still have lacked the lighting displayed, for instance, in the medieval chancel. Although the building lacks an anchorite squint—normally a key indicator—other squint-style windows and the unusual design indicate the building was used as an anchorite cell.

### 1. Post-Medieval Alterations

Post-medieval alterations to the vestry at Much Wenlock include the blocking off of the second storey, the plastering and remodelling of the interior of the space, and the addition of two doors, one leading into the chancel and one into the churchyard. The second storey is now completely blocked off and only accessible through a narrow sliding panel in the ceiling. This reinforces how grand the proportions of the building are if the space was intended to be used as a vestry. [344] In addition, the second storey has no floor, and is covered in insulation between roof beams, so measuring and sketching features can only be done through approximation. The space is empty except for the multiple bird nests, one of which blocked the panel granting access; I had to shift the nest with the panel before I could proceed up the ladder. The interior of the vestry is now plastered, and cabinets are added on both walls, making the space appear narrower than it would have in the medieval period (Fig. 3.38).

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[344] Cranage, *An Architectural…Volume II*, pp. 1013, 1075. A two-storey vestry is unusual, and this is what prompted Cranage to suggest the vestry was originally an anchorite cell.

**Fig. 3.38.** An internal view of the vestry—note the cabinets along both walls, the squint-style window now usually hidden by a cabinet door, and the panel in the ceiling to access the second storey.

The lack of an anchorite squint is directly related to the addition of a modern door from the vestry allowing entrance into the chancel—this door is placed in the chancel wall where a squint would be expected, and there is no sign of a squint in the second storey (Fig. 3.39). Cranage was the first to note the absence of medieval doorways; both doors are clearly later insertions, not adaptations or re-uses of earlier features (Fig. 3.39).[345] This lack of medieval doorways is striking in such a substantial building and suggests the lack of access was deliberate. However, the large modern doorway leading into the chancel may have obliterated signs of a smaller medieval doorframe. A modern glass door has been added at the northernmost end of the vestry, allowing access from the outside. A 23 June 1820 sketch depicting a northeast view of the chancel at Much Wenlock includes the vestry; only a long rectangular window was placed in the north wall, showing that the modern glass door is a post-1820

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[345] Cranage, *An Architectural…Volume I*, p. 218.

modification.[346] The top half of the glass door has replaced this 1820 window, which was probably inserted to add light and decoration to the dimly lit and markedly undecorated vestry; at some point post-1820, this window was enlarged into the door seen today, which still includes a glass panel.



**Fig. 3.39.** The modern door leading into the vestry (left); and the modern door leading into the church grounds (right).

The external string coursing around the eastern side of the cell, and continuing halfway along the western side, is reminiscent of Acton Burnell (Fig. 3.11). The modern northern door has obliterated any traces of this coursing, but the 1820 photograph shows the coursing in place on this wall, and continuing around the window.[347] The string coursing does not continue into the nave. As at Acton Burnell, I argue this detail was added later, after the anchoritic windows were blocked, to make the vestry more

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[346] D. C. Cox and M. D. Watson, 'Holy Trinity Church, Much Wenlock: A Reassessment', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, 140 (1987), 76-87 (p. 85). Also Shrewsbury, Shropshire Archives, XLS27657 or XWB/H/3/14, 'Reprint', Cox and Watson, 'Holy Trinity Church'. Cranage, *An Architectural…Volume I*, p. 218. London, British Library, Add. MS 36378, f. 227 (1820), drawing by J. C. Buckler.

[347] London, BL, Add. MS 36378.

cohesive with the rest of the chancel, and to highlight the new window in the northern wall.

The external stonework phasing also indicates significant modern changes to the medieval building. The second storey on the eastern and western side of the cell retain medieval stonework, but the stonework of the first stories has been significantly altered (Fig. 3.11).[348] The changes evident to the first storey stonework are related to the rebuild of the northern side, in accordance with the addition of the modern glass door— the entire first storey on the northern side has been rebuilt with stonework visibly different from the medieval stonework above, and this modern stonework also extends to the first storey on the eastern and western sides of the cell, in addition to the peak of the roof on the northern side (Fig. 3.40). This explains why a ledge at the top of the fourteenth-century chancel extension foundation does not continue around the cell, although the string coursing does; in the post-medieval remodelling of the cell into a vestry, the first storey was changed significantly internally and externally, and this foundation was not replaced, whereas the string-coursing above survived these changes in part on the eastern and western sides (Fig. 3.11).

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[348] Modern repairs and renovations were undertaken in 1744, 1746, 1790, 1827, and 1892-3; and these are only selected renovations, mentioned in an appeal for more restoration in September 1990. Shrewsbury, Shropshire Archives, XLS1449, 'Holy Trinity, Much Wenlock Pamphlet' (September 1990).

**Fig. 3.40.** The patchwork of phasing on the north wall of the cell, showing that the lower and upper parts of the north wall have been replaced with modern stonework (left); and the foundation ledge visible on the east wall of the cell (right).

I am the first scholar to discuss the squint-style window extant in the first storey, or the internal evidence of other windows in the second storey. Since the first-storey window is now used as a storage cupboard and hidden behind a wooden shutter, the medieval features have gone unnoticed—as have the features in the blocked-off second storey. These windows are key to providing an indication of medieval anchoritic activity. The chancel is full of elaborate aumbries and sedilia, as well as various other apertures and niches; however, none of these features include the characteristic splayed squint-style design, or are set into recesses like the squints at Great Ness or Chester-le-Street. The continuity of design of the four small squint-style windows recessed into the east and west walls is also striking. Modern alterations to the chancel have shifted the focus towards the modern doorways and away from surviving medieval features.

2. Dating and Interpretation

Determining the *terminus post quem* of the Much Wenlock cell is clear-cut, as the building straddles a Perpendicular chancel extension (most likely late-fourteenth

century), and the phasing of the internal stonework in the chancel clearly shows the break between the former Norman chancel and the new extension, with the modern door leading into the vestry dividing these two distinct wall phases (Fig. 39, 41).[349] The cell, then, could only have been built after enough of the chancel extension was completed, since it straddles the former chancel build and the new.[350] A *terminus ante quem* is more difficult to articulate, since the cell is still in use as a vestry, but by the Dissolution anchoritism was declining rapidly, and it is reasonable to assume the cell was repurposed by this point, if not earlier.



**Fig. 3.41.** The clear difference between the pre-chancel extension build, and the chancel extension stonework.

The late fourteenth-century stonework that survives demonstrates that although the vestry has undergone significant post-medieval alterations, the dimensions of the

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[349] Cranage, *An Architectural…Volume II*, p. 126. Pevsner, *The Buildings*, pp. 211-12. Cox and Watson, 'Holy Trinity Church', p. 85.

[350] Cox and Watson assumed the vestry was added in the later fifteenth or earlier sixteenth century, following the Perpendicular chancel extension, but there is no clear reasoning for such a late attribution—in other words, the vestry is assumed to be built in a phase separate from the chancel extension without cause ['Holy Trinity Church', p. 85]. Cranage also stated evidence for the medieval date of the vestry is clear externally, but did not go into further detail (*An Architectural…Vol. II*, p. 126). The squint-style window within the vestry was not discussed by Cranage, Pevsner, or Cox and Watson.

vestry are the same as the medieval cell. Only two other complete English medieval

anchoritic cells are known: one cell at Compton, Surrey, and the cell complex at

Chester-le-Street, Durham.[351] The cell complex at Chester-le-Street served as a post-

medieval almshouse, among other uses, which resulted in the medieval building being

extended; moreover, the inside of the building demonstrates an array of internal features

testifying to the building's long and convoluted uses over time, both medieval and post-

medieval. Therefore the cell complex, now turned into a small museum, could hardly be

described as representative of what a medieval two-storey cell may have looked like.[352]

The cell at Compton, Surrey now houses a staircase allowing access to the second

storey of the chancel, which also makes it difficult to conceptualise how the space was

used. Although post-medieval use has also altered the cell at Much Wenlock, the

placement of the original walls has been maintained. Much Wenlock was also a wealthy

parish in the late medieval period, with stylish features similar to Acton Burnell and

Ellesmere—and this expansive, thick-walled, two-storey cell is a testament to the kind

of investment this church was willing to make in terms of housing an anchorite.

D. Squints

Both Stanton and Church Preen have only a single anchoritic indicator: a squint.

However, the squints at both of these sites are dated to different periods and are not

similar in design. Church Preen was also formerly a cell of Much Wenlock, indicating

that there may have been a connection between them. These sites demonstrate that even

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[351] Selected sources for **Compton, Surrey**: André, 'Compton Church', 1-19. Boston, *Guide to the Church*. Gibson, 'Compton Church', 154-55. Gilchrist, *Contemplation*, pp. 187-88.
Selected sources for **Chester-le-Street, Durham**: Auden, 'Shropshire Hermits', p. 104. Clay, *The Hermits and Anchorites*, p. 83; Gilchrist, *Contemplation*, p. 187; Sauer, 'Architecture of Desire', pp. 555-57.

[352] These conclusions come from personally visiting the cell in February 2018 and January 2019; for more information about the museum, see: 'Anker's House Museum', *The Parish Church of St Mary & St Cuthbert, Chester-le-Street* ([n.d.]) <https://www.maryandcuthbert.org.uk/parish-church-/ankers-house/> [accessed 24 September 2020].

when a single typological indicator survives, analysing context is still crucial to understanding how the squint functioned as part of the church building.

### 1. Internal Squint

The squint at Stanton is splayed, small and simple in design, made of a single stone block, and provides a clear view into the chancel (Fig. 3.1). No outer indications survive, as a buttress now stands where a cell would have been located; this buttress was probably added with the other modern buttresses attached to the tower (Fig. 3.42).[353] Evaluating wider context around the squint is crucial. Overall church records suggest Stanton has undergone less post-medieval renovation than many other churches in this area, and the Norman influence is still strong.[354] The small, deep-set lancet windows in the nave and chancel are characteristically Norman, as is the style of the building.[355] Traces of herringbone stonework can also been seen in the chancel and nave, indicating an even earlier Anglo-Saxon build (Fig. 3.42).[356] The squint is placed between two Norman-style windows; however, the easternmost window in the north chancel wall is bigger than its neighbours in the chancel and nave, and this suggests that during the Norman period the chancel was enlarged, and the architect attempted to stay as close to the original window design as possible. It is likely that the cell was added at

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[353] Joan Leighton and Rev. Cyril Shufflebotham, *St Andrews Church: Stanton Upon Hine Heath*, ed. by Michael Leighton, Church Pamphlet, ([n.p.]: [n. pub.], [n.d.]), 'The Tower'. Buttresses were added to the tower in 1666 to prevent the church from sinking. Cranage, *An Architectural…Volume II*, pp. 725, 727. Cranage suggested the buttress blocking the squint may be medieval, but provided no evidence for this assertion.

[354] Stanton Minute Books from 1894-1978 (Shropshire Archives, CP 267/1/1 and CP267/1/2) indicated no mentions of major church repairs, although on 10 November 1959, Shufflebotham's request for funds to repair the church was denied. The Stanton Account Book from 1933-1955 (Shropshire Archives, CP267/3/2) also did not indicate any church repairs. Cranage indicated the north porch was added in 1595, and also mentioned an eastern chancel rebuild in 1740, as well as a 'restoration' in 1892 (*An Architectural…Vol. II*, p. 726).

[355] For further information about characteristics of Norman building: Platt, *The Parish Church*, pp. 13-14. Bradley, *Churches*, p. 18.

[356] Bradley, *Churches*, pp. 13, 19-20. Pevsner, *Pevsner's*, 'Anglo-Saxon' and 'Norman'. Cranage, *An Architectural…Volume II*, p. 726.

this time, and that it would have straddled the original chancel and the new extension (Fig. 43).



**Fig. 3.42.** The buttress blocking the location of where the medieval cell would have been placed. Note also the herringbone pattern next to the buttress.



**Fig. 3.43.** The bigger window set into the later Norman chancel extension, external (left) and internal (right).

2. External Squint

Church Preen is an unusual example of an anchorite squint; the most distinctive aspect is that the squint is not located within a recess, and that the squint survived in the external instead of internal church fabric. With the other examples in this dataset and at

other churches I have assessed, a blocked or unblocked squint recess is usually the

surviving external feature. Since the squint now sits at ground level, the feature has

become weathered and debased, making it difficult to assess if it was splayed. The

internal sides of the squint are uneven, in part from being roughly filled in from the

chancel, and in part from weathering. However, even though at first glance the feature

appears to be a 'rough hole', as described by Cranage, a distinctive lintel stone

demonstrates that this small square opening, reminiscent of the squints at Acton Burnell

and Ruyton, was an intentionally designed window (Fig. 3.44).[357] Neither crumbling

stonework nor a simple niche would have included a lintel stone.



**Fig. 3.44.** A close-up of the lintel stone placed over the squint (left); and the rough
internal walls of the squint, exacerbated by weathering (right).

The church is composed of a continuous chancel and nave with lancet windows,

ending in a tower at the west end; multiple scholars have noted the church's unusually

lengthy dimensions (Fig. 3.45).[358] The squint is placed about halfway along what is now

the nave. This area of the church was clearly important, because another unusual

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[357] Cranage, *An Architectural…Volume II*, p. 472.
[358] Cranage, *An Architectural…Volume II*, p. 470. Pevsner, *The Buildings,* pp. 99-100.

feature, a thirteenth-century lancet window with a small rectangular window added underneath, can be seen immediately east and above the squint; Cranage described this as 'a very remarkable' low side window (Fig. 3.46).[359] Internally, the lancet windows are set into recesses, but the recess around the lancet and rectangular window is distinct (Fig. 3.46). The recess extends to the ground floor, with a platform and niche on either side; although Cranage interpreted these niches as seats, they were most likely intended for statues, although they are now open.[360]



**Fig. 3.45.** The chancel and nave at Church Preen.

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[359] Cranage, *An Architectural…Volume II*, p. 470
[360] Cranage, *An Architectural…Volume II*, pp. 470-71.

**Fig. 3.46.** An external view of the distinctive lancet window with the rectangular window below, very close to the squint (left); and an internal view of the same window, showing the niche it is placed in, distinct from other nave or chancel windows (right).

The significance of this point in the church, about halfway along the nave and associated with unusual features, is key to understanding how this squint functioned, especially because at first glance it appears too far from the chancel to allow a view of the Eucharist. An earlier depiction of Church Preen from 1787 shows that the chancel used to extend to just beyond the unusual lancet and squint, and the nave was narrower than the chancel; in other words, just after these features, there was a clear break in the wall signalling the end of the chancel and the beginning of the nave (Fig. 3.47).[361] Even though these features are placed in what now looks like the nave of the church, the medieval building included an unusually lengthy chancel, and so these striking features were both still part of the chancel, although they are now far from where the altar is

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[361] Shrewsbury, Shropshire Archives, PH/C/16/1, 'St John the Baptist Church, Church Preen' (1787), photograph of watercolour by Rev Edward Williams. A series of typewritten notes about Church Preen, which included confirmation of this earlier appearance of the chancel, is also available at the Archives; unfortunately the notes are anonymous and undated: Shrewsbury, Shropshire Archives, XLS25189, 'History of the Church of St John the Baptist, Church Preen' (n.d.).

located. Cranage also described the rood screen as being placed halfway along the chancel—in this context, that placement makes sense.[362] Moreover, the 1787 depiction and a drawing from 1793 show that instead of the modern lancet window (built to mimic the thirteenth-century originals) now in the nave wall between the lancet-cum-rectangular window and squint, and the porch and modern vestry, the former narrower nave included one square window of two lights, in the place where the modern lancet is now located (Fig. 3.48).[363]

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**Fig. 3.47.** A 1787 depiction of Church Preen, clearly indicating a narrower nave attached to an unusually long chancel (Shrewsbury, Shropshire Archives, PH/C/16/1).

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[362] Cranage, *An Architectural…Volume II*, p. 472. He also claimed that parts of the rood screen were still in existence in 1841, but disappeared soon afterwards.

[363] Shrewsbury, SA, PH/C/16/1. Shrewsbury, Shropshire Archives, 6001/6740, 'Memorials for Church Preen', (1793), north view of Preen Church. Note the 1793 depiction is much rougher and less defined, but the square window is clearly visible.

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**Fig. 3.48.** Another basic sketch of Church Preen, showing the same two-light window in the nave that has been replaced by a post-medieval version of a thirteenth-century lancet window (Shrewsbury, Shropshire Archives, 6001/6740).

Traditionally, Church Preen is described as a thirteenth-century build, largely because of the lancets and the earliest known documentary evidence for the church: a 1244 reference describing Church Preen as a cell of Much Wenlock.[364] However, this explanation fails to take into account other archaeological evidence that the church has undergone significant renovations pre-thirteenth century. Neither Pevsner nor Cranage mention the depictions from the late 1700s, indicating that this earlier building phase with a wider chancel and narrower nave has not been considered.[365] A pre-1866 watercolour of Church Preen shows that by this date, the nave had been extended to be flush with the chancel—however, the watercolour also clearly depicts an awkwardly patched roof at this point, as well as a raised burial vault extending from the point where the nave used to narrow (Fig. 3.49).[366] This burial vault is still seen immediately to the west of the small squint, although the gating visible in the pre-1866 watercolour had

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[364] Cranage, *An Architectural…Volume II*, p. 470. Pevsner, *The Buildings*, pp. 99-100.
[365] Cranage, *An Architectural…Volume II*, pp. 470-73. Pevsner, *The Buildings*, pp. 99-100.
[366] Shrewsbury, Shropshire Archives, 6009/50, 'Church Preen' (pre-1866), watercolour by John Homes Smith.

disappeared by 1988, as an exterior photograph shows; in addition, a modern vestry has been added alongside the porch, and the roof has been smoothed (Fig. 3.50).[367]

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**Fig. 3.49.** A pre-1866 watercolour of Church Preen, showing that the nave has been widened to be flush with the chancel wall (Shrewsbury, Shropshire Archives, 6009/50). Note also the raised burial vault, and the awkward roofing over the area where the chancel and nave were joined. Finally, note the steep rise of the ground level.



**Fig. 3.50.** The features depicted in the 1866 watercolour as they appear today. Note the post-medieval lancet window in the nave wall next to the porch.

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[367] Shrewsbury, Shropshire Archives, PH/C/16/2, 'Church Preen' (19 March 1988), exterior photograph.

The pre-1866 watercolour also highlights how steeply the ground has risen over time (Fig 3.49). My measurements indicate the original length from the ground level at the east end foundation, to the sill of the first lancet window, is 3.22m. The measurement from the ground level at the raised vault, to the sill of the lancet window closest to the porch (these windows, with the exception of the unusual lancet-cum-rectangle window, are all spaced at about the same height) is 85cm. The difference is a startling 2.37m. The squint, now resting at ground level, must be a feature from an earlier phase of the church, when the ground level was either located at or closer to the original foundation level; therefore, the squint pre-dates the recess, niches, and lancet-cum-rectangle window (Fig. 3.51).



**Fig. 3.51.** Images showing the steeply lowered ground level at the easternmost end of the chancel, on either side of the gate.

An 1846 plan of Church Preen shows the church before the modern vestry, but after the church has been altered to be one width along its entire length; this remodelling was completed in order to re-pew the church, including inside what was previously the

long chancel (Fig. 3.52).[368] Currently, the recess internally marking the division point between the previous chancel and nave is now partially blocked by pews. During the thirteenth-century renovation, the floor level was no doubt raised to accommodate the changing landscape around the church, and the modern pews have been placed on a wooden platform just above this thirteenth-century floor level. This provides further evidence for the squint and lancet-cum-rectangular window being part of different phases of church development. The sustained placement of distinctive architecture at this point in the medieval chancel/modern nave demonstrates an impressive continuity of significance over time.

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**Fig. 3.52.** An 1845 plan showing the re-pewing of Church Preen, which required the nave and chancel to be the same width (Shrewsbury, Shropshire Archives, PH/C/16/7).

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[368] Shrewsbury, Shropshire Archives, PH/C/16/7, 'Ground Plan of Preen Church' (1845), drawing by Rev. R. Armitage.

The two-light window with a pilaster between, depicted in 1787 in the north wall of the chancel and now replaced by a modern replica of a thirteenth-century lancet window, must have been part of a rebuild after the nave was shortened, before the thirteenth-century refurbishment of the chancel (Fig. 3.47).[369] The squint would have been in use before the thirteenth-century renovation, and potentially during the time of the nave shortening. An undated series of notes about Church Preen in the Shropshire Archives includes the hypothesis that the chancel was widened, instead of the nave shortened.[370] However, this is unlikely, as overwhelmingly chancels are built to be narrower than naves, with extensions relating to length as opposed to width.[371] The nave was most likely shortened due to damage sustained to the north side of the nave. Even though the squint at Church Preen is, in many ways, distinct from other examples of anchoritic archaeology, an analysis of the wider context demonstrates the unique design of this church, which would no doubt affect the presentation and construction of an anchorite cell at the site.

3. Dating and Interpretation

At Church Preen and Stanton, little can be definitely stated about the construction of the cell outside of the squints; however, evaluating context not only clarifies the dates of these features, but also how they functioned within the church building. At Stanton, the squint offers a clear view of the altar, even within the later Norman extension. The anchoritic archaeology at Staplehurst, Kent, is another example of an early Norman cell, and herringbone stonework is also clearly visible on the external wall (Fig. 3.53). However, the squint at Staplehurt is large and square, with a

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[369] Shropshire Archives, PH/C/16/1.
[370] Shrewsbury, SA, XLS25189.
[371] For more information about how churches are typically developed over time, in terms of additions or deletions, see: Rodwell, *English Heritage*, pp. 68-71 and Bradley, *Churches*, pp. 28-37.

niche set into the side (Fig. 3.53). Remnants of wall foundations and a floor were uncovered in an antiquarian investigation as well (Fig. 3.54).[372] These two squints are different in style and design, but they were both built as part of the Norman rebuild of earlier Anglo-Saxon churches, demonstrating that even within the same time period, the construction style of squints and cells varied.



**Fig. 3.53.** An example of the herringbone stonework associated with the Staplehurst squint, directly underneath the squint (left); and an internal view of the large square squint (right). The niche cannot be seen because of the post-medieval addition of the masonry with the circular hole, designed to accommodate a flue.

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[372] Walker, *Staplehurst Church*, pp. 12-14.

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**Fig. 3.54.** The foundation remains recorded by A. J. Walker underneath the squint at Staplehurst (Walker, *Staplehurst Church*, p. 13).

The squint at Church Preen offers a different problem of interpretation, that of understanding how the unusually long chancel functioned during the medieval period. Since the squint is so small and was not set into a squint recess, the anchorite would have had a narrow view into the chancel: essentially, the anchorite would only be able to see an internal feature directly in front of the squint through the slim passage. The squint was placed behind the rood screen, in a sacred area of the church, despite the distance from the eastern end of the chancel. This construction is similar to Staplehurst, Kent, and Faversham, Kent. The squints at Staplehurst and Church Preen both functioned the same way, despite the great difference in size: instead of walking into a floor-length squint recess or leaning into a partial squint recess, the anchorite at each site would have looked through the squint directly. The cruciform squint at Faversham, Kent, is also placed an unusual distance from the chancel in the northern transept, but was still behind the rood screen. The Faversham squint provides a very distant view to

the main altar, but it offers a clear view of a piscina, no doubt related to a secondary altar, in the wall across from it (Fig. 3.55).



**Fig. 3.55.** The cruciform squint at Faversham, Kent (left); and the view from the squint across the transept (right). A modern organ now blocks a view of the main altar, but even without the organ, the main altar could only be glimpsed.

To interpret how the medieval space was used, the relationship between the church and the medieval manor house behind the church must be assessed. This manor house, attached to the church's south side since the thirteenth century, housed monks who lived at the site when the church was a cell of Much Wenlock.[373] This side of the church is now fenced off, and the house is private property. Two doors located in the chancel on the south side of the church show how this space may have been used (Fig. 3.56). The door closest to the altar and farthest from the squint is now blocked in, but the shouldered arch is a distinctive style popular in the late thirteenth century.[374] The door across from the squint has been heavily altered in post-medieval renovations, but the placement of this door so close to the squint is noteworthy. Clearly, access points to

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[373] Cranage, *An Architectural…Volume II*, p. 470; Pevsner, *The Buildings*, pp. 99-100. Cranage noted that domestic buildings were still visible until 1970, when Arthur Sparrow significantly remodelled the house and surrounding area.
[374] Bradley, *Churches*, pp. 59-60.

the chancel in particular were important for the monks living alongside the church, and the doorway across from the squint accentuates the continued significance of this area of the church. Both of these doors would have been added in the thirteenth century at the earliest, after the squint was no longer in use, but they continue to demonstrate that the medieval use of the long chancel likely involved multiple areas of sacred activity, including a secondary altar in addition to the main altar at the eastern end of the church.
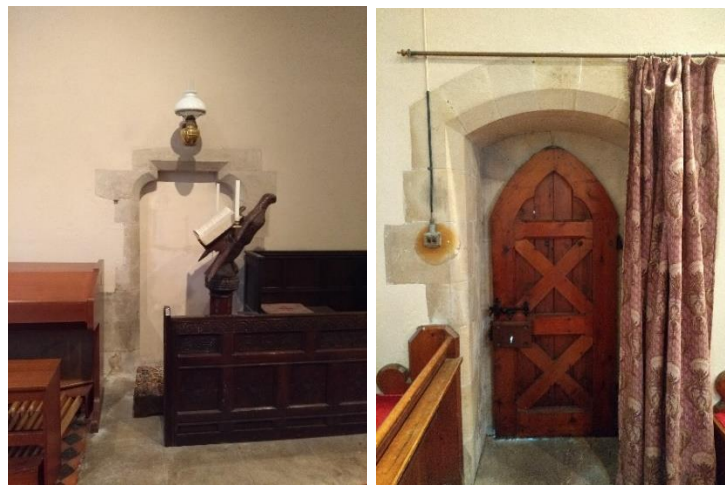


**Fig. 3.56.** The door closest to the modern altar, now plastered over (left); and the door still used to access the manor house across from the squint (right). Note how the modern wooden door does not fit the frame.

Other features that support this interpretation of multiple areas for sacred activity within the chancel in the thirteenth century include the two lancet windows with distinctive recesses and niches. The first lancet near the squint has already been discussed; although the lancets on both sides are set into typical window recesses, the easternmost lancet next to the modern altar in the south side of the chancel also includes a more dramatic recess and niches (Fig. 3.46, 3.57). This lancet in the southern wall is also placed next to a piscina, another significant architectural feature. The placement of these unusual windows alongside two doors in the chancel wall shows that these were points of ritual significance in the thirteenth century, and continue to be preserved

today. The anchorite squint placed in the same area as a later point of ritual significance marks a continuity of use and tradition, and reinforces the likelihood of a secondary altar across from the squint despite the plastered wall masking any architectural indications.



**Fig. 3.57.** The distinctive lancet window close to the altar (left), and a comparison to the lancet-style windows in the chancel and nave set into typical recesses (right).

At Church Preen and Stanton, the only typological feature indicative of anchoritic activity which survives is the squint. However, a close analysis of these squints through evaluating archaeological context demonstrates that this single feature can inform our understanding of the lived experiences of medieval anchorites. Both squints are earlier features; Church Preen's squint is pre-thirteenth-century, whereas Stanton's squint can be dated to the later Norman period. More research about the earlier history of Church Preen is essential; for instance, was the church always connected with a monastic house, or was this a major thirteenth-century change? If the pre-thirteenth-century church was also linked with a monastic house, then this would be the only squint in the Shropshire dataset not associated with a parish church.

Table 3.3., Summary of Shropshire Cell Dating, provides an overview of the dating discussed in this section. This analysis shows that the archaeological record

indicates continuous anchoritic activity in the Shropshire area from the Norman period until the late-fourteenth century, a markedly different pattern from the thirteenth- to fourteenth-century focus typical of a literary framework. Cells built so late in the medieval period may have been inhabited up to the Dissolution. This simultaneously shows an astonishing continuity of anchoritic activity, and a great variety in the construction of individual anchorite cells in various kinds of churches.

| Table 3.4: Summary of Shropshire Cell Dating ||
|---|---|
| **Name of Church** | **Date** |
| Acton Burnell, St Mary's | Built 13th c.; no longer in use by 14th c. renovations in the transepts. |
| Church Preen, St John the Baptist | Pre-13th c.; no longer in use by 13th c. renovation. |
| Ellesmere, The Blessed Virgin Mary | Late 13th-mid 14th c. No longer in use by Dissolution. |
| Great Ness, St Andrew's | Post-late 12th c., pre-14th c. (or significant remodel by 14th c.) |
| Much Wenlock, Holy Trinity | Late 14th c. No longer in use by Dissolution. |
| Ruyton-of-the-XI-Towns, St John the Baptist | Post-Norman, pre-late 13th c. chancel extension. |
| Stanton-Upon-Hine-Heath, St Andrew's | Norman. |

V. Final Interpretations

This section concludes my archaeological methodology in the context of these sites in Shropshire. Now that the archaeology has been independently evaluated, I will discuss any medieval, antiquarian, or current research informing anchoritism at each site. Excavation was not necessary at any of the sites I visited; substantial later medieval and post-medieval renovations near squints made excavation unlikely to yield

significant results, and all of these churches are in active use. Most of the sites in this dataset lack any current research, the antiquarian records were brief and focused on describing the squint and so have already been mentioned in the section above, and only Church Preen has a medieval literary reference. Therefore, this section will be brief, and for most sites, the interpretation described in the earlier section, based solely on the archaeological evidence, remains unchanged. This section concludes with a discussion of some wider points made about anchorite cells in current research, and what this dataset suggests in relationship to these arguments.

### A. Current Research

This section is divided into three parts: 1) a discussion of the antiquarian link between the anchoritic archaeology at Church Preen and a medieval literary source; 2) a consideration of a current brief reference to the anchoritic archaeology at Ruyton; and 3) various post-antiquarian references to these sites in popular literature.

### 1. Church Preen

Church Preen is the only site in this dataset that may be related to a medieval literary account, although this link was perpetuated by antiquarian researchers, despite the lack of evidence for the connection. *The Chronicle of Lanercost*, including entries from 1272-1346, contains a story about two travelling Franciscans visiting a female anchorite enclosed in a church dedicated to St John the Baptist, around six miles outside Shrewsbury.[375] The entry is ambiguous—part of the church is described as a 'basilica', which does not fit any of the churches in the area, and it is possible that the medieval writer confused the church's patron saint.[376] Nonetheless Sparrow, as well as other

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[375] Sparrow, *The History of Church Preen*, pp. 137-41 (Appendix D), 110-111. *The Chronicle of Lanercost 1272-1346*, ed. by Herbert Maxwell (Cribyn: Llanerch Press, 2001), pp. 151-52. Auden, *Shropshire Hermits*, pp. 101-02.
[376] Sparrow, *The History of Church Preen*, pp. 137-41 (Appendix D).

antiquarian historians, argued for the presence of an anchorite at Church Preen, and suggested that the small rectangular window underneath the lancet window and the internal floor-length recess with niches were evidence of a cell (Fig. 3.46).[377] My analysis has already shown that this feature is not associated with anchoritic archaeology. Cranage rejected Sparrow's interpretation, stating that the argument 'does not impress me', even with the *Chronicle* evidence.[378]

The *Chronicle* reference is not clear and contradicts the archaeological evidence; moreover, antiquarian interpretations relied on the rectangular window and internal recess, not the anchorite squint, as proof of the relationship between the archaeological and written record. The squint with the lintel near the lancet-cum-rectangle window includes typological features distinct to anchorite squints. The rectangular window underneath the lancet does not fit the typology, and also constructing a cell around this feature would be problematic. A cell could not be built without either enclosing the entire lancet, or partially blocking it. Moreover, the squint recess is placed on the wrong side of the feature, as anchorite squint recesses are placed on the external church wall, and would have opened into the anchorite cell. The dating also conflicts, as the feature my archaeological analysis identifies as an anchorite squint would have been in use pre-thirteenth century. In this case, antiquarian researchers fitted the archaeology to suit the documentary record, despite the lack of clarity from the *Chronicle* and the archaeological evidence for a squint independent of the lancet window.

In addition to the *Chronicle* reference, medieval documentary records linking Much Wenlock and Church Preen must also be explored in more depth to investigate potential connections between their anchorite cells. Church Preen became a cell of Much Wenlock priory in the thirteenth century, when the church was heavily

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[377] Sparrow, *The History of Church Preen*, pp. 137-41 (Appendix D).
[378] Cranage, *An Architectural…Volume II*, p. 472.

remodelled and the anchorite cell became obsolete (the priory ruins are still visible, literally less than a five-minute walk from Holy Trinity).[379] At first, this connection seems to indicate that an anchorite at Much Wenlock may have encouraged an anchorite at Church Preen, but the early date of the cell at Church Preen and the late date of the cell at Much Wenlock do not support this view. The anchorites at each of these sites were supported at their respective churches at a point when they were not linked as closely as they were in the thirteenth century. Further research about the pre-thirteenth century history of Church Preen, when the cell was in use, is necessary for further analysis, especially the tensions caused by claims to Church Preen from both Combermere Abbey and the Prior of Wenlock in the twelfth century.[380] However, this is out of the scope of this thesis. Medieval and antiquarian documentary sources ultimately do not change the archaeological analysis, which shows a small squint placed in the far end of an especially long chancel, constructed prior to the thirteenth century when the anchorite cell was dismantled as part of the church remodelling, and the church became a cell of Much Wenlock priory.

### 2. Ruyton

The only modern reference to the anchoritic archaeology at Ruyton is a 2012 article by Hughes-Edwards.[381] The brief section in the article titled 'Archaeological Evidence' does not mention the site specifically, but includes an external photograph of the church with a view of the blocked-up squint recess. The caption described the squint recess as 'typical archaeological evidence of an anchorage which stood against the north

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[379] Cranage, *An Architectural…Volume II*, p. 470.

[380] M. J. Angold, and others, 'Houses of Cluniac Monks: Priory of Preen', in *A History of the County of Shropshire: Volume 2*, ed. by A. T. Gaydon and R. B. Pugh (London: Victoria County History, 1973), p. 38 <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/salop/vol2/p38> [accessed 24 September 2020].

[381] Mari Hughes-Edwards, 'Solitude and Sociability: The World of the Medieval Anchorite', *Historic Churches* (2012) <https://www.buildingconservation.com/articles/anchorites/anchorites.htm> [24 September 2020].

wall of the chancel'.[382] An earlier version of this article that I referenced in my MA

thesis included other photographs of the anchoritic archaeology at this site that have

now been removed, including an internal view of the squint.[383] However, neither

version offered more in-depth analysis alongside the photographs, and so did not assess

archaeological context. These brief references do not challenge the archaeological

interpretation articulated in the previous section, which described the squint and squint

recess as a post-Norman and pre-thirteenth-century cell that extended into the

churchyard from the end of the original chancel with an annexe for the squint recess.

3. Popular Post-Antiquarian References

As Table 3.1: Shropshire Anchoritic Archaeology References demonstrates,

many of these anchoritic features have been mentioned in church pamphlets and a

popular magazine, although again these interpretations are brief and highly influenced

by antiquarian research. In the April 1974 edition of *Shropshire Magazine*, Challoner

mentioned Acton Burnell and Ruyton as sites with examples of anchoritic archaeology

and printed an image of the squint recess at Acton Burnell.[384] In addition, he included

Church Preen in a list of churches with anchorites in the area, but did not mention

archaeological evidence.[385] None of these sites received in-depth analysis.

The church pamphlets at Acton Burnell and Ellesmere described the squint

recesses and squints as leper squints.[386] The leper squint theory has been critically

evaluated and is recognised as an antiquarian invention with no basis in medieval

evidence, as Chapter 4 shows.[387] The church pamphlet at Ruyton did not explicitly refer

to the anchorite squint or the blocked recess, focusing instead on a door in the southern

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[382] Hughes-Edwards, 'Solitude and Sociability'.
[383] Hughes-Edwards, 'Solitude and Sociability'. Yuskaitis, 'Anchorites and the Archaeological', pp. 122-23.
[384] Challoner, 'Shropshire and her Anchorites', p. 17.
[385] Challoner, 'Shropshire and her Anchorites', p. 17.
[386] *Welcome to St. Mary's*, Church Pamphlet. *What to See*, Church Pamphlet.
[387] Gilchrist, *Contemplation*, p. 192. Gilchrist described leper squints as 'mythical'.

end of the north wall of the chancel as 'an opening into a hermit's chamber'.[388] My interpretation indicates that the cell would not have extended far enough into the chancel to connect with this door; after all, a spacious cell stretching from the end of the original medieval chancel to the beginning of the nave would have blocked both Norman windows. The pamphlet also mentioned the discovery of foundations supposedly reinforcing this interpretation in 1868, which no doubt refers to the wall foundation discovered during the building of the raised burial vault highlighted by Cranage.[389]

The church pamphlet at Stanton directly cited Cranage in multiple places, and described the squint as either related to an anchorite cell or used as an aumbry.[390] My typology demonstrates that the squint has key characteristics of anchorite squints, therefore invalidating its interpretation as an aumbry. The writer identified the squint simply as 'a small opening'.[391] In addition, details about the cross found inside the squint are included: 'The small oak cross in it was presented to the church some years ago by [redacted], whose remains rest in the churchyard'.[392] The church pamphlets and popular magazine all contain brief references to the anchoritic archaeology at these sites, and antiquarian influence—particularly from Cranage—is evident. These sources do not challenge the archaeological site interpretations described in the previous section.

Although few medieval, antiquarian, or modern references outside of the archaeological evidence are available, these references demonstrate a sustained interest in anchoritic archaeology in the area, especially from non-scholarly perspectives. This interest continues today; for instance, the 1974 *Shropshire Magazine* article was sent to

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[388] *Guide and Short History: St. John the Baptist Parish Church Ruyton XI Towns, Shropshire*, Church Pamphlet ([n.p.]: The Parochial Church Council, 2010, rev. 2015).
[389] *Guide and Short History*, Church Pamphlet.
[390] Leighton and Shufflebotham, *St Andrews Church*.
[391] Leighton and Shufflebotham, *St Andrews Church.*
[392] Leighton and Shufflebotham, *St Andrews Church.*

me by a local who attended one of my public talks in the area. Similarly, even though the *Chronicle* account cannot be linked definitively to Church Preen, the persistence of a narrative connecting an anchorite with a church dedicated to St John the Baptist near Shrewsbury is noteworthy, as this shows an established tradition of anchoritism in the area of Shropshire in a medieval source.

B. Cells in the North Chancel Wall

Although current research has not specifically addressed most of the cells in this dataset, patterns in this dataset inform broader claims about anchoritism in general. In particular, modern researchers view squints placed in north chancel walls as the norm; Chapter 4 discusses how this placement is erroneously associated with principally female anchorites. [393] All of the Shropshire squints are placed in the north chancel wall, although there are significant differences in terms of squint and cell design. However, multiple prominent examples from outside Shropshire mentioned in this chapter and previous chapters show this is not always the case. The squint at Faversham, Kent is placed in the north transept; the second, later cell at Compton, Surrey as well as two anchorite cells at Lewes, Sussex are placed on the south side of the chancel; the squint at Barnburgh, Yorkshire is placed in the south wall of the nave, next to the tower; and the squint at Chester-le-Street, Durham is placed in the north wall of the tower. My MA research also indicates other sites where an anchorite squint may be located on the south side of churches.[394] This Shropshire dataset is also not comprehensive, and other examples on the south side or outside the chancel may be discovered in future.

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[393] Gilchrist, *Contemplation*, pp. 183-93. Gilchrist and Oliva, *Religious Women*, pp. 76-77.

[394] Yuskaitis, 'Anchorites and the Archaeological', Table 1: Archaeological Evidence for English Anchorholds Before the Fifteenth Century, pp. 30-47. Note in particular potential squints in the south of chancels at Northumberland, Lowick; Sussex, Hardham, St Botolph's Church; and Sussex, Lewes, St Anne's. Also note potential squints in other places, such as the north or south aisle at Cornwall, Marhamchurch, St Marwenna; and York, All Saints North Street, among others. The majority of these sites need modern evaluation, but this demonstrates the placement of squints is potentially more varied than often assumed.

Therefore, this dataset indicates that the archaeological evidence of anchorite cells in the area discovered so far are placed in the north chancel wall, but that other placements should be considered for an additional, more comprehensive study, based on archaeological evidence from other regions.

### C. Archaeology, Gender, and the Welsh Marches

As described in Chapter 1, current anchoritic scholarship is gendered in perspective and focuses on women's experience. Anchoritic research in the Welsh Marches in particular concentrates on elite women anchorites from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries; this is discussed further in Chapter 5.[395] The archaeology in this dataset, however, introduces a different perspective; not only is the surviving architecture not explicitly gendered, but the archaeological evidence spans the entire medieval period. The archaeological evidence informs a discussion of social class, as the disparity between cells such as Ruyton and Acton Burnell make clear. But the archaeological evidence alone does not indicate whether a male or female anchorite was enclosed. Instead, the archaeological evidence raises questions about the influence of the particular church housing anchorites; the funding these churches, anchorites, and church communities could contribute; and the needs of the different communities these churches supported and the anchorite served.

## VI. Conclusions

Although the anchorite's role was constricting in many ways, especially physically, the archaeological evidence suggests great flexibility in terms of interpreting the vocation. After all, would anchorites enclosed alongside a castle, or a prosperous

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[395] For example: Innes-Parker, 'Medieval Widowhood', 95-124.

parish church next to a flourishing priory, or a rural community, all perform the same activities? What role did the needs of these differing communities play in determining the role of the anchorite? How did the practicalities of daily life differ for anchorites enclosed in these various cells? And how did squint placement affect an anchorite's experience, and the experience of the church community helping to support him/her? This dataset moves away from a focus on thirteenth- and fourteenth-century elite women anchorites, and encourages different kinds of questions about anchoritic experience. Shropshire is an ideal place to situate this archaeological analysis—*Ancrene Wisse* was published in the area, current anchoritic research often focuses on Shropshire, and significant archaeological evidence survives as well.[396] Shropshire is a nexus where different types of medieval evidence and modern scholarship intersect, and successfully using my methodology to add to this dialogue shows the importance and feasibility of my approach.

The anchoritic archaeology in Shropshire indicates sustained anchoritic activity from the Norman period up to the Dissolution in churches serving different communities, with varying levels of wealth. The archaeological evidence demonstrates that a nuanced understanding of the anchoritic vocation needs to consider the physicality of the cell, as well as the physicality of the church it was attached to. After all, supporting an anchorite was a significant investment for the church and the community; anchorites were not just individuals pursuing their own higher calling, but rather were members of the larger community who had practical obligations to their community. For instance, the opulence of the cell at Much Wenlock invites a consideration of how these needs were balanced—the needs of the anchorite, desiring an ascetic and holy life, and the needs of the church and community, desiring the

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[396] Again, for evidence of the importance of Shropshire in the field overall, see Chapter 1, sections IV-VI, and Chapter 5. *Ancrene Wisse* is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

anchorite's prayers and the status that supporting an anchorite offered. A modern in-depth regional study of anchoritic archaeology had not been attempted until this project, and further studies of this type are essential for a more comprehensive understanding of anchorite cells across England. My approach to this dataset demonstrates that using an archaeological methodology to assess anchoritic archaeology introduces new data and different perspectives of lived anchoritic experience that are essential for a comprehensive understanding of English medieval anchoritism.

Chapter Four:

Refuting the Fallacies of the Model Anchorite Cell and Gendered Archaeological

Features

I. Introduction

This chapter analyses the complex relationship between archaeology,

antiquarian perceptions, and modern interpretations of cell design and anchoritic

experience. Two fallacies about anchorite cells that continue to shape current

scholarship are refuted: the assumption of a model cell design inspired by anchoritic

rules, and the gendering of particular anchoritic archaeology features. The first half of

this chapter focuses on the fallacy of the model cell. Section II discusses the few

architectural details highlighted in two anchoritic rules, *Ancrene Wisse* and *De*

*Institutione Inclusarum*, then shows how current scholarship uses these details as a cell

template that continues to impact perceptions of cell design. Sections III and IV show

that the concept of a standardised anchorite cell is unsupported in medieval

documentary and archaeological sources, and that cell design was frequently adapted

and customised to individual anchorites and specific churches. In particular, Section III

analyses various types of medieval documentary sources that briefly describe the

physical design of the cell, including enclosure ceremonies, hagiography, and other

records, indicating variety instead of conformity. Archaeological evidence demonstrates

different kinds of cell design, including temporary cell constructions and freestanding

cells, and three case studies of parish churches with anchoritic archaeology in Surrey

and Sussex show how features mentioned in written records—including doors, altars,

graves, and oratories—are used in ways specific to each site, and are not always present

in archaeological contexts at all, despite being considered essential in documentary

sources.  Both archaeological and written records are fragmentary, but the archaeological evidence shows the physical remains of cells, while anchoritic rules indicate an imagined ideal of anchoritic experience. Individual archaeological sites cannot provide a comprehensive view, but a systematic approach to the archaeological evidence of anchoritism results in a more nuanced understanding of cell structure and anchoritic experience than can be offered by medieval literary and historical sources alone.

The second half of the chapter focuses on gendered assumptions about specific anchoritic archaeology features. Section V shows that current scholarship also views the cell as an inherently gendered space, with different designs for male and female anchorites; in particular, male anchorite-priests are linked with roomier and two-storey cells, as well as altars and oratories. However, Section V indicates that this interpretation is grounded in antiquarian gendered assumptions, not in medieval documentary or archaeological evidence. The term 'anchoress' perpetuates these gendered assumptions. The leper squint theory also highlights how antiquarian interpretation still impacts current perspectives of squints, for both scholarly and non-academic audiences. Ultimately, gendered archaeological interpretations are still based on antiquarian perceptions, and although antiquarians used archaeology to justify and illustrate their arguments, assessing the archaeological record with my methodology shows that specific archaeological features such as altars are *not* gendered, which generates a more nuanced interpretation that considers other factors, such as status, that influenced cell design and lived experience. Section VI discusses how these findings effect interpretation of the parish church sites in Shropshire discussed in Chapter 3.

II. The Development of the Model Cell

The anchoritic rules *Ancrene Wisse* and *De Institutione Inclusarum* have influenced research about cell design and anchoritic experience in current scholarship, even though neither source offers a complete description of the physical space. This section challenges the concept of an ideal anchorite cell, first by identifying the few architectural details in each text, and then by assessing how current scholarship has evaluated these sources from the perspective of cell design. *Ancrene Wisse* and *De Institutione Inclusarum* offer the most architectural detail of any surviving English anchoritic rules. Both rules sought to articulate an ideal of the anchoritic vocation, and current scholarship often uses these sources to create a standardised cell, despite the lack of evidence for a clear physical design in the anchoritic rules themselves, and also in other textual evidence and the archaeological record, as sections III and IV of this chapter demonstrate.

A. Anchoritic Rules

Anchoritic rules rarely addressed the construction or design of cells; the two English rules that provided the most details about the cell are Aelred of Rievalux's *De Institutione Inclusarum* (c.1160-62) and *Ancrene Wisse* (thirteenth century).[397] Neither rule focused on the anchorite's physical surroundings, but instead offered a guide of how to live as an anchorite, and therefore created a model of the vocation that took place within cells specific to each source, and only vaguely described in both. This model focused less on physical details and more on important spiritual attitudes

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[397] John Ayto and Alexandra Barratt, 'Introduction', in *Aelred of Rievaulx's De Institutione Inclusarum*, ed. by John Ayto and Alexandra Barratt, Early English Text Society, Original Series 287 (London: Oxford University Press, 1984), pp. xi-lv (p. xii). Bob Hasenfratz, ed., 'Introduction,' *Ancrene Wisse* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2000) <http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/hasenfratz-ancrene-wisse-introduction> [accessed 24 September 2020].

cultivated through essential architecture. Aelred wrote to his enclosed sister, whereas

*Ancrene Wisse* was originally written to a small group of noblewomen in the Shropshire

area.[398] Both texts were influential during the medieval period and survive in multiple

manuscript copies and/or translations, and *Ancrene Wisse* clearly shows familiarity with

and often borrows from Aelred's text.[399] For the purposes of this thesis, I use the Early

English Text Society, MS Bodley 423 Middle English translation of *De Institutione*

*Inclusarum*.[400] This mid-fifteenth century translation covers the entire Latin original,

unlike the earlier Vernon Manuscript Middle English version, and is more accessible

than the Vernon Manuscript or the original Latin text.[401] For *Ancrene Wisse*, I use

Millett's standard Middle English edition.[402] I also consulted the TEAMS Middle

English Translations version, which provided footnotes on more complex sections of

prose and allowed for keyword searches for architectural terms.[403] Since the Middle

English in *Ancrene Wisse* does not always smoothly translate into modern English, I

have also used Ann Savage and Nicholas Watson's translation where applicable to

improve readability.[404]

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[398] Hasenfratz, ed., 'Introduction'. See Chapter 1 for more information about how *Ancrene Wisse* was adapted for other audiences and uses. Aelred of Rievaulx, *De Institutione Inclusarum* MS Bodley 423, ed. by John Ayto and Alexandra Barratt, Early English Text Society, Original Series 287 (London: Oxford University Press, 1984), Capitulum i, lines 5-6, p. 1.

[399] Ayto and Barratt, 'Introduction', pp. xi-xii, xxxviii-xlii.

[400] Aelred of Rievaulx, *De Institutione Inclusarum*. Due to Covid-19 complications, I was unable to access the standard CCCM Latin version and Cistercian Fathers Series translation: Aelred of Rievaulx, 'De Institutione Inclusarum', in *Opera Omnia I*, ed. by C. H. Talbot, Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis (CCCM) (Turnhout: Brepols, 1971), pp. 635-82, and Aelred of Rievaulx, *De Institutione Inclusarum*, ed. by Mary Paul MacPherson, Cistercian Fathers Series 2 (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1971). From this citation forward, all *De Institutione Inclusarum* references refer to the Early English Text Society version.

[401] Ayto and Barratt, 'Introduction', p. xiii. For more information about MS Bodley 423, see pp. xix-xxxii.

[402] *Ancrene Wisse: A Corrected Edition*.

[403] *Ancrene Wisse*, Parts One–Eight.

[404] Savage and Watson, *Anchoritic Spirituality*. Due to Covid-19 complications, I was unable to access the standard translation: *Ancrene Wisse: Guide for Anchoresses,* ed. by Bella

*De Institutione Inclusarum* included few details of cell design: a window to the outside world, no ornaments or hangings within the cell except for devotional images specified by Aelred, an altar within the cell arrayed as simply as possible, and a door guarded by a servant.[405] Aelred's description of the altar, and the handful of images for contemplation that should accompany it, is a pragmatic explanation of how to set up this sacred space: 'Now shal I shewe [show] the [thee] how thou shalt arraye [furnish] thyn oratory'.[406] This section also linked spiritual meaning to the physical set-up of the cell—for instance, the white linen cloth on the altar symbolised the anchorite's journey towards purity.[407] The only other furniture mentioned is a bed, with the anchorite sleeping at prescribed times.[408] A door to the outside world is also briefly mentioned, but Aelred specified that an 'honest anxient [old, wise] womman' servant should be chosen to 'kepe thyn houshold and thy lyflod [necessities of life], to close thy dores [doors]'.[409] This door was clearly not intended to provide an entry or access point for the anchorite, but for the anchorite's servant. For Aelred, the specifics of the size, shape, or placement of the cell were not as important as arranging the internal space in a way that would be free of distractions, a constant reminder of the anchorite's vocation, and an encouragement to continued meditation.

Aelred cautioned that a window should be small to prevent any interaction that might tempt the anchorite: if 'the wyndowe [window] hath be maad moor [made more, i.e., enlarged], that euereyther [everyone] might come in or out to other, soo that atte

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Millett, Exeter Medieval Texts and Studies LUP (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009).

[405] Aelred of Rievaulx, *De Institutione Inclusarum*, Capitulum xiii, lines 582-611, pp. 15-16 (altar) and Capitulum i, lines 29-31, 43-46 (window). Gilchrist, *Contemplation*, p. 184. Clay, *The Hermits and Anchorites*, p. 80.
[406] Aelred of Rievaulx, *De Institutione Inclusarum*, Capitulum xiii, line 583, p. 15.
[407] Aelred of Rievaulx, *De Institutione Inclusarum*, Capitulum xiii, lines 583-601, p. 15.
[408] Aelred of Rievaulx, *De Institutione Inclusarum*, Capitulum vi, lines 231-38, p. 6.
[409] Aelred of Rievaulx, *De Institutione Inclusarum*, Capitulum iii, lines 107, 110, p. 3.

last of a recluse or of an ancresse selle [female anchorite's cell] is maad [made] a bordel hous [brothel house]'.[410] The placement of the window within the cell is not specified, but it is likely to have been in an outside wall, since Aelred cited concern with various members of the community gossiping with and distracting the anchorite: 'tofore [before] the wyndowe shal sitte an olde womman fedynge [plying] hir with tales [gossip]'.[411] However, in a later section Aelred also advised choosing a confessor 'the whiche is an auncyant [wise] man of gode fame [good reputation] and of gode oppinyon [good judgement]'.[412] The veiled anchorite could also occasionally speak with a visiting abbot or prior.[413] These individuals would have had access to sacred areas of the church, including behind the rood screen, and the confessor would have had regular and intimate communication with the anchorite; it is probable that he spoke with the anchorite through a different internal window or entrance. A squint is also not described; it may have been an assumed feature, the altar and images may have taken the place of the squint, and/or the cell may have been freestanding and not attached to the church. The details are sparse, but Aelred envisioned a cell with only a single window opening to the outside world, as well as some kind of access for the anchorite's confessor and other high-status religious visitors.

*Ancrene Wisse* described a cell placed 'under chirche euesunges/[under the church's eaves]' as having three windows: a squint looking to the altar to view the Eucharist, one window allowing an anchorite contact with servants, and one window allowing contact with the outside world, facing either outside or into a room designated for visitors.[414]

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[410] Aelred of Rievaulx, *De Institutione Inclusarum*, Capitulum i, lines 44-46, p. 2.
[411] Aelred of Rievaulx, *De Institutione Inclusarum*, Capitulum i, lines 29-30, p. 1.
[412] Aelred of Rievaulx, *De Institutione Inclusarum*, Capitulum iv, lines 142-44, p. 4.
[413] Aelred of Rievaulx, *De Institutione Inclusarum*, Capitulum iv, lines 149-57, p. 4.
[414] *Ancrene Wisse: A Corrected Edition*, Part Three, line 326, p. 56.

Vt þurh þe chirche þurl ne halde ȝe tale wið na mon, ah beoreð þer-to

wurðmunt for þe hali sacrement þet ȝe seoð þer-þurh, ant neomeð

oðerhwile. To ower wummen, þe huses þurl; to oþre, þe parlur.

Speoken ne ahe ȝe bute ed tes twa þurles.

[Do not talk with anyone through the church window, but hold it in

honor because of the holy sacrament that you see through it. And use

the house window for talking sometimes with your women; for others,

the parlor window. You should not speak except at these two

windows.][415]

*Ancrene Wisse* further instructed anchorites to cover these already small windows with a

tightly fastened black cloth emblazoned with a white cross.[416] This design not only

encouraged spiritual contemplation, but also the black cloth:

deð leasse eil to þe ehnen, ant is þiccre aȝein þe wind ant wurse to

seon þurh, ant halt his heow betere, for wind ant for oðerhwet.

[does less to harm the eyes and is thicker against the wind and

harder to see through, and keeps its color better against the wind

and other things.][417]

The earlier passage indicates that the two windows other than the anchorite squint were

intended for communication, but when not in use these windows were meant to be

carefully covered to 'witeð þer ower ehnen/[guard your eyes there]'.[418]

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[415] *Ancrene Wisse: A Corrected Edition*, Part Two, lines 340-43, p. 29. Savage and Watson, *Anchoritic Spirituality*, p. 74.

[416] *Ancrene Wisse: A Corrected Edition*, Part Two, lines 20-51, pp. 20-21.

[417] *Ancrene Wisse: A Corrected Edition*, Part Two, lines 34-36, pp. 20-21. Savage and Watson, *Anchoritic Spirituality*, pp. 66-67. The spiritual meaning is stated in lines 20-51, pp. 20-21.

[418] *Ancrene Wisse: A Corrected Edition*, Part Two, line 37, p. 21. Savage and Watson, *Anchoritic Spirituality*, p. 67.

The parlour window is an ambiguous feature, not only because the audience to be communicated with is not more explicitly articulated, but also because the text indicates it may be associated with an attached room. The purpose of the parlour window is usually interpreted as a communication point for visitors approved by the anchorite's confessor.[419] This would not require a separate room in practice, but the sentence syntax in *Ancrene Wisse* suggests otherwise:

> For-þi, mine leoue sustren, þe leaste þet ȝe eauer mahen luuieð ower
>
> þurles. Alle beon ha lutle, þe parlurs least ant nearewest.
>
> [Therefore my dear sisters, love your windows as little as you possibly
>
> can. Let them all be little, the parlor's smallest and narrowest.][420]

The possessive form of 'parlour' used in the above passage implies the smallest window is placed within a separate space called the 'parlour'. Hasenfratz's edition highlighted this and noted that the Middle English word 'parlour' may refer to a separate room, or to a grate in the wall.[421] The *Middle English Dictionary* includes several definitions of 'parlour' that indicate a physical chamber or apartment extending from a larger building.[422] Two more specific definitions are 'a chamber in a religious house used for consultation or conversation, especially for conversation with persons outside the monastic community' and 'a grate or window through which the enclosed religious can make confession or communication with persons outside the cloister'.[423] The examples for a grate or window are all from *Ancrene Wisse*, with two other

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[419] Gilchrist, *Contemplation*, p. 184. Sauer, 'Architecture of Desire', pp. 545-48. Hasenfratz, ed., 'Introduction'. See subsection 'The Architecture of Anchorholds'.

[420] *Ancrene Wisse: A Corrected Edition*, Part Two, lines 20-21, p. 20. Savage and Watson, *Anchoritic Spirituality*, p. 66.

[421] *Ancrene Wisse*, Part Two, lines 16-35, 259-61 (see the notes accompanying Lines 16-17).

[422] 'Parlour', *Middle English Dictionary*, ed. by Frances McSparran and others (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Library, 2000-2018) <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/> [accessed 24 September 2020].

[423] 'Parlour', *Middle English Dictionary*.

references from *Rule Minoresses*, a fifteenth-century Rule of St. Clare that stressed using the 'parlour' for confession.[424] Finally, a single source (the *Catholicon Anglicum*) uses the word to describe 'a conversation, conference'.[425] The Middle English word 'parlour', then, is strongly associated both with being physically set apart from the world, and with communication.

From *Ancrene Wisse*'s description alone, the 'parlour' remains ambiguous: it comprised of at least a window, and allowed limited communication with unspecified parties who were not the anchorite's servants. However, the details of exactly what 'others' would be conversing with the anchorite, and the physical layout of the parlour either as only a window or grate, or as a room attached to the cell, are unclear. The 'parlour' description is especially vague in comparison to the details about use and audiences for the other windows. In addition, the *Middle English Dictionary*'s reliance on *Ancrene Wisse* to define 'parlour' as a grate or window suggests this interpretation may have been read into the text, based on the other windows. Moreover, older editions of the text that still titled the work *Ancrene Riwle*—an 'editor's invention' with 'no medieval authority' that nevertheless continued to be used by Early English Text Society volumes—also indicates the need for updating this entry.[426] The modern meaning of parlour, connoting a Victorian room specifically for entertaining guests, may also be influencing ideas of how the medieval anchorite 'parlour' is viewed.

*Ancrene Wisse* also described gates as part of the cell; like the windows, gates controlled the anchorite's space by both keeping undesirable visitors and temptations

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[424] 'Parlour', *Middle English Dictionary*.
[425] 'Parlour', *Middle English Dictionary*.
[426] 'Parlour', *Middle English Dictionary*. Yoko Wada, 'What is', p. 1.

out, and allowing approved interactions in.[427] Not only is the anchorite warned against luring outside visitors to the gate, but the anchorite's servants are also not allowed to go beyond the gates without the anchorite's express permission.[428] In addition, the physical gate is blurred with the metaphorical, further complicating an understanding of how this feature functioned:

> …hald te i ti chambre. Ne fed tu nawt wiðuten þine gate tichnes, ah hald
> wiðinnen þin hercnunge, þi speche, ant ti sihðe, ant tun feaste hare ȝeten,
> muð ant ehe ant eare…

> […stay in your chamber, and do not feed your kids [goats] outside your
> gate, but keep your listening, your speech and your sight within, and close
> fast their gates, mouth and eye and ear.][429]

The gate is both a physical barrier and also the anchorite's body—just as the physical gate is shut tight against the world, so the anchorite's senses are open only to holy contemplation within the cell. Without further information the physical gate is ambiguous, like the parlour, but the gate's use as a rhetorical device in *Ancrene Wisse* suggests that the design of the gate is of less importance than the concept of preserving the internal space of the cell as apart from the world. These gates may have functioned as dividing points between various parts of the cell—for instance, a door may have divided the anchorite's and servants' living space, and/or the anchorite's space and the parlour room. *Ancrene Wisse*, then, described a compartmentalised cell divided by barriers of some kind with three windows, including a squint, a parlour window or room

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[427] Sarah Salih, 'Julian in Norwich: Heritage and Iconography', in *Julian of Norwich's Legacy: Medieval Mysticism and Post-Medieval Reception*, ed. by. Sarah Salih and Denise N. Baker (New York: Palgrave Macmillian, 2009), pp. 153-172 (p. 157).

[428] *Ancrene Wisse: A Corrected Edition*, Part Eight, Lines 41-43, p. 156, and 234-36, p. 162.

[429] *Ancrene Wisse: A Corrected Edition*, Part Two, Lines 813-16, p. 41. Savage and Watson, *Anchoritic Spirituality*, p. 86.

for visitors, and a window for contact with servants. However, as with *De Institutione Inclusarum*, details about the size of this cell, how these internal spaces were arranged, and where the cell was placed in relation to the church are lacking.

### B. The Model Cell

Current scholarly interpretations of cell construction and design overwhelming rely on medieval written sources, especially *Ancrene Wisse* and *De Institutione Inclusarum*. These anchoritic rules are also regularly cited together, specifically when describing the physical cell.[430] Sauer acknowledged 'the reality of the anchoritic cell is somewhat different from the idealised version presented in *Ancrene Wisse*', but her introduction and archaeological interpretation nevertheless relied on this model.[431] Jones' most recent monograph used documentary and archaeological primary sources to highlight variety in cell design, and his work is frequently cited throughout this chapter.[432] However, *Ancrene Wisse* and *De Institutione Inclusarum* are still focal points in the introduction.[433] This section demonstrates that these sources have significantly shaped current perceptions of cell design, and that archaeological evidence is interpreted within this model cell framework—despite the lack of evidence within textual or archaeological sources for a standardised anchorite cell.

*Ancrene Wisse* and *De Institutione Inclusarum* are often interpreted as reinforcing each other's descriptions of cell design. For instance, Salih reimagined Julian of Norwich's original anchorite cell (not the modern reconstruction) as a mix between these cells, even though Julian of Norwich's cell existed in an entirely different context from either of these sources.[434] In describing how Julian of Norwich's cell now

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430 Gilchrist, *Contemplation*, p. 184.
431 Sauer, 'Architecture of Desire', p. 546.
432 Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites*.
433 Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites*, pp. 10-11, 42, 44.
434 Salih, 'Julian in Norwich', pp. 156-57.

looks in comparison to its likely medieval form, Salih repeatedly referred to the model described by *Ancrene Wisse*, for instance by describing windows referenced in the text.[435] Even when discussing what the current reconstructed cell does *not* contain, Salih mentioned directives from *Ancrene Wisse*: 'The Cell is furnished as a chapel, and so, perhaps mindful of *Ancrene Wisse*'s rebuke to those who are inquisitive about the anchoress's sleeping quarters, has no heritage-style reproductions of domestic furnishings'.[436] Aelred's *De Institutione Inclusarum* is also mentioned between references to *Ancrene Wisse*, particularly in regard to the altar in the cell, which 'conforms to Aelred's recommendations'.[437] This indicates how impactful the anchorite cell described—albeit vaguely—in *Ancrene Wisse* continues to be, and also how *De Institutione Inclusarum* is also often used in tandem with *Ancrene Wisse* to strongly influence current interpretation.

This perceived similarity between the two cells is superficial, as *Ancrene Wisse* and *De Institutione Inclusarum* described distinct cells from different contexts. As already shown, Aelred's cell is not clearly attached to the church, and if a squint was assumed, it was not imperative to mention it alongside the access for high-status religious visitors and one external window.[438] In contrast, *Ancrene Wisse* elaborated on the audiences and purposes of three windows, including a squint; conceptualised the cell as attached to the church; and also described a compartmentalised cell divided by gates. Moreover, each source was written within a particular context, and extrapolating cell design from one context to a cell within another is a problematic interpretative leap. For example, Chapter 5 will show that *Ancrene Wisse* was most likely written in the Shropshire or Herefordshire area, in an area well-known as a hub of anchoritic

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[435] Salih, 'Julian in Norwich', p. 157.
[436] Salih, 'Julian in Norwich', p. 156.
[437] Salih, 'Julian in Norwich', p. 157.
[438] See this chapter, II, A.

activity—specifically, noble female anchoritic activity.[439] In many ways *Ancrene Wisse*

describes a very specific kind of anchoritic experience: female, highly literate, noble,

and set within a complicated web of political relationships unique to the Marcher

borderlands.[440] This context cannot be applied to Aelred's twelfth-century text, written

in a different cultural and religious milieu. However, Salih's associations of Julian of

Norwich's cell with these medieval texts demonstrates that this standardised cell

template is viewed as transcending contextual distinctions.[441] Although *De Institutione*

*Inclusarum* and *Ancrene Wisse* both describe how to live the anchoritic vocation, the

cells envisioned in each text are unique. Nonetheless, in current scholarship *Ancrene*

*Wisse* is used as a template for typical cell design, supplemented by Aelred's advice

concerning internal design.

A major issue with this interpretation of these sources is that *Ancrene Wisse* was

not offering a pragmatic explanation of cell design, but instead elucidating spiritual

attitudes to be cultivated by the anchorite; Hughes-Edwards described anchoritic

guidance writing as 'rich sources of spiritual ideology rather than of historical

practice'.[442] For instance, the symbolism of the cross-covered cloth used to restrict the

anchorite's sight is discussed in detail; the mention of the windows the cloths cover is

incidental.[443] Furthermore, the anchorite is given strict instructions in terms of which

windows she can speak to others through, and who she can speak with—again, the

construction of the windows is secondary to an understanding of the anchorite's

enclosure, and the necessary separation from the world.[444] The purpose behind

mentioning construction details in anchorite rules is to reinforce symbolic or

[439] Hasenfratz, 'Introduction'. McAvoy, *Medieval Anchoritisms*, pp. 148-52.
[440] Innes-Parker, 'Medieval Widowhood', 95-124. See also Chapter 1 and Chapter 5, II.
[441] Salih, 'Julian in Norwich', pp. 156-57.
[442] Hughes-Edwards, 'Anchoritism: The English', p. 136.
[443] *Ancrene Wisse*, Part Two, Lines 16-35.
[444] *Ancrene Wisse*, Part Two, Lines 259-61.

metaphorical interpretations of the anchorite's physical reality. Therefore, the details

mentioned in these sources do not offer a complete description of a cell, and were never

meant to. Still, despite a description which lacks many important aspects, including

approximate size, distance from the altar, and a lack of clarity in terms of the meaning

and use of the parlour, Hasenfratz drew a 'Conjectural Reconstruction' of the cell (Fig.

4.1).[445] Although this reconstruction includes all the central elements mentioned in

*Ancrene Wisse*, it is almost entirely fanciful—the written description offered by *Ancrene*

*Wisse* is simply too vague, and everything from the size of each room, to the placement

of particular windows within each section of the cell, to the size and shape of the church

the cell is attached to, is speculative. In a 2007 article, Hasenfratz used this

reconstruction again, adding labels to indicate sacred space, secular space, and domestic

space for the anchorite.[446]

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[445] Hasenfratz, 'Introduction'. See subsection 'The Architecture of Anchorholds'.
[446] Hasenfratz, 'The Anchorhold', p. 12, Figure 2.

**This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.**

**Figure 4.1:** An interpretation of what the *Ancrene Wisse* cell may have looked like (Hasenfratz, 'Introduction'. See subsection 'The Architecture of Anchorholds').

Some details which have been interpreted in a literal sense may have been purely metaphorical: a prime example is the description in *Ancrene Wisse* of the anchorite kneeling within her own grave to see the Eucharist through the squint.[447] Scholars debate whether this was a metaphorical description, intended to make the anchorite think about her position as dead to the world, instead of a literal grave.[448] An anchorite enclosed in London in 1513, Simon Appulby, included a request as part of his will to be buried in a tomb already prepared within the cell, but again it is unclear if this

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[447] *Ancrene Wisse*, Part Two, lines 815-16.
[448] Jones, 'Anchorites and Hermits', pp. 11-12. Gilchrist, *Contemplation*, p. 190.

was exceptional or the norm.[449] Indeed, the anchorite being buried within the cell brings up a host of other questions: Could the cell be reused? How would those burying the anchorite enter the cell without an entry point? The anchorite cells at Lewes, Sussex offer answers to some of these questions, although the excavation is rarely referenced. As already discussed, the three separate cells show the development of anchoritic activity at the site over time, with the first cell having no evidence of a grave, the second including a performative grave, and the final cell including a squint recess with a deep functional grave that was discovered with a skeleton inside.[450] This shows that at Lewes, the concept of kneeling within the grave began as a performative act that was part of the anchorite's devotional practice, and later involved a literal burial within the cell. Entry points to the cells are unclear, but the cells were not always reused, as they were rebuilt at three different points. Of course these examples should not be taken as indicative of all anchoritic experience—it is likely that different regions and particular churches had various traditions. However, the cells at Lewes show that interpretation varied not only over time, but even at the same location with an established anchoritic tradition, and modern scholars must be cautious about assuming medieval interpretation and practice was homogenous.

Viewing the *Ancrene Wisse* cell as a building template misinterprets the reasons why physical features of the cell are mentioned, and also assumes a standardised experience that is not evidenced in written or archaeological sources. Meanwhile, archaeological evidence is almost always presented as a physical example of an element seen in the literary record, even though the archaeological record is not consistent with the concept of a standardised cell, as section IV of this chapter demonstrates. Architectural descriptions in anchoritic rules are non-specific by design, as the spirit of

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[449] Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites*, pp. 103-04. Dowding, '"*Item receyvyd*"', pp. 127-28.
[450] Victoria Yuskaitis, 'Performative Anchorite', forthcoming.

enclosure was more important than, for instance, the practical realities of the form and function of gates. Ultimately this lack of clarity in both sources could indicate that the text purposely left room for interpretations specific to particular churches and anchorites. The form of the access point for high-status visitors in *De Institutione Inclusarum*, the design and use of the parlour and parlour window and gates in *Ancrene Wisse*, and the unspecified audience for the parlour window, may have remained vague intentionally in an implicit acknowledgement that in practice these features would be tailored to specific churches due to variations in funding, cell size, and church and cell design. The differences between cell design in these anchoritic rules emphasises how context impacted the creation of the ideal cell, and the following sections will show that cell design variety is evident in the textual and archaeological record, thus demonstrating that the concept of the model cell so often articulated in current scholarship in not supported by medieval evidence.

III. Medieval Written Sources and the Construction of Anchorite Cells

Medieval historical and literary documents other than anchorite rules include limited details of cell design, and can be divided into three categories: enclosure ceremonies; hagiography; and other records. Jones' work is frequently cited in this section, as his most recent monograph (2019) contains multiple references to literary sources that describe architectural features, and his study of enclosure ceremonies (2012) is central to my analysis.[451] None of these sources functioned as blueprints for cell design, meaning that architectural references are brief and incomplete. However,

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[451] Eddie A. Jones, 'Rites of Enclosure: The English *Ordines* for the Enclosing of Anchorites, S. XII-S. XVI', *Traditio,* 67 (2012), 145-234. See also Jones' earlier publication that also discussed enclosure ceremonies: Jones, 'Ceremonies of Enclosure', pp. 34-49. Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites.*

these details demonstrate that textual sources highlight variety and ambiguity in cell

design, not conformity to a standard.

### A. Enclosure Ceremonies

Enclosure ceremonies described the liturgical rite for anchorites; by the end of

the rite, the anchorite was symbolically dead to the world and enclosed within the cell.
[452] For the purpose of this thesis, I will not focus on the liturgical details, but instead on

brief references to aspects of the cell that relate to construction or internal design. This

thesis also focuses specifically on English examples.

#### 1. Doorways

Enclosure ceremonies explicitly mention walling up the entrance to the cell

behind an anchorite to conclude the ceremony, but details about what this entrance

looked like and how it was blocked are unclear. The location of the cell and the cell's

entrance is not clearly articulated either; once the ceremony at the altar was finished, the

bishop or priest led the anchorite by the hand to the entrance of the cell, and after the

bishop or priest blessed the cell, the anchorite was enclosed.[453] It is unclear if the

entrance was an internal doorway in the chancel, or an external doorway in one of the

cell walls, or even if the cell was located close to the altar where the ceremony was

held. In fact, two continental examples from the Rhineland simply state the anchorite is

blocked into the cell, but do not specify a doorway.[454] English cells may have followed

a similar protocol. There is no mention of whether a door was locked behind the

anchorite, with the key outside the cell, or if an entrance was blocked in without a

doorway being preserved. If the anchorite was sealed in with no doorway, then surely

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[452] Clay, *The Hermits and Anchorites*, pp. 193-98. Jones, 'Anchorites and Hermits', pp. 11-12.

[453] Examples from two different enclosure ceremonies: Clay, *The Hermits and Anchorites*,
     Appendix A, pp. 193-98 (p. 196). Jones, 'Anchorites and Hermits', pp. 11-12.

[454] Jones, 'Rites of Enclosure', p. 157.

this would have to be fully completed after the ceremony—it would be arduous work, especially considering the thickness of the medieval walls in cells like Much Wenlock. Cells made of wattle and daub would also have to be sealed, but again enclosure ceremonies do not discuss the practical realities of what enclosure would entail. The ceremonies emphasise the importance of shutting the anchorite away from the world and sealing him/her within the cell—and the lack of clarity regarding the practical realities of enclosure leaves open the possibility of cells with or without doorways.

### 2. Altars

The first enclosure ceremony to have different ceremonies for each gender and to specifically exclude the presence of an altar in only female anchorite cells is included in Henry Chichele's fifteenth-century pontificals, which demonstrate a concern for reform and countering heterodoxy.[455] Before this, English enclosure ceremonies 'all state explicitly that they may be used for men or women' and gendered distinctions regarding altars were not mentioned.[456] The only difference between the sexes in pre-fifteenth century manuscripts was where the soon-to-be-anchorite waited within the church at the beginning of the ceremony, indicating a focus on status instead of gender: clerics in the middle of the choir, laymen at the door of the choir, and women in the western part of the church.[457] It is striking that each of these groups followed the same enclosure ceremony, and that no further distinctions were made between genders or status during the ceremony itself, or once the anchorite was enclosed.[458] This clearly indicates that in medieval literary sources, an altar was normal and expected for both

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[455] Jones, 'Rites of Enclosure', p. 168.
[456] Jones, 'Rites of Enclosure', p. 161. This claim is based on Jones' survey of pontificals, which included fourteen examples in British libraries that have the enclosure ceremony rite (pp. 146-51).
[457] Jones, 'Rites of Enclosure', pp. 160, 168.
[458] Jones, 'Rites of Enclosure', pp. 160, 168.

genders, and as much a part of the cell as the squint or external windows, until the fifteenth century. Even so, the rite described in the Chichele pontificals is one version of this ceremony—other areas in England in the fifteenth century may still have followed previous ceremonies that did not differentiate by gender.

As already discussed in the section above, both *Ancrene Wisse* and *De Institutione Inclusarum* mention the altar and were originally written for female anchorites; each source was also later adapted for use by a wider audience including both sexes. This strongly indicates that altars were present in cells regardless of sex. The altar is associated with only male anchorites by antiquarian and modern scholars, despite the lack of evidence for this distinction; the reasons behind this will be explored further within this chapter.[459] The role of the altar in anchorite cells is significantly understudied, and because of gendered assumptions, the altar is usually associated with the performance of clerical rites by ordained priests. However, the purpose of the altar must be re-evaluated: instead of being necessary for male anchorites to perform liturgical functions, the inclusion of altars in cells for both sexes shows that it should be interpreted as a focal point for personal devotion.

### 3. Graves and Oratories

Another feature described in many enclosure ceremonies is the open grave.[460] The Chichele pontificals include a grave in both male and female cells, and further stipulate that this grave, placed in the oratory or chapel, should continue to be enlarged by the anchorite during enclosure.[461] Lay recluses did not require these features; however, the Chichele pontificals stipulated that women anchorites needed an oratory

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[459] Salih, 'Julian in Norwich', p. 155. See section V.
[460] Jones, 'Rites of Enclosure', p. 160.
[461] Jones, 'Rites of Enclosure', p. 163.

and grave, but not an altar.[462] Earlier enclosure ceremonies mention graves in less detail,

and some do not mention a grave at all.[463] As already shown, *Ancrene Wisse* also

mentioned a grave within the cell and vividly described the anchorite continuing to dig

out the grave by hand.[464] *De Institutione Inclusarum*, however, did not mention a grave,

although Aelred envisioned an altar to be placed within the oratory.[465] This

demonstrates the following: some cells contained open graves, usually in an oratory, as

part of devotional practice; in some cases the oratory may have been a separate room

within the cell, which included graves and/or altars; and graves and oratories were not

gendered features, but appeared in both male and female cells. Indeed, pre-fifteenth

century pontificals suggest that status—lay or religious—was more likely to determine

whether a cell had an oratory, grave, and/or altar than gender.

### C. Hagiography

Typically, hagiographical depictions of anchorites do not describe cell layout or

construction, but the two exceptions discussed in this section demonstrate how

occasional references to cell design also demonstrate complexity instead of conformity.

Multiple versions of the *Life and Miracles of St Dunstan* by different hagiographers

survive; the excerpt focused on in this section is included in the version written by the

monk Osbern (d. 1094), which records how Dunstan (d. 988) went to the church at

Glastonbury and built a cell attached to it, where he lived as a recluse.[466] This

description is part of a hagiographical trope focusing on memorialising Dunstan.[467] The

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462 Jones, 'Rites of Enclosure', pp. 163, 168.
463 Jones, 'Rites of Enclosure', p. 172.
464 *Ancrene Wisse*, Part Two, lines 815-16. See section II, B.
465 Aelred of Rievaulx, *De Institutione Inclusarum*, Capitulum xiii, line 582, p. 15.
466 *Memorials of St Dunstan, Archbishop of* Canterbury, ed. by William Stubbs, The Chronicles and Memorials of Great Britain and Ireland during the Middle Ages, 253 vols (London: Longman & Co, 1874), vol. 63, pp. 1, 83.
467 *Memorials of St Dunstan,* vol. 63, pp. 71, 83.

chronicle indicated that Dunstan built the cell himself, and that the construction was rough, like a small lean-to; indeed, the cell was likened to a grave.[468] Surprisingly, only Licence has briefly mentioned the *Life* in the context of the archaeology of anchorite cells.[469] One reason for this may be the hagiographical narrative: the astonishment the text conveys about the miserableness of the hut Dunstan chose to erect for himself is meant to underscore Dunstan's holiness and commitment, as opposed to creating a manual of how to build the ideal cell. Osbern wrote other Saints' Lives that also stressed the crudeness of cells or caves that early saints lived in, emphasising that Osbern and his contemporaries 'saw solitary withdrawal as an ideal to which saints should aspire'—a sentiment that resonated with English and Norman audiences.[470] Further scholarly analysis of how depictions of the cell changed over time in various editions of the *Life* is welcome, but this is outside the scope of this thesis. Although it would have been possible to build rough lean-to constructions by hand, other more substantial cells such as the two-storey stone cell at Much Wenlock, or even the elaborate, deep splay at Ellesmere, would have required more specialised construction.

Dunstan's cell was also reportedly built during a very early period of reclusive activity, when hermiticism and anchoritism were still not clearly defined; such a crude cell may not have been intended for constant habitation, and indeed Dunstan's later activities include advising kings, advocating for Benedictine reform, and eventually being appointed Archbishop of Canterbury.[471] Hughes-Edwards also argues that early anchoritism may not have neatly fitted into the prescribed categories of anchorite or hermit articulated by the thirteenth century: 'A metaphorical widening of the anchorhold is needed, so that conceptions of early anchoritism can include arrangements

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[468] *Memorials of St Dunstan*, vol. 63, p. 83.
[469] Licence, *Hermits & Recluses*, p. 88.
[470] Licence, *Hermits & Recluses*, p. 64.
[471] *Memorials of St Dunstan*, vol. 63, pp. 94-97. Jones, 'Anchorites and Hermits', pp. 7-8.

that contradict the image of the space-deprived recluse, locked in her narrow, single-occupancy cell'.[472] Cells of this kind could also have been constructed by the anchorites themselves, as hagiographers like Osbern assumed.[473] Dunstan's hagiography shows that cells could be more temporary, less sophisticated constructions that did not include elements like altars or graves indicated by anchorite rules or enclosure ceremonies, and also that at least in some cases, anchorites had input into the design of their cells.

Other hagiographies offer glimpses of cell design through architectural details embedded in the wider narrative; in the same way that anchoritic rules did not offer a cell blueprint, hagiographies like *The Life of Saint Wulfric* (d. 1154), finished by prior John of Forde in 1185, only reveal sparse details of the anchorite's physical surroundings. [474] Pauline Matarasso acknowledged that the cell 'is not described but can be roughly reconstructed from the stories [in the *Life*]' and outlined the following architectural details: cell placement on the north side of the chancel; a raised altar with a step placed against the east wall; a chest to the left of the altar containing the anchorite's belongings; a window in the north wall; a crude bed; a privy with a door (*cellula necessariorum*); another shuttered window for speaking to visitors; a door to the outside world, with the key held by Wulfric's servant; and a door allowing Wulfric entrance to the church itself. [475] Wulfric's access to the church is discussed in more detail in section V of this chapter. This set-up implies an inner and outer chamber, with the inner chamber including the entrance into the church functioning as Wulfric's living space, and the outer chamber serving as a place for interactions with servants or guests, similar

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[472] Hughes-Edwards, 'Anchoritism: The English', p. 136.

[473] Licence, *Hermits & Recluses*, p. 87-88.

[474] John of Forde, *The Life of Wulfric of Haselbury, Anchorite*, ed. by Pauline Matarasso, Cistercian Fathers Series 79 (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2011). Pauline Matarasso, 'Introduction', in *The Life of Wulfric of Haselbury, Anchorite*, ed. by Pauline Matarasso, Cistercian Fathers Series 79 (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2011), pp. 1-80 (p. 12).

[475] Matarasso, 'Introduction', pp. 6-8; quoted p. 6.

to the *Ancrene Wisse* cell.[476] This outer chamber may have extended alongside the nave.[477] Further analysis is out of the scope of this thesis, but this text highlights that like anchoritic rules, architectural details mentioned in hagiography are usually not intended to provide a complete cell description, but rather to facilitate the edifying narrative. John of Forde specified that the cell was unoccupied before Wulfric was enclosed.[478] Unlike Dunstan, then, Wulfric moved into a substantial cell that had already been constructed for a previous occupant, and therefore had no control over design. In Dunstan's hagiography, the act of building the crude cell functioned as a key example to highlight his humility; in Wulfric's hagiography, the cell details are incidental and mentioned as part of the context for other narratives.[479] These texts indicate that pre-thirteenth century cell design traditions depicted in hagiography were diverse—from temporary cell constructions to complex, multi-roomed cells—and that the details of cell design served various roles within the hagiographies themselves.

### D. Other Medieval Records

Other records of various kinds also reference cell design, but are linked to specific circumstances and individuals, making it difficult to extrapolate about wider experience. For instance, the archives of St John's College, Cambridge include a brief description of a cell comprised of '4 little chambers for the anchoress at the nunnery in Stamford'.[480] This cell was as lavish as it was substantial, as furnishings included cushions, a canopy bed, and carpets.[481] A compilation of papal records from 1398-1404

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[476] Matarasso, 'Introduction', p. 6.
[477] Matarasso, 'Introduction', p. 7.
[478] Matarasso, 'Introduction', p. 6.
[479] Note how the privy is mentioned as part of a story depicting John overcoming demonic temptation—the architecture is not the main focus. John of Forde, *The Life of Wulfric*, 1.21 (pp. 126-27).
[480] Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites*, pp. 58-60.
[481] Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites*, pp. 58-60.

included a 1401 indult to Emma Scherman, a female anchorite enclosed at Pontefract,

which allowed her a 'little garden…for the sake of taking fresh air, — on account of the

tumults and clamours of the people in the said place'.[482] Scherman was also given

permission to leave the cell once a year for pilgrimage—this cell must have included a

doorway into the garden, as well as a doorway or gate from the cell and garden

complex.[483] The accounts of the churchwardens of Rye also recorded paying for a key

to an anchorite's door in 1513, and then adding a chimney to the cell in 1518.[484] At

Faversham, Kent, medieval church records indicate the presence of two anchorites

enclosed at a single parish church at the same time, in different cells: William

Thornbury, a male anchorite, and also an unnamed female anchorite.[485]

Various references in wills to servants of anchorites indicate that a separate

chamber for servants may have been part of the anchorite cell, although it is also

possible that the servants lived separately.[486] In some cases, the context of the source

makes it clear that the anchorite lived with the servant: for instance, a fifteenth-century

female anchorite in Warwick woke from a disturbing dream late at night to pray, and

was joined by 'a little maid child' who also lived in the cell.[487] *The Chronicle of

Lanercost* includes an account of an anchorite named Emma, already mentioned in

Chapter 3 when discussing antiquarian claims of a link with Church Preen.[488] This

account describes a spacious cell with some furniture (a bed and lamp), space for

receiving visitors, room for a handmaid who lived with her, a view into the church, and

an oratory with an altar.[489] An early fourteenth-century male anchorite, Brother Thomas,

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[482] Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites*, pp. 50-51.
[483] Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites*, pp. 50-51.
[484] Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites*, pp. 49-50.
[485] Sauer, 'Architecture of Desire', pp. 556-57. 'Anchorites in Faversham', 24-39.
[486] Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites*, pp. 52-53.
[487] Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites*, pp. 87-89.
[488] See Chapter 3, V., A., 1.
[489] *The Chronicle of Lanercost*, pp. 151-52.

requested permission for a door to be added to his cell, in anticipation of becoming
infirm and requiring assistance as he grew older, and to allow for his burial in the
churchyard.[490] This request was granted, as long as the door was locked and the key
held by the vicar.[491] This cell did not contain a grave, and the anchorite must have been
blocked in without a door up to this point. These glimpses of cell design showcase
significant variety instead of conformity, thereby challenging the concept of the model
cell.

## IV. The Archaeological Record and Medieval Written Sources

The archaeological record also indicates great variety in cell construction and
design, and shows that many of the elements included in the cells described in enclosure
ceremonies and anchoritic rules, such as graves and altars, are missing from
archaeological examples. This section highlights three case studies in Surrey and Sussex
at Leatherhead, Compton, and Lewes. These examples inform a discussion of
architectural features mentioned in written sources—including graves, altars, and
doorways—and demonstrates their complexity. Moreover, the cells at Leatherhead and
Compton are associated with male anchorite-priests, and section V of this chapter
discusses these cells in more detail.[492] I have assessed each of these sites in person
according to my archaeological methodology. For plans, measurements, and feature
sketches, see Appendix B: Church Plans and Appendix C: Anchoritic Features. Next,
temporary cell constructions and freestanding cells are assessed, again highlighting the
variety of construction styles and materials. The section concludes with considering the

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[490] Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites*, pp. 100-01.
[491] Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites*, pp. 100-01.
[492] Section V., B., 2.

iconography of anchorite cells and how these depictions support the diversity of the archaeological record.

A. Case Studies: Leatherhead, Compton, and Lewes

The archaeological evidence for anchorite cells at Leatherhead, Surrey; Compton, Surrey; and Lewes, Sussex indicate that cells could vary significantly in size, shape, and design, and that altars and graves were not always included within cells, despite written sources such as enclosure ceremonies suggesting otherwise. At Leatherhead, a blocked door and a nearby blocked squint are still visible on the external north wall of the chancel; the door and squint face the main altar. In 1908, Philip Mainwaring Johnston excavated underneath these features and discovered 'massive flint walls, 3 ft. [0.9m] thick, of a square chamber, exactly 8 ft. x 8 ft [2.4m x 2.4 m]'.[493] This would have been an extremely small cell—similar in size to the cell at Compton, Surrey, which measures 1.25m x 1.96m. At Leatherhead, the blocked squint is located above the doorway, suggesting the cell would have been two-storey, and that the anchorite would have used a ladder to access the squint; Johnston also interpreted this loft as space for the anchorite to sleep, but there is no clear evidence for this. [494] The cell at Compton is often interpreted as two-storey, with the second floor of the chancel serving as the anchorite's oratory; however, my archaeological analysis indicates the space would have been one-storey when in use as a cell.[495] Appendix C demonstrates that the cell's roof is irregular and has been raised to accommodate the second storey, and the second-storey entrance does not match the first-storey Norman entrance into the cell, indicating that it was also added later.[496] At both Compton and Leatherhead, the

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[493] Johnston, 'An Anchorite's Cell', p. 223.
[494] Johnston, 'An Anchorite's Cell', p. 225.
[495] Gibson, 'Compton Church', p. 154. Gilchrist, *Contemplation*, p. 187.
[496] Alan Bott, *A Guide to the Parish Church of Saint Nicholas Compton Surrey*, Church Booklet ([n.p.]: [n. pub.], 2000), p. 27. Bott noted that 'there are signs of an earlier, lower roof-

cell was too small to include an altar, never mind a separate room or area as an oratory. Graves are also not extant—at Compton, no trace of a grave is visible, and at Leatherhead, the excavation did not uncover a grave.

The cells at Compton and Surrey both also include medieval doorways; at Compton, the door has been removed, but a heavy curtain blocks the entrance into the cell, and at Leatherhead, the door remains blocked. Antiquarian researchers interpreted these cells as belonging to male anchorite-priests, and argued that the anchorites were able to leave the cell to perform liturgical functions at the main altar; this will be discussed in more detail in Section V of this chapter. However, these doors would most likely have been locked from the outside, providing access to confessors or servants, but still keeping the anchorite enclosed. In both of these cases, the cells were placed close to the medieval altar, and the squint allowed an intimate view of the Eucharist. These examples indicate that the size of the cell did not always permit the inclusion of a grave or altar; that cells could be one- or two-storey; and that the blocking in of the anchorite could mean being locked in from the outside, instead of sealing the entrance, especially if the medieval walls were thick and stone-built.

The three cells at Lewes, Sussex also illustrate the complexity of cell construction and design, and show that ideas about design changed over time; this site was described in detail in Chapter 2.[497] The three cells indicate successive phases of anchoritic activity.[498] At Compton, there are also two cells, with the earlier pre-Norman cell placed in the north chancel wall, and the Norman cell discussed above placed in the

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line', but also recounted the hypothesis of the second storey of the chancel functioning as an oratory for 'an anchorite in priest's orders'.

[497] See Chapter 2, III, H.

[498] Yuskaitis, 'Performative Anchorite', forthcoming.

south chancel wall alongside the Norman two-storey chancel.[499] Only a squint survives

of the first cells at Lewes and Compton; both squints are simple in design, and set into

rudimentary recesses.[500] The later cell at Compton features a more elaborate cruciform

squint, and a squint recess with a shelf for the anchorite to lean on.[501] Future cells at

Lewes also show elaboration. Only a small portion of the squint recess of the second

squint survives, and the squint is now lost due to the creation of a hallway from the

vestry into the chancel.[502] However, a shallow performative grave survives directly

underneath the squint recess, while the final cell at Lewes includes a squint set into a

recess, with a deep, functional grave as the floor of the recess.[503] The various cells at

Lewes and Compton show that even at the same site, ideas about cell design and

construction developed over time, and the performative and functional graves show that

even the same feature could be re-interpreted for different purposes within cells.

Hughes-Edwards concluded a short section about anchoritic archaeology, which

focused on the lack of available evidence, by comparing what she described as a four-

room cell at Chester-le-Street, Durham, and the tiny cell at Compton.[504] Chapter 2 has

already shown that this interpretation of the Chester-le-Street cell is flawed.

Nonetheless, this comparison still prompted Hughes-Edwards to argue that 'a

consideration of the anchorhold's two archaeological extremes implies a material

culture intentionally as individualized as the spirituality of its incumbent'.[505] The

archaeological evidence discussed above and in previous chapters demonstrates that

even among cells of similar size or design, individualisation is still evident. These

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[499] Boston, *Guide to the Church*, pp. 5, 15, 18-19. Boston described both cells, although the
    dating I suggest is from my own archaeological analysis.
[500] Yuskaitis, 'Performative Anchorite', forthcoming.
[501] Sauer, 'Architecture of Desire', p. 555.
[502] Yuskaitis, 'Performative Anchorite', forthcoming.
[503] Yuskaitis, 'Performative Anchorite', forthcoming.
[504] Hughes-Edwards, 'Anchoritism: The English', p. 143.
[505] Hughes-Edwards, 'Anchoritism: The English', p. 143.

differences in cell design indicate the particular context that shaped an individual anchorite's environment, and examining anchoritic archaeology using my typology and methodology allows scholars to assess the factors that influenced cell design, and to consider how this would have impacted everyday lived experience.

### B. Temporary Cell Constructions

The archaeological record also indicates that some cells were more temporary constructions, probably built with wattle and daub and a thatched roof, instead of stone-built structures. Antiquarian researchers discovered anchorite squints with timber slots indicative of timber roof beams above the squint. At Bengeo, Hertfordshire, two slots that would have supported roof beams are placed above two features: a squint set into a recess, and another recess without a squint that would also have been part of the cell.[506] Licence noted the presence of a third slot, indicating a roof shaped like an isosceles triangle over these features.[507] At Chipping Ongar, Essex, a square slot for a wooden beam was discovered above a squint set into a recess, along with evidence for rude plaster flooring.[508] Other sites with anchorite squints in Essex, including Chickney, East Ham, and Lindsell, were described and/or excavated between the 1920s and 1940s, but no structural evidence such as stone foundations were discovered, and all of the cells mentioned so far were characterised as a timber lean-to or a lean-to shed.[509]

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[506] Michlethwaite, 'On the Remains', 26-29.

[507] Licence, *Hermits & Recluses*, p. 88.

[508] Dewick, 'On the Discovery', 284-88. Licence, *Hermits & Recluses*, p. 88. 'History of St Martin's Chipping Ongar', *St Martin's Chipping Ongar with St Peter's Shelley* (2020) <http://www.stmartinongar.org.uk/index.php/about-us/history/st-martin-s-history> [accessed 24 September 2020].

[509] **Chickney:** Komlosy, 'The Parish and Church', p. 162. Steer, 'Chickney Church', pp. 94-95. **East Ham:** Hodson, 'Anker-hold', 344-46. Benton, 'Archaeological Notes', p. 318. Licence, *Hermits & Recluses*, pp. 88-89. 'A Tour of the Church', *The Parish of Holy Trinity East Ham, St Mary Magdalene's* ([n.d.]) <https://easthamparish.org.uk/churches/st-mary-magdalene-church/a-tour-on-the-church/> [accessed 24 September 2020]. **Lindsell:** Benton, 'Archaeological Notes', 316-20. Licence, *Hermits & Recluses*, p. 88.

These antiquarian-style descriptions exaggerate the simplicity of these structures, in the same way that the hagiographical description of Dunstan's hut emphasised the crudeness of the space. However, the lack of stone foundations or other structural remains, and the presence of timber slots for timber roof beams, suggest that not all cells were stone-built; cells constructed of wattle and daub with thatched roofs would have been quicker and less expensive to build, and easier to dismantle when no longer in use. Cells of this design may have also been more common pre-thirteenth-century, when hermiticism and anchoritism were not as clearly defined, and cells may not have been intended to be continually inhabited—both Dunstan and Christina of Markyate moved in and out of enclosure.[510] Of course, early examples of stone-built cells are also evident, such as the second cell at Compton; however, no foundations were discovered for the first cell at Compton, and this cell was also probably not stone-built.[511] Stone-built cells are much more likely to survive and/or be repurposed—therefore, the archaeological record may be underrepresenting cells of more temporary construction, and a stone-built cell should not be assumed as the context for the few details available about cell construction from medieval written sources.

C. Freestanding Cells

Freestanding cells located within the churchyard but unconnected to the main building are also understudied and underrepresented in archaeological and literary analysis. In current scholarship, freestanding cells are often mentioned without further citation.[512] Freestanding cells are associated with male anchorite-priests in current scholarship, despite the lack of medieval evidence; this is discussed further in section V

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[510] See Chapter 1, II and section III, B in this chapter.
[511] Boston, *Guide to the Church,* p. 15.
[512] Licence, *Hermits & Recluses*, p. 89. Gilchrist, *Contemplation*, p. 185. Clay, *Hermits and Anchorites*, p. 82.

of this chapter.[513] Although Licence provided archaeological examples of cells attached

to churches, his brief reference to cells 'labelled "houses" (*mansiones*) or "cottages"

(*tuguria*), [which] might sometimes have stood alone in cemeteries' does not include

specific examples.[514] William Thornbury, a male anchorite enclosed at Faversham,

Kent, is a used as an example of this phenomenon by Sauer, but the interpretation of

enclosure in the churchyard is antiquarian.[515] Thornbury's 1480 will described a chapel

and parvise, which the anonymous author assumed 'in all probability, he [Thornbury]

had built'.[516] The will stipulated that the vicar succeeding Thornbury after his enclosure

'shall sufficiently repair and sustain certain tenements', including the features described

above.[517] These buildings are identified as either or both a small building attached to the

south aisle, or a chapel that used to stand in the graveyard.[518] This interpretation is

accepted uncritically in current research, but the medieval will does not connect these

buildings with a cell, and more evidence is needed before Thornbury's cell can be

conclusively placed in the churchyard.[519] Darwin also included a primary source

translation of the enclosure of the monk Robert Cherde in 1402, which indicated that the

cell was built near the parish church and placed within the cemetery.[520] An example of a

fifteenth-century, two-storey freestanding cell near a parish church also still survives

with significant post-medieval alterations at Fore in Co. Westmeath, Ireland; although

outside of a strictly English context, this cell design may also have been used in

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[513] Yuskaitis, 'Archaeology and Medievalism', p. 143. Salih, 'Julian in Norwich', p. 155.

[514] Licence, *Hermits & Recluses,* p. 89.

[515] Sauer, 'Architecture of Desire', pp. 556-57. Sauer cited Warren, who provided a translation of Thornbury's funeral brass; Warren cited the article 'Anchorites in Faversham': Warren, *Anchorites and their Patrons*, plate 2 (facing p. 114). 'Anchorites in Faversham', 24-39.

[516] 'Anchorites in Faversham', pp. 26-27.

[517] 'Anchorites in Faversham', pp. 26-27.

[518] 'Anchorites in Faversham', pp. 26-27.

[519] Sauer, 'Architecture of Desire', pp. 556-57.

[520] Darwin, *The English Mediaeval*, p. 48.

England.[521] The presence of freestanding cells is assumed in current scholarship, but the prevalence, construction, and function of these buildings is largely unknown.

Major issues with studying freestanding cells from an archaeological point of view are that medieval buildings within the churchyard rarely survive, and that the archaeological assessment of churchyards has received little scholarly attention.[522] In addition, it would be difficult to identify typological characteristics unique to cells from foundation remains alone—without further evidence, a small building that used to stand in the churchyard would be hard to conclusively identify as a cell.[523] Twentieth-century aesthetic ideals valuing churches 'set upon a broad and perfectly manicured expanse of lawn, unencumbered even by Georgian tomb-chests' indicate how significantly different the modern churchyard looks from the medieval, where churchyards were crowded with graves, priests' houses, charnel houses, belfries, and more.[524] Cells unconnected to the church may have been more popular before the thirteenth century, when hermiticism and anchoritism were more fluid; for instance, Christina of Markyate's first period of enclosure in a hermitage outside a town was not associated with a church, and Aelred's twelfth-century cell in *De Institutione Inclusarum* did not have an explicit link to a church building, unlike *Ancrene Wisse*.[525] This topic urgently requires more research, and freestanding cells are also currently underrepresented in the archaeological data.

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[521] Colmán Ó Clabaigh, OSB, 'Anchorites in Late Medieval Ireland', in *Anchoritic Traditions of Medieval Europe*, ed. by Liz Herbert McAvoy (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2010), pp. 153-77 (pp. 175-76).

[522] Hasenfratz, 'The Anchorhold', pp. 8-9.

[523] Yuskaitis, 'Archaeology and Medievalism', p. 143.

[524] Alec Clifton-Taylor, *English Parish Churches as Works of Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 87. Hasenfratz, 'The Anchorhold', pp. 8-9.

[525] Licence, *Hermits & Recluses*, p. 2.

D. Enclosure in Text and Iconography

The variety of cell construction and design visible in the archaeological record challenges the concept of a standardised cell, and also introduces a new context to consider ambiguity about the physical construction of anchorite cells in medieval texts. The act of enclosure and cell design would have been difficult to standardise, if standardisation was even desired, considering the variety seen in archaeological examples. Scrutinising the overall patterns within English enclosure ceremonies supports this conclusion, as continental enclosure ceremonies 'show markedly less variation among themselves than do the English texts', suggesting a degree of conformity in continental examples not seen in English ones.[526] Although details of these ceremonies varied, 'what seem to have been consistently important, rather, are elements of initiation: a reflection of the life change…and the sense that...this was not a time of death but of new beginnings'.[527] In this sense, the minutiae of *how* enclosure was carried out and the cell was designed were less important—the essential aspect was that the anchorite was enclosed, literally and symbolically, through a mixture of meaningful ritual and literal action. Although there was a model of how to live an anchoritic life, the ideal anchorite cell in both anchoritic rules and enclosure ceremonies still remained vaguely defined, both because this physical reality was of secondary importance to the mental and spiritual approach of the anchorite, and because the physical reality of enclosure was shaped by so many factors that could not be accounted for in a more generalised text, including regional and church preferences, and the needs of the individual anchorite.

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[526] Jones, 'Rites of Enclosure', p. 157.
[527] Jones, 'Rites of Enclosure', p. 175.

Iconographic depictions of anchorite cells reinforce that the construction and design of the physical cell was less important than the symbolic representation of enclosure. Depictions of anchorites are uncommon, but two illustrations from pontificals show the anchorite in the act of being enclosed by the bishop (Fig. 4.2, 4.3).[528] In one image, the anchorite looks out from a cell window as the bishop concludes the rite, and in the other, the bishop stands outside the entrance of the cell, and the viewer can only see the anchorite's back as she/he enters. The cells in both images are stylised and the perspective is distorted, with the bishop as tall as or taller than the roof; after all, 'it was not the intent of the artists to represent the actual architectural space of the anchorholds, but instead to show them as symbolic spaces'.[529] Both cells are depicted as compact, one-room houses with peaked roofs; no entrance is visible in the cell where the anchorite is looking out the window, and in the other cell a barred external window is visible, but no door at the entrance the anchorite is using, implying that the anchorite would be walled in. Nevertheless, an image of Perceval visiting an anchorite in the *Queste del Saint Graal* shows the knight using a knocker on a door outside another stylised cell, with no evident window (Fig. 4.4).[530] These images emphasise not the cell itself, but the anchorite's enclosure within the cell, again demonstrating that this symbolic and literal action was of more importance than design. Moreover, each of these three depictions includes different details of cell design, including an entrance, windows (barred and unbarred), and door—even within stylised

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[528] Hasenfratz, 'The Anchorhold', p. 18, Figures 3-4. Clay, *The Hermits and Anchorites*, Plates XXVIII, 'Enclosing an Anchoress', p. 93, and XXIX, 'Enclosing an Anchoress', p. 96. Warren, *Anchorites and their Patrons*, Plate 1, 'Enclosure of an Anchoress' (facing p. 114).

[529] Hasenfratz, 'The Anchorhold', p. 18.

[530] Hasenfratz, 'The Anchorhold', p. 18, Figure 5. Clay, *The Hermits and Anchorites*, Plate XXXIII, 'The Recluse in Romance: Sir Perceval Visits a Cell'. Warren, *Anchorites and their Patrons,* Plate 3, 'Sir Percival Arrives at His Aunt's Reclusorium' (facing p. 114).

depictions that offer only a partial view of the cell, the variety evident from the

archaeological record can be glimpsed.

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**Fig. 4.2.** An anchorite being enclosed (from a pontifical *c.* 1300-1499).[531] Cambridge, Parker Library, Corpus Christi College, MS 079, fol. 96r.

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[531] 'Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 079: Pontifical', *British Library* ([n.d.]) <https://parker.stanford.edu/parker/catalog/tx112pf2826> [last accessed 24 September 2020]. See the black and white image in Clay, *The Hermits and Anchorites*, Plate XXVIII, 'Enclosing an Anchoress', p. 93. Black and white image also used by Hasenfratz, 'The Anchorhold', p. 18, Figure 3.

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**Fig. 4.3.** An anchorite being enclosed (from a pontifical dated to the first quarter of the fifteenth century).[532] London, British Library, MS Lansdowne 451, fol. 76v.

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[532] 'Detailed record for Lansdowne 451', *British Library* ([n.d.]) <https://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/record.asp?MSID=7299&CollID=15&NStart=451> [last accessed 24 September 2020]. See the black and white image in Clay, *The Hermits and Anchorites*, Plate XXIX, 'Enclosing an Anchoress', p. 96. Black and white image also used by Hasenfratz, 'The Anchorhold', p. 18, Figure 4.

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**Fig. 4.4.** Perceval visiting an anchorite in *Estoire del Saint Graal, La Queste del Graal, Morte Artu* (manuscript dated to the first quarter of the fourteenth century; French provenance).[533] London, British Library, MS Royal 14 E III, fol. 101v.

V. Current Scholarly Interpretations and Approaches to Antiquarian Material

Current scholarship not only assumes a model cell, but also assumes that this cell is explicitly gendered, with construction details specific to male and female anchorites. For instance, altars, oratories, and doors are often linked to male anchorite-priests only, despite the lack of evidence for such a distinction in the medieval documentary sources or the archaeological record. [534] This section shows how a concept of gendered spaces has developed from antiquarian assumptions that have been

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[533] 'Detailed record for Royal 14 E III', *British Library* ([n.d.]) <https://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/record.asp?MSID=7793&CollID=16&NStart=150111> [last accessed 24 September 2020]. See the black and white image in Clay, *The Hermits and Anchorites*, Plate XXXIII, 'The Recluse in Romance: Sir Perceval Visits a Cell'. Black and white image also used by Hasenfratz, 'The Anchorhold', p. 18, Figure 5.

[534] Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites*, p. 44. Also note Jones' entry regarding the male anchorite John Lacy: *Hermits and Anchorites*, pp. 79-80.

accepted into mainstream academic discourse without critical analysis. I begin by evaluating current gendered trends in cell analysis, and showing how common assumptions must be questioned based on conclusions evident from the archaeological record. These trends have shaped perceptions not only of anchoritic experience, but also of the physical design of the anchorite cell. Next, I demonstrate that although some male anchorites were previously priests, the concept of the male anchorite-priest associated with certain architectural features and performing Mass outside of the cell is an antiquarian construction legitimatised through faulty interpretations of archaeological evidence. The following subsection critiques the term 'anchoress' and demonstrates that it continues to reinforce these gendered assumptions. An evaluation of the concept of the leper squint concludes the section by indicating that antiquarian interpretation still continues to impact current ideas about anchorite cells and squints, and that engaging with historiography is essential. Unpicking gendered assumptions exposes dubious claims about cells while at the same time revealing a more nuanced understanding of anchoritic lived experience within these cells.

A. Gendered Spaces and Experiences

Current scholarship emphasises that men usually entered the anchoritic vocation after a lifetime of ecclesiastical service, and that enclosure served as a form of esteemed retirement.[535] McAvoy explicitly argued that 'the anchoritic space carried a different set of connotations depending on the sex of the occupant'; moreover, because female anchorites came from a non-ecclesiastical background, they were considered 'far more problematic'.[536] Sauer expanded on these ideas in reference to the cell in particular, arguing that cruciform squints were designed specifically for female anchorites, who

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[535] McAvoy, 'Gender, Rhetoric and Space', pp. 112-15.
[536] McAvoy, 'Gender, Rhetoric and Space', pp. 112-13.

needed their sight to be policed more closely than their male counterparts.[537] Indeed,

Sauer suggested that rectangular, angular squints were used for male anchorites in

particular, and that other forms of visual purification such as wall paintings had to be

added to a male-inhabited cell if a female anchorite became the next occupant due to her

polluting gaze.[538] Current scholarship also places secular and regular clergy within the

monastic system in contrast to women being placed outside of this system, despite the

secular clergy's role in living outside the cloister and providing pastoral care.[539] This

paradigm fails to acknowledge differences in experience between lay and religious

women. It also ignores crucial differences not only between secular and regular clerics,

but also between lay and clerical men, even though enclosure ceremonies place them in

different parts of the church before the ceremony begins.

These assumptions about male anchoritic experience have promoted the concept

of the male anchorite-priest associated with specific architecture and performing Mass

outside of the cell; anchorite-priests inhabited specific kinds of cells different from their

female counterparts. The next section will show how the anchorite-priest originated in

antiquarian interpretation, and has been uncritically carried over into current

scholarship, despite the lack of archaeological or textual evidence for this interpretation.

A male anchorite-priest is described as the opposite of a female anchorite: the female

anchorite remained enclosed and could not provide a public function for the church

community, but male anchorite-priests are assumed to have lived in roomier cells,

sometimes two-storey or built independent of the church in the churchyard, to perform

mass from an altar within or outside of their cells, and to interact more freely with

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[537] Sauer, 'Architecture of Desire', pp. 547-48.

[538] Sauer, 'Architecture of Desire', pp. 557-559.

[539] Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites*, pp. 8-9. For more information about the differences between regular and secular clergy, and the relationship of secular clergy to the laity, see: Hugh M. Thomas, *The Secular Clergy in England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 9-11.

visitors.[540] Laymen enclosed as anchorites would not qualify as part of this group, since they were unable to perform clerical functions, but again current scholarship includes them under the umbrella of male, monastic experience.

Evaluating Sauer's assessment of cells and male anchorite-priests shows how these assumptions have shaped archaeological interpretation. Sauer argued the anchorite cell was an explicitly gendered space, and heavily cited Gilchrist's gendered archaeological research.[541] Reused cells that formerly housed a male anchorite, Sauer argued, often needed to be modified for female anchorites; after all, 'male anchorites, who were often priests as well, offered little threat to the Church order. They could see and celebrate Mass. Their bodies were not dangerous or polluting'.[542] The claim about male anchorites often being priests is not cited. However, Sauer's gendered interpretations fail to hold up when viewed in wider context: for instance, Chapter 1 critiqued Sauer's interpretation of the painted pillar outside the squint at Faversham, Kent.[543] Ultimately, Sauer's arguments about the gendered nature of the anchorite cell, like Gilchrist's, are grounded in a literary perspective focused on particularly female experience, and cherry-picked archaeological features outside of larger context are used to reinforce gendered assumptions about anchoritic experience.[544] In order to gain a better understanding of the design and construction of cells, the following section confronts these gendered perspectives and the archaeological interpretations that follow.

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[540] McAvoy, 'Gender, Rhetoric and Space', pp. 112-38. See also Salih, 'Julian in Norwich', p. 155. Note that Salih cited the ongoing research of Michelle Sauer; I argue this is partly because there is little other evidence to back up these claims.

[541] Sauer, 'Architecture of Desire', p. 547.

[542] Sauer, 'Architecture of Desire', pp. 557-58.

[543] Sauer, 'Architecture of Desire', pp. 556-57.

[544] As Chapter 1 showed, Sauer explicitly followed Clay's structure for her article; the first half is dedicated to discussing the cell in the context of written sources, with archaeological examples following as illustrations at the end. Sauer, 'Architecture of Desire', pp. 545-54.

B. Male Anchorite-Priests

The concept of the male anchorite-priest illustrates how antiquarian assumptions are incorporated into modern interpretations even as these assumptions are not acknowledged as fundamentally antiquarian. Moreover, this section will show that archaeology is overwhelmingly used to provide evidence for and justify this interpretation, even though current scholarship continues to downplay archaeology's significance. Medieval written sources do not provide enough evidence for this gendered narrative, leading to the reliance on archaeological evidence that is interpreted through a literary lens.

1. The Gendered Anchorite

Antiquarian and antiquarian-style early twentieth-century research emphasised the contrast between male and female experience. Antiquarians identified male anchorites specifically named in medieval records who were also priests, and linked certain kinds of construction—such as roomier cells with space for an altar—as distinctively male.[545] Auden even identified the 'hermit-priest' as 'mid-way between these beggar hermits and the gentle-hermit, i.e., the man of gentle birth who had retired to a hermitage'.[546] This unusual term connotes the anchorite-priest: in both cases, ordained men were associated with greater prestige in their respective vocations, with enclosure in a hermitage or anchorite cell being viewed as an extension of their monastic careers. These associations led to assumptions about the relationship between written records of male anchorites and archaeological remains; for instance, as Chapter

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[545] 'Anchorites in Faversham', pp. 26-27, 39. Bloxam, *On the Domus Inclusi*. Johnston, 'The Low Side Windows of Sussex Churches' (1899), pp. 176-78. Clay, *The Hermits and Anchorites*, p. 79. Clay, 'Some Northern Anchorites', pp. 202.

[546] Auden, 'Shropshire Hermits', pp. 98-99; quoted p. 98.

2 described, the spacious 'cell' at Hartlip, Kent, was linked with a pre-Norman male anchorite, even though the 'cell' itself was dated to the fourteenth century.[547]

Male anchorites were described as selfless public servants who retained an active role, as this introduction to an anchorite who previously served as a vicar highlights:

> This graphic description enables us to picture ourselves the life led
> by William Thornbury, during the last eight years of his existence
> [as an anchorite]. It enables us to understand why he could still be
> called Vicar of Faversham, by the scribe who penned his last will;
> doubtless he had performed priestly functions in the church up to
> the last. There are to this day…two grated windows through which
> he may have communicated with persons in the churchyard.[548]

 Crucially, William Thornbury is *assumed* to have performed 'priestly functions' as an anchorite—there is no explicit mention of this activity within the will. Thornbury's enclosure did not negate his position as a member of the clergy, and so the use of 'Vicar' alone, especially when he was well-known as a vicar before enclosure, does not indicate continued performance of the Mass as an anchorite. High-status male anchorites, already well-known in their communities for ecclesiastical service, would of course be the most likely to be written about; however, this does not mean that *all* male anchorites fit this template. The same examples are repeated, since such specific descriptions of anchorites that specify gender, name, and further identifying information are rare. Moreover, the example at Hartlip, often depicted as a prime example of a male

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[547] Johnston, 'The Low Side Windows of Sussex Churches' (1899), p. 176. *Registrum Roffense*, p. 124.
[548] 'Anchorites in Faversham', p. 38.

anchorite-priest cell, was misidentified and is not an anchorite cell, and other spaces interpreted as anchorite-priests' cells by antiquarians may also be flawed.[549]

Antiquarians emphasised the mystical and specifically *feminine* qualities of female anchorites, often describing women as particularly emotive and compassionate. For instance, Clay paraphrased Aelred of Rievaulx when mentioning female anchorites specifically, and used affective language—but the rest of the paragraph, which addressed anchorites more generally, lacked this tone.[550] Especially when framed by *Ancrene Wisse*, female anchorites were viewed in a domestic setting; Auden called the female anchorite a 'lady-anchorite', her servants served 'their mistress' household', and 'the maid [the anchorite's servant] was to privately take her lady's gift'.[551] This type of language is conspicuously absent in discussions of male anchorites. Female anchorites were also depicted as calm, pure, and content, seeking to 'lead a quiet life of prayer and praise'.[552] Female anchorites, especially Julian of Norwich, were further revered because of their mystical insights—although, 'such [mystical] experiences cannot be self-induced, though may be sought by passive and sentimental temperaments'.[553] This attitude continued into the twentieth century; in 1981, J. Phillip Dodd compared medieval female anchorites to present-day women, and argued that women across time demonstrated a greater commitment to religion, which 'naturally disposed them towards

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[549] Bloxam, *On the Domus Inclusi*. Bloxam's descriptions of many anchorite cells are also suspect—he often suggested lofts or tower rooms were used by anchorites (and sometimes specifically male anchorites, especially if linked to an altar), but many of his examples lacked any mention of specifically anchoritic archaeology, such as a squint (see particularly Gloucestershire, Daglingworth, p. 12; Nottinghamshire, Upton Church, p. 13; and Wiltshire, Boyton Church, p. 13).

[550] Clay, *The Hermits and Anchorites*, p. xvi. An example of Clay's emotive language: 'Aelred of Rievaulx mentions some of the needs which would call out the sympathies of the anchoress: the misery of the poor, the sigh of the orphan, the desolation of the widow…'

[551] Auden, 'Shropshire Hermits', pp. 104, 106.

[552] Auden, 'Shropshire Hermits', p. 111.

[553] P. Franklin Chambers, *Juliana of Norwich: An Introductory Appreciation and An Interpretive Anthology* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1955), p. 24.

embracement of the solitary religious life'.[554]Antiquarians, then, reinforced rigid gender differences between male and female experiences of anchoritism, and these categories were directly informed by the gendered views of antiquarians themselves, who saw the female anchorite mirrored in the elite ideal of the domestic, private sphere cultivated for eighteenth- and nineteenth-century women, and the male anchorite as reflective of an active, career-driven, comparatively public, and ultimately masculine role.[555]

Antiquarians used archaeology to justify this perception, as the next section shows, in part because medieval written records do not support this interpretation. The focus on low side windows also pushed interpretation in this direction, as identifying low side windows—notoriously difficult to categorise—as anchoritic squints provided clarity. Examples of medieval written sources contradicting gendered approaches to the cell are plentiful; for instance: Chapter 1 demonstrated that *Ancrene Wisse* was revised to suit various audiences, including men and laypeople, and other anchoritic texts and letters were also written to and sometimes adapted for both men and women; enclosure ceremonies could be used for male or female anchorites; and identifying details such as gender or name are often simply not mentioned in medieval records.[556] This chapter has already shown that medieval written sources mention altars and doors in cells for male and female anchorites as well. There is no doubt that some male anchorites were previously priests—William Thornbury at Faversham, Kent, mentioned above, is a prime example.[557] However, using an isolated example as proof of the experience of the

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[554] Dodd, 'The Anchoress of Frodsham', p. 32.

[555] This division of spheres is an elite ideal and not necessarily reflective in everyday practice—for instance, working-class women routinely worked outside their own homes.

[556] Gunn, *'Ancrene Wisse'*, pp. 8-9, 183-84. McAvoy, 'Gender, Rhetoric and Space', pp. 112-13. Jones, 'Anchorite and Hermits', pp. 9, 12. Jones, 'Hidden Lives', pp. 20-21.

[557] 'Anchorites in Faversham', p. 38.

majority of male anchorites is as groundless as suggesting that all cells resembled the conjectural drawing of *Ancrene Wisse*.

This antiquarian and early twentieth-century background is key to placing the example of the twelfth-century anchorite Wulfric in proper context.[558] Although Wulfric's hagiography described him as a male anchorite-priest who left his cell to perform Mass for the congregation on feast days, showing that some anchorites during the medieval period may have functioned in this way, assumptions about overall male anchoritic experience and the link between certain archaeological features with male anchorite-priests must still be questioned.[559] Wulfric was an especially holy man, even among other anchorites, as the creation of a *vita* about his life that emphasised his miracles and devoutness demonstrates. Therefore, Wulfric can hardly be considered an example of an average anchorite, especially since elements of Wulfric's enclosure may have been exaggerated as part of the hagiographical narrative, as a close reading of Dunstan's *Life* earlier in this chapter showed. In addition, Wulfric was enclosed before the thirteenth-century distinction between anchorites and hermits became clear-cut, indicating that this fluidity of movement and roles may have more to do with differences in how anchoritism was perceived in the earlier medieval period than with gender and the typical role of a male anchorite.

Medieval sources explicitly describing a male anchorite-priest performing Mass outside of the cell are unusual; I am not aware of any post-thirteenth-century examples, although hagiographies of pre-thirteenth-century anchorites show great flexibility in terms of movement in and out of the cell, as examples throughout this thesis have

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[558] See section III, B. of this chapter.
[559] John of Forde, *The Life of Wulfric*, 1.18 and 2.7 (pp. 121, 141-42).

demonstrated.[560] As already stated, Wulfric's experience is exceptional. Antiquarians and current scholars both focus on the male anchorite-priest with access to the main altar and the congregation as the only version of male anchoritic experience, but enclosure ceremonies stipulating that both laymen and clergymen (regular and secular) could be enclosed indicates that this focus is critically misrepresenting experience. The next section shows how archaeology is used to provide evidence for male anchorite-priests, as the examples from textual sources are sparse, but as this chapter has shown, the features described as part of Wulfric's cell—including various doors, multiple rooms, an altar, windows, and space for visitors—are also included in cells inhabited by female anchorites, showing that cells with these architectural features cannot be linked specifically to a male anchorite without further evidence.[561]

Other named male anchorites who were formerly priests, like Simon Appulby (enclosed at All Hallows, London), are also assumed to be anchorite-priests who could leave the cell to perform Mass at the main altar; however, this role is not explicitly stated. Clare M. Dowding argued that the recording of payments towards an anchorite's priest in church records for All Hallows, London between 1488-90 indicates that 'whoever occupied the anchorhold at this time was either female or not ordained, so had a priest allocated for the celebration of the Eucharist'.[562] This interpretation acknowledged that not all male anchorites were ordained. However, ordained priests may have performed Mass privately within their cells instead of publicly at the main altar. Although anchorites at All Hallows are recorded interacting with the church community through providing funds for church expenses and renovations, there is no

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[560] Both Christina of Markyate and Dunstan, already mentioned in this thesis, also moved in and out of the cell.

[561] For a more detailed description of these features, see section III, B. of this chapter.

[562] Dowding, '"*Item receyvyd*"', p. 126.

explicit description of Simon Appulby or other unnamed ordained anchorites performing Mass.[563]

Moreover, Appulby's profession as an anchorite does not claim public performances of Mass as part of his new role:

> I, Simon Appulby, priest, offer and give myself to the mercy of God to serve in the order of an anchorite; and, according to the rule of that order, I promise to continue in the service of God from this time forward, by the grace of God and with the guidance of the Church, and to show obedience according to the law to my spiritual fathers.[564]

Appulby identified himself as a priest, but this a common formula for these declarations and served to highlight his qualifications to undertake anchoritism, as another example of a female anchorite's declaration from 1521 indicates: 'I, Sister Margery Elyote, offer and give myself to the mercy of God in the order of an anchoress, to live in his service after the rule of an anchoress'.[565] The declaration clarified that Appulby did not view anchoritism as an extension of his identity as a priest—he continued to serve God, but in a novel context and obeying a different rule. The performance of Mass is also absent from anchoritic rules, even when adapted for men. There is also precedent for enclosed men who were formerly priests to view the private performance of Mass as a way to connect to the Church as a whole; St Peter Damian (1007-1072) advised male recluses to state their own responses to the Mass instead of relying on the congregation, indicating both that Mass was celebrated privately within the recluses' cells, and that the state of being enclosed did not prevent communion with the church community.[566]

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563 Dowding, '"*Item receyvyd*"', pp. 122-23.
564 Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites*, p. 40.
565 Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites*, p. 41. Note that 'anchoress' is Jones' translation.
566 Jones, 'Anchorites and Hermits', p. 16.

This perspective is striking for anchorites of both sexes: although physically separated, spiritual activities performed within the cell were still viewed as vital to the wider Church. Therefore, although some anchorites were formerly priests, the performance of Mass at the high altar was not necessarily an expected part of their vocation.

Jones' 2012 analysis of enclosure ceremonies shows that assumed distinctions between male and female experience continue to impact interpretation even in sources that overwhelmingly show a lack of distinction between the sexes. Because the Chichele pontificals exclude altars in cells for women, Jones described 'the presence of an altar in a reclusory prepared for a female recluse' in the Bainbridge pontifical, which includes the only surviving enclosure ceremony used in York, as 'noteworthy'. [567] However, surely the exclusion of the altar in the fifteenth-century Chichele pontificals is 'noteworthy'; as already established, enclosure ceremonies overwhelmingly included altars regardless of gender. Indeed, the Chichele pontificals indicated that an oratory and grave should be included in the cell for both sexes.[568] However, even oratories are almost always associated with male anchorite-priests in modern scholarship; two-storey or roomy cells are assumed to be male, as is the case for cells like Compton and Leatherhead.[569] Jones further specified that the Chichele pontificals indicated clerics required an oratory or chapel with a grave in front of it, but that this was optional for laymen; in general, the manuscripts demonstrate a keen interest in 'whether the candidate is a priest or religious or a layman, literate or illiterate'.[570] This fifteenth-century enclosure ceremony, then, shows an intensified focus on status and gender, but

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[567] Jones, 'Rites of Enclosure', p. 174.
[568] Jones, 'Rites of Enclosure', pp. 163, 168.
[569] This is discussed in the next section in this chapter: 2. Justifying the Gendered Cell.
[570] Jones, 'Rites of Enclosure', pp. 163, 168.

as already discussed, earlier enclosure ceremonies described the same ceremony regardless of gender or status.

Darwin's more limited overview of four enclosure ceremonies also noted that an altar was included in all examples, 'even by that of York [ie, the Bainbridge pontifical mentioned above by Jones], intended though it was only for the enclosure of Anchoresses'.[571] Indeed, Darwin theorised that altars for either gender were 'probably destined to the use of the chaplain-confessor on his visits'.[572] This analysis is perhaps too simplistic, as the altar could also have been used as a focal point for personal devotion, and many cells placed the altar within oratories or the living space of the anchorite, not within spaces intended for high-status visitors. Nonetheless, Darwin's view is refreshing since he acknowledged that altars were not architectural features associated with male anchorites in particular. Many of the assumptions modern scholars accept about the anchorite cell, such as oratories, roomier cells, and altars being the purview of only male anchorite-priests, are *not* evident in medieval literary records or the archaeological record.

Current scholarship continues to rely on archaeological examples to prove the existence of the male anchorite-priest as well. For instance, Gilchrist did not cite her assertions about male anchorite-priests, instead using her archaeological assessments, which relied heavily on gendered antiquarian interpretations: 'Exceptions [to positioning the anchorite cell on the north side of the chancel] might therefore include the cells of anchorite-priests, as proposed for Compton, where the usual ordinances did not apply'.[573] Salih's 2009 article discussing the possibility that Julian of Norwich's cell was actually detached from the church and placed in the churchyard argued: 'The

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[571] Darwin, *The English Mediaeval*, p. 77.
[572] Darwin, *The English Mediaeval*, p. 77.
[573] Gilchrist, *Contemplation*, p. 190.

current site [against the chancel wall] is more likely: the few detached cells that are known to have existed are associated with priest-anchors, who could say their own masses and thus would not require visual access to the altar'. [574] The citation for this claim is 'Michelle Sauer, ongoing research'.[575] The idea of the male anchorite-priest is so entrenched that the term does not require clarification, and is readily used as an explanation for cells that do not fit a typical cell model. Of course, other medieval written sources mentioned earlier in this chapter describe cells that do not reinforce this narrative, such as the lavish, four-roomed cell designed for a female anchorite enclosed at Stamford in 1505.[576]

The lack of interest in current scholarship in male anchoritic experience is concerning, and is directly related to viewing the cell as an explicitly gendered space. Male experience is dismissed as easier and less intensive because of their ecclesiastical connections:

> For a man, it [the anchoritic life] tended to be part of a lifelong, unbroken trajectory through institutional space towards the ultimate, representational space of the anchorhold; for a woman it tended to signal a complete life-change, an abandonment of the social spaces she had formerly occupied.[577]

This dramatic juxtaposition places the female anchorite in a position of greater sacrifice, and justifies the continued overt focus on feminine experience.[578] This also is not an isolated assertion, as Hughes-Edwards indicated: 'It was more common for female anchorites to relinquish their previous identity completely… although male anchorites

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[574] Salih, 'Julian in Norwich', p. 155.
[575] Salih, 'Julian in Norwich', p. 170.
[576] Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites*, p. 59.
[577] McAvoy, 'Gender, Rhetoric and Space', p. 113.
[578] See Chapter 1 for an overview of feminist research.

who had formerly been priests could maintain both their old and new identities concurrently'.[579] This is a paradoxical claim: if male anchorites were simply part of the monastic system, then how can anchoritism be articulated as a vocation that allowed women new opportunities that they often could not access through monastic institutions?[580] Clearly, the cell is viewed as gendered *not* because of medieval source material, but because of interpretation grounded in antiquarian gendered divisions that stress different experiences for men and women in general, and also male and female anchorites.

### 2. Justifying the Gendered Cell

Antiquarian and early twentieth-century researchers assumed anchorite cells at Compton and Leatherhead belonged to male anchorites who were able to leave the cell, and these views are still reinforced by modern scholars. No medieval documentary evidence for anchoritism at either site survives, and the interpretation of a male anchorite-priest relied on archaeological analysis alone.[581] One of the cells at Compton is located against the south wall of the church in a small room now used as a stairwell to reach the second-storey of the chancel. Links between an anchorite and this second storey, which potentially served as an oratory for the anchorite, had been suggested among other possible interpretations by multiple antiquarians, but in a 1950 antiquarian-style publication, J. H. Gibson clearly articulated the theory of the male anchorite-priest in this context for the first time, and modern authors have continued to cite his claim.[582] After first lamenting the lack of literary records for an anchorite at Compton, Gibson

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[579] Hughes-Edwards, 'Anchoritism: The English', p. 141. Note that Hughes-Edwards cited Warren as providing evidence for women giving up their identities. Warren, *Anchorites and their Patrons.*.

[580] Jones, 'Anchorites and Hermits', p. 8. Robertson, *Early English Devotional*, pp. 21-24. Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites*, p. 9.

[581] Bott, *A Guide to the Parish Church*, pp. 26-27. Johnston, 'An Anchorite's Cell', p. 223.

[582] Gibson, 'Compton Church', 154-55. Warren, *Anchorites and their Patrons*, pp. 29, 106. Gilchrist, *Contemplation*, p. 187.

argued the second storey of the chancel was 'the oratory of an anchorite in priest's orders, where he could say Mass daily and the other offices of the Church'.[583] In explaining anchorites more broadly, Gibson clarified that 'the cell was generally outside the chancel north wall, small and single, but might have extra rooms for a servant or disciple, and an anchorite priest had an oratory as at Compton'.[584] There is no medieval evidence to back up Gibson's assertions about the concept of the male anchorite-priest, and his assessment of the anchorite cell is clearly based upon an *Ancrene Wisse* template—indeed, his bibliography included only one medieval source, *Ancrene Wisse*.[585] Gibson's interpretation, then, was *not* based on medieval evidence—in fact, my interpretation indicates that when used as a cell, it was a one-storey room, and therefore not an access point to what Gibson envisioned as an anchorite's oratory.

Modern authors continued to cite Gibson's interpretation uncritically through the endorsements of Warren and Gilchrist, and now this view of the anchorite cell in the south chancel wall at Compton has become standard. In 1985 Warren described the cell as 'the home of male priest recluses from 1185 to the early fourteenth century' and suggested the anchorite slept in a loft, due to the small size of the cell.[586] There is no explicit mention of the oratory, but it is striking to note that the concept of the anchorite-priest had become so ubiquitous as to not require further explanation. Ten years later, Gilchrist relied on Gibson's account of the cell, in addition to J. Lewis André's 1895 description of the squint and second-storey chancel—despite the fact that Gibson lacked medieval evidence for his assertions, and André did not even view the features as anchoritic.[587] Gilchrist asserted the second-storey of the chancel functioned

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[583] Gibson, 'Compton Church', p. 154.
[584] Gibson, 'Compton Church', p. 155.
[585] Gibson, 'Compton Church', p. 155.
[586] Warren, *Anchorites and their Patrons*, pp. 29, 106.
[587] Gilchrist, *Contemplation*, pp. 187-88.  André, 'Compton Church', pp. 10-11.

as an oratory for the male anchorite-priest.[588] Other descriptions of this cell at Compton

have directly cited Warren's and Gilchrist's research.[589] Even a church booklet written

by Alan Bott in 2000 included the theory of the male anchorite-priest and associated

oratory, although Bott admitted that this theory was 'without any documentary evidence

to corroborate the proposal'.[590]

The literature detailing the archaeological remains of an anchorite cell at

Leatherhead illustrates the same interest in the mythical male anchorite-priest by

antiquarians and modern scholars, despite the lack of medieval evidence. In 1908,

Johnston wrote a short article discussing a blocked-in square window and blocked-in

door on the external north wall of the chancel at Leatherhead, in addition to the

discovery of wall foundations associated with these features uncovered via an amateur

excavation, and argued the window was a squint, and the door an entryway into the

chancel offering access to the altar for a male anchorite.[591] Especially since the

foundation walls indicated the room was so small, and since the squint was placed so

high up as to require a second-storey or platform to view the Eucharist, Johnston argued

that 'if the door of communication with the church were not blocked, [the male

anchorite could] enter the building by this means, and so make his Communion, and

take part in the daily offices'.[592] Johnston finished his summary of the cell by describing

two other external windows, following the basic template offered by *Ancrene Wisse*, but

acknowledged that 'of these, of course, now no trace is left'.[593] He even included

'probable' roof lines on his plan of the features.[594] Johnston's interpretation of these

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[588] Gilchrist, *Contemplation*, p. 188.
[589] Hughes-Edwards, 'Solitude and Sociability'.
[590] Bott, *A Guide to the Parish Church*, p. 13; quoted p. 27.
[591] Johnston, 'An Anchorite's Cell', 223-28.
[592] Johnston, 'An Anchorite's Cell', p. 225.
[593] Johnston, 'An Anchorite's Cell', p. 225.
[594] Johnston, 'An Anchorite's Cell', p. 227.

archaeological features, then, is largely fanciful, and associated the door with an anchorite-priest able to leave the cell.

This cell received little attention by antiquarian researchers (unlike Compton), but by the time Clay referenced the Leatherhead cell in 1914, Johnston's interpretation was considered final: 'the foundations of a chamber on the north side of the chancel were excavated by Mr. Johnston, and were described and illustrated in the *Surrey Archaeological Collections* (XX)'.[595] Johnston's authority derived from his considerable work on low side windows, which also involved numerous assessments of potentially anchoritic archaeology at well-known sites like Compton; however, his interpretations involving male anchorite-priests cherry-picked aspects of the archaeological evidence to fit his analysis, and also simply ignored the lack of evidence in medieval literary sources.[596] G. H. Smith critiqued Johnston's analysis in 1965, focusing particularly on Johnston's suggestion that the anchorite could leave the cell; Smith argued Johnston was describing a hermit, based on Clay's research, and that the features were not anchoritic, but instead the remains of a sacristy or vestry.[597] However, this was a very short-lived critique—in 1983, F. B. Benger described seeing an apparition that he interpreted as an anchorite, which appeared to move from the north wall to the chancel, as though leaving from the doorway into the anchorite cell. [598] Although a fantastical claim, this incident demonstrates that the association of these

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[595] Clay, *The Hermits and Anchorites*, p. 84.

[596] Johnston, 'The Low Side Windows of Sussex Churches' (1898), 159-202. Johnston, 'The Low Side Windows of Sussex Churches' (1899), 117-79. Johnston, 'The Low Side Windows of Surrey Churches', 83-133.

[597] G.H. Smith, 'A History of the Church and Advowson of St. Mary and St. Nicholas, Leatherhead', *Proceedings of the Leatherhead & District Local History Society*, 2.9 (1965), p. 272.

[598] F. B. Benger, 'An Apparition in Leatherhead Parish Church', *Proceedings of the Leatherhead & District Local History Society*, 4.7 (1983), 170.

features with an anchorite cell and an anchorite who could leave the cell to approach the altar was once more assumed.

Leatherhead is not as well-known a site as Compton, but when modern scholars mention Leatherhead, it is invariably linked with a male anchorite-priest. In 1995, Gilchrist described the Leatherhead cell after discussing the cell in the south chancel wall at Compton, and followed Johnston's analysis verbatim.[599] In the first paragraph of the section titled 'Anchorites', Gilchrist had already made it clear that anchorite-priests existed and experienced the vocation differently than women anchorites: 'Women drawn to this vocation seem to have come mainly from a secular background, whereas men more often had some existing clerical status, enabling them sometimes to serve as anchorite-priests'.[600] Although Gilchrist did not explicitly claim the Leatherhead cell was associated with a male anchorite priest, she endorsed Johnston's view and, moreover, compared Leatherhead to the two-storey cell at Compton, which she did explicitly link to a male anchorite-priest.[601] In 2011, Licence uncritically mentioned the Leatherhead cell without a reference, asserting that the cell at Leatherhead, as well as those at Hartlip, Kent, and Chester-le-Street, Durham are all examples of surviving fourteenth-century anchorite cells.[602] The proposed anchorite cell at Hartlip and the complex of anchorite cells at Chester-le-Street have also both been linked with male anchorite-priests, making this assumption about the identification of Leatherhead as a cell housing a male anchorite-priest evident.[603] These two examples clearly indicate how the male anchorite-priest originated with antiquarian interpretations that have no

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[599] Gilchrist, *Contemplation*, pp. 187, 189 (reproduction of Johnston's drawing).
[600] Gilchrist, *Contemplation*, p. 183.
[601] Gilchrist, *Contemplation,* p. 187.
[602] Licence, *Hermits & Recluses*, p. 88 (Footnote 89).
[603] Just one of many examples: Gilchrist, *Contemplation*, p. 190.

basis in medieval sources, and how this concept has been uncritically accepted and continues to be actively embraced in current scholarship.

C. Anchoresses

The term 'anchoress', referring specifically to a female anchorite, is ubiquitous in scholarship and popular narratives focusing on anchoritism. Jones' most recent monograph and Licence's monograph are unusual for depicting a male anchorite or hermit on the cover; even McAvoy's edited collection about anchoritic traditions throughout Europe portrayed a female anchorite on the cover.[604] Meanwhile, popular narratives remain focused on women's experience and include images of specifically female anchorites, with a marked focus on Julian of Norwich.[605] This visual display, along with the regular use of the term 'anchoress' in both scholarly and popular sources, reinforces a view of anchoritism as specifically related to women's experience.[606]

However, medieval sources include a variety of words for anchorite, some of which are explicitly gendered, and the term 'anchoress' is not included in this list. The word 'anchorite', derived from the Latin *anchorita/anachorita*, is most commonly used in medieval sources, and could refer to either gender.[607] Other gendered Latin terms— *inclusus/inclusa*, and *reclusus/reclusa*—were also used to refer to anchorites.[608] Some Middle English forms—*ancer/ancress* and *anker/ankress*—are gendered, although the Middle English term *ancre* could refer to either gender.[609] Clay's perspective has

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[604] Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites.* Licence, *Hermits & Recluses.* McAvoy, ed., *Anchoritic Traditions.*

[605] Robert Llewelyn, *Enfolded in Love: Daily Readings with Julian of Norwich* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1980). Most recent edition is 2004.

[606] McAvoy, 'Introduction', in *Anchoritic Traditions*, p. 11.

[607] Jones, 'Anchorite and Hermits', p. 9. Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites*, p. 13. McAvoy, 'Introduction', in *Anchoritic Traditions*, p. 11, footnote 29.

[608] Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites*, p. 14.

[609] Clay, *The Hermits and Anchorites*, p. 73. McAvoy, 'Introduction', in *Anchoritic Traditions*, p. 11, footnote 30.

continued to influence current scholarship, as she discussed medieval terminology for anchorites but then concluded the discussion by stating that 'more women than men undertook this austere vocation'.[610] This again highlighted women's experience, and justified the use of the term 'anchoress'. Despite the popularity of gender-neutral terms in medieval texts, the term 'anchoress' is now widespread; moreover, instead of having a male-gendered counterpart, the only other modern term is the gender-neutral 'anchorite'.

In this thesis, I have used the term 'anchorite', and have clarified it with 'male' or 'female' where appropriate. This is intentional, as the term 'anchoress' reinforces a hyper-focus on women's experience, which I have shown is unwarranted. The term 'anchoress', although derived from *ankress*, is not a Middle English word, but rather a back-formation from the modern term 'anchorite'.[611] In addition, Jones argued that the term 'marks the female as deviation from a male norm'.[612] McAvoy analysed this perspective in more detail, explaining that in contemporary English usage the –ess suffix is 'subject to negative hierarchizing practices, rendering it frequently a patronizing and demeaning linguistic construction'.[613] For this reason, McAvoy also advocated using the term 'female anchorite' instead of 'anchoress', even though in her view a higher percentage of female anchorites indicated that a feminised ending would be appropriate without the modern problematic connotations; after all, 'one could argue that the anchorite was, indeed, generically female'.[614] Chapter 1 has already challenged this interpretation of available data about the gender of anchorites. Therefore, I suggest that the use of the term anchoress is inappropriate for a different reason: the female

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[610] Clay, *The Hermits and Anchorites*, p. 73.
[611] Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites*, p. 14.
[612] Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites*, p. 14.
[613] McAvoy, 'Introduction', in *Anchoritic Traditions*, p. 12.
[614] McAvoy, 'Introduction', in *Anchoritic Traditions*, pp. 11-12; quoted p. 11.

anchorite is seen as the standard, whereas male anchorites are placed within their own

distinctive category of monastic anchoritic experience, despite a lack of medieval

literary or archaeological evidence for this position.

### D. The Leper Squint

Antiquarian research has influenced scholarly perceptions of gender, but also

continues to impact non-academic impressions of anchoritic archaeology, as the

sustained popularity of the leper squint theory shows. This section demonstrates that

current scholarship adopts different attitudes towards the antiquarian research at the

heart of gendered interpretations of anchorite cells discussed earlier in this chapter, and

the antiquarian research supporting the leper squint theory. Since anchorite squints are

commonly misidentified as leper squints, including in some Shropshire churches in my

dataset, and since this directly impacts archaeological assessment, discussing the origin

of the leper squint and the reasons it is an invalid interpretation are vital. However, the

leper squint theory can only be analysed effectively within the antiquarian context

outlined in this chapter. Scholarly responses to leper squints are rare and often brief.[615]

For instance, Gilchrist dismissed the theory in a single sentence: 'Evidence for

anchorholds was compiled by antiquaries who stripped render and unblocked openings

in search of "low side windows" and the mythical lepers' squints in chancel walls'.[616]

Gilchrist only cited antiquarian research and did not contextualise this observation

further, therefore frustrating attempts at critical analysis.[617] The rest of this section is a

summary of my forthcoming publication focusing on the connections between

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[615] Victoria Yuskaitis, 'The Mythical Outcast Medieval Leper: Perceptions of Leper and
Anchorite Squints', in [title to be determined], Writing History in the Middle Ages
(Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2021), forthcoming.
[616] Gilchrist, *Contemplation*, p. 192.
[617] Gilchrist, *Contemplation*, p. 192.

antiquarians, anchorite squints, and leper squints, which responds to this gap in scholarship.[618]

A leper squint is an antiquarian term for an architectural feature, described as a small side window in a church, usually near the chancel with a view to the altar, for the purpose of allowing lepers to receive the Eucharist from outside the church while remaining ostracised from the healthy population.[619] Church pamphlets regularly describe anchorite squints as lepers' squints; this is the case at Ellesmere and Acton Burnell, even though Cranage did not associate either squint with lepers.[620] However, this antiquarian theory has no basis in medieval source material; the idea of the leper squint evolved from nineteenth-century anxieties over communities of lepers in the British colonies.[621] The leper squint, and the nineteenth-century image of the grotesque medieval leper, have long caught the imagination of the wider public, and the leper squint continues to be mentioned in a variety of contexts—from art, to literature, to politics—from the nineteenth century to the present.[622]

The only two antiquarian theories about low side windows that are still discussed are the anchorite and leper squint; the anchorite squint, by both scholarly and amateur historians, and the leper squint, by amateur historians alone.[623] The lack of scholarly engagement with the leper squint is related to both its antiquarian origin, and to a broader Humanities-wide issue with disseminating research to non-scholarly audiences.[624] Among antiquarians, the leper squint was a controversial theory, and Clay,

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[618] Yuskaitis, 'The Mythical', forthcoming.

[619] Johnston, 'The Low Side Windows of Sussex Churches' (1898), pp. 190-91.

[620] *What to See*, Church Pamphlet. *Welcome to St. Mary's*, Church Pamphlet. **Ellesmere:** Cranage, *An Architectural…Volume II*, pp. 750, 1073. **Acton Burnell:** Cranage, *An Architectural…Volume II*, pp. 569-60 and Chatwin, *Squints in Warwickshire*, p. 13.

[621] Yuskaitis, 'The Mythical', forthcoming.

[622] Yuskaitis, 'The Mythical', forthcoming.

[623] For a list of explanations of low side windows, see Johnston, 'The Low Side Windows of Sussex Churches' (1898), pp. 190-94 and Cranage, *An Architectural…Volume II*, p. 472.

[624] Yuskaitis, 'The Mythical', forthcoming.

as well as some of her contemporaries, viewed it as debunked: 'Since the term "leper's window" has become discredited, there is a tendency to describe any inexplicable low-side window as an "anchorite's squint"'.[625] The leper squint deserves more scholarly analysis, but current attitudes view the leper squint as indicative of a lack of sophistication in antiquarian research, despite serious debate over the theory and the lack of access to recent research about medieval leprosy.[626]

In the same way that Julian of Norwich's reconstructed modern shrine resonates with visitors more deeply than a faithful reconstruction of an anchorite cell, the ahistorical leper squint clearly impacts current church visitors, despite its provenance.[627] The popularity of both leper and anchorite squints shows that they still speak to modern concerns about connections between illness, religious belief, community interaction, and separation.[628] Church pamphlets advertise anchorite and leper squints as historical features that contribute to distinctive histories at individual churches, and these features are often tied into narratives about individuals, such as Julian of Norwich. Scholarly engagement with more popular perceptions of squints is vital to preserving anchoritic archaeology in parish churches. The scholarly response to the leper squint and to antiquarian claims about gender sharply contrast, despite the similarity between how these squints are viewed in non-academic contexts, and the research links between these features. The acceptance of antiquarian gendered perspectives, as opposed to the way

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[625] Clay, *The Hermits and Anchorites*, p. 84. Johnston, 'The Low Side Windows of Sussex Churches', (1898), pp. 190-94. Johnston, 'The Low Side Windows of Sussex Churches' (1899), pp. 173-74. Note Johnston's theory was that low side windows were used primarily for confession, sometimes with a secondary function as a leper's squint.

[626] The leper's squint has not received seriously scholarly consideration since Clay because of modern assumptions about antiquarian inaccuracy, a lack of interest in the squint as an archaeological feature, and advances in modern leprosy scholarship. However, I have personally encountered researchers blaming erroneous church pamphlets on speculative antiquarian research, without placing this research in proper context.

[627] Yuskaitis, 'Archaeology and Medievalism', pp. 150-52. Yuskaitis, 'The Mythical', forthcoming.

[628] Yuskaitis, 'The Mythical', forthcoming.

the leper squint has been largely ignored in current scholarship, shows the need to acknowledge the antiquarian origin of the field and the importance of re-evaluating responses to antiquarian research.

VI. Anchoritic Archaeology in Shropshire and the Gendered Cell

Some features of the Shropshire cells discussed in Chapter 3 could be misinterpreted in a framework that accepts a template of a model cell as well as gendered assumptions about cell size and features such as doors, altars and graves. Therefore, further analysis of these features that acknowledges that they are not part of a standard template or indicative of a male anchorite in particular is essential. Doors placed next to typological features such as squints should not be viewed as incompatible with using the space as a cell, or with the cell being linked to specifically a male anchorite. The doors at Ellesmere and Great Ness are near the squint recesses, and were likely incorporated into the original build of the cell, although both doors have now been heavily remodelled. These doors would have been locked from the chancel side, thereby allowing the anchorite's confessor access, while leaving the anchorite enclosed. For Cranage, the lack of medieval doorways at Much Wenlock indicated the presence of an anchorite, but I argue that such a massive, thick-walled stone-built cell would have required a doorway—blocking in the doorway in the first place, as well as unblocking it when needed, would have been a difficult task. Instead, I argue that the larger modern doorway and heavily reconstructed wall on either side have obliterated all trace of the original medieval entrance into the chancel as well as the nearby squint. This chapter has shown that the size of the cell and the presence of a doorway do not indicate a male anchorite.

Much Wenlock and Ellesmere are examples of large, stone-built cells, but other cells in the dataset may have been more temporary constructions. For instance, no trace survives of the cell at Stanton other than the squint, and this early cell may have been constructed of wattle and daub, like the earliest cell at Compton. The Much Wenlock cell is composed of two rooms, with one storey most likely serving as an oratory with an altar. The construction of the cells at Acton Burnell and Ruyton are similar: the squint and squint recesses were enclosed in an alcove separate from the main cell where the anchorite lived. An altar would easily fit in the Much Wenlock cell, and the sophistication and spacious design of the squint recess at Ellesmere suggests that this cell would also be lavish and roomy enough to house an altar. But for many of the cells in this dataset—including Great Ness, Church Preen, and Stanton—cell size and shape are indeterminable. In these cases, it is important that assumptions about the size of these cells, and the presence of altars and potentially graves, are not made based on a false idea of a model cell or on gendered experience grounded in antiquarian perceptions.

These cells also functioned as status symbols, and the varied cell constructions in this dataset show how different churches shaped cell design to influence the perception of these cells and the churches they were attached to. The cell was a performative space, both for the individual anchorite and also for the wider church community; for medieval society, the cell was 'a site simultaneously of reclusion and spectacle'.[629] Just as the church building was a performative space, so was the cell. As Jacqueline Jenkins pointed out, the windows to the outside world and the squint were not only portals allowing the anchorite to see out, but also ways for the outside world to

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[629] Jacqueline Jenkins, 'Playing Julian: The Cell as Theater in Contemporary Culture', in *Julian of Norwich's Legacy: Medieval Mysticism and Post-Medieval Reception*, ed. by Sarah Salih and Denise N. Baker (New York: Palgrave Macmillian, 2009), 113-29 (p. 122).

see in—and closing the curtains over the windows, as specified by *Ancrene Wisse*, is an explicitly performative act.[630] Therefore, the varied designs of cells function as part of this performance; for instance, the massive two-storey cell at Much Wenlock showcased wealth and extravagance. Lord Burnell built the church at Acton Burnell in sight of his castle, and the cell functioned as a statement of Burnell's own wealth and prestige, especially since he created a more sophisticated version of the smaller, earlier cell at Ruyton. This shows that cells were constructed not only for the anchorite, but also to influence the reputation and prestige of churches and the communities that supported them. Even more rudimentary cells attached to less wealthy, more rural parish churches would highlight the ability and funds to construct a cell and support an anchorite. Indeed, churches that could have afforded a more generous cell may have purposely chosen a less polished design to emphasise the spiritual prowess of the particular anchorite enclosed at their church, as Dunstan's example indicates. Cell construction was influenced by many varied factors, and assuming that gender was the primary consideration in the size or design of the cell is misleading.

VII. Conclusions

This chapter addressed two common fallacies: the acceptance of a model cell based on prescriptive anchoritic rules, and the gendering of anchoritic archaeology features influenced by antiquarian interpretation. Medieval sources, documentary and archaeological, indicate that cell design did not follow a specific template, but instead that construction was adjusted for particular churches and individual anchorites, showing that aspects other than gender impacted cell design. For instance, enclosure

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[630] Jenkins, 'Playing Julian', p. 123.

ceremonies emphasise an anchorite's status as religious or lay, and literate or illiterate, in the construction of cells and ceremonial performance, but these aspects receive considerably less scholarly attention than gendered differences. The archaeological record also demonstrates astonishing diversity in cell construction styles and materials, cell design, and individualised interpretations regarding how features such as oratories, graves, and altars were used. Assumptions about gendered cell design and archaeological features are not based on medieval sources, but on antiquarian interpretations—and archaeological assessment using my methodology indicates that specific architectural features such as doors, altars, and oratories cannot be linked to the gender of the anchorite, as these features were common to cells used by male and female anchorites. The pervasiveness of the male anchorite-priest within current scholarship, as well as the popularity of the leper squint for non-academic audiences, demonstrates that antiquarian perspectives still influence modern interpretation, especially of surviving anchoritic archaeology. The archaeological record, including the cells at Shropshire, highlight both the diversity of cell construction, and also the various factors that played a role in cell design, including gender, but also the design of specific churches, the needs and perceptions of church communities and individual anchorites, and the funding available for construction and maintenance.

Chapter 5:

Anchoritic Archaeology and Lived Experience


I. Introduction

This thesis has shown that assessing the archaeology of anchorite cells is essential to a more nuanced and comprehensive view of medieval anchoritism. A historiographical analysis in Chapter 1 indicates that currently, the field of anchorite studies is primarily focused on women's experience viewed through literary sources. Antiquarian research is rejected as biased and outdated; at the same time, the continuing impact of this research on current scholarship is unexplored. Chapter 2 introduces the archaeological theory underpinning my original typology for anchoritic features. My original archaeological methodology relies on this typology and interprets features within their wider context. This same approach applied to antiquarian sources shows how to separate valuable data from antiquarian interpretation, and the chapter concludes with a discussion of how to date anchoritic archaeology. Seven churches in Shropshire with anchoritic archaeology are evaluated using my typology and methodology in Chapter 3, showing that significant archaeological evidence of anchorite cells survives in the area from the Norman period until just before the Dissolution. Chapter 4 analyses key medieval texts, such as anchoritic rules and enclosure ceremonies, which have shaped perceptions of the ideal anchorite cell, and shows that many assumptions about anchoritic lived experience are based on antiquarian ideas instead of the medieval evidence, and must be re-examined. The great variety indicated by the archaeological record in cell design and placement emphasises that a cell template did not exist in practice, and that lived experience varied according to understudied factors including

available funding, the design of specific parish churches, and the particular needs of the anchorite and parish community.

This final chapter before the conclusions further explores the anchoritic archaeology at Ellesmere as a case study for how my archaeological research challenges current assumptions about anchorites in the Shropshire area in particular. *Ancrene Wisse* and aspects of anchoritism associated with the Welsh Marches have had a significant impact on the field of anchorite studies as a whole, shaping ideas about liminality and women's participation in the vocation. Therefore, this is an appropriate case study to conclude this analysis of archaeology's contribution to the field. The case study discusses Ellesmere in context with the other Shropshire cells analysed in Chapter 3, and also identifies areas for further research in this dataset. The rest of the chapter focuses on the next steps for anchoritic archaeology research. This section emphasises the important role public engagement played in my research, and builds on this by arguing for regional anchoritic archaeology surveys conducted by local volunteers through a community-based archaeology project. The chapter closes with areas for future anchoritic archaeology research, such as exploring anchoritic features that survive outside of parish churches. This analysis of areas for further study shows the potential of my typology and methodology in various contexts, and highlights the important role archaeological analysis must continue to play in the field of anchorite studies.

## II. Case study: Ellesmere

The Welsh grave slab used as the lintel of the squint recess at Ellesmere shows a traditional, distinctively Welsh sculpture being incorporated into a sacred space within an English-style cell, geographically placed in the Welsh Marches. The archaeology,

then, forces a consideration of the nature of the border between England and Wales in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. This section is split into two parts. The first part focuses on how anchoritic scholars have analysed medieval literary sources such as *Ancrene Wisse*, showing that border texts portrayed anchorites in the Marches as exemplars of national identity, therefore leaving little room for the nuanced interactions between English and Welsh traditions evident from the Ellesmere lintel. This perspective is not often challenged; for instance, McAvoy acknowledged 'the problematics of sameness and otherness vying to dominate a single space', but also concluded that anchorites in the Marches provided 'points of stability in a perilously unstable geographical and spiritual location'.[631] Although scholars like McAvoy and Catherine Innes-Parker have extensively researched this border in the context of anchoritism based on documentary sources, an archaeological perspective introduces new ways of considering this relationship.[632] In contrast to interpretations based on solely documentary evidence, archaeological analysis at Ellesmere indicates a fluid border marked by continuity instead of difference, and stresses the regional characteristics of the cells in the Shropshire dataset, suggesting that anchoritic experience must be assessed at a regional instead of a national level.

The second part focuses on how ideas about the liminal nature of the Marches themselves and anchorites in this region have been applied to anchoritism beyond the specific context of the Marches. The term 'liminality' is nebulous; as I show later in this chapter, it is used to describe everything from the anchorite cell, to the anchoritic body, to geographical place. It is best defined through example: the Marches are liminal

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[631] McAvoy, *Medieval Anchoritisms*, pp. 147-77 (esp. 153, 177). For the rest of Chapter 5, I cite from the chapter titled, 'Mapping the Anchorhold: Anchorites, Borderlands and Liminal Spaces'.

[632] McAvoy, *Medieval Anchoritisms*, pp. 147-77. Innes-Parker, 'Medieval Widowhood', 95-124.

because the area is in between, neither fully English nor fully Welsh. Similarly, the anchorite is between the living and the dead, enclosed but embraced by the community. *Ancrene Wisse* and the particular border dynamics within the Marches have had an outsized impact on interpreting overall anchoritic experience. The concept of liminality has been used as a lens to analyse anchoritism, and this is connected to in-depth analyses of anchorites within the Welsh Marches, a liminal geographical space. I show that arguments about the liminality of the cell and anchoritic body are placed within a gendered literary framework that privileges women's experience, and also that this focus has erased the physical body of the anchorite, thereby preventing the assessment of lived experience. In the same way that Chapter 4 showed that the *Ancrene Wisse* cell is often perceived as the ideal, conclusions about the liminality of the anchoritic body and cell, developed from analysis of anchoritism on the border between England and Wales, are often extrapolated more widely to influence perceptions of English medieval anchoritism as a whole.

A. The Welsh Marches and the Ellesmere Lintel

This section begins with a brief historiography of the March of Wales, and emphasises how scholars have contextualised anchoritism within the Marches. This is a narrow perspective, and future research outside of the scope of this thesis could compare how scholars in other fields have conceived of the Marches; however, I focus specifically on how a narrative of instability in this border region leads to assumptions about the role of the anchorite which are both unconvincing, and inappropriate to extrapolate to anchoritism more broadly. The March of Wales, identified as the border between Wales and Shropshire as early as the eighth century with the building of Offa's

Dyke, was eventually reinterpreted as the Anglo-Norman frontier.[633] By the twelfth century, the English colonization of the Wales frontier was justified as a way to Anglicise—and therefore humanise—the barbaric Welsh.[634] As McAvoy explained, this context shaped the creation of *Ancrene Wisse*:

> It is no coincidence that the richest of our extant anchoritic guidance texts [*Ancrene Wisse*] should have emerged within a borderland context in which the way of life it maps plays more than an ordinarily important part in asserting the superiority of English identity and the construction of an expedient common enemy in the uncivilized and ungodly Welsh.[635]

Marcher territory, an area distinct from both England and Wales, was a contested space in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, with a mix of Welsh and English nobility.[636] Innes-Parker characterised the Welsh Marches in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries as a place of political instability, with Marcher noblewomen potentially viewing anchoritism as a means to obtain stability, independence, and continued political and religious influence, removed from a militarised context that shaped their relationships with immediate or extended male family members.[637]

The backdrop of the unstable and politically charged Marches influences the characterisations of both Welsh and English anchorites. McAvoy acknowledged that 'the histories of English colonization and conquest', both medieval and post-medieval,

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[633] Max Lieberman, *The Medieval March*, p. 13. Margaret Gelling, *The West Midlands in the Early Middle Ages*, Studies in the Early History of Britain (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1992), p. 102.

[634] Cohen, *Hybridity, Identity*, pp. 92, 101.

[635] McAvoy, *Medieval Anchoritisms*, pp. 147-77 (esp. 153).

[636] Lieberman, *The Medieval March*, pp. 19-21.

[637] Innes-Parker, 'Medieval Widowhood', pp. 98-105. See also: McAvoy, *Medieval Anchoritisms*, pp. 147-77 (esp. 151). Liz Herbert McAvoy, 'Uncovering', p. 802.

have resulted in a dearth of documentary evidence for anchoritism in Wales, especially in comparison to England.[638] With few sources to draw on, the multiple encounters with male anchorites and hermits mentioned in *Itinerarium Kambriae (Journey Through Wales)*, written by Gerald of Wales, a twelfth-century cleric and historian of Welsh and Norman heritage, shaped McAvoy's perspective.[639] In addition to these encounters, McAvoy also emphasised that Gerald included references to hagiographic and folkloric narratives of early eremitism.[640] McAvoy characterised Gerald's writing as openly politicised, which influenced his description of Welsh recluses as representing the best of Christianity, and their holiness justifying the independent nature of the Welsh church.[641] Resistance to the Romanisation of the Welsh church is evident into the fourteenth century; for instance, McAvoy also highlighted that *The Book of the Anchorite of Llanddewi Brefi*, completed in 1346, included subversive accounts of male anchorites in the old Celtic tradition, and in the fifteenth century the text 'would be adopted as part of the statement of hostility against the English'.[642] McAvoy also emphasised other texts roughly contemporary with Gerald, such as the *Chronicle of Lanercost*, that included borderland socio-political contexts, which referenced Welsh demonisation by the English.[643] Medieval literary sources, then, portrayed Welsh anchorites in opposition to English religious practice.

*Ancrene Wisse* characterised English anchorites as a civilising force on the border of Wales—a portrayal that McAvoy argued is echoed in other sources like *The*

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638 Liz Herbert McAvoy, 'Anchorites and Medieval Wales', in *Anchoritic Traditions of Medieval Europe*, ed. by Liz Herbert McAvoy (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2010), pp. 195-216 (p. 195).
639 McAvoy, 'Anchorites and Medieval', pp. 197-202.
640 McAvoy, 'Anchorites and Medieval', pp. 197-202.
641 McAvoy, 'Anchorites and Medieval', pp. 198-99.
642 McAvoy, 'Anchorites and Medieval', pp. 205-09; quoted p. 209.
643 McAvoy, *Medieval Anchoritisms*, pp. 147-77 (esp. 154-161).

*Chronicle of Lanercost*.[644] Instead of associating the anchorite at St John the Baptist
with Church Preen, as Chapter 3 showed was popular with antiquarian researchers,
McAvoy argued the anchorite was enclosed at Stapleton instead, and that placing the
anchorite's encounter with the friars in a borderland church was a deliberate political
statement in a pro-English text.[645] Therefore, McAvoy interpreted a high number of
female urban anchorites in Shrewsbury, the capital of a powerful Marcher earldom, as a
direct result of instability in the region; in this context, female English anchoritism
offered 'a strong sense of both religious and national identity…which come to represent
stability of place and stability of purpose'.[646] Similarly, Innes-Parker argued that
Annora and Loretta de Braose, sisters descended from Marcher nobility who were
enclosed as anchorites outside of Shropshire, chose to do so in part to gain stability and
security as wealthy widows; in addition, 'religious seclusion also provided a form of
political sanctuary, away from the teeming intrigues of their parents, for which Annora
had suffered imprisonment and Loretta exile'.[647] The Marches were a volatile place, but
I argue that this narrative is misleading. The experiences of the de Braose sisters, for
instance, are not unique; well-connected noble families outside of the Marches also
struggled with the balance between their individual lives and political machinations.[648]
Nonetheless, anchoritic scholars argued that medieval literary characterisations of
anchorites on either side of the border depicted anchorites, whether male or female, as
pure examples of national values and identity in times of crisis—which version of
anchoritism was the most civilised and righteous depended on an individual's border
allegiance.

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644 McAvoy, *Medieval Anchoritisms*, pp. 147-77 (esp. 149; 159-61).
645 McAvoy, *Medieval Anchoritisms*, pp. 147-77 (esp. 160-61).
646 McAvoy, *Medieval Anchoritisms*, pp. 147-77 (esp. 154; quoted p. 158).
647 Innes-Parker, 'Medieval Widowhood', pp. 98-101; quoted p. 101.
648 Robertson, *Early English Devotional*, pp. 21-22.

The Ellesmere lintel, most likely created in the thirteenth century and incorporated into the squint recess in the late thirteenth or fourteenth century, complicates a narrative of opposition from either side of a nebulous border. In the context described by McAvoy and Innes-Parker, an anchorite was either English or Welsh—interpreting anchorites as embodiments of national identity prevents interconnections between these identities. The placement of a Welsh grave slab in an English-style anchorite cell in the Marches contradicts this framework. It would have been easy to place the grave slab upside down to hide the carved detail, but instead the Welsh sculpture remained on display in a high-status build. Re-using old sculptural pieces is common, and many other examples of this Welsh sculptural style have been found within church wall rubble during renovations or as part of later medieval or post-medieval alterations.[649] However, the grave slab was placed intentionally, and the lack of evident plaster damage suggests that the slab was consciously left un-plastered, so the anchorite kneeling within the recess would, in effect, already be enclosed by the grave. The inscription on the slab marked it as definitively Welsh:

> Clearly, [Lombardic, sunk-relief] inscriptions embedded in the
> design are a special feature of these monuments…It suggests great
> importance is being given to naming the person commemorated, an
> impression further emphasised by the labour-intensive way they
> were carved. Clearly, identity mattered in medieval north Wales,
> which may perhaps reflect a fundamental need to perpetuate family
> histories.[650]

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[649] Gresham, *Medieval Stone Carving*, pp. 59-60. Gittos, 'Gresham Revisited', pp. 380-81.
    Butler, 'A Medieval Tombstone', 31-34. Gittos, 'Gresham Revisited Again', pp. 221-23.
[650] Gittos, 'Gresham Revisited Again', p. 217.

In the context of Welsh colonisation by the English, the impulse towards commemoration is understandable, and the re-use of the grave slab in a high-status build with part of the inscription intentionally visible may have been intended as a further tribute. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's discussion of hybridity as both 'fusion *and* disjunction', discussed further in the next paragraph, is fundamental to considering why a grave slab commemorating Welsh identity is placed so prominently within an English-style anchorite cell within the Marches.[651]

The Ellesmere grave slab indicates that the community who built the cell accepted influences from both Welsh and English sources. Cohen argued that hybrid middle spaces that defied clear definition were 'imagined as dangerous borders' in twelfth-century Britain as it grappled with migration, conquest, and colonisation.[652] Identities, even within homogeneous groups, changed in composition and self-definition over time; for instance, the term 'English' eventually included other designations like 'Norman'.[653] Cohen labelled the March itself as a middle space which lacked a fixed identity, due to the mix of English and Welsh influences.[654] Although sources like *Ancrene Wisse* tried to create a definitive English identity, Ellesmere was not on the opposite side of the border with Wales, but *part of* this border territory. In this context, the Welsh grave slab at Ellesmere is unsurprising—the cell was a hybrid space, housing an anchorite dead to the world and essential to the community, and straddling Welsh heritage and English tradition.

The nearby grave slab at St Martin's, as well as other examples of Welsh sculpture found in Shropshire, show that the Ellesmere lintel is not an anomaly, and

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[651] Cohen, *Hybridity, Identity*, p. 2.
[652] Cohen, *Hybridity, Identity*, p. 7.
[653] Cohen, *Hybridity, Identity*, pp. 4, 80.
[654] Cohen, *Hybridity, Identity*, p. 81.

other details from the Welsh sculpture corpus also indicate interplay between English and Welsh identities in the Marches.[655] Gittos noted that inscriptions in the Welsh sculptural style in the Marches during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries overwhelmingly list Welsh names, despite co-existence with the English, especially after the thirteenth-century conquest of Wales by Edward I.[656] They wondered whether people who identified as English were buried 'true to their own traditions' without the sunken-relief inscriptions characteristic of the Welsh corpus, and why, but offer no hypothesis.[657] If English and Welsh people were buried according to their own traditions, instead of adapting to more local customs, multiple interpretations could be proposed. On one hand, the insistence on an English-style burial could be viewed negatively as a contemptuous response to local Welsh traditions by the English. On the other hand, this could also be viewed positively—people who identified as both Welsh and English co-existed, with the embracing of cultural preferences specific to either side of the border accepted by both the Welsh and English. Anchoritic scholars have interpreted the medieval documentary record as portraying anchorites as the embodiments of national identity, associated with either the English or Welsh political and religious landscape; however, the archaeology at Ellesmere challenges this either/or distinction, and shows that anchoritic identity in the Marches was more complex than this dichotomy indicates, and that at least in some cases anchorites operated in a context that embraced both Welsh and English influences.

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[655] Butler, 'A Medieval Tombstone', 31-34. Gresham, *Medieval Stone Carving*, pp. 125-26; 156-58.
[656] Gittos, 'Gresham Revisited Again', p. 212.
[657] Gittos, 'Gresham Revisited Again', p. 212.

B. Liminality and the Archaeological Record

Scholarly analysis of border politics and anchoritism is linked with discussions of liminality, specifically focusing on the liminal anchoritic body living in a permeable, liminal cell located within a liminal geographical place.[658] Hasenfratz argued that the cell is perceived as fused with the body of the female anchorite specifically, prompting study of the cell/anchorite 'as a liminal space between the realms of body and spirit, the profane and sacred…[in which] both the anchorhold and the female body it contains represent sites of danger'.[659] Sauer defined liminality as the anthropological concept of 'a state of being in transition' or of being 'betwixt and between'.[660] In an introduction to a special issue of the *Journal of Medieval Religious Cultures*, titled 'Anchoritic Studies and Liminality' (2016), Sauer described the liminality of the anchorite and cell:

> Significantly, the anchoress, too, exists both as a boundary and
>
> between boundaries. She is bound within her cell and bound to keep
>
> her body pure; she stands between death and life. Moreover, as
>
> women, anchoresses were suspended in a liminal state of social and
>
> spiritual development, more than the common male Christian, who
>
> could be complete, while she remained in a state of becoming.[661]

This shows that gendered assumptions about differences between male and female anchoritic lived experience continue to distort scholarly perspectives.[662] In addition, the liminal quality of the cell is explicitly linked to female, not male, anchorites, therefore

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[658] McAvoy, 'Gender, Rhetoric and Space', p. 114. Liz Herbert McAvoy, 'Introduction', in *Rhetoric of the Anchorhold: Space, Place and Body within the Discourses of Enclosure*, ed. by Liz Herbert McAvoy (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2008), pp. 1-16 (p. 10). Jones, 'Anchorites and Hermits', p. 17. Hasenfratz, 'The Anchorhold', p. 2. Michelle M. Sauer, '"*In anniversaries*"', p. 111.

[659] Hasenfratz, 'The Anchorhold', p. 2. For another example, see Sauer, 'Introduction', p. viii.

[660] Sauer, 'Introduction', pp. v, vii.

[661] Sauer, 'Introduction', p. vi.

[662] McAvoy, 'Gender, Rhetoric and Space', pp. 112-20.

marking the cell a distinctively feminine space, as this sentence immediately following the extract above indicates: 'Anchorholds at gateways can be seen as forming an axis of this transitional state [specific to women]'.[663] This framework fails to acknowledge that men were also anchorites, and that their lived experience was also defined by their enclosure within cells. The framework also portrays women as continually in a state of limbo, even within the cell, which falls short of acknowledging the power women exercised in political and religious contexts outside of or within the cell.[664] In a short section that discussed the lack of surviving anchoritic archaeology and the difficulty of analysing features, Mari Hughes-Edwards clarified that the cell functioned 'as an extended metaphorical symbol of the piety which gave rise to its spatial construction'.[665] Just as the anchoritic body is absorbed into the cell, the cell itself is read as metaphorical instead of physical. Although this argument ostensibly addressed the space of the cell inhabited by the anchorite, the physicality and lived reality of the anchorite within her (or his!) body is lost.

By conflating the physical body of the anchorite, the tactile space of the cell, and the concept of liminality, searching for daily lived experience loses meaning. Instead, McAvoy emphasised the symbolic nature of the cell and the anchoritic body:

> …the anchoritic body functioned as both the producer and the recipient of communal socio-religious rhetoric, was shaper of and shaped by that same community and served rhetorically to assert and demonstrate the ideal status quo within a given place, space and time frame.[666]

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[663] Sauer, 'Introduction', p. vi.
[664] For examples of powerful Marcher women, in both secular and various kinds of religious life, see Innes-Parker, 'Medieval Widowhood', pp. 98-105.
[665] Hughes-Edwards, 'Anchoritism: The English', p. 142.
[666] McAvoy, 'Introduction', in *Rhetoric of the Anchorhold*, p. 7.

In this conceptualisation of the anchoritic vocation, the individual anchorite's corporeal existence is irrelevant—it is the rhetoric enacted by the anonymised anchoritic body, and by extension, the cell—that provides meaning. In this way, anchoritic experience is generalised, and this frustrates attempts to understand a vocation characterised by complexity and individualised interpretations and experiences in both the archaeological and documentary records. However, the lack of scholarly interest in the physical reality of the anchorite cell is unsurprising, as interpretations of the body/cell as rhetorical instead of corporeal are common. For instance, McAvoy discussed the anxieties of male clerics over allowing Christina Carpenter, a fourteenth-century female anchorite enclosed at Shere, Surrey, to break her enclosure and leave the cell in a rhetorical framework: 'Christina's body is to form a bridge between the lay and ecclesiastic, and between the ecclesiastic and God; any lapse in her vocation will necessarily harbour potentially catastrophic consequences for all'.[667] Here, again, the enclosed body is reduced from a physical reality to a symbol. Sauer linked the fused anchorite and cell to reliquaries, and compared casket or purse reliquaries to the design of cells.[668] Indeed, for Sauer, both reliquaries and cells show an overlapping of physical and spiritual space; the anchorite or relic is concealed within the cell or reliquary, but openings or windows also allowed points of revelation that permitted limited interactions with those outside the cell or reliquary.[669] Again, this discourse dehumanises the individual anchorite, with the body literally subsumed by the semi-permeable walls of the cell, therefore blocking the possibility of evaluating lived, corporeal experience.

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[667] McAvoy, 'Gender, Rhetoric and Space', p. 122.

[668] Michelle M. Sauer, 'Caskets, Purses, and Chests: The Shape of Anchoritism in Medieval England', presented at the *International Medieval Congress (IMC)*, Session 1338, 'Vessels of the Spirit: Recluses, Reliquaries, and Architecture' (University of Leeds, 03 July 2019).

[669] Sauer, 'Caskets, Purses'.

However, the archaeological record demonstrates diversity of lived experience through variety in cell design and placement, and the literary record shows that anchorites were not anonymised by enclosure, but that they had individual reputations and interactions with the local and wider community. Visitors from outside of the local community sought out particular anchorites for advice or guidance on spiritual or more mundane matters; a famous example is Margery Kempe, who visited Julian of Norwich.[670] Anchoritic visions also sometimes involved current political issues or patrons, as Emma Rawghton's prophecies about her noble patron's family indicate.[671] The cell as a status symbol also reinforces this point, as the cell advertised the presence of an anchorite, who could bring revenue to the church and the community through cultivating a reputation that encouraged visitors to seek counsel. The anchoritic vocation embodied opposing tensions that required balancing enclosure and community interactions, but consideration of the wider religious milieu is necessary—after all, monastic houses, too, were engaged in some form of removal from the world, while also grappling with the level of acceptable participation in secular life.[672] In order to consider the rich and varied lived experiences of individual anchorites, their lifestyle must be considered as physical and temporal, and grounded within a clearly defined material space.

This perception of the liminal anchoritic body as both fused with the cell and as symbolic or rhetorical, instead of corporeal, is also linked to the relationship between anchoritism and mysticism. Sauer's analysis of anchoritic mysticism demonstrates how the cell, the anchoritic body, and mystical experiences are all liminal:

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[670] Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites*, pp. 68-69.
[671] Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites*, pp. 69; 83-85.
[672] Willmott, *The Dissolution*, pp. 11-12, 14.

> Mystical encounters invite investigations of liminality by virtue of
>
> their existence. Attempting to describe ineffable mystical
>
> experiences commonly engages efforts at a reconciliation of
>
> opposites, and participants reside constantly at a liminal point or
>
> threshold, at in-between stages of being, and must negotiate where
>
> the self ends and the divine begins.[673]

The concept of liminality cannot be applied to the physical building of the cell, the corporeal body of the anchorite, and an individualised mystical encounter in the same way. Chapter 2 of this thesis demonstrated the importance of a methodology that considers how different voices of the past—including the Word and the Object—speak. Other scholars have also focused on connections between liminality, the cell, and mystical experience or the anchorite's devotional practice.[674] These interpretations of liminality fail to consider how different types of experience must be assessed on their own terms. Now that liminality has been removed from its particular context in the Marches, it is used as a catch-all to describe varied aspects of anchoritic experience— and, more specifically, female anchoritic experience.

The foundations of this link between liminality and mysticism lie in antiquarian and twentieth-century fascination with the mystical experiences of specifically female anchorites, as this 1955 excerpt by P. Franklin Chambers describing Julian of Norwich exemplifies:

> What marks the special experiences of the great mystics is a direct
>
> or mediated spiritual awareness of the divine Reality or Presence,
>
> sometimes exceeding rational comprehension and normal

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[673] Sauer, 'Introduction', p. vii.

[674] Hasenfratz, 'The Anchorhold', pp. 1-2, 12. Kim, 'Rewriting Liminal Geographies', pp. 73-74.

expression. Regarded as an infused grace, such experience cannot

be self-induced, though they may be sought by passive and

sentimental temperaments.[675]

For Chambers, mystical experiences are only possible through feminine attributes—passivity and sentimentality—while for Sauer, the liminal mystical experience is inextricably linked with the liminal cell and explicitly feminine anchoritic body. As Chapter 4 highlighted, antiquarians viewed female and male anchorites within idealised nineteenth-century gender dynamics, and this emphasised the connection between the private experience of mysticism within the cell (instead of more public religious expression) and women anchorites in particular. Mysticism resists a purely temporal or rational definition. However, mystical revelations were just one aspect of the lived experience of an anchorite, which encompassed activities grounded in the temporal world. The archaeological record reminds researchers that anchorites existed in a corporeal body in a physical space, and that the variety evident in cell design would have enabled different kinds of experiences and perspectives; although the cell was liminal in the sense of what it represented, it also functioned as the daily, intensely physical space that shaped an individual anchorite's perception of matters earthly and divine.

C. The Archaeological Record in Shropshire

The Shropshire sites discussed in this thesis highlight the value of regional and comparative archaeological study. Jones has also focused on regional studies of anchorites, in particular to build on the statistics collated by Clay; nonetheless, documentary sources have dominated Jones' analysis due to the perceived difficulty in

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[675] Chambers, *Juliana of Norwich*, p. 24.

interpreting the few archaeological features that survive.[676] Although Jones claimed that 'we do not have much information about the size and design of anchorholds', and that 'standing remains of archaeological evidence are both rare and rarely straightforward to interpret', this thesis has shown that archaeological evidence of cells survives, and that these features can be analysed independent of documentary sources.[677] Indeed, analysing sites using my typology may indicate more archaeology survives than initially expected, and my methodology sets out how to interpret these features. An archaeological perspective demonstrates continuity of anchoritic activity over time in Shropshire, but also variety in cell design—a factor missing from documentary studies. Some regional similarities have emerged: for instance, the parallel cell designs at Acton Burnell and Ruyton indicate that the Acton Burnell cell may have consciously been built as a more sophisticated version of the earlier cell at Ruyton. However, the unique construction of the Ellesmere cell, with the grave slab lintel, also shows choices in design independent of other squint recesses in the area. The context of specific churches that shaped the design of anchorite cells also comes to the fore through an archaeological perspective, as the finely-crafted two-storey cell at Much Wenlock shows. Here, the cell served both as the anchorite's living space, and as a status symbol for a church also recently boasting a new chancel extension. The sophistication of design and materials indicates the availability of considerable wealth, probably contributed by the community and individual anchorite. This variety in cell design, placement, and style indicates that lived experience was not universal, but specific to individual churches and cells.

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[676] Jones 'The Hermits and Anchorites of Oxfordshire', pp. 61-63. Jones, 'Hidden Lives', pp. 20-21.

[677] Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites*, p. 42.

This thesis has provided an overview of the anchoritic archaeology and wider context at each site in Shropshire, demonstrating the validity of using my typology and methodology to evaluate anchoritic archaeology features; however, more in-depth analysis of these cells and the wider context of the churches they were attached to is paramount to a comparative- and regionally-focused approach. Analysing the history of these parish churches in more detail would provide valuable data about the community anchorites served at each site and how the church buildings evolved over time. For instance, in addition to the structural similarities of the cells at Acton Burnell and Ruyton, both cells were attached to parish churches associated with castles; the ruins are still visible in close proximity at both sites. More complete church profiles could strengthen connections between these sites, and may also suggest reasons behind similarities or differences between cells. In addition, a comprehensive survey of anchoritic archaeology surviving in Shropshire parish churches is necessary to place these cells within their wider local context; regional surveys are discussed in more detail in section IV of this chapter. The anchoritic archaeology in Shropshire demonstrates a long-standing anchoritic tradition in the area, and the variety in cell design indicates that individual lived experience was shaped by the specific context of the parish church the cell was attached to.

III. Public Engagement

Public engagement activities have been a major part of the archaeological and archival research trips essential to this thesis, and these experiences have shaped the future research agenda presented in sections IV and V of this chapter. The high number of locals who attended public engagement events in Shropshire shows the value of not only increasing scholarly research about anchoritic archaeology, but also disseminating

this research to a non-academic audience. Between 2018 and 2019, I delivered three public talks in the Shropshire area at the Shropshire Archives, The Much Wenlock Civic Society, and The Arts Society (Shrewsbury chapter). The Shropshire Archives public talk included a display of relevant material from the archive, and I followed up by planning an interactive workshop about how to use archival sources, with one of my Shropshire sites as a case study, for August 2020. This was cancelled due to the Covid-19 crisis, but this event, along with other public talks, will take place when restrictions are lifted. In 2018, I was also consulted by Acton Burnell committee members creating a heritage trail, which featured the anchorite cell. In addition, I delivered two public talks in 2019 and 2020 to non-academic audiences outside Shropshire (the Yorkshire Archaeological & Historical Society and the Bedale Archaeology & History Society), and have also participated in a University of Leeds campus-wide public engagement festival titled 'Be Curious' in 2018 and 2020. Audience sizes for public talks varied from 20 to 37 participants, with The Arts Society talk reaching over 100 people. Some locals attended multiple talks, showing continued interest in the topic, and feedback recorded on forms handed out after the talks was overwhelmingly positive, with listeners often commenting that they had learned something new and wanted to be kept up-to-date with my research; as one participant said, 'There was obviously a lot more to it [anchoritism] than I had imagined'.

Public engagement has been a powerful way for me to give back to a community that has welcomed me and provided access to parish churches essential to my thesis— and I argue that this approach of community building and interactive engagement with local heritage is essential to the success of future anchoritic archaeology surveys, which will rely on local goodwill, interest, and involvement. Building these community networks positively impacted locals and encouraged engagement with local heritage, and my research also benefitted from these interactions. For instance, I was able to view

the second storey of the Much Wenlock vestry after a local attended my talk and

approached me about providing access, as I mentioned in my conclusions that viewing

this part of the building would be useful for further research. I have also been contacted

by Shropshire residents who have attended or heard about my talks regarding sources

that mention Shropshire anchoritism. Offers for future talks and potential publications

also resulted from these public engagement activities. By the time I attended and

presented at the British Archaeological Association Annual Conference in July 2019,

held in Shrewsbury, I was well-known by local communities in the area, and during a

site visit to the parish church in Much Wenlock, I was recognised by locals hosting a

reception and asked for more details about my research. Ultimately, my public talks

demonstrating the presence of anchorite squints in local churches prompted curiosity

and an attitude of continued learning: 'The talk will encourage me to look very carefully

when visiting other churches'.

Anchorite and leper squints function as key features that facilitate engagement

with current concerns about health, community, and spiritual belief in modern church

congregations. During my public talks, audience members often ask about the leper

squint; as one individual on a feedback form stated, 'I have revised my views on the

leper squint theory'. Chapter 3 indicated that church pamphlets and local publications

mentioned anchorite squints—sometimes misidentified as leper squints—in multiple

churches within the Shropshire dataset.[678] Further research of church literature

mentioning anchorite and leper squints also shows that this trend continues in churches

beyond the Shropshire area, as the interpretation of the squint in Barnburgh, Yorkshire

as a leper squint and reliquary shows.[679] Moreover, Chapter 3 described how the squint

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[678] See Table 3.1: Shropshire Anchoritic Archaeology References.

[679] Yuskaitis, 'The Mythical ', forthcoming. *St Peter's Church Barnburgh,* Church booklet, p. 14.

recesses at Ruyton and Stanton were used for community safekeeping to store objects of religious significance formerly belonging to church parishioners.[680] Parishioners view anchorite and leper squints as essential both to honouring members of the current church community through storing items of religious significance, and also to highlight the historical significance of their local church through the survival of squints.[681] I have argued elsewhere for the importance of engaging church visitors with many examples of anchoritic archaeology and of emphasising the diversity of lived experience, which would also encourage a consideration of the interactions between text and material culture.[682] Completing original archaeological research and using local archives necessitates interaction and trust with the community, and responding to local interest through public outreach activities such as talks or workshops, accessible publications for a non-academic audience, the involvement of communities in identifying squints as part of regional surveys, and the improvement of church pamphlets and displays alongside local churches is mandatory to an inclusive research approach that supports the preservation of local history and incorporates community voices.

IV. Regional Anchoritic Archaeology Surveys

Regional surveys are an essential next step to analysing anchoritic archaeology, as they would address the lack of archaeological research within the field, and would identify where the surviving archaeological evidence in England is located. The last regional surveys of anchoritic archaeology were carried out by antiquarians like Johnston, who focused on anchorite squints and viewed them as a particular category of

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[680] See Chapter 3, III, A.
[681] Yuskaitis, 'The Mythical', forthcoming.
[682] Yuskaitis, 'Archaeology and Medievalism', pp. 153-54; quoted p. 154. Yuskaitis, 'The Mythical', forthcoming.

low side windows.[683] Without my typology, attempting a survey would be futile, since the key identifiers of anchoritic archaeology—including but not limited to squints—had previously not been articulated. However, using my typology and methodology shows that surveys are possible, and my work with public engagement demonstrates that community involvement is central to a successful project. [684]  The following paragraph lays out a brief outline indicating how regional surveys should be implemented; however, consultation with local communities is paramount to designing this project, with these views also informing development and approaches.

A comprehensive survey programme would train local communities in my approach, focusing especially on typological characteristics unique to anchoritic archaeology. Volunteers would be assigned to particular parish churches within a local area, with instructions about how to record any features that may be anchoritic on a pre-designed form. Next, an archaeologist would go through the reports and visit any sites with likely features in person, with interested volunteers also welcome to attend and learn how to apply the methodology. This approach would not only cover more ground than a single researcher could hope to achieve in the same period of time, but would also involve the local community in a project that encourages interest in and engagement with heritage. As well as scholarly publications, a non-academic report on findings could then be disseminated to volunteers, in addition to public talks that highlighted community involvement and how local trends connect to wider anchoritic

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[683] Johnston, 'The Low Side Windows of Sussex Churches' (1898), 159-202. Johnston, 'The Low Side Windows of Surrey Churches', p. 85. Johnston, 'The Low Side Windows of Sussex Churches' (1899), 117-79.

[684] Carenza Lewis, 'Up Close and Personal: How and Why to Engage Members of the Public with Medieval Archaeology', presented at the *International Medieval Congress (IMC)*, Session v14-02, 'Teaching the Middle Ages' (University of Leeds, virtual congress, 09 July 2020). This paper provided an example of how community archaeology worked in a different context, and provided inspiration and encouragement for how to build on my current public engagement connections both to involve local communities more effectively and to build our knowledge base about the archaeology of anchorite cells.

archaeological research. This project could incorporate collaboration with other scholars focusing on parish church features as well. Completing regional parish church surveys is crucial to moving forward with archaeological analysis, as this will provide valuable data about where anchoritic archaeology survives, which then allows researchers to analyse wider context at specific sites.

Regional surveys would increase the amount of data available to analyse, and would therefore allow researchers to evaluate trends within a particular region, and also more broadly. Comparing anchoritic archaeology from different regions would provide valuable insights, especially if anchoritic features are present in counties that multiple scholars have stated lack any documentary evidence of anchoritism (including Buckinghamshire, Rutland, Cumberland, and Westmorland).[685] Surveys identifying anchoritic archaeology at previously unknown sites also invites more in-depth analysis of individual case studies, focusing on wider context. For instance, the cells at Lewes, Surrey require this kind of analysis, which would examine the evolution of multiple cells alongside the development of the church building as a whole. Studies focusing on a single site's development over time are necessary to understand the relationship between the cell and church building. My approach provides the tools necessary for both regional surveys and individual site analysis, using archaeological, antiquarian, and medieval and modern documentary sources.

V. Future Research

This thesis has focused on applying my archaeological typology and methodology to features in parish churches in Shropshire specifically, but a future

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[685] Hughes-Edwards, 'Anchoritism: The English', p. 140. Gilchrist, *Contemplation*, p. 183.

research agenda includes expanding this focus to parish churches throughout England, cells not attached to parish churches, and cells associated with chantry chapels. Anchorites were also enclosed within the precincts of religious orders, city and castle walls and gates, and churchyards in freestanding cells.[686] Archaeological evidence of anchorites in these contexts is rare, in part because some structures, such as city walls, no longer survive or have been significantly altered by post-medieval building work; however, current research of surviving structures has also not focused on anchoritic archaeological analysis.[687] My methodology is also essential to analysing pre-thirteenth-century anchoritic archaeology and more temporary cell constructions, as described in Chapter 4.[688] Sauer linked fourteenth- and fifteenth-century chantry chapels to anchorite cells, arguing for similarities in architectural design, ideology, and use.[689] Moreover, Sauer argued that anchorite cells 'could be seen as less costly substitutes for chantries', and therefore could be accessed by laypeople in the community who could not afford intercession through a chantry chapel.[690] Jones also highlighted links between chantry chapels and anchorites and hermits; buildings designated as chantries had sometimes previously housed anchorites or hermits, or chantries that had fallen out of use were found inhabited by hermits during the dissolution of the chantries (completed 1548).[691] Connections between these structures deserves further study, although this is outside the scope of this thesis. Using my typology and methodology to archaeologically evaluate known chantries, as well as anchorite cells, could provide further clarity about architectural similarities or differences. Ultimately my approach could be adapted to

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[686] Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites*, p. 42. Eddie A. Jones, '*O Sely Ankir*', in *Medieval Anchorites in their Communities*, Studies in the History of Medieval Religion, ed. by Cate Gunn and Liz Herbert McAvoy (Cambridge: Brewer, 2017), pp. 13-34. Gunn, 'Was there', 117-23. For freestanding cells, see Chapter 4, III, C.

[687] Gunn, 'Was there', 117-23 is a notable exception.

[688] See Chapter 4, III, B-C.

[689] Sauer, '"*In anniversaries*"', pp. 107-110.

[690] Sauer, '"*In anniversaries*"', p. 109.

[691] Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites*, pp. 186-87.

evaluate surviving anchoritic archaeology in a variety of contexts outside of parish churches, although the wider context of a monastic precinct, for instance, would be more complex than that of a small parish church.

This thesis has focused on anchoritic archaeology in England specifically, but surviving features outside of England also require archaeological analysis. Assumptions about the continuity of cell design across a wide geographic area must be resisted, especially since anchoritism took on different characteristics in various parts of the medieval world, as McAvoy's edited collection, *Anchoritic Traditions of Medieval Europe*, demonstrated.[692] However, this thesis provides a template for how to design a relevant typology of anchoritic features, and my methodology could then be applied for further analysis. Comparative studies of surviving anchoritic archaeology from different areas of the medieval world would enhance and nuance our understanding of how cell design impacted lived experience in myriad contexts and environments.

In addition to its value for studying anchorite cells in a variety of contexts, my model could also be adapted for a different archaeological feature. Although the details of the typology would change, the archaeological framework is transferable, and the process of working through my methodology would remain relevant regardless of the particular feature the typology was designed for. Creating a different typology would involve considerable original archaeological fieldwork relevant to the feature under study. However, once the typology was completed, my methodology provides a clear guide to interpreting the archaeology independently, while also incorporating historical and modern documentary assessments, including antiquarian reports.

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[692] McAvoy, ed., *Anchoritic Traditions*.

VI. Conclusions

Through the case study of the anchoritic archaeology at Ellesmere and evaluating how this research can be expanded in future, this chapter demonstrated that my typology and methodology impacts the field of anchoritic studies as a whole, and can contribute to other fields as well. The Ellesmere lintel encourages a consideration of the interactions between Welsh and English culture in the Welsh Marches, and complicates a narrative of anchorites representing national identity on either side of the border. This also indicates that the concept of liminality requires more careful analysis, as viewing anchorites, their vocation, and their physical reality as liminal fails to articulate the nuance of their lived experiences. Moreover, I have demonstrated the importance of public engagement in community archaeology projects. I also outlined how to continue identifying anchoritic archaeology through regional surveys, which will require public engagement and local support. I concluded by indicating a future research agenda beyond my Shropshire case study, which includes focusing on other surviving anchorite cells in England (including freestanding structures, or cells attached to churches or other structures), the connection between anchorite cells and chantry chapels, and anchorite cells outside of England. My typology could also be adapted for a different feature, indicating the value of this research even outside the field of anchorite studies. An archaeological methodology offers a fresh perspective and invites further study of surviving archaeology, which prompts new questions about the lived experience of medieval anchorites.

Chapter 6:

Conclusions

An archaeological methodology focusing on wider context is crucial, not only to reveal surviving anchoritic archaeology, but also to evaluate the archaeology independently, outside of a literary framework. The archaeological record shows variety in cell design and placement, both within regions and over time, thereby dispelling the myth of the standardised anchorite cell. Moreover, my archaeological approach broadens the current scholarly focus from specifically thirteenth- to fourteenth-century women's lay experience, to the lived experience of anchorites of any status and gender. My Shropshire case study shows that even a limited regional survey produced a variety of cell and squint designs, from the Norman period to the Dissolution. Archaeological analysis demonstrates changing attitudes towards cell design—and therefore, anchoritism—over time, both at a single site and within a region. This long-term, regional perspective is a strength unique to the archaeological record; indeed, the current focus on the later medieval period coincides with the greater survival rate of documentary material. Interpreting these changes in cell design includes consideration of the gender or previous social status of individual anchorites, but these changes also highlight the role of individual parish churches in shaping cell design (and therefore anchoritic experience), the kinds of funds available to construct cells, and the function of cells as status symbols for the community and church.

Current scholarship uses archaeology to focus almost exclusively on gender— particularly women's experience—and status, but these interpretations are based on assumptions not supported by the archaeological or documentary record. Altars, graves in the cell, and spacious or multi-storey cells were used by both men and women, as

medieval documentary sources also show, and no material culture that would signal specifically a male or female occupant survives from the archaeological evidence presented in this thesis. Spacious, expensively-made cells are often associated with lay, wealthy noblewomen or male priests, but this interpretation fails to consider the cell's potential as a status symbol for the church and community, and the fact that cells were often re-used over time by successive anchorites. Moreover, these interpretations are grounded in antiquarian interpretations of medieval sources, instead of medieval sources themselves, as a close analysis of the male anchorite-priest with access to the altar outside of the cell demonstrates. Although status and gender no doubt played a role in shaping an individual anchorite's experience of enclosure, the archaeological record indicates that other factors, including available funding, regional preferences, changing attitudes over time, and the context of the specific church associated with the cell, also shaped experience and so deserve more scholarly analysis.

My archaeological typology and methodology open up possibilities for new approaches. These include completing regional archaeological surveys with comparable data through a community-based project that prioritises public engagement, evaluating anchoritic archaeology not associated with parish churches, and adapting the framework for a different archaeological feature. Comprehensive surveys across England would promote further comparison with specific sites and regional trends, and would also encourage in-depth site analysis focusing on wider context. Future research could also include assessing anchoritic archaeology outside of England, and exploring connections between late medieval anchorite cells and chantry chapels. This thesis has focused on a limited survey of Shropshire churches, but nonetheless has positively impacted local communities, challenged scholarly assumptions based on antiquarian ideas, especially concerning gender and lived experience, and offered new perspectives on medieval anchoritism, emphasising the connection between the church building and cell.

**A**ppendix **A:** Churches with Anchoritic Archaeology Features

This is not an exhaustive list of all churches with anchoritic archaeology, but includes all sites discussed as case studies in this thesis for easy reference. Thesis chapters will refer to individual sites by town or city name, followed by county name (ex: Ellesmere, Shropshire) on first reference; frequent subsequent references within each chapter refer only to the town or city name. County names are in bold; sites known by a specific area within larger cities include the district in parentheses. This list is intended to provide clarity for researchers intending to visit these sites by including current dedication names while simultaneously avoiding confusion within chapters that could be caused by similar dedications.

I have completed on-site research trips for the majority of churches in this list; sites marked by a cross (†) are the exceptions, due to travel and funding constraints. Any relevant notes on individual sites following this list are marked by an asterisk (*).

**Durham**

Chester-le-Street, Church of St Mary and St Cuthbert

**Essex**

Chickney, St Mary's Church†

Chipping Ongar, St Martin's Church†

East Ham, St Mary Magdalene's Church†

Lindsell, St Mary the Virgin Church†

**Hertfordshire**

Bengeo, Church of St Leonard†

**Kent**

Faversham, St Mary of Charity Church

Staplehurst, Church of All Saints

**Shropshire**

Acton Burnell, St Mary's Church

Church Preen, Church of St John the Baptist

Ellesmere, Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Great Ness, St Andrew's Church

Much Wenlock, Church of the Holy Trinity

Oswestry, St Martin's Parish Church*

Ruyton-Upon-XI-Towns, Church of St John the Baptist

Stanton-Upon-Hine-Heath, St Andrew's Church

**Surrey**

Compton, St Nicholas' Church

Leatherhead, St Mary and St Nicholas' Church

Shere, St James' Church

**Sussex**

Lewes, St Anne's Church

**Yorkshire**

Barnburgh, St Peter's Church


These churches are frequently described as having archaeological features that indicate anchoritic activity, but my analysis suggests that these claims are unfounded:

**Kent**

Hartlip, St Michael & All Angel's Church

**Norfolk**

Norwich (Conisford), St. Julian's Church

**Yorkshire**

York (Fishergate), Church of All Saints†

*This church does not have extant anchoritic archaeology, but fragments of a Welsh grave slab found here are essential to the interpretation of a grave slab at Ellesmere, Shropshire.

The map on the next page corresponds to this list, and includes all sites discussed in this thesis. A map featuring specifically the Shropshire sites can be viewed in Chapter 3 (Map 3.1). Maps created by author using ArcMap.

English Parish Churches with Alleged and Identified Anchoritic Archaeology Features



**Key**

1. Chester-le-Street, Durham
2. Chickney, Essex
3. Chipping Ongar, Essex
4. East Ham, Essex
5. Lindsell, Essex
6. Benegeo, Hertfordshire
7. Faversham, Kent
8. Staplehurst, Kent
9. Acton Burnell, Shropshire*
10. Much Wenlock, Shropshire*
11. Oswestry, Shropshire*
12. Ruyton-Upon-XI-Towns, Shropshire*

13. Church Preen, Shropshire*
14. Ellesmere, Shropshire*
15. Great Ness, Shropshire*
16. Stanton-Upon-Hine-Heath, Shropshire*
17. Compton, Surrey
18. Leatherhead, Surrey
19. Shere, Surrey
20. Lewes, Sussex
21. Barnburgh, Yorkshire
22. Hartlip, Kent
23. Norwich, Norfolk
24. York, Yorkshire**

* For a map of only the Shropshire sites, see Chapter 3.

** Pin at Kent Street, York (in the vicinity of the excavation).

**Appendix B:** Church Plans

Plans of churches within the Shropshire dataset and select case studies are included. The red outline indicating the placement of anchoritic archaeology at each site is my addition. Black arrows indicating northern orientation are also my addition, if not included in original plans.

Plans are arranged alphabetically, first by county (bolded). Within each county, sites are arranged alphabetically by town or city name, followed by the current dedication name. For a full list of church sites, see **Appendix A:** Churches with Anchoritic Archaeology Features.

Any photographs not otherwise attributed are my own.

For further information about anchoritic features, see **Appendix C:** Anchoritic Features.

**Durham**

Chester-le-Street, Church of St Mary and St Cuthbert

**This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.**

'Historical Plan of Church', *The Parish Church of St Mary & St Cuthbert, Chester-le-Street* ([n.d.]) < https://www.maryandcuthbert.org.uk/parish-church-/-history-of-building/church-building/historical-plan-of-church.php> [accessed 24 September 2020]. Reprinted in Chris Fairley, *Chester-le-Street Lindisfarne Gospel Trail*, Church Pamphlet ([n.p.]: NB Group, 2013)

**Kent**

Faversham, St Mary of Charity Church

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Brian Jones, 'Ecclesiastical Features to be Found in the Church', *The Parish Church of St Mary of Charity, Faversham: Built to InSpire*, Church Pamphlet ([n.p.], The Parish Church of St Mary of Charity, Faversham, Kent, 2007). See also: *The Parish Church of St Mary of Charity*, Church Pamphlet ([n.p.]: The Art of Design Limited, [n.d,]), back cover.

Staplehurst, Church of All Saints

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F. C. Elliston-Erwood, 'Plans of, and Brief Architectural Notes on, Kent Churches', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, 61 (1948): 57-67, Plan 12.

**Shropshire**

Acton Burnell, St Mary's Church

**This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.**

David Herbert Somerset Cranage, *An Architectural Account of the Churches of Shropshire: Volume II*, 2 vols (Wellington: Hobson & Co., 1912), across from p. 451.

Church Preen, Church of St John the Baptist

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Shrewsbury, Shropshire Archives, PH/C/16/7, 'Ground Plan of Preen Church' (1845), drawn by Rev. R. Armitage.

N.B. This plan is outdated, as the porch has been extended; this extension reaches to the end of the tower (see author's photo below). However, this plan provides an accurate depiction of overall church design, and shows the proximity of the squint to the doorway opposite.

Ellesmere, Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary

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*What to See in the Parish Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Ellesmere*, Church Pamphlet ([n.p.]: [n. pub.], [n.d.])

Great Ness, St Andrew's Church

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London, Lambeth Palace Library Collections, Incorporated Church Building Society, ICBS10891, 'Great Ness, St. Andrew' (1909), drawing by Arthur Edward Lloyd-Oswell <http://images.lambethpalacelibrary.org.uk/> [accessed 10 June 2020]. See also: Shrewsbury, Shropshire Archives, P114/B/9/1, 'Plan of Great Ness Church' (1909).

Much Wenlock, Church of the Holy Trinity

**This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.**

David Herbert Somerset Cranage, *An Architectural Account of the Churches of Shropshire: Volume I*, 2 vols (Wellington: Hobson & Co., 1901), across from p. 215.

Oswestry, St Martin's Parish Church

**This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.**

M.J. Salter, *St Martin's Church, St Martin's Shropshire*, used with permission from churchwarden John Keighley 14 June 2020 ([n.p.]: [n.pub.], 12 April 1977).

Oswestry, St Martin's Parish Church, Continued…

N.B. Modern chapter house/parish room my addition. Grave slab fragments discovered in the medieval wall of the north aisle, when the corridor to the chapter house was added (Lawrence Butler, 'A Medieval Tombstone at St Martins, Near Oswestry', *Shropshire History and Archaeology*, 89 (2014), 31-34). See author's photos below.

Ruyton-Upon-XI-Towns, Church of St John the Baptist

**This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.**

David Herbert Somerset Cranage, *An Architectural Account of the Churches of Shropshire: Volume II*, 2 vols (Wellington: Hobson & Co., 1912), across from p. 818.

N.B. The red outlines indicate the placement of the squint and squint recess, and also the external wall extension.

Stanton-Upon-Hine-Heath, St Andrew's Church
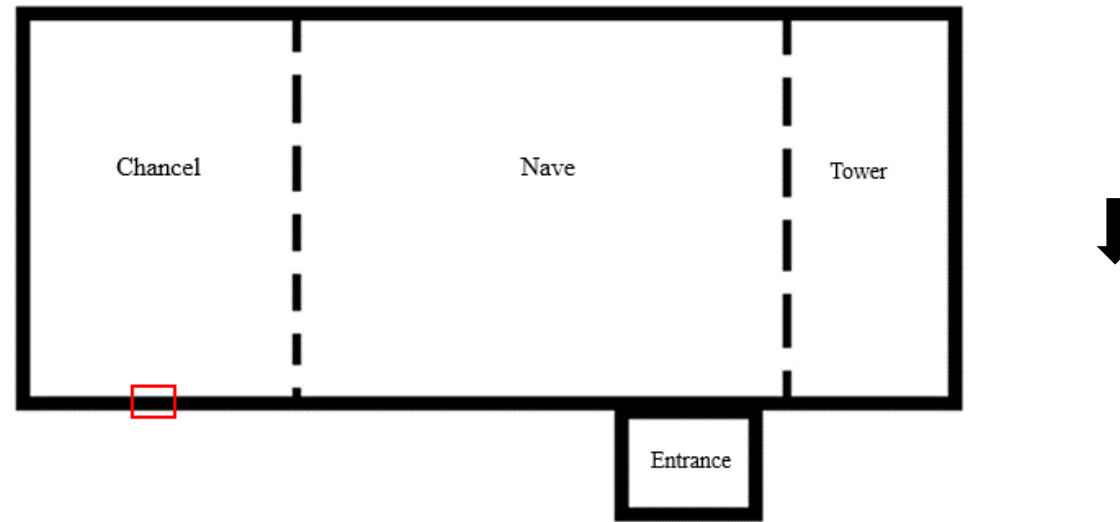


Plan by the author, based on field notebook sketch.

N.B. To my knowledge, no church plan of any date exists at the Shropshire Archives or the Lambeth Palace Library Collections, and the churchwardens at St Andrew's also confirmed that there is no plan in on-site church records, either.

**Surrey**

Compton, St Nicholas' Church

**This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.**

Bott, Alan, *A Guide to the Parish Church of Saint Nicholas Compton Surrey*, Church Booklet ([n.p.]: [n. pub.], 2000).

N.B. Both anchorite cells are indicated, in the north and south walls.

Leatherhead, St Mary and St Nicholas' Church

**This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.**

Thomas Ford & Partners, Chartered Architects & Surveyors, 'Existing Church Floorplan', *St Mary & St Nicholas Church, Leatherhead. New Future our Church—Feasibility Study* ([n.d.]), <file:///C:/Users/Victoria/Documents/University%20of%20Leeds%20PhD%202016-2017/PhD%20Articles/New-Future-Leatherhead-Presentation.pdf> [accessed 24 September 2020].

N. B. The rectangular outline in black near the location of the anchoritic archaeology and outside the drainage ditch extending around the chancel is not an extension built from Johnston's excavated walls. It is a modern oil tank placed within a brick compound.

Shere, St James' Church

**This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.**

Philip Mainwaring Johnston, 'Ecclesiastical Architecture', in *The Victoria County History of the County of Surrey: Volume Two*, ed. by H. E. Malden, 3 vols (London: Constable, 1905), pp. 425-60 (p. 434).

N.B. The dotted lines indicating the size of the cell are speculative.

**Sussex**

Lewes, St Anne's Church

**This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.**

Godfrey, Walter H., 'Church of St Anne's Lewes: An Anchorite's Cell and Other Discoveries', *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, 69 (1928), 159-69, p. 160.

**Yorkshire**

Barnburgh, St Peter's Church

**This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.**

*St Peter's Church Barnburgh (The 'Cat and Man' Church): A Guided Tour of the Church and Churchyard*, Church booklet ([n.p.]: St Peter's District Church Council, [n.d.]), p. 3.

N.B. Squint marked at 'E', labelled in booklet as 'Squint/Reliquary'. Blocked squint recess visible externally.

**Appendix C:** Anchoritic Features

This appendix includes original feature sketches and photographs of anchoritic features at churches in the Shropshire dataset and other key case study sites. The Shropshire sites have received the most archaeological analysis, and interpretations at other sites are more preliminary. See Chapter 3 for complete interpretations of the Shropshire sites. St Martin's Parish Church in Oswestry, Shropshire is not included since there is no anchoritic archaeology on site.

Each entry includes photographs and feature sketches, with feature notes concluding each entry. Sketches are not to scale. This is a selection of field notes, sketches, and photographs taken by the author; any queries about further details should be directed to the author. All images—sketches and photographs—are the author's. Repetition with photographs from Chapter 3 is avoided when possible.

**Durham**

Chester-le-Street, Church of St Mary and St Cuthbert

See Victoria Yuskaitis, 'Archaeology and Medievalism at Julian of Norwich's Anchorite Cell', *Studies in Medievalism*, 29 (2020), 123-54 (p. 143-50, Figures 11, 12).

Images and notes below.

An external view of the north aisle extension attached to the west tower; the section in red is the medieval phase of the building, with the section in blue the post-medieval extension to the original anchorite cell:



An internal view of the north wall shared with the north aisle and the west tower (left); and a close-up of three anchoritic archaeology features: an anchorite squint and two openings below the squint (right):

A sketch of the wall with the anchorite squint, and two openings below that I argue are also part of the anchoritic archaeology:
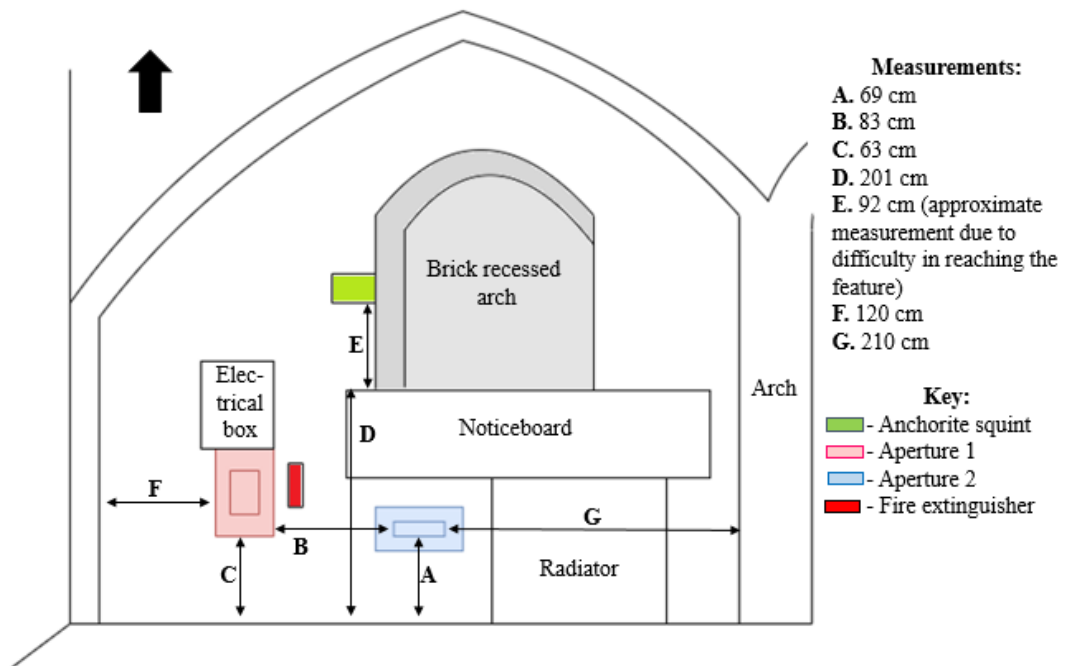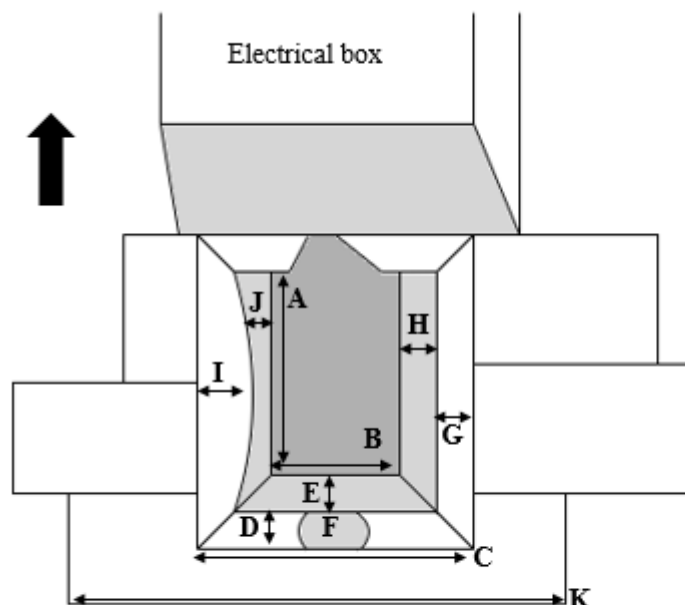


The anchorite squint, slanted to allow a narrow view of a side altar in the south transept; photograph (left) and sketch (right):
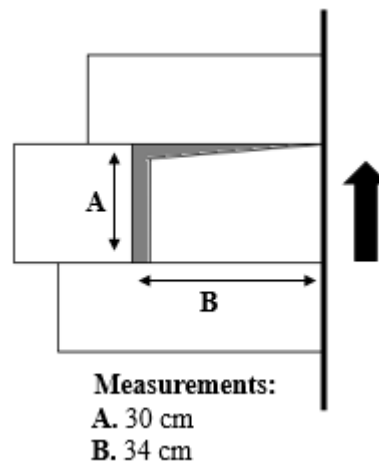
One of the openings below the squint, labelled Aperture 1 on the diagram above (left), and a close-up of the dip in the frame (right):



Sketch of Aperture 1, located below the squint:



**Measurements:**
A. 48 cm
B. 26 cm
C. 32 cm
D. 7 cm
E. 10 cm
F. 11 cm x 9 cm; 4.5 cm at deepest point (circular dip in stonework)
G. 7.5 cm
H. 9 cm
I. 7 cm
J. 10 cm
K. 68 cm

**N.B.** West side of feature debased; measurements approximate. Top sill also cut away for wiring access.

Another opening below the squint, labelled Aperture 2; photograph (top) and sketch
(bottom):
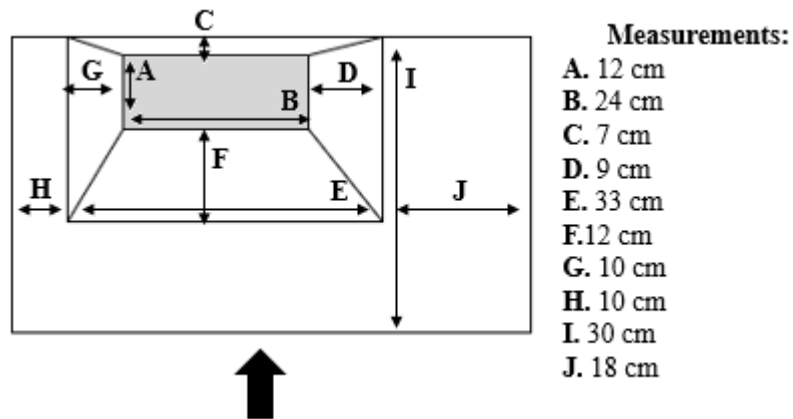




A view of the west wall blocking off the north aisle, with the former roofline of the
original anchorite cell visible (left), and a close-up of the doorway lintel preserved in
the northern corner, which is now blocked and houses tomb effigies (right):

Measurements of the doorway:

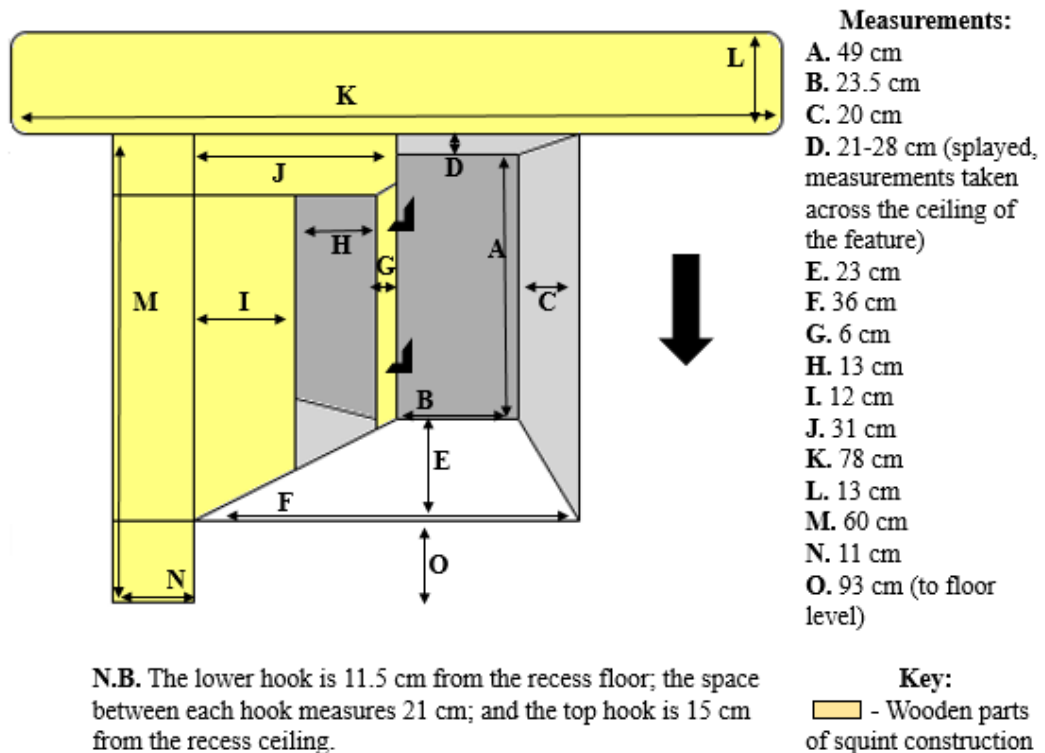- Lintel: 70 cm across, 63 cm from floor level
- Depth of arch: 47 cm

The squint from inside the north aisle extension off of the west tower, in the space of the former anchorite cell and what is now the Anker's House Museum (left); a close-up of the squint (right):

A sketch of the squint from inside the north aisle extension, which would have been the inside of the cell:



**Measurements:**
**A.** 49 cm
**B.** 23.5 cm
**C.** 20 cm
**D.** 21-28 cm (splayed, measurements taken across the ceiling of the feature)
**E.** 23 cm
**F.** 36 cm
**G.** 6 cm
**H.** 13 cm
**I.** 12 cm
**J.** 31 cm
**K.** 78 cm
**L.** 13 cm
**M.** 60 cm
**N.** 11 cm
**O.** 93 cm (to floor level)

**N.B.** The lower hook is 11.5 cm from the recess floor; the space between each hook measures 21 cm; and the top hook is 15 cm from the recess ceiling.
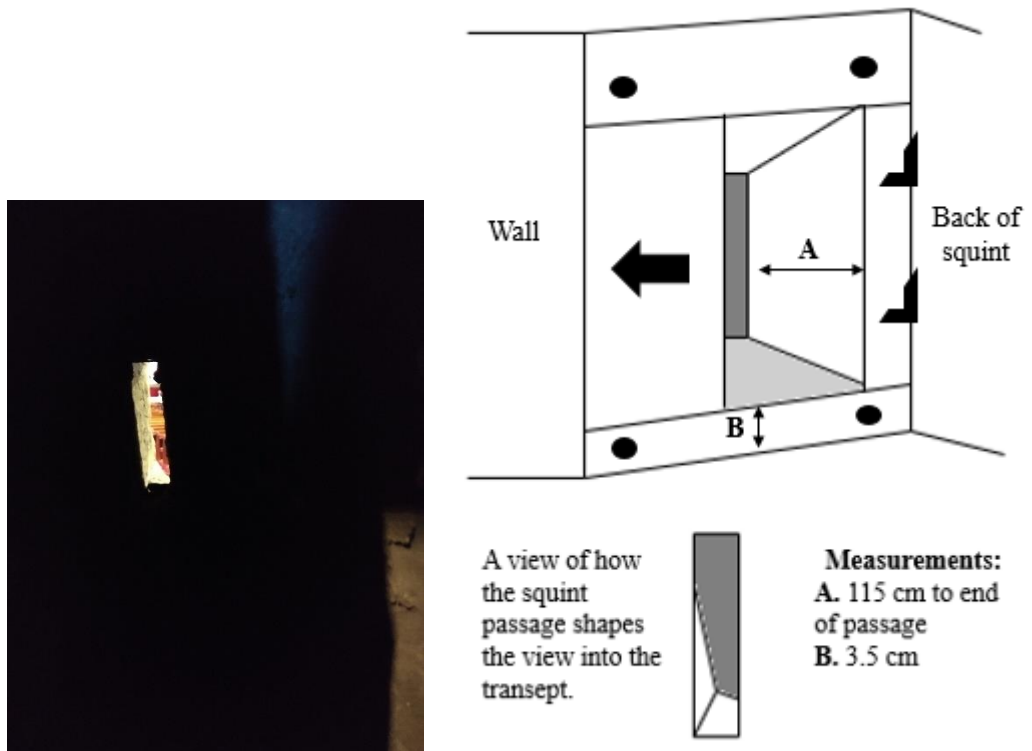
**Key:**
☐ - Wooden parts of squint construction

The long, narrow passage inside the east wall of the squint, which offers a telescopic view of the south transept (left), and a close-up of the passage (right):

Photograph of the telescopic view through the squint to the south transept altar, with the church lights turned on (left); and sketches of the squint passageway (right):



Wall

Back of squint

A

B

A view of how the squint passage shapes the view into the transept.

**Measurements:**
A. 115 cm to end of passage
B. 3.5 cm

A view of the blocked wall in the north aisle from inside of what would have been the cell, showing the roof outline also visible on the other side of the wall:
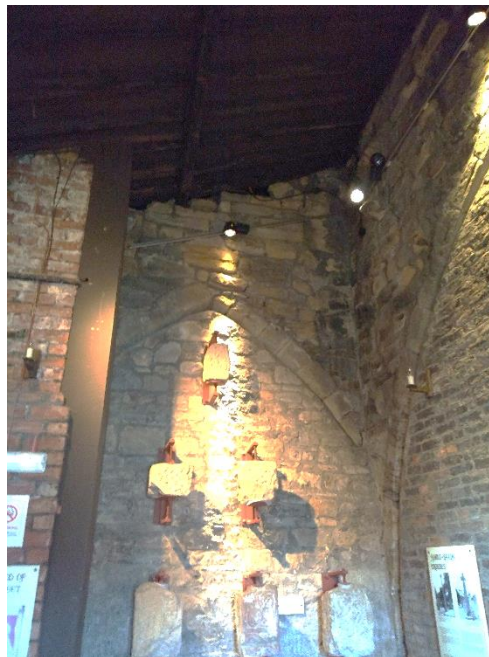
Notes: The space that used to be the anchorite cell and the post-medieval extension now house the Anker's House Museum. Good photographs were particularly difficult to obtain in the Anker's House Museum due to harsh artificial lighting and dim natural light. After the medieval period, this space housed the curate and destitute widows. Of all the sites included so far, this site has had the most varied use over time, continuing into the present.

For a complete assessment of this site, see my article referenced above. The anchorite cell was not a four-roomed structure, but instead a two-roomed, two-storey structure. This is evident from the former roofline and also from comparing the north extension off the tower to the south extension off the tower (the south extension is the same size as the original cell). Moreover, no medieval or anchoritic archaeology survives in the post-medieval extension.

I argue that the first storey would have been used by the anchorite's servant(s), with the doorway serving as a discrete entrance for their use. The openings labelled Aperture 1 and 2 would have been used by these servants. Further research is needed to find out more about these apertures, especially since both have been altered alongside modern renovations. In addition, I was unable to access what would have been the first storey of the anchorite cell, as this is now used as the boiler room and the warden did not have the correct key. More archaeological evidence may survive in this space. The anchorite would have lived in the second storey, where the squint was located.

The squint is an unusual design, although one of the squints at Shere, Surrey, is strikingly similar. The squint recess that leads into the passageway providing a view of the transept altar is splayed, as is characteristic of anchorite squints. Squints at Faversham, Kent; Barburgh, Yorkshire; and Lewes, Sussex also offered views to side altars instead of the main altar. This is a preliminary analysis, with further archival and archaeological research essential to understand the first floor of the anchorite cell especially.
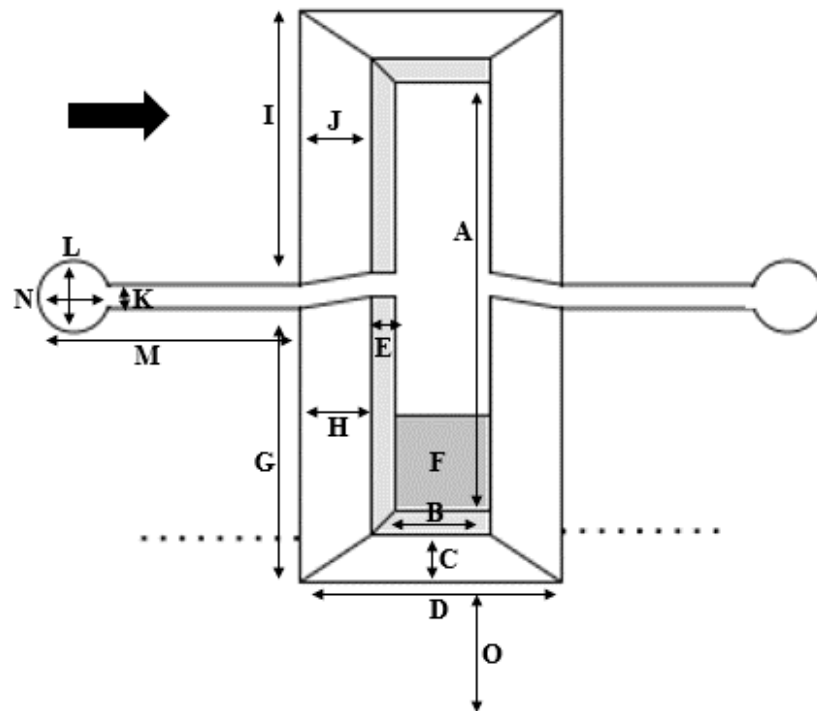
**Kent**

Faversham, St Mary of Charity Church

See Victoria Yuskaitis, 'Archaeology and Medievalism at Julian of Norwich's Anchorite Cell', *Studies in Medievalism*, 29 (2020), 123-54 (p. 129, Fig. 2).

Internal squint in the west wall of north transept, facing the main altar:

Sketch of internal squint:



**Measurements:**

A: 63 cm
B: 13.5 cm
C: 7 cm
D: 22 cm
E: 5 cm
F: Depth varies due to the feature being roughly filled in.
G: 35.5 cm
H: 7 cm
I: 34.5 cm
J: 7 cm
K: 2.5 cm
L: 7 cm

M: 20.5 cm
N: 6 cm
O: 136 cm (to current floor level; approximate measurement due to cabinet in front of feature).

**N.B.** Cross arms narrow towards the squint; measurement K taken at the widest point. Placed in the north transept. Dotted line indicates the top of a single stone making up the sill of the squint; the rest of the stone is obscured by post-medieval plaster.

External buttress on the west wall of the north transept, blocking any sign of an anchorite cell that would have been associated with the internal squint between the windows:



Close-up of the internal painted pillar in the north transept across from the squint (left), and a distant view of the main altar (now blocked by the post-medieval organ) while standing in front of the squint (right):

Close-ups of other chancel architectural features, including sedilia and a piscina (top), and an easter sepluchre (bottom):

More chancel features, including another window set into a curved passageway originally linked to a side chapel; close-up (top) and in wider context (bottom):
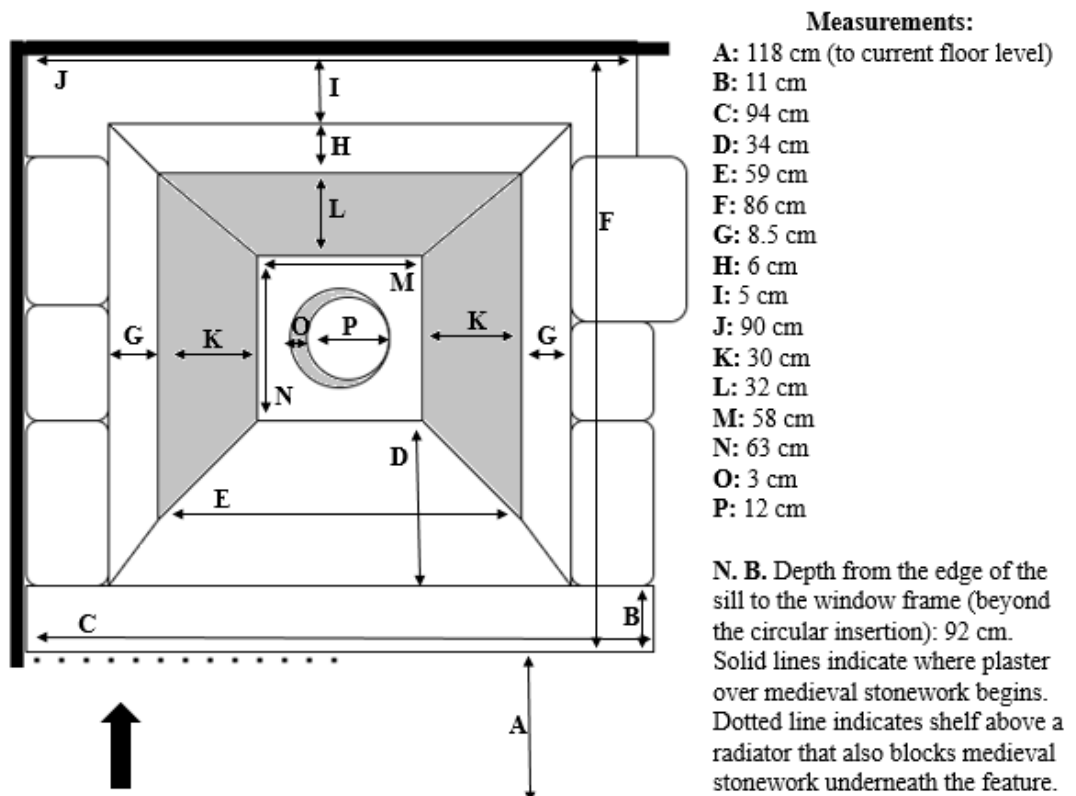




Notes: Cross arms on the squint may have been added at a later date, after the cell was no longer in use; this requires further research. The arms are roughly proportionate but are not of equal thickness. The painted column is the only one to survive, but other columns would no doubt also have been painted during the medieval period. An organ now blocks a distant view to the main altar, but regardless the anchorite would have relied on a side altar in the transept, as the main altar is just too far to view reliably. However, the squint was still located behind the rood screen, and placing the squint in the transept was a strategic move that allowed the anchorite to remain in the most sacred part of the church without overloading an already very crowded chancel. This is a preliminary assessment and more archaeological and archival research is needed.

Staplehurst, Church of All Saints

Internal squint in the north wall of the chancel, with a circular post-medieval insertion formerly used for a stove flue (left); a close-up of the feature (right):



A sketch of the internal squint in the north wall of the chancel:



**Measurements:**
A: 118 cm (to current floor level)
B: 11 cm
C: 94 cm
D: 34 cm
E: 59 cm
F: 86 cm
G: 8.5 cm
H: 6 cm
I: 5 cm
J: 90 cm
K: 30 cm
L: 32 cm
M: 58 cm
N: 63 cm
O: 3 cm
P: 12 cm

**N. B.** Depth from the edge of the sill to the window frame (beyond the circular insertion): 92 cm. Solid lines indicate where plaster over medieval stonework begins. Dotted line indicates shelf above a radiator that also blocks medieval stonework underneath the feature.

Niche in the east wall of the squint, beyond the circular insertion (and therefore not visible in the pictures and sketch above) (top right, bottom left and right). Accessed via another small opening in the north chancel wall to the east of the squint (top left), which I argue is not associated with the anchorite cell:
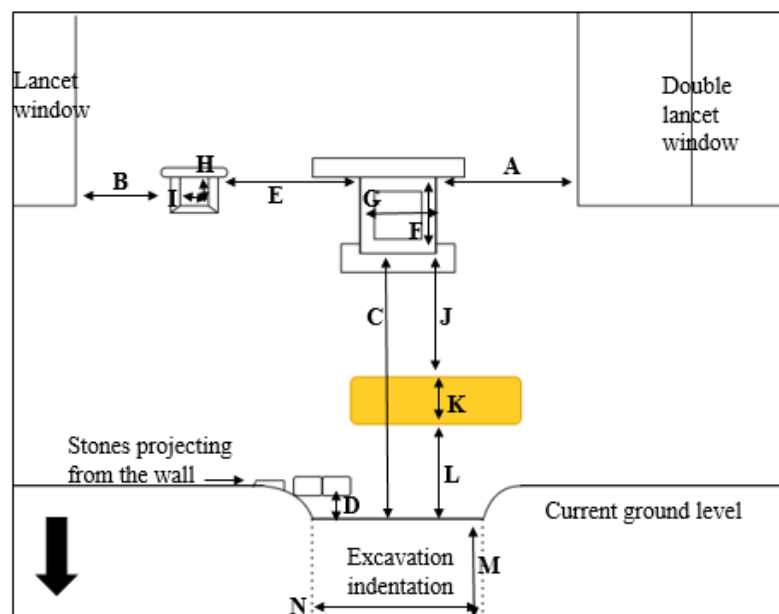


External view of the squint in the north chancel wall, with the indentation of the pre-1938 excavation still visible at ground level:
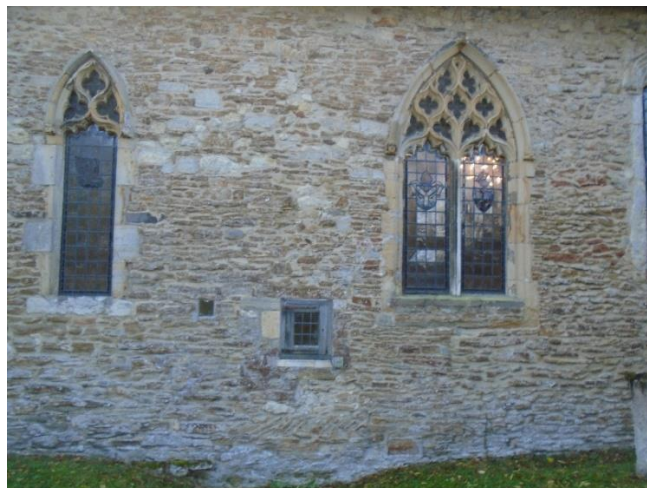
External close-ups of the herringbone stonework underneath the squint (left) and the squint and other opening (right):



A sketch of these external features:



**Measurements:**
A. 72 cm
B. 94 cm
C. 142 cm
D. 25 cm
E. 76 cm
F. 69 cm
G. 60 cm
H. 18 cm
I. 17 cm
J. 59 cm
K. 18 cm
L. 57 cm
M. 200 cm (continues beyond edge of sketch)
N. 170 cm

**Key:**
▮ - Herringbone pattern stonework

N.B. Measurements to the ground level are approximate since the ground is uneven. Measurements H and I are also approximate, as the feature is not a perfect square. Measurements M and N are the same, as the indentation is irregular in shape.

Notes: See A. J. Walker, *Staplehurst Church* (Kent: The Eagle Printing Works, Cranbrook, 1938) for key context, including the detail about the circular insertion being used to facilitate a flue.

This squint is substantial in size, but the squint is not placed within a recess, which may have influenced the large size. The opening to the east of the squint is very rough and not of the same architectural standard as the anchorite squint; it has been glassed in like the squint due to an antiquarian claim of a link between the features, but there is no evidence for this and I argue the opening is post-medieval. However, a passage has been tunnelled out from the wall fill between this rough opening and the squint, allowing a view of the niche. The niche is made of noticeably smooth and well-crafted stone blocks, although the back wall of the niche has now been destroyed. Achieving good photographs, sketches, or measurements of the damaged niche was very difficult due to the location of the niche as well as the height and placement of the squint and other opening. Note also the similarities between this niche and the placement of the passageway in the squint at Chester-le-Street, Durham.

Externally, a clear indentation underneath the squint indicates the parameters of the excavation. The stonework sticking out from the wall, close to the ground level, may indicate the original floor level of the cell, before excavation of the foundations. Internally the floor is also sloped at the same point, which requires further investigation. Internally the raised floor allows access to the squint, but externally the squint is set high in the wall and would require assistance to see through it comfortably, potentially with a ladder or by standing on a stool.
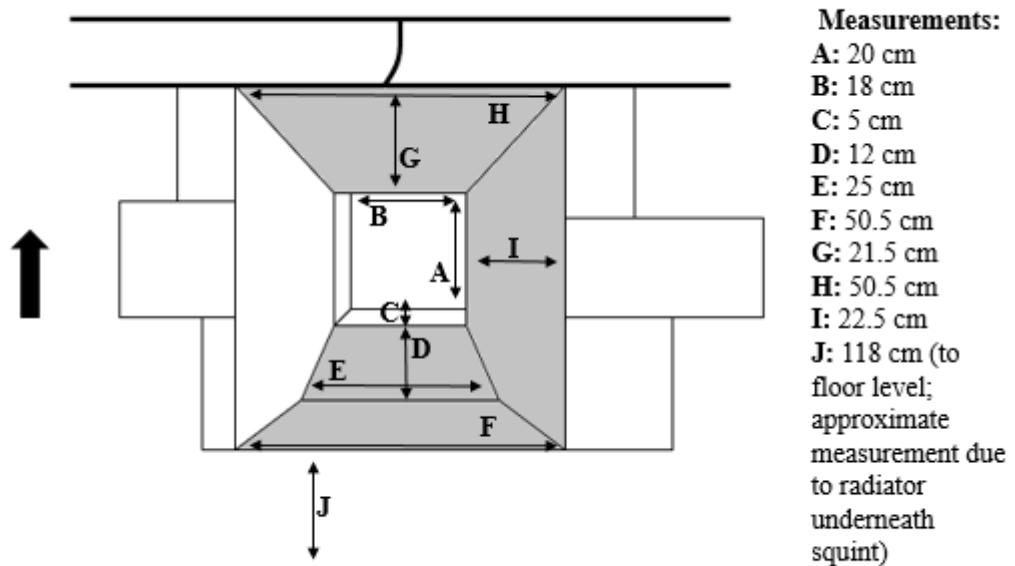
This was a preliminary assessment of this site, and again further archaeological and archival investigation is needed.

**Shropshire**

Acton Burnell, St Mary's Church

See Victoria Yuskaitis, 'The Archaeological Context of an Anchorite Cell at Ruyton, Shropshire', *Journal of Early Middle English*, 2.2 (2020), forthcoming.

Internal squint in the north chancel wall (top left); a close-up of the squint (top right); and a sketch of the squint (bottom):





**Measurements:**
A: 20 cm
B: 18 cm
C: 5 cm
D: 12 cm
E: 25 cm
F: 50.5 cm
G: 21.5 cm
H: 50.5 cm
I: 22.5 cm
J: 118 cm (to floor level; approximate measurement due to radiator underneath squint)

External squint and squint recess in the north chancel wall (top left); a close-up of the squint within the recess (top right); and a sketch of the squint and squint recess (bottom):
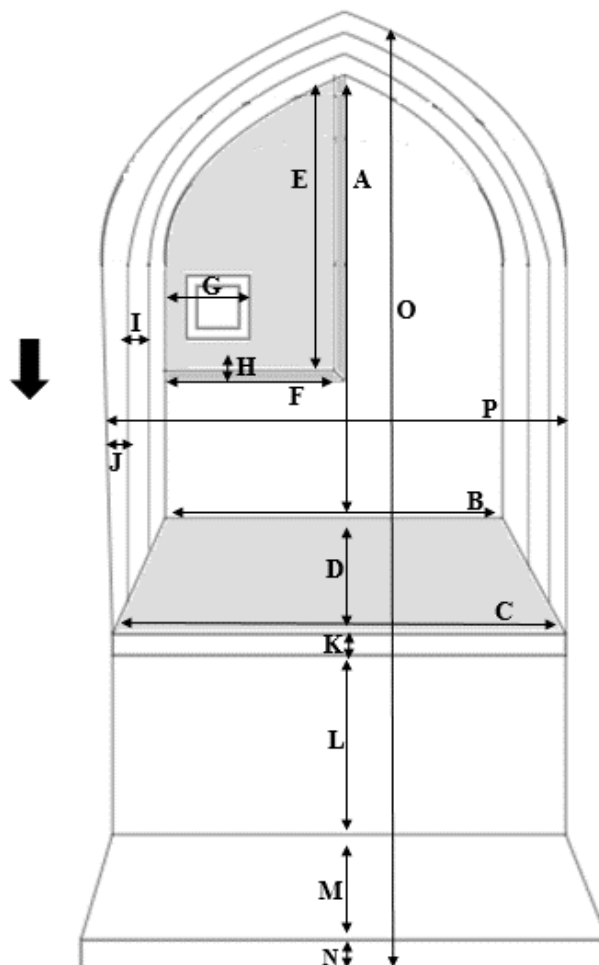




**Measurements:**

**A:** 201 cm
**B:** 166 cm
**C:** 166 cm
**D:** 44 cm
**E:** 117 cm
**F:** 89 cm
**G:** 28 cm
**H:** 7 cm (width of internal recess ledge)
**I:** 12.5 cm
**J:** 12.5 cm
**K:** 6 cm
**L:** 43.5 cm
**M:** 18 cm
**N:** 16.5 cm
**O:** 287 cm
**P:** 195 cm

**N.B.** Since the west side of the squint recess is more debased and has been cut away to make room for the tower and niche, the splayed arch and foundation have been adjusted for clarity in this sketch. Also, the raised foundation (N reaches the ground level) encircles the entire chancel, not just this feature.

Parish church entrance, with the castle in the background:



Views of the external north wall of the chancel (left), and the external niche cut into the east wall of the tower to preserve the squint recess (right):
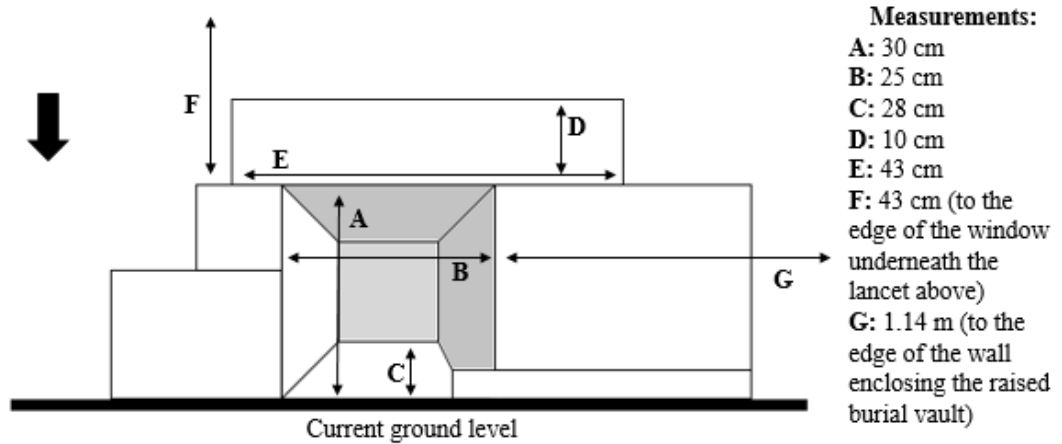
The east wall of the tower (top left); the gap between the tower and the east wall of the northern transept (top right); and the east wall of the northern transept beyond the post-medieval tower (bottom):



Notes: The raised foundation continues around the chancel and tower. Internally the chancel design is remarkably cohesive, although aberrations in string coursing and window style have been noted and interpreted in Chapter 3. This squint is particularly interesting since visitors can still see through the opening. See Chapter 3 for images of particular features within the chancel and transepts.

Church Preen, Church of St John the Baptist

External squint in north chancel wall (top left); a close-up of the squint (top right); and a sketch of the squint (bottom):







**Measurements:**
**A:** 30 cm
**B:** 25 cm
**C:** 28 cm
**D:** 10 cm
**E:** 43 cm
**F:** 43 cm (to the edge of the window underneath the lancet above)
**G:** 1.14 m (to the edge of the wall enclosing the raised burial vault)

Current ground level
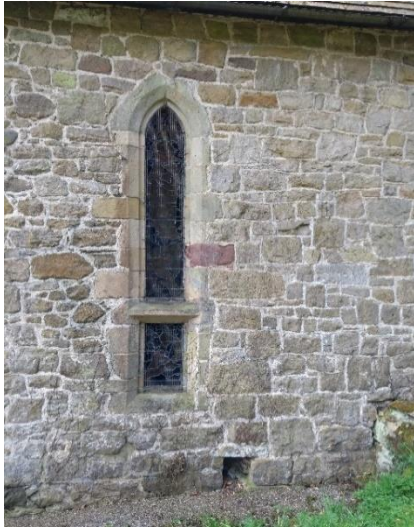
External north chancel and nave wall (See Appendix B for image of entrance and vestry) (left); and a close-up of the chancel and nave wall near the squint (right):
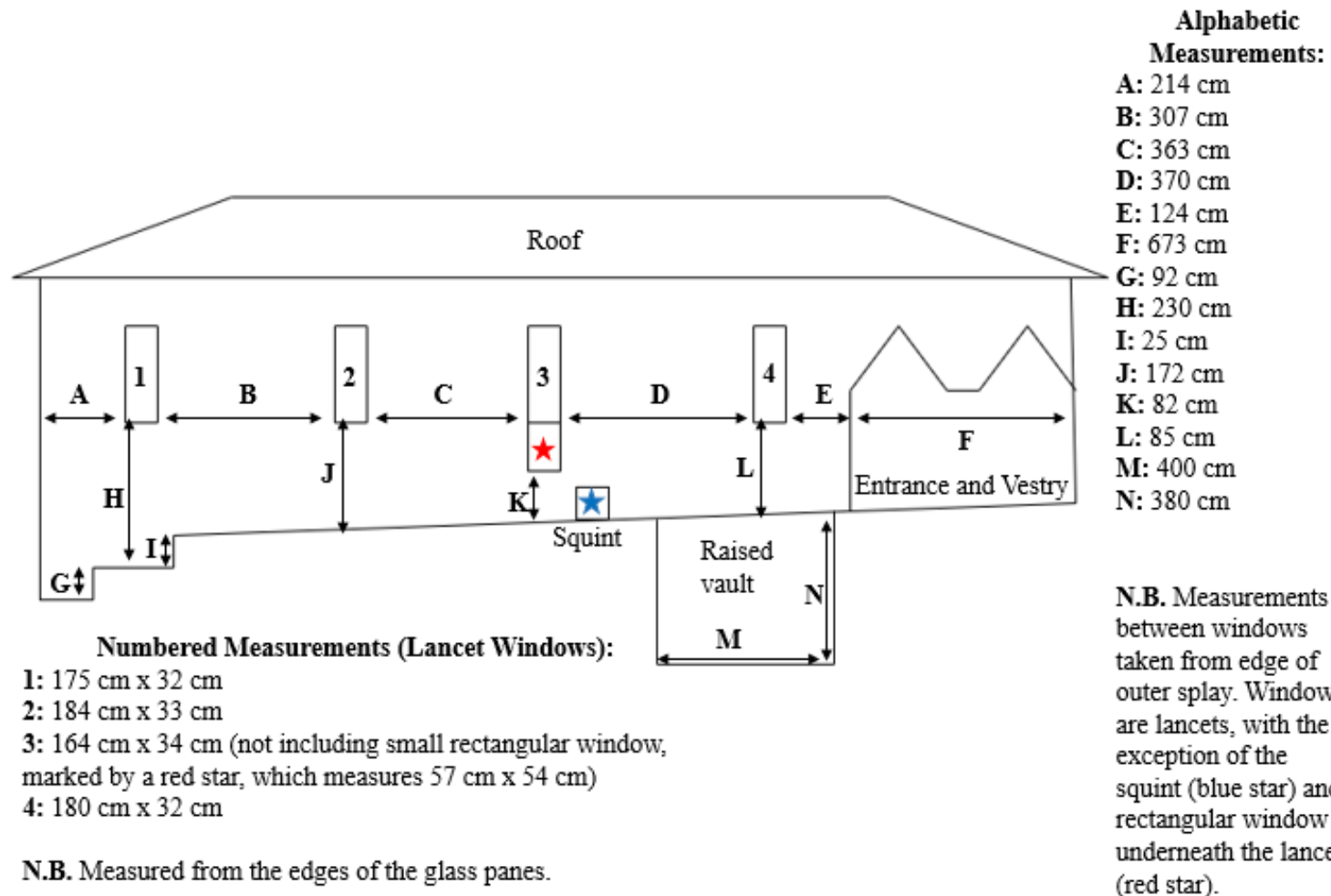


Raised ground level evident from the eastern end of the north chancel wall (left); and the original ground level of the church, visible beyond the gate (right):



Ground level of the raised vault; the wall pictured is closest to squint:

Plan indicating raised ground levels on the external north chancel wall:



**Alphabetic Measurements:**
**A:** 214 cm
**B:** 307 cm
**C:** 363 cm
**D:** 370 cm
**E:** 124 cm
**F:** 673 cm
**G:** 92 cm
**H:** 230 cm
**I:** 25 cm
**J:** 172 cm
**K:** 82 cm
**L:** 85 cm
**M:** 400 cm
**N:** 380 cm

**N.B.** Measurements between windows taken from edge of outer splay. Windows are lancets, with the exception of the squint (blue star) and rectangular window underneath the lancet (red star).

**Numbered Measurements (Lancet Windows):**
**1:** 175 cm x 32 cm
**2:** 184 cm x 33 cm
**3:** 164 cm x 34 cm (not including small rectangular window, marked by a red star, which measures 57 cm x 54 cm)
**4:** 180 cm x 32 cm

**N.B.** Measured from the edges of the glass panes.

Internal lancet and rectangular window recess in the north chancel wall (left), and
doorway across from this feature in the south chancel/nave wall (right):



Notes: The plan above indicates how substantially the ground level his risen
over time at this site. When the current indoor floor level and ground level are taken
into account, it is clear that the squint belonged to an earlier church phase when the
ground level was lower, and that the internal window recess and rectangular window
underneath the lancet were added at a later date. However this unusual window design
and the doorway across from the lancet and rectangular window, as well as the squint,
indicates that this point in the church has retained significance through various church
phases.

Internally the church is plastered, making further archaeological assessment
difficult. The lancet windows appear uniform from a distance, but closer scrutiny
indicates differences in design and style that indicate some windows were added in later
renovations. The external south side of the church is blocked off since the church is
adjacent to what is now a privately-owned manor house.
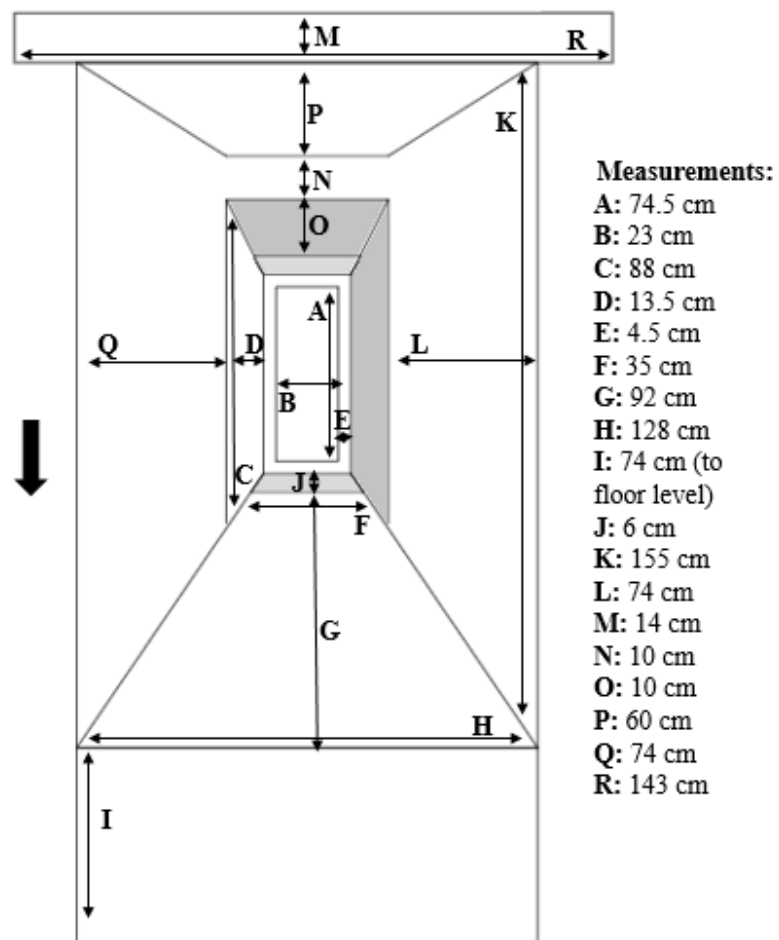
Ellesmere, Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Internal squint in the north chancel wall (doorway into vestry blocked by ornate chair) (top left); a close-up of the squint (top right); and a sketch of the squint (bottom):
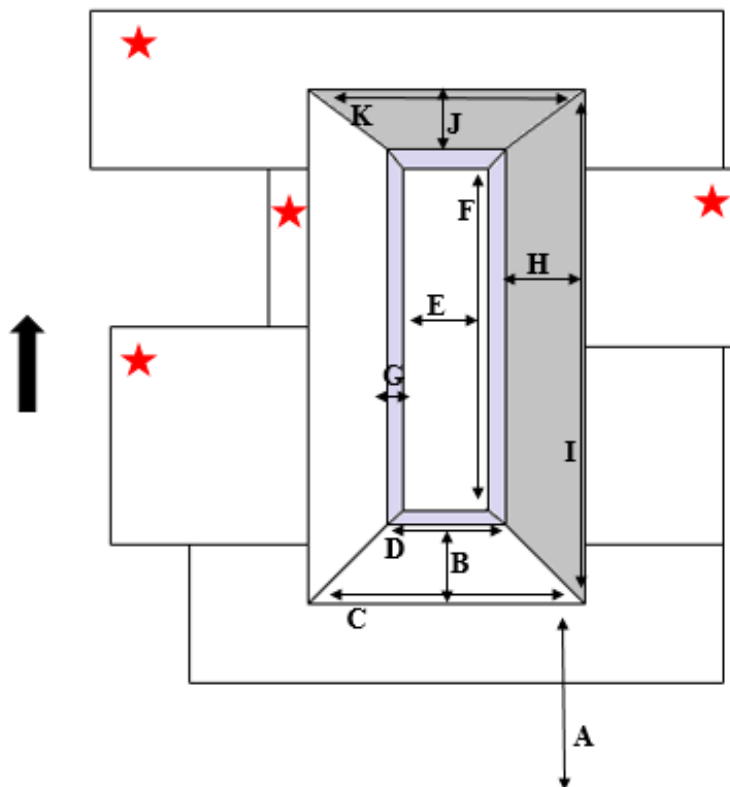


**Measurements:**
A: 75 cm (to floor level)
B: 16 cm
C: 35.5 cm
D: 17.5 cm
E: 17 cm
F: 67 cm
G: 5.5 cm
H: 15 cm
I: 90 cm
J: 18 cm
K: 35.5 cm

N.B. Red stars indicate reddish stonework.

Squint recess in the north chancel wall, opening into the current vestry (top left); a close-up of the squint recess (top right); and a sketch of the squint recess (bottom):



Measurements:
A: 74.5 cm
B: 23 cm
C: 88 cm
D: 13.5 cm
E: 4.5 cm
F: 35 cm
G: 92 cm
H: 128 cm
I: 74 cm (to floor level)
J: 6 cm
K: 155 cm
L: 74 cm
M: 14 cm
N: 10 cm
O: 10 cm
P: 60 cm
Q: 74 cm
R: 143 cm

Doorway in the north chancel wall, from inside the vestry (left); a close-up of the doorway (right):



Close-ups of the doorway from inside vestry (left) and from the chancel (right):
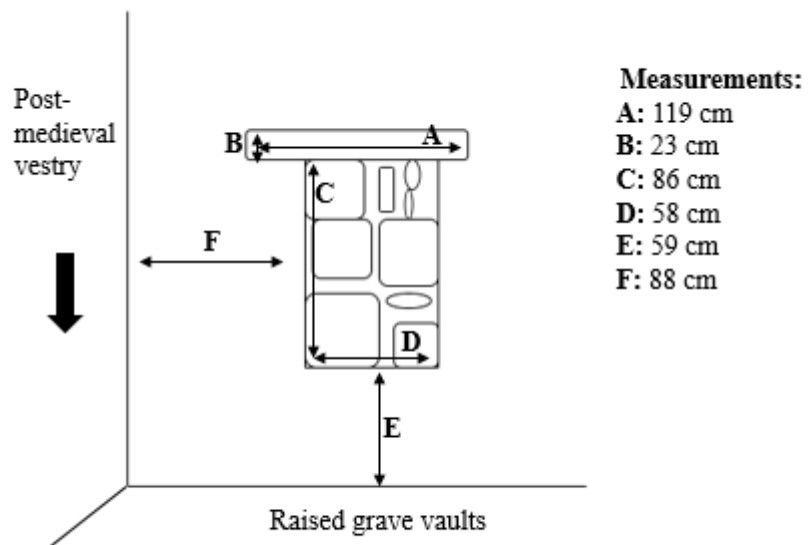
Close-up of the grave slab squint recess lintel (top); close-up highlighting the gap between the lintel and squint recess (bottom):



Notes: The doorway adjacent to the squint and squint recess, especially the lintel, has clearly been remodelled in subsequent post-medieval renovations, but the stonework inside the vestry indicates the doorway recess is coeval with the medieval squint recess, suggesting that an earlier medieval doorway opened into the cell. Also note the gap at the back of the squint recess, caused by an imperfect fit with the graveslab. For my interpretation of this site, see Chapters 3 and 5.
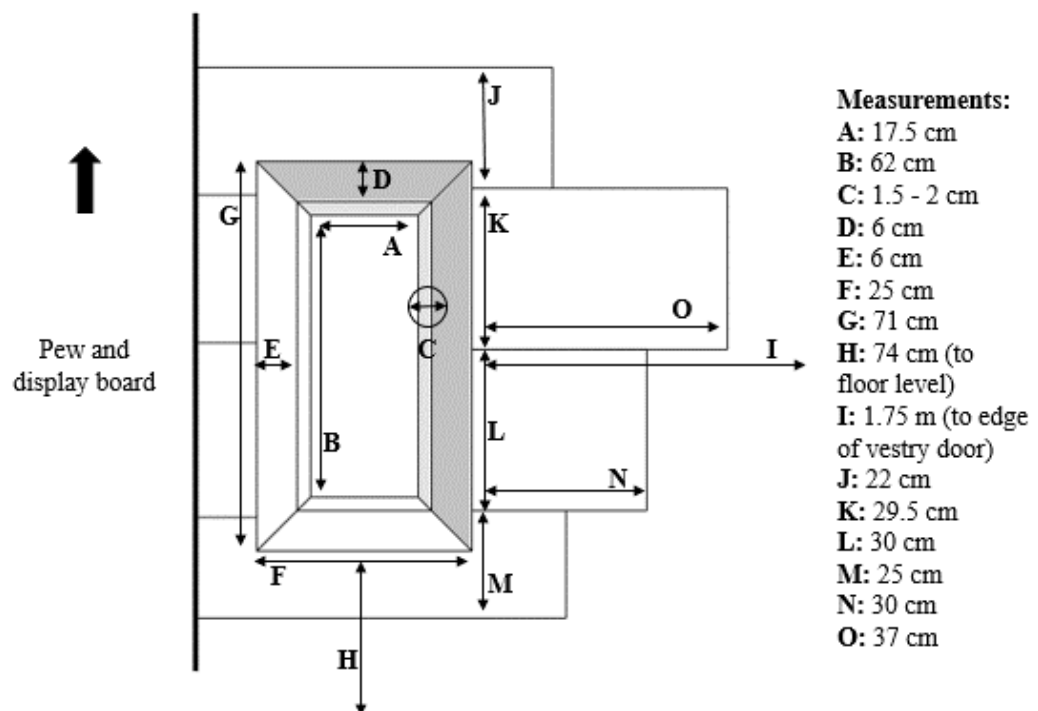
Great Ness, St Andrew's Church

External blocked squint recess in the north chancel wall (top left); close-up of the squint recess (top right); and sketch of squint recess (bottom):







Post-medieval vestry

Raised grave vaults

**Measurements:**
A: 119 cm
B: 23 cm
C: 86 cm
D: 58 cm
E: 59 cm
F: 88 cm

Interior blocked squint in the north chancel wall (top left); close-up of the blocked squint (top right); and a sketch of the blocked squint (bottom):



**Measurements:**
A: 17.5 cm
B: 62 cm
C: 1.5 - 2 cm
D: 6 cm
E: 6 cm
F: 25 cm
G: 71 cm
H: 74 cm (to floor level)
I: 1.75 m (to edge of vestry door)
J: 22 cm
K: 29.5 cm
L: 30 cm
M: 25 cm
N: 30 cm
O: 37 cm

Pew and display board

Notes: Thick white grouting inserted between internal squint stonework; measurements of blocks (J-M) taken up to the thick lines of grout. Also note that measurement C is not a splay, but a ledge created by the blocking of the squint. The chancel is very dark due to an absence of windows in the north wall, and the lack of features in the north wall with the exception of the post-medieval vestry and squint/recess is striking. The doorway lintel to the east of the squint may be a post-medieval remodel, but the continuity of the stonework on the doorframe up to the lintel with the squint indicates the original doorway may have been medieval, and connected with the cell. Each time I visited, the vestry was locked, but viewing the vestry doorframe is key to further assessment.

Much Wenlock, Church of the Holy Trinity

Interior blocked squint-style recessed window in the east wall of the current vestry extending from the north side of the chancel (left), and a close-up of the squint within the recess (right):

A sketch of the squint-style window and recess:
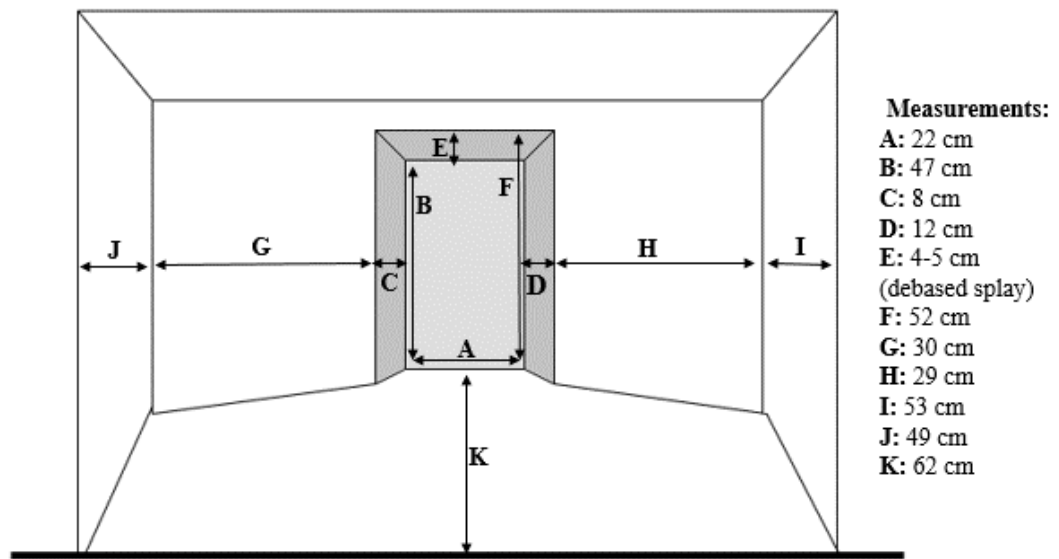


Interior of the current vestry, including the removable ceiling panel allowing access to the blocked second storey (left); and a close-up of the cabinet enclosing the squint-style window and recess (right):
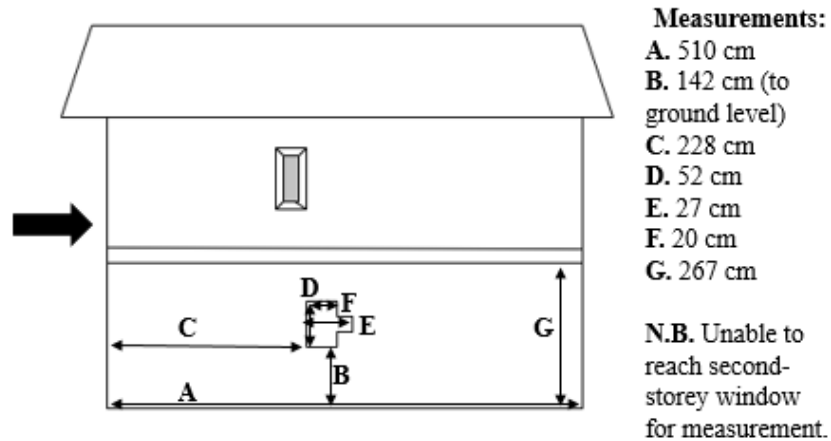
Doorway into the current vestry (left); a view of the phasing change in the brickwork above the vestry door, between the former chancel and extension (right):



Exterior east wall of the current vestry, extending from the north side of the chancel (left). In the following photographs, blocked squint-style windows are circled in red. Close-up of blocked squint-style window in the second storey (right):

Sketch of exterior east wall of the current vestry:



**Measurements:**
**A.** 510 cm
**B.** 142 cm (to ground level)
**C.** 228 cm
**D.** 52 cm
**E.** 27 cm
**F.** 20 cm
**G.** 267 cm

**N.B.** Unable to reach second-storey window for measurement.

N.B. Sketches for the other external walls of the current vestry are not included, since I was unable to reach the window above the doorway on the east wall for measurement, and the measurements of the vestry on the west side are similar to the east wall. Both first-storey squints are blocked and are roughly parallel to each other. The doorway on the north wall measures 267 cm in height, and the step below the door to ground level measures 32 cm in height. The blocked window in the north wall is placed directly above this.

Exterior north wall of the current vestry, extending from the north side of the chancel (left); a close-up of the blocked window and roof (right):

Exterior west wall of the current vestry, extending from the north side of the chancel (left); another angle of the west wall, with the remnants of a chimney above the roof visible (right):



Internal second storey of the vestry, with close-ups of the squint-style window recesses in the east wall (largely blocked by a bird's nest) (top left) and west wall (top right), and the large rectangular window in the north wall (bottom):

Notes: Measurements were impossible to obtain for the second storey. In future, I need to bring a sturdy board wide enough to rest over two struts so that I can move around in the upper storey. Clear photos were hard to obtain due to poor lighting, obstructions, and standing on a ladder, which limited my mobility and stability. The square east and west window recesses are roughly parallel to each other and are of the same design as the recess still visible on the first floor, and the blocked squint-style window visible externally on the east wall matches up with the squint recess visible internally. The rectangular window is noticeably of a different style and is not recessed, leading to my interpretation of the window being used for light in the upper storey (which also made interactions with first-floor visitors difficult). The vestry squint-style window visible internally in the east wall has not been discussed by any other scholar. Note the thick medieval tiles on the floor of the squint recess.
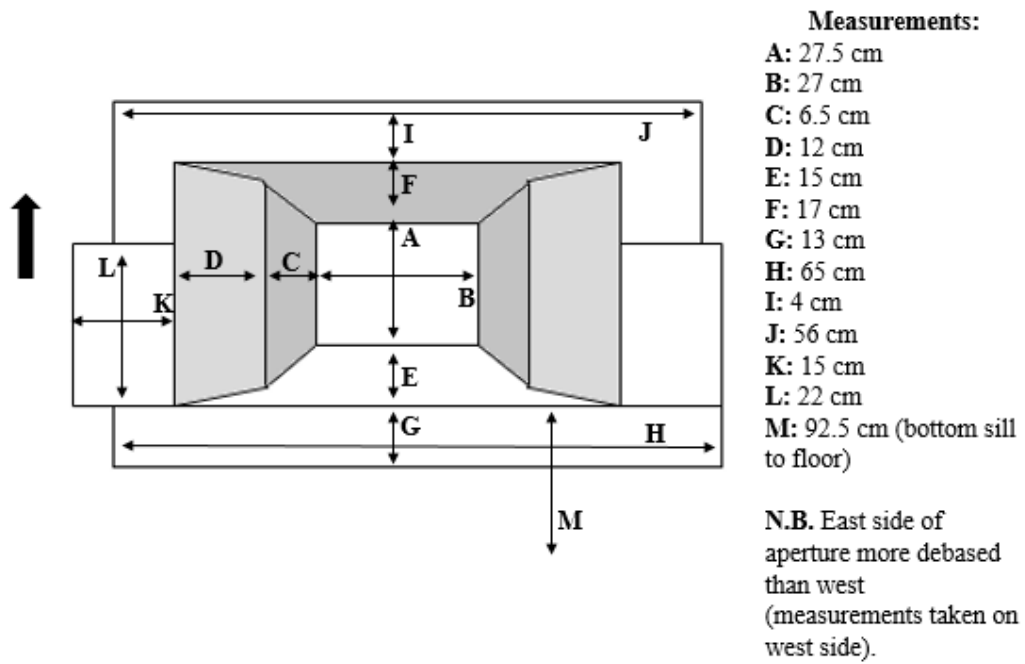
A more in-depth analysis must include assessment of the vestry's external wall phasing, which is out of the scope of this appendix. More archival research focusing on the post-medieval renovations of this space, and potential features now covered internally, is imperative for further analysis. The remains of brick chimney are visible on the west side, which may be linked to a later use of this room. It is rare for complete cells to survive in England, making this site particularly important for further research.

Ruyton-Upon-XI-Towns, Church of St John the Baptist

Interior squint in the north chancel wall (left), and a close-up of the squint (right):

A sketch of the squint:



**Measurements:**
**A:** 27.5 cm
**B:** 27 cm
**C:** 6.5 cm
**D:** 12 cm
**E:** 15 cm
**F:** 17 cm
**G:** 13 cm
**H:** 65 cm
**I:** 4 cm
**J:** 56 cm
**K:** 15 cm
**L:** 22 cm
**M:** 92.5 cm (bottom sill to floor)

**N.B.** East side of aperture more debased than west (measurements taken on west side).

External blocked squint recess in the north chancel wall (left); and a close-up of the blocked squint recess (right):
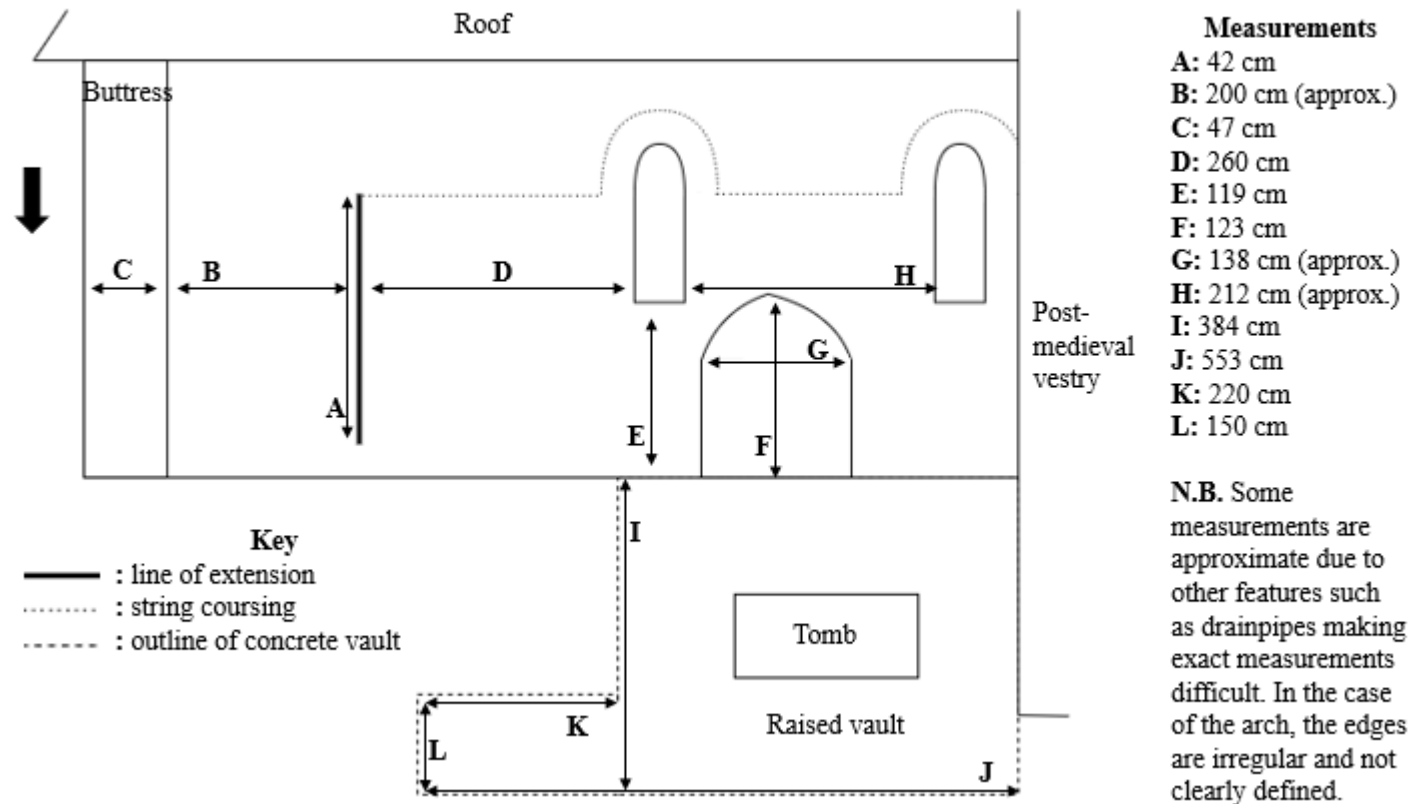
Chancel extension line on the external north chancel wall (left); and a close-up of the extension line (right):



Raised vault extending from the north chancel wall in front of the squint recess (left); and the nearby post-medieval vestry built alongside the squint recess (right):

Plan of the external north chancel wall:



Key
——— : line of extension
········ : string coursing
- - - - - : outline of concrete vault

Measurements
A: 42 cm
B: 200 cm (approx.)
C: 47 cm
D: 260 cm
E: 119 cm
F: 123 cm
G: 138 cm (approx.)
H: 212 cm (approx.)
I: 384 cm
J: 553 cm
K: 220 cm
L: 150 cm

N.B. Some measurements are approximate due to other features such as drainpipes making exact measurements difficult. In the case of the arch, the edges are irregular and not clearly defined.
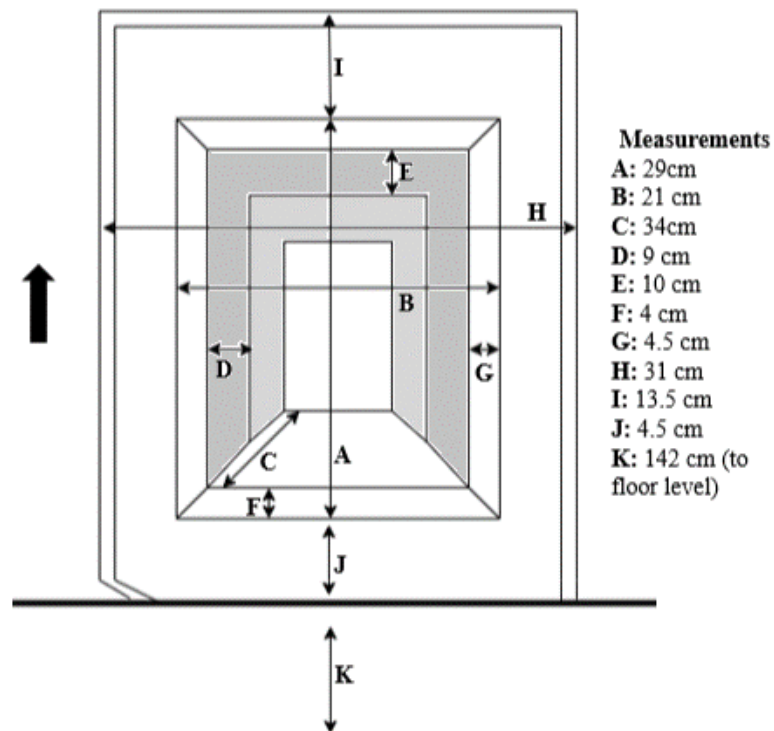
Notes: The similarity between the internal squint shutters at Ruyton and Ellesmere suggests that the same designer may have made both; further research into church records may uncover who was billed for this work. The link with the priest's door providing entrance to the post-medieval vestry suggested by the current church pamphlet does not fit with the archaeological evidence; the cell would not have extended this far into the chancel. Also see the similarities in design between this cell and the example at Acton Burnell.

Stanton-Upon-Hine-Heath, St Andrew's Church

Interior squint in the north chancel wall (left), and a close-up of the squint (right):

A sketch of the internal squint:



| Measurements |
|---|
| A: 29cm |
| B: 21 cm |
| C: 34cm |
| D: 9 cm |
| E: 10 cm |
| F: 4 cm |
| G: 4.5 cm |
| H: 31 cm |
| I: 13.5 cm |
| J: 4.5 cm |
| K: 142 cm (to floor level) |

The buttress against the external north chancel wall, where the anchorite cell would have stood (left); and a close-up of the buttress (right):

Herringbone stonework on the external (left) and internal (right) north chancel walls:



Notes: The post-medieval internal wooden panelling added underneath the squint and the post-medieval external buttress both obscure other indications of a Norman anchorite cell that may have survived. The easternmost windows in the north wall of the chancel have slightly different designs, indicating an early renovation later in the Norman period. Note the herringbone stonework visible internally on the north and south walls of the chancel, and externally on the north wall of the chancel and nave. The south wall of the chancel shows significant later medieval and post-medieval renovation and lacks Norman features, whereas the north wall of the chancel retains Norman features.

**Surrey**

Compton, St Nicholas' Church

This is a complex site with two anchorite cells and various other unusual architectural features, and findings can only be briefly summarised here. This is also still a preliminary assessment.

Images and notes below.

Internal squint in the north chancel wall (top left); a close-up of the squint (top right); and a sketch of the squint (bottom):
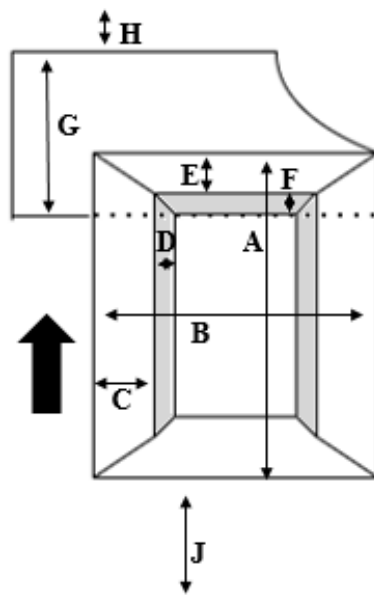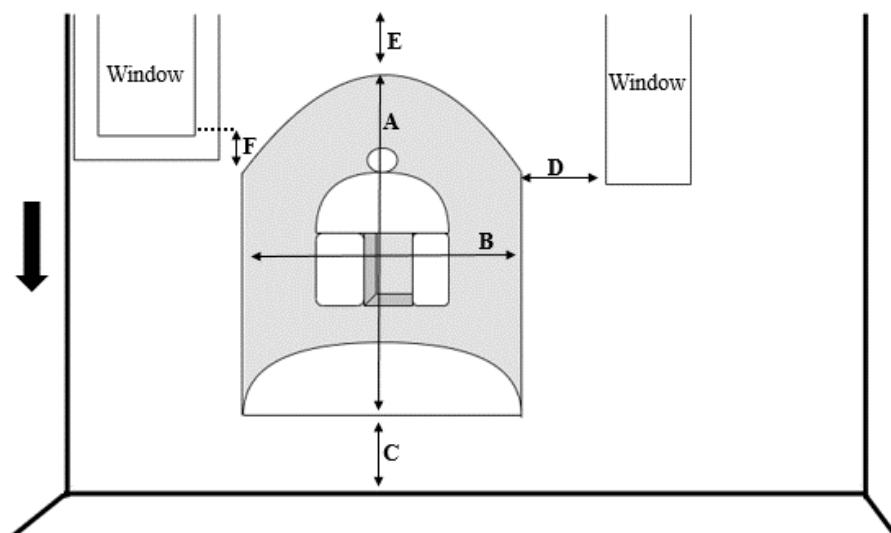




**Measurements:**
A. 37 cm
B. 25.5 cm
C. 5 cm
D. 2.5 cm
E. 4.5 cm
F. 2 cm
G. 16 cm
H. 3 cm (to edge of window lintel)
I. 195 cm (to the arch enclosing the main altar)
J. 56 cm (to floor level)

N.B. Dotted line indicates the outline of the lintel stone.

External squint and squint recess in the north chancel wall (top left); a close-up of the external squint and squint recess (top middle); a close-up of the external squint (top right); and a sketch of the external squint and squint recess (bottom):





**Measurements:**
**A.** 136 cm
**B.** 113 cm
**C.** 32 cm
**D.** 53 cm
**E.** 59 cm (to preserved stonework; approximate measurement because feature is difficult to reach)
**F.** 16 cm

**N.B.** Impossible to measure inside the squint recess because it is covered with a thick sheet of clear plastic.

Close-up of preserved external stonework above the squint recess in the north chancel wall:
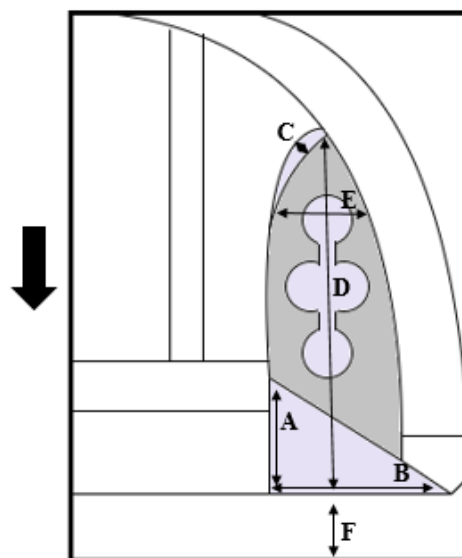


The two-storey chancel (left), and a close-up of the first-storey chancel where the second squint is located (right):
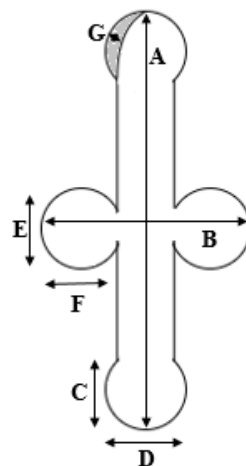
Squint in the south wall of the first storey of the two-storey chancel (top left); close-up of the squint (top right); and two sketches of the squint (bottom):





**Measurements:**
A. 18 cm
B. 38 cm
C. 21 cm
D. 63.5 cm
E. 19 cm
F. 119 cm (to floor level)

N.B. Piscina and aumbry located directly underneath the squint.

**Measurements:**
A. 52 cm
B. 25 cm
C. 12 cm
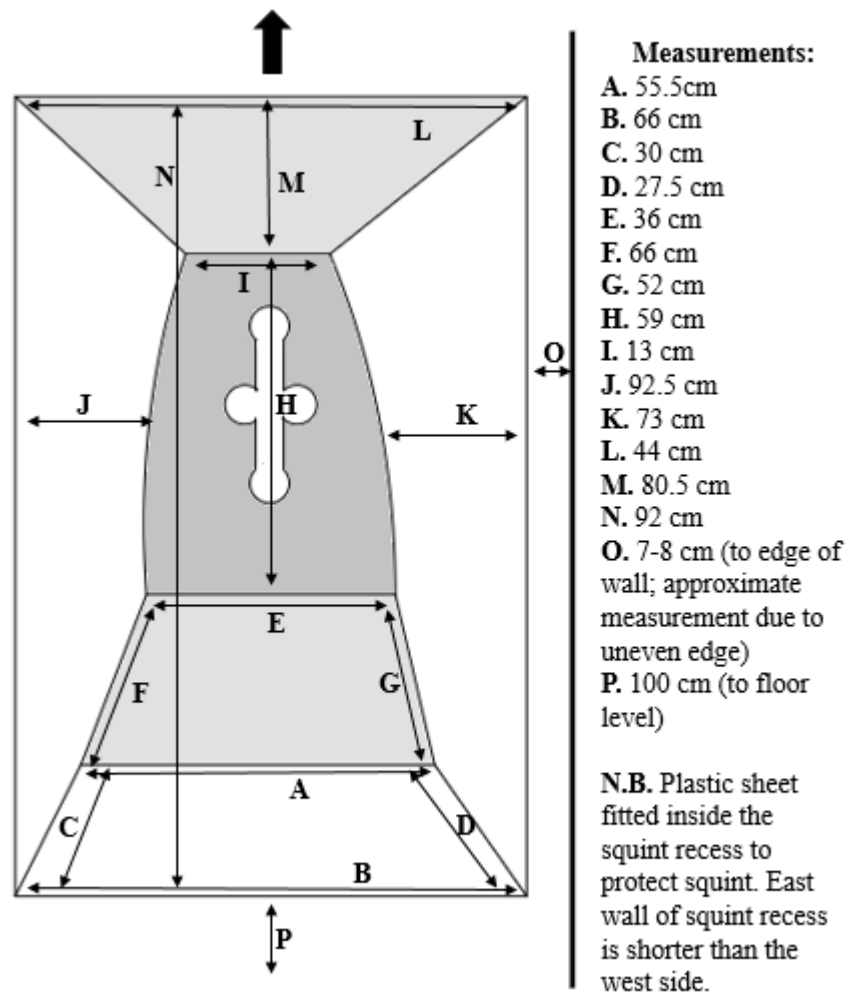D. 13 cm
E. 10.5 cm
F. 9 cm
G. 6 cm

Entryway into the modern vestry and former anchorite cell (left), and view of the inside of the vestry/cell immediately after entry (middle); note the stairwell to the second storey that now takes up most of the space (right):



The squint and squint recess on the south side of the chancel from inside the cell/vestry (left); a close-up of the squint (right):

A sketch of the squint and squint recess from inside the cell/vestry:



**Measurements:**
A. 55.5cm
B. 66 cm
C. 30 cm
D. 27.5 cm
E. 36 cm
F. 66 cm
G. 52 cm
H. 59 cm
I. 13 cm
J. 92.5 cm
K. 73 cm
L. 44 cm
M. 80.5 cm
N. 92 cm
O. 7-8 cm (to edge of wall; approximate measurement due to uneven edge)
P. 100 cm (to floor level)

**N.B.** Plastic sheet fitted inside the squint recess to protect squint. East wall of squint recess is shorter than the west side.
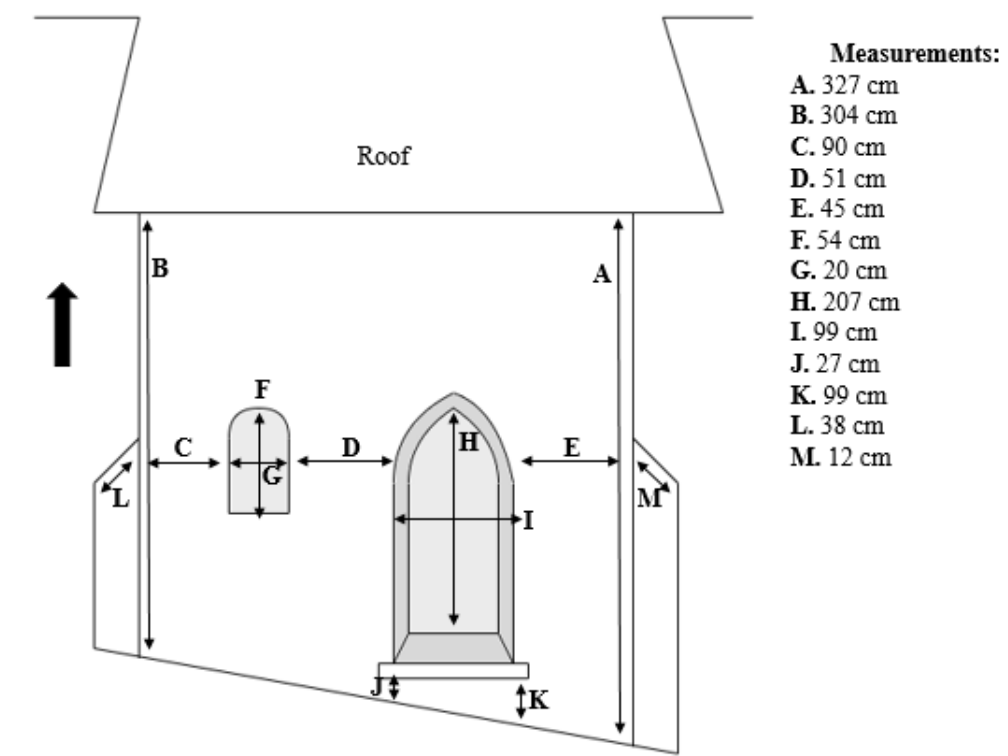
An external view of the two-storey vestry/cell on the south side of the chancel:

External views of the west side (left) and east side (right) of the cell/vestry:



A sketch of the cell/vestry on the south side of the chancel, with related features:



**Measurements:**
**A.** 327 cm
**B.** 304 cm
**C.** 90 cm
**D.** 51 cm
**E.** 45 cm
**F.** 54 cm
**G.** 20 cm
**H.** 207 cm
**I.** 99 cm
**J.** 27 cm
**K.** 99 cm
**L.** 38 cm
**M.** 12 cm

The dimensions of the vestry/cell from the inside:

- North and south walls: 196 cm across
- West wall: 115 cm across
- East wall: 125 cm across (discrepancy due to uneven walls/plastering)

Internal view of the roof in the two-storey vestry/cell (left), and the doorway of the upper storey of the two-storey chancel, accessed via a stairway inside the vestry/cell (right):



Notes: Further photos or sketches of the second-storey chancel are not included, because archaeological analysis indicates the second storey is a later addition and that when in use, the cell would have been one storey. The current stairway is modern, and the doorway to the second storey does not match the Norman entryway leading into the cell and is a post-medieval imitation that probably replaced or altered a later medieval doorway. In addition, internally the roof is wavy and has clearly been altered—close analysis indicates that the roof was raised to accommodate the second storey. For these reasons, I argue that when originally in use, the cell was one storey, and therefore the anchorite would not have had access to the second storey as an anchorite priest. The blocked doorway in the cell is dated to the fourteenth century. By this time, the cell would no longer have been in use, and the roof would have been raised to accommodate entrance to the chancel's second storey.

Note the squint in the south side of the church has been restored; the soft white stone is in pristine shape and is now protected by glass. Bott includes a historiography of references to this squint before its restoration, indicating that the design has remained consistent with the original (see reference below).
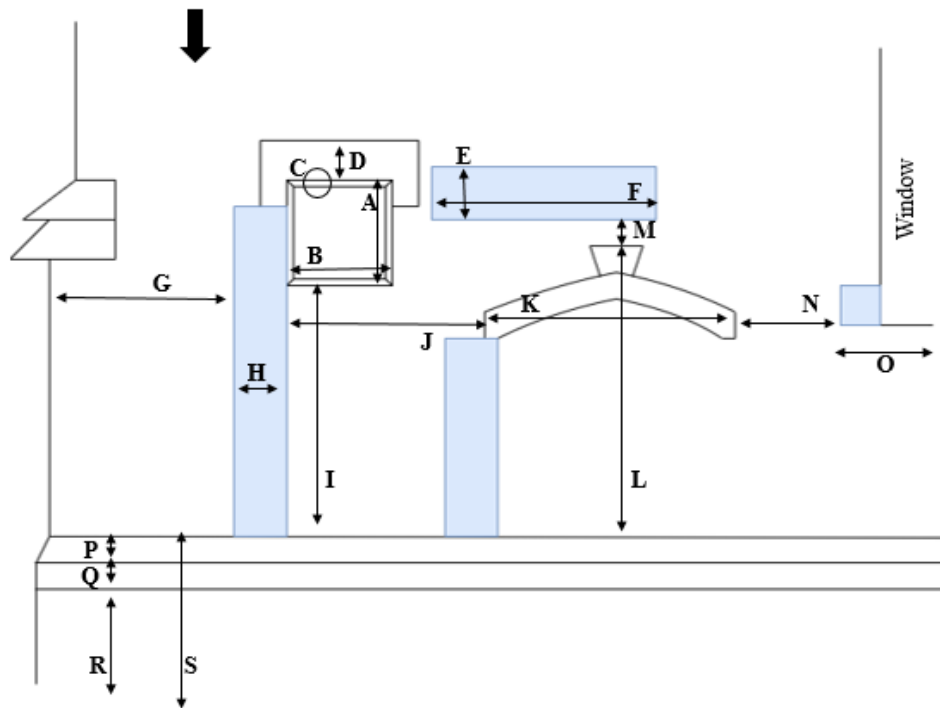
The squint and squint recess on the north side has received significantly less scholarly attention. The cell may have been a more temporary structure, and it deserves further analysis, especially in comparison to other similar structures (such as one of the

cells at Lewes, Sussex). This cell originally faced the altar, but the Norman chancel extension would have made the altar inaccessible, prompting the building of the cell on the south side. This is a preliminary analysis and more detailed assessment of both cells is necessary.

A key source for this site: Bott, Alan, *A Guide to the Parish Church of Saint Nicholas Compton Surrey*, Church Booklet ([n.p.]: [n. pub.], 2000), pp. 26-29.

Leatherhead, St Mary and St Nicholas' Church

A sketch of the external anchoritic archaeology on the north side of the chancel, including a blocked squint and a doorway lintel, with the modern enclosure for an oil tank in front of the features removed for clarity:



**Measurements:**

A. 56 cm
B. 64 cm
C. 3-4 cm (varies on each side)
D. 27 cm
E. 16 cm
F. 120 cm
G. 95 cm
H. 30 cm
I. 167 cm
J. 110 cm
K. 110 cm
L. 183 cm
M. 23 cm

N. 48 cm
O. 585 cm (to end of chancel)
P. 9.5 cm
Q. 10 cm
R. 75.5 cm (to ground level)
S. 79 cm (to ground level)

**Key:**
□ - Preserved stonework, visible against flint facing. All measures are approximate since boxes represent general outlines of stonework.

Close-ups of the squint and lintel (left), and a close-up of the lintel alone (right):



Close-ups of the original stonework visible against the flint facing extending from the squint (left) and from the doorway lintel (right):



A view of the tank enclosure, which also shows the passage circling the chancel extending to the ground level (left); and a view of the east end of the chancel, with the anchoritic archaeology just visible above the tank enclosure and graves (right):

The blocked doorway from inside the chancel—there is no sign of the blocked squint:



Notes: This is also a preliminary analysis and more research of wider context is necessary for interpreting the cell and indicating a date. The inside of the chancel is completely plastered, therefore leaving little detail for further analysis. The external evidence indicates the presence of a lintel with a nearby squint, designed similarly to the large square squint at Staplehurst, Kent. The cell must have been a two-storey structure to allow access to the squint, probably via a ladder.

Johnston excavated the site in 1908 before the tank enclosure was added, and discovered thick 3 ft [0.9m] foundation walls of a square building that measured 8 ft x 8 ft [2.4m x 2.4m] (see reference below). The size of this cell, then, is similar to the cell on the south side of the chancel at Compton, Surrey. Johnston also added roof lines to his interpretation, but no archaeological or documentary evidence for this feature survives.

A key source for this site: Johnston, Philip Mainwaring, 'An Anchorite's Cell at Letherhead Church', *Surrey Archaeological Collections*, 20 (1908), 223-28.

Shere, St James' Church

The blocked squint recess located in the north chancel wall (left), and an external view of the north side of the chancel, showing the placement of the recess against the nave wall (right):



A sketch of the external squint recess:



Measurements:
A. 11 cm
B. 12 cm
C. 173 cm
D. 105 cm
E. 137 cm
F. 137 cm
G. 11 cm
H. 52 cm
I. 31 cm
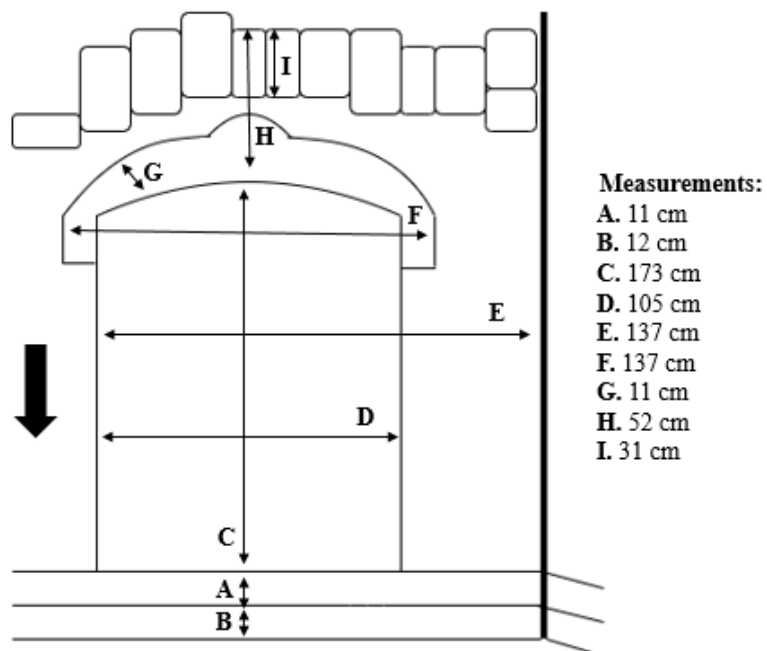
A close-up of both squints located in the north wall of the chancel (left), and another view of the squints demonstrating their proximity to the chancel arch (right):



A sketch of both squints in the north chancel wall:
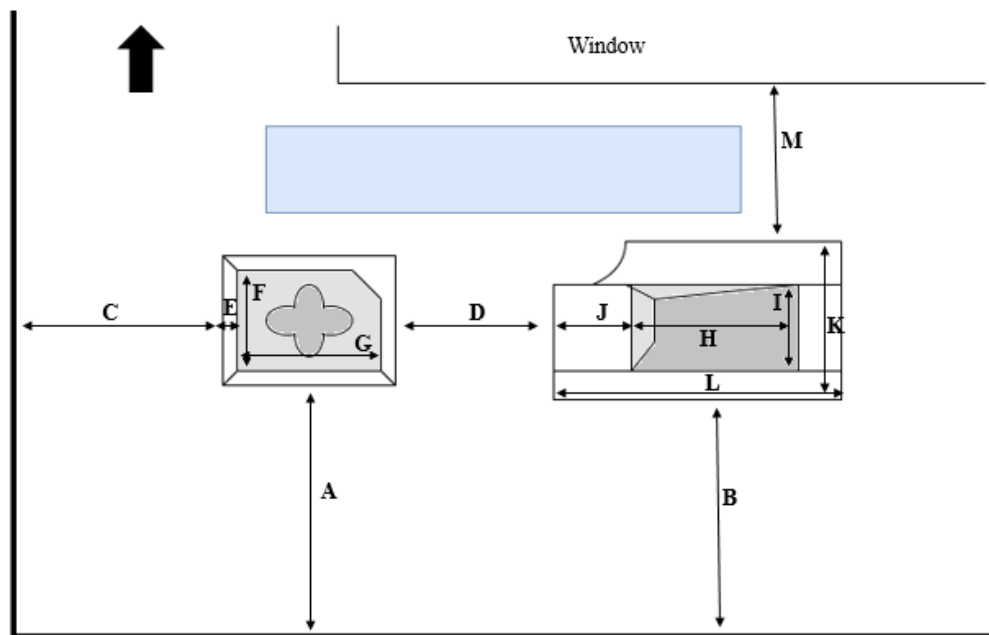


**Measurements:**

A. 87 cm (to floor level)
B. 82 cm (to floor level)
C. 85 cm (to end of chancel wall)
D. 32 cm
E. 2.5 cm
F. 40 cm
G. 40 cm
H. 40 cm

I. 30 cm
J. 24 cm
K. 50 cm
L. 77 cm
M. 47 cm

**Key:**
☐ - Plaque with information about anchorites above the squints

A close-up of the quatrefoil squint (left) and the rectangular squint (right), with sketches of both features below:
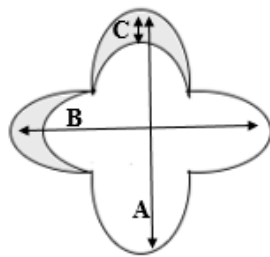




**Measurements:**
A. 33 cm
B. 32 cm
C. 12-13 cm

**Measurements:**
A. 9 cm
B. 39 cm
C. 61 cm
D. 30 cm
E. 20.5 cm

N.B. Passage is blocked.

Close-ups of the quatrefoil squint (left) and rectangular squint (right):

Notes: This site is particularly interesting due to the presence of two squints of different designs. The quatrefoil squint at Shere is markedly similar to the quatrefoil squint at Compton, Surrey; both are made of the same soft, white stone as we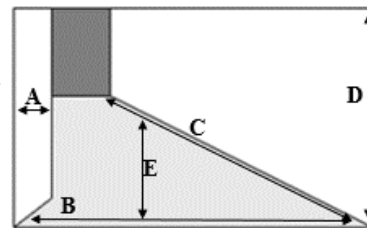ll. Another comparable squint is present at Faversham, Kent. The rectangular squint is similar to the one at Chester-le-Street, Durham. The rectangular squints at Shere and Chester-le-Street are both angled towards the chancel to view the altar. The quatrefoil squint is located within the east wall of the squint recess, like the squints at Ruyton and Acton Burnell, Shropshire. However, the rectangular squint is located outside of the recess.

This is a preliminary analysis. More research focusing on wider context is necessary to inform the evolution of this cell over time. I suggest that the the two squints indicate different stages of cell use, instead of being used concurrently. As is the case of two cells side-by-side at Lewes, Sussex, the original cell with the quatrefoil squint may have been enlarged into a new structure with the rectangular squint, or the original cell may have been blocked and a new cell built alongside it. This may have coincided with a chancel extension or other major building works. The wholesale plastering of internal walls at this site makes internal analysis difficult, but extensive archival research could inform a more nuanced perspective.

**Sussex**

Lewes, St Anne's Church

See Victoria Yuskaitis, 'Performative Anchorite Grave at St. Anne's, Lewes, Sussex', *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, 158 (2020), forthcoming.

Images and notes below.

Internal views of the current vestry, with features related to two cells that faced into the chancel (left), and one cell that faced into a side chapel (right):



A plan of all three anchorite cells on site, now located in the modern vestry (taken from Victoria Yuskaitis, 'Performative Anchorite Grave at St. Anne's, Lewes, Sussex', *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, 158 (2020), forthcoming):



**Phases of Cell Development**

*Phase 1* The squint and recess looking into the chapel, with no grave

*Phase 2* The cut-off recess and shallow grave underneath the trap door- Godfrey's final discovery

*Phase 3* The deep grave set into a recess, with squint looking into the chancel
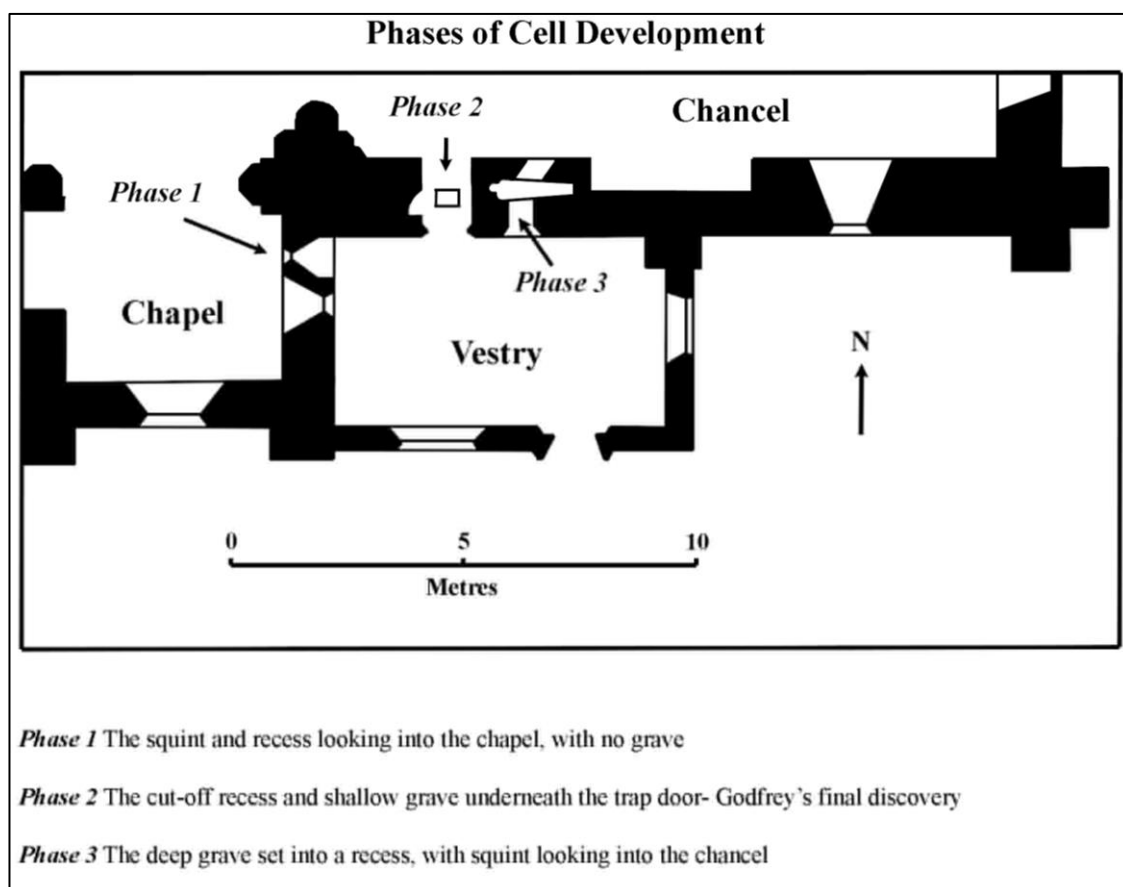
The shutter covering the squint recess in the west wall of the vestry, marked Phase 1 in the diagram above (left), and a close-up of the squint recess (right):
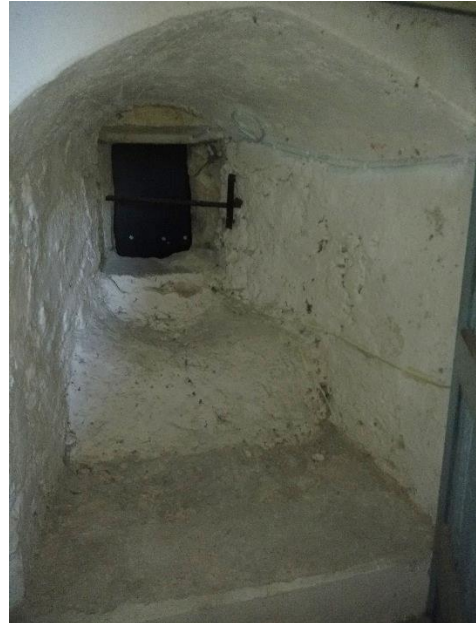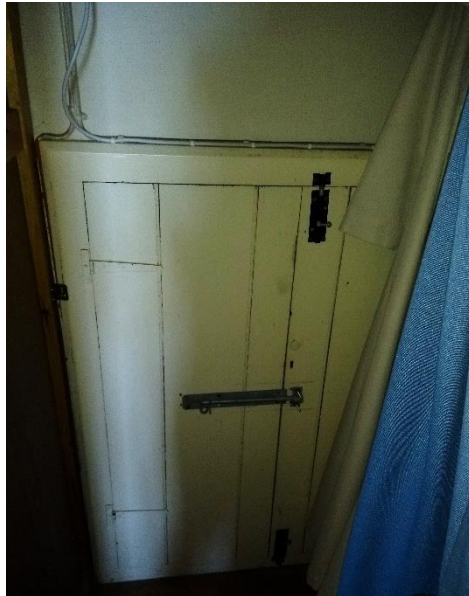


A sketch of the squint recess in the west wall of the vestry:
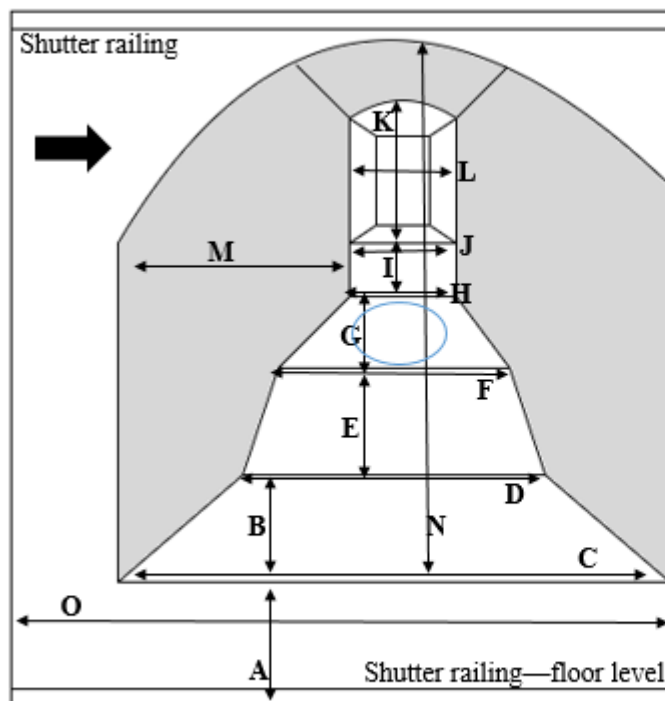


**Measurements:**

A. 21 cm
B. 43.5 cm
C. 81 cm
D. 68 cm
E. 27 cm
F. 62 cm
G. 14 cm (sloped edge)
H. 38 cm
I. 13 cm
J. 37 cm
K. 38 cm
L. 45 cm
M. 68 cm
N. 97 cm
O. 95 cm (from shutter to shutter)

**Key:**

— - Indicates a significant dip in the feature.

**N.B.** Edges are more rounded and less defined than appear in this sketch.

A close-up of the squint in the west wall of the vestry, from the vestry side (left), and from the south transept chapel side (right):



A close-up of the squint in the west wall of the vestry, from inside the squint recess:
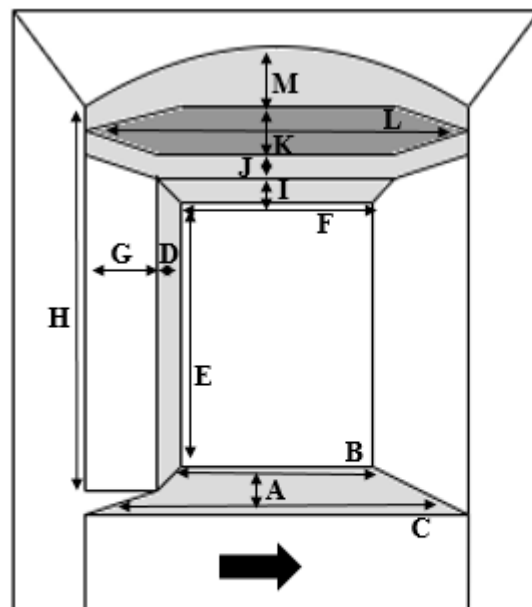


**Measurements:**
A. 17 cm
B. 26 cm
C. 35 cm
D. 6-7 cm
E. 35 cm
F. 25 cm
G. 5-6 cm
H. 29 cm
I. 4 cm
J. 2.5 cm
K. 9 cm
L. 32 cm
M. 5 cm

**N.B.** The north side of the recess is degraded; in addition, a hole for electrical wires has been drilled through this side of the feature. From the chapel, the squint measures 59 cm from the floor level. A post-medieval black shutter now blocks the squint.

The south transept chapel, with the blocked squint half-hidden by the altar (left); and the intricate and unusual design of the chancel ceiling (right):
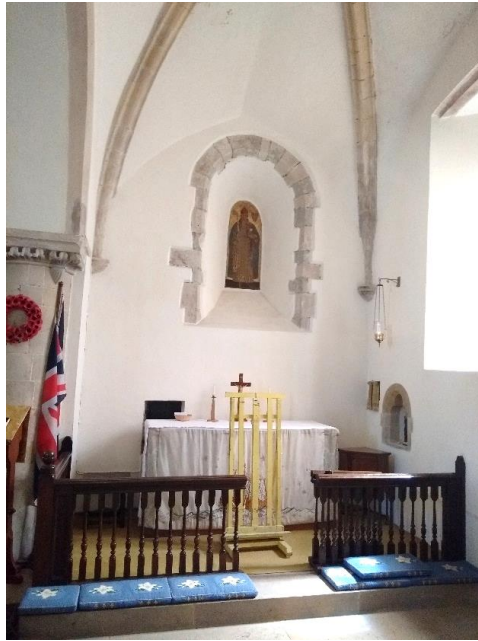


The squint recess remnant and trapdoor opening into the floor level of the grave, labelled Phase 2 in the diagram above (left); and a close-up of the squint recess remnant in the west wall of the hallway leading into the chancel from the vestry (right):

A close-up of the trapdoor and grave floor (left); and a close-up of the grave floor (right):

Sketches of the anchoritic features labelled Phase 2 (top left); the squint recess remnant (top right); and the inside of the trapdoor (below):



Hallway

Post-medieval vestry

B

C

A

G    F    D

E

H

I

Chancel
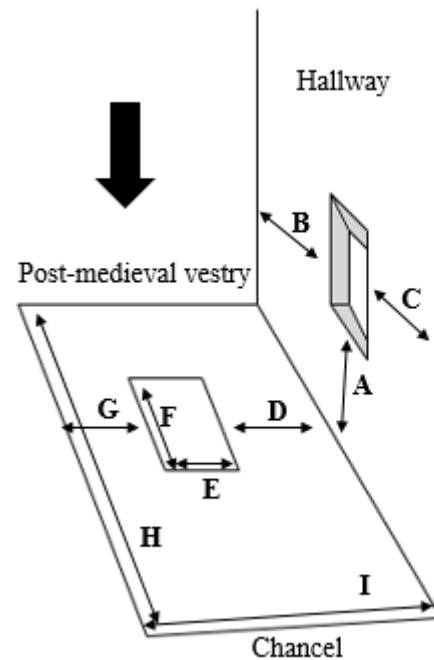
**Measurements:**
**A.** 40.5 cm
**B.** 49 cm
**C.** 62.5 cm
**D.** 22.5 cm
**E.** 38 cm
**F.** 52 cm
**G.** 32 cm
**H.** 141 cm
**I.** 91 cm

**N.B.** Trapdoor (measurements 'E' and 'F') only visible when hallway rug is removed.



C

B

A    E

D

F

G
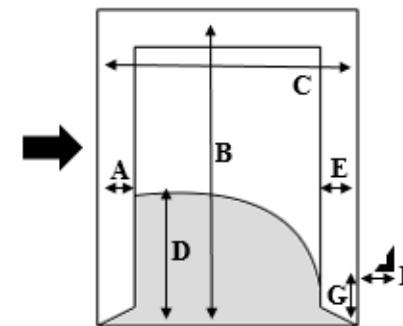
**Measurements:**
**A.** 12 cm
**B.** 30.5 cm
**C.** 25.5 cm
**D.** 31.5 cm
**E.** 13 cm
**F.** 2.5 cm
**G.** 5.5 cm

**N.B.** Hook located on north side of squint (see measurements 'F' and 'G').



E

B

D    C

A
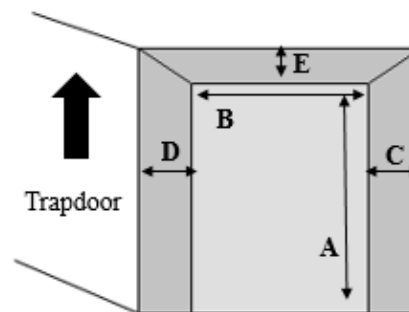
Trapdoor

**Measurements:**
**A.** 45 cm
**B.** 42 cm
**C.** 19 cm
**D.** 16 cm
**E.** 21 cm
(including lip of trapdoor)

Looking into the cell labelled Phase 3 on the diagram above, with the squint and grave visible (left); and the modern concrete slab leading into the cell (right):



Sketch of the entrance to the cell, labelled Phase 3:



**Measurements:**
**A.** 56.5 cm
**B.** 56 cm
**C.** 29 cm (depth of concrete step, not visible in sketch)
**D.** 64 cm
**E.** 34 cm (post-medieval wooden slats)
**F.** 33-34 cm (approximate measurement—uneven plaster)
**G.** 20.5 cm
**H.** 28 cm
**I.** 56.5 cm
**J.** 66 cm
**K.** 56 cm
**L.** 36 cm
**M.** 33 cm
**N.** 6 cm
**O.** 49 cm
**P.** 84 cm

**Key:**
⊡ - Roughly rectangular section of plaster different from the rest of the wall; all measurements are approximate since edges are roughly defined.

**N.B.** Measurements of grave are approximate due to curved sides.

The grave dug into the floor of the cell (top left); the head of the grave, extending underneath the current cell walls (top right); a close-up of the post-medieval inscription added to the grave (the detail is sharper in person) (bottom left); and the foot of the grave, extending underneath the current walls of the cell, with a block lodged underneath it (bottom right):



N.B. The post-medieval inscription reads: INCLUSA BEATE MARIE DE WESTOVTE (Latin translation: The recluse of Saint Mary Westout). The church was formerly known as St Mary Westout (*St Anne's Church, Lewes: History and Guide*, Church Pamphlet ([n.p.]: [n.pub.], [May 2019])).

A sketch of the grave on the floor of the cell:
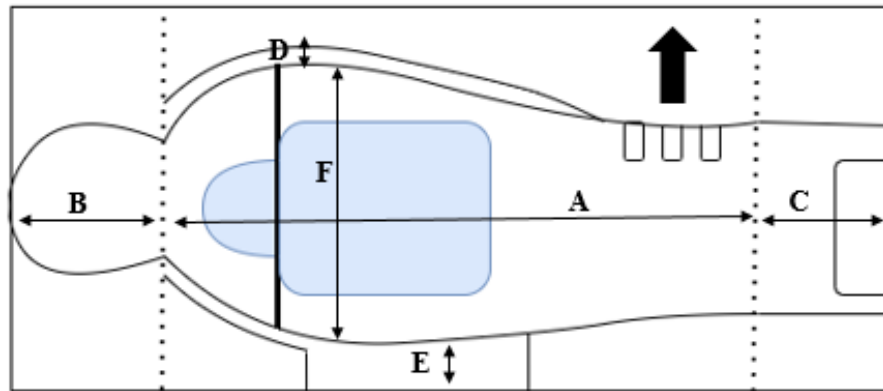


**Measurements:**
A. 100 cm
B. 16 cm
C. 21 cm
D. 6 cm
(approximate
measurement)
E. 8.5 cm
F. 47.5 cm

**Key:**
☐ - Area of darker plaster and post-medieval inscription.

┅ - Placement of current walls of squint recess, which cut off the end of the grave on each side.

**N.B.** Measurement 'D' is raised, (approximately 3 cm). Measurement 'E' is the indentation from the post-medieval concrete slab that provides a step into the grave. Measurement 'F' taken at widest point.

The squint in the squint recess placed in the north wall of the vestry looking into the chancel (left), and a close-up of the rough east side of the squint (right):

A sketch of the squint above the grave, looking into the chancel:



**Measurements:**
A. 36.5 cm
B. 69 cm
C. 13.5 cm
D. 2.5 – 3 cm
E. 64 cm
F. 16 cm
G. 29 cm
H. 10 cm
I. 43 cm
J. 47 cm
K. 6 cm
L. 71 cm
M. 120 cm (to grave)
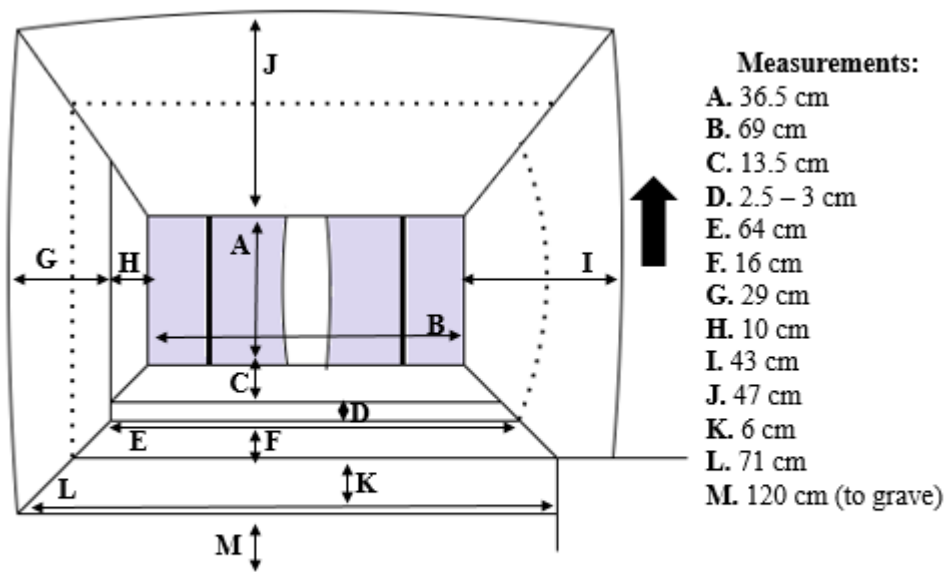
**Key:**
▢▢▢ - Marks changes in plaster. Debased feature with multiple post-medieval adjustments. Uneven edges make most measurements approximate. From the chancel side, the glassed-in squint measures 70 cm to the chancel floor.

A view of the squint with the grave below from the chancel, next to the hallway leading into the chancel that contains the trapdoor and remains of the squint recess (left), and a close-up of the glassed-in squint from the chancel (right):



Notes: This is a complex site that requires significantly more archaeological and archival assessment. Potential dating cannot be suggested without further analysis, although the progression of development of the cells is clear. Phase 1 represents the earliest cell on site, which looked into an ornate chapel. This cell includes a squint and

squint recess, but no grave, and in style it resembles the earliest squint and squint recess visible at Compton, Surrey, in the north wall of the church. This squint and squint recess has received remarkably little scholarly attention, and further analysis of the chapel is essential.

The later cells that both include graves, labelled Phases 2 and 3, have features in common and demonstrate that ideas of where the anchorite squint and squint recess were placed, how they should be designed, and the role of graves in association with squints, changed over time at this site. The cell at Phase 2 has mostly been obliterated by the creation of the hallway leading into the chancel; Godfrey (cited below) preserved the edge of the squint recess and the floor level of the grave underneath it during an excavation before this renovation. The edge of the squint recess survives, and the feature would have stretched across the space now used as the hallway. A squint would have been placed within this recess.

The trapdoor is indicated on Godfrey's plan of the vestry, but not labelled, and Godfrey did not discuss the trapdoor in the body of the text, either. This means that my discovery of this feature brought to light an aspect of anchoritic archaeology that was previously unknown and has not been discussed by other scholars. Godfrey preserved the medieval floor of the grave underneath the squint recess; his plan shows the grave extending to either side of the hallway, although this extension is now blocked. This grave is markedly shallow in comparison to the deep grave found in the Phase 3 squint recess—too shallow for burial. I argue that this grave was used in a performative sense, as part of the anchorite's daily devotional pratice as he/she knelt in the grave every day to look through the squint in the squint recess.

The anchoritic archaeology at Phase 3 has received the most scholarly attention. This squint recess is very deep to accommodate a grave dug into the floor of the cell. When the grave cover was removed by Godfrey and his associates, a skeleton was discovered within the grave, indicating that the anchorite was buried within the cell at death. The squint has undergone significant post-medieval alterations, and a large concrete slab has been added at the entrance to the cell.

These three phases of anchoritic archaeology at the same site show how ideas about cell design changed over time, and how graves were used in different ways at different periods of cell use. Moreover, at this site, new cells were regularly created or

expanded, instead of an anchorite moving into a cell formerly occupied by a different anchorite. This also shows a remarkable consistency of anchoritic activity over a long period of time. With this said, more research is necessary in order to more closely date these three phases of anchoritic activity, and to better understand the relationship of the anchorite cells to the chapel and chancel.

No external evidence of these cells has survived, since the post-medieval vestry has now covered any traces. However, a closer examination of archival records of the building of the vestry and the excavation may provide further context to aid interpretation.

A key source for this site: Godfrey, Walter H., 'Church of St Anne's Lewes: An Anchorite's Cell and Other Discoveries', *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, 69 (1928), 159-69.

**Yorkshire**

Barnburgh, St Peter's Church

A close-up of the recessed squint in the west wall of the north aisle (top left); a close-up of the diamond-shaped opening (top right); and the west wall of the north aisle, with a hole cut in the post-medieval panelling for the squint (bottom):

A sketch of the squint in the west wall of the north aisle:



Measurements:
**A.** 15 cm
**B.** 19.5 cm
**C.** 5.5 cm
**D.** 20 cm
**E.** 25.5 cm
**F.** 2 cm
**G.** 1 cm
**H.** 9 cm
**I.** 29 cm
**J.** 7 cm
**K.** 6 cm
**L.** 8 cm (approximate measurement—debased splay)
**M.** 36 cm
**N.** 95 cm (to current floor level)

**N.B.** Thick black lines indicate post-medieval wooden panelling.
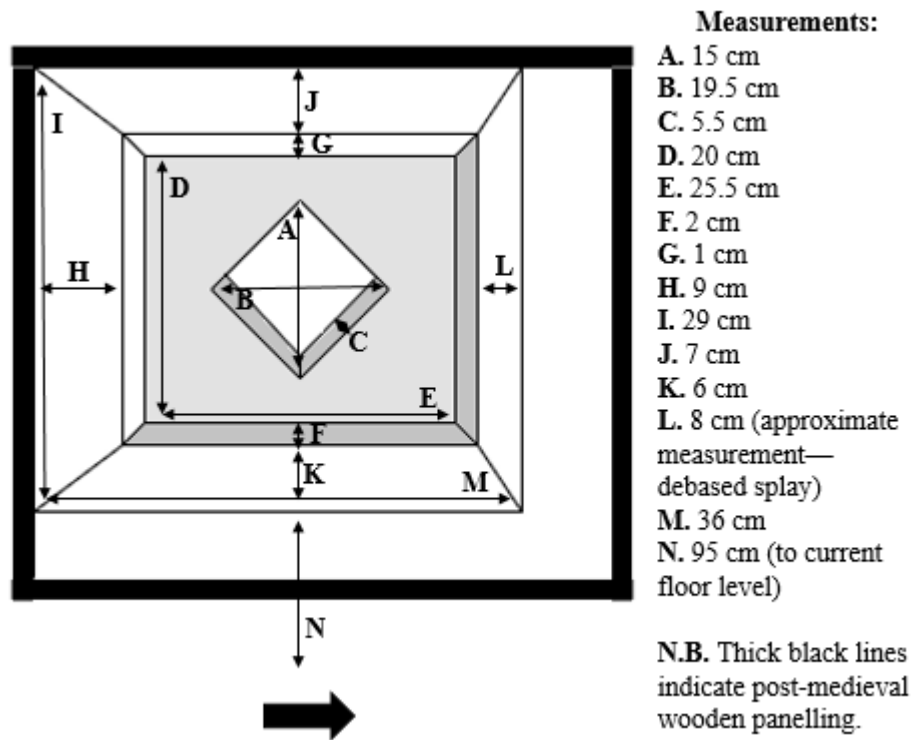
The external blocked squint recess in the west wall of the north aisle (left); a close-up of the outline of the recess (right):
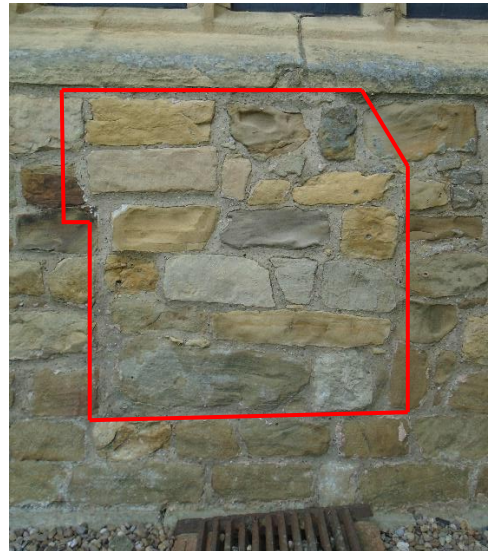
A sketch of the blocked squint recess in the west wall of the north aisle:



Measurements:
A. 116 m
B. 85.5 cm
C. 75 cm
D. 26 cm
E. 6 cm

Key:
▢ - Outline of blocked squint recess

N.B. Square grated drainage feature underneath the blocked squint recess.
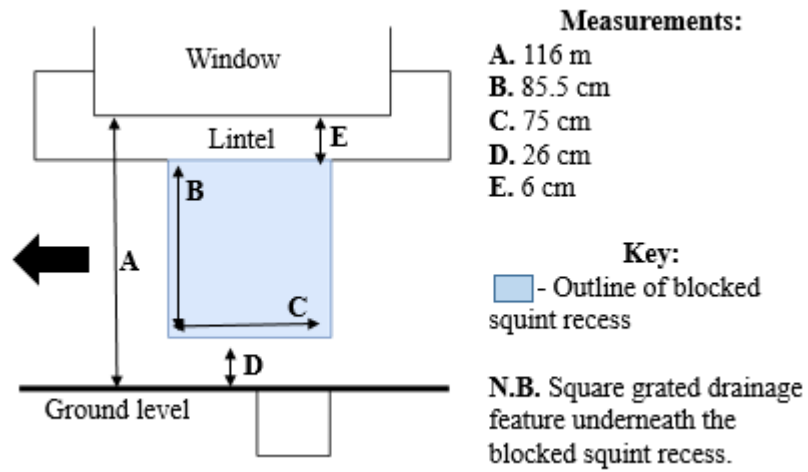
An external view of the west wall of the north aisle, with the grated drainage feature visible (top left); a close-up of the feature with the grate removed (top right); and a close-up of the inside of the drain (bottom):
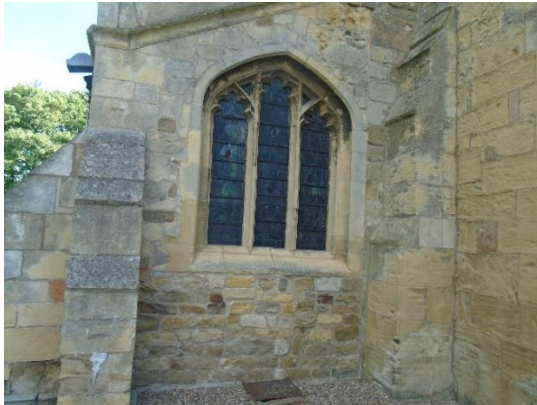
Notes: This site is unusual because of the diamond-shaped squint and the placement of the squint in the west wall of the north aisle. The placement is similar to the squint at Chester-le-Street, Durham. A view of the chancel is possible from this perspective, but more analysis of the design of the church when the squint and cell were in use is imperative to a more detailed assessment.

The ground level has been raised externally, indicating that the squint recess would not have been as close to the ground level as it now looks. The drainage feature would be worth examining in more detail, as it may have re-used earlier medieval stonework. Further archaeological and archival analysis is essential; this is a preliminary assessment of the squint and blocked squint recess.

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