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The Faversham Society  
Archaeological Research Group



Community  
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## The Lost Tower of Luddenham

Report for K82  
Luddenham Church, Luddenham,  
Near Faversham.

Grid Reference TQ 99232 63133



Now you see it (above, 1803<sup>1</sup>).....now you don't (below, 2011).



<sup>1</sup> Print by courtesy of the Kent Archaeological Society, Ref. No. KD2-074

## 1. Introduction

This was a 'Time Team' type project to find the foundations of the lost tower of Luddenham Church. St Mary of Luddenham is a classic manorial church, only a hundred metres from the manor house, Luddenham Court, and surrounded by barns, oasts and other outbuildings. It used to serve a wide rural parish with scattered settlement, and had a maximum possible congregation of 264 in 1871. In 1972 it became redundant and is nowadays administered by the Churches Conservation Trust.

Like most other churches, St Marys has been through many stages of development, with a drastic late Victorian remodelling. A much worn but distinctive Norman door in the west end (see **Appendices 2 & 3**) clearly dates the original build to (at latest) AD1100. At present there is no certain material evidence for an earlier church but 'Dodeham' in the Faversham Hundred is mentioned in the Domesday Book<sup>2</sup> as having a church (the Oare and Ospringe churches are separately listed) implying a pre-Conquest foundation. There is also a break in the south nave wall which implies an extension around 1100AD, again suggesting an earlier church.

Documentary evidence tells us that the church tower, located on the north side of the church and containing three bells (see cover pictures), collapsed in 1806 or 7<sup>3</sup>, damaging the nave and chancel. The tower was replaced with what Newman<sup>4</sup> calls a 'puny red brick tower' at the south west corner of the church, and the damage to the body of the church repaired in 1807-8. All traces of the north tower disappeared.

Much more detail about St Marys can be obtained from the Guidebook<sup>5</sup> and a Faversham Society publication by Melrose<sup>6</sup>. Our findings are intended to supplement these publications. The church is open every weekend and is popular with visitors who value its serenity and charm: a visit is strongly recommended.

## 2. Location of investigative activities

The Luddenham complex lies in the transition zone between drained salt marsh to the North West and rising land to the south and east. Generally, the land in this part of Kent dips downwards towards the north and soon runs below sea level in the Thames estuary.



**Fig 1: Aerial view of the Luddenham complex. The Swale to the north, Faversham to the east, marshlands to the north west and along the Swale.**

The marsh itself is recent alluvium, overlying downward dipping deposits similar to those to the east. The whole area is underlain by the Upper Chalk which is dipping sharply northwards but can be glimpsed in the sides of the steep cut little valleys in the southern area. In the south the chalk is overlain by Thanet Sands, themselves overlain by Woolwich beds further north. The Woolwich beds run under London Clay. Powerful springs emerge from the chalk and the valleys of the spring streams have trapped deposits of relatively recent (Pleistocene) Head Brickearth. Thus, within a small area is a great diversity of soils, landforms and land

<sup>2</sup> Williams A. & G. Martin (eds) 1992 edition Domesday Book Penguin Books: London p 25

<sup>3</sup> Melrose K. 1993 Luddenham and Stone by Faversham Faversham Papers No 31 Faversham Society: Faversham p 6

<sup>4</sup> Newman J. 1969 Buildings of England: North East and East Kent Penguin books: Harmondsworth p 360

<sup>5</sup> Percival A. 2002 St Marys Church, Luddenham near Faversham, Kent Churches Conservation Trust: London

<sup>6</sup> Melrose, op.cit.

use.<sup>7</sup> For the 'Lost Tower' project (see cover pictures), investigation was entirely focussed on the church and churchyard. The prints shown on the cover were very useful in deciding where to carry out the geo-resistivity survey. In interpreting the findings, however, the church does need to be seen within its very special landscape, as will become evident later.

### 3. The procedures at Easter (2 days)

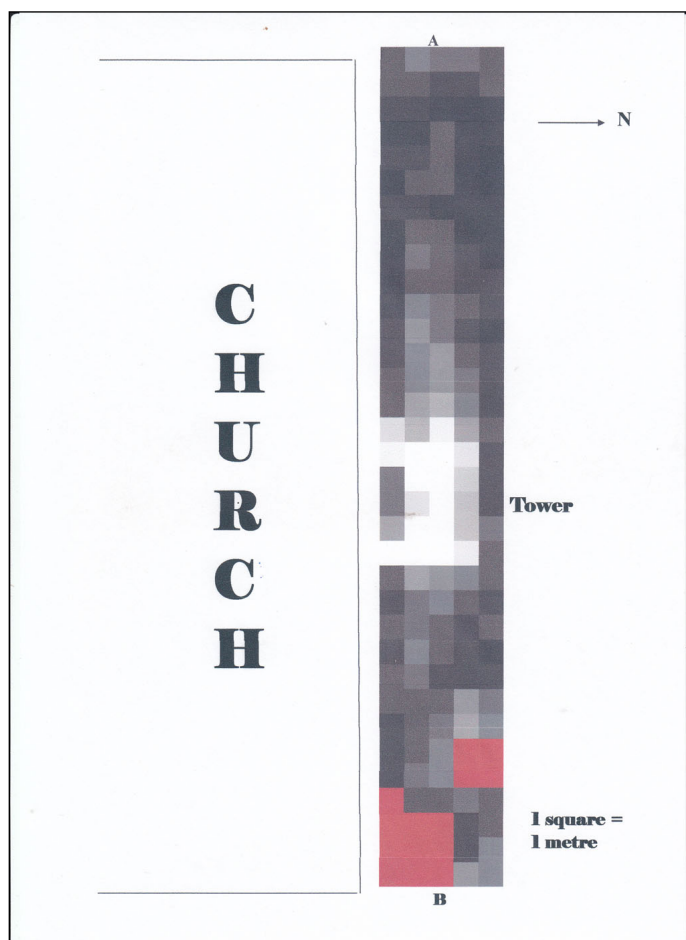
The total field time allowed for this project was five days - two during the Easter season for non-intrusive surveying and three in June for follow up excavation, backfilling and making good.

During the two days in April the following tasks were completed:

- A full survey of the churchyard with the locations of the graves plotted onto the map. Once digitalised, this information was used to produce a sequence of maps showing the changing use of the churchyard over the centuries.
- A careful geo-resistivity survey along the north side of the church, to a distance of 6m from the wall. This was digitalised and maps produced (**Fig 2**).
- A comprehensive survey of building materials (where not rendered - see below) with the different stages of build identified in chronological order (**appendix 2**).
- An inspection of the excavated debris in front of rabbit holes and in debris heaps in the churchyard.

### 4. The findings from the Easter season

The geo resistivity survey could not have yielded clearer results - see **Fig 2** below. We certainly had a start point for our excavation later in June.



**Fig 2: Results of geo-resistivity survey along the north side of Luddenham Church. Light colour = dry (walls etc) and dark = wet (ditches etc), red= not surveyed.**

<sup>7</sup> British Geological Survey 1:50,000 series Sheet 273 Faversham, Solid and Drift edition.





**Fig 3: The north wall with infill of the gap created by the tower collapse. The window is modern (note the falling away of the render).**

Other significant observations came from the building materials survey. Except for the west front and the chancel buttresses, the church is coated with render - excellent for water proofing but not helpful to anyone interested in building materials. Happily for us the render has fallen away in many areas and the actual build beneath is being temporarily revealed. Thus it was easy to see from a band of large squared stones exactly where the gap in the north wall, created by the disappearance of the tower, was filled in (**Fig 3**).

Generally, though, the most striking thing about this little church is the assortment of materials involved in its structure. There is nowhere near as much flint as we expect to find in a 'chalk church' and much more stone. This is mostly Kentish ragstone and greensand, and consists of many different shape and size blocks. In fact, St Marys looks as if it has been built from a heap of leftovers. The red bricks built into the north west and

south west corners are an eye-catching clue to explaining the 'junk heap' impression - much of this church, and not just the red tile-bricks, is reused material from a substantial Roman ruin. This made the prospect of seeing inside the foundations of the lost tower even more attractive.

The graveyard mapping was also useful, showing as it does the development of the burial area over the centuries. The debris heaps survey yielded a small piece of green glazed Flemish late medieval tile - another tantalising hint at what we might find in the tower foundations.

## **5. The procedures in the Summer (3 days)**

In June, we homed in on the area pinpointed by the geo resistivity survey as most likely for the foundations.

Initially, a 4m by 1m trench was pegged out using the planning square, and the area delineated marked with string. The position of the trench was recorded by measuring to mapped corners of the church. Turf was removed carefully, rolled and set aside in plastic bags and some rare wild plants in the vicinity were bucket covered to protect them. The trench was then hand excavated using single contexts, each of which was fully recorded: the maximum depth was well within the maximum safety depth of 1.2m. As the foundations were revealed, the trench was extended to reveal more of the features, with the fill of the tower base area left half sectioned. The walls and foundations themselves were exposed and cleaned down but not lifted.

All excavated soil was sieved meticulously, and the spoil heap and excavations scanned using a metal detector. Finds were set aside for each context and special finds were given three dimensional coordinates to pinpoint the exact find spot. The features revealed (**Fig 4**) were carefully recorded. Finally, the spoil was put back in, tamped down, watered and the turf replaced.





**Fig 4: Full extent of excavations. North to the right.**

The June spell was planned so that the middle day was the Open Day for the Churches Conservation Trust, with the preceding day for opening up and the following day for recording and backfilling. An exhibition was set up in the church for the visitors, and conducted tours given.

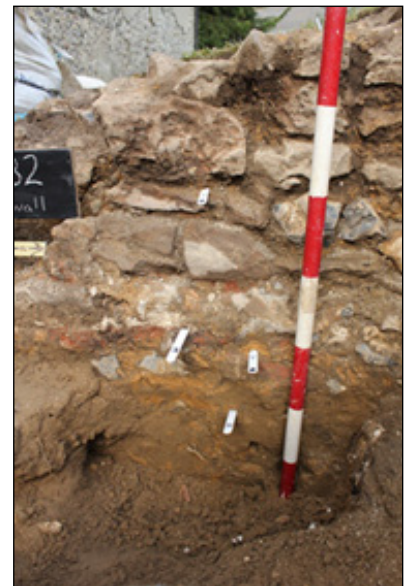
## 6. The findings from the summer season

Once the turf and wild flowers had been removed, the tops of the surviving walls were very quickly revealed, no more than 10cm below the surface. The west wall [5] was the first to emerge, perfectly in line with the western terminal of the row of 'infill' stones in the church wall. The trench was extended to the east and the east wall [4] swiftly found. The east wall was followed northwards until it turned to run westwards. We then had the outline of the tower. From the eastern end of the north wall projected a foundation [25] and from this yet another [26] - these seem to be two cumulative stages of a buttress. More about this below.

The western half of the fill in between the walls was removed but the eastern half left in situ. The fill, divided by horizontal layers into [2], [3] and [7] contained huge amounts of building rubble (**Fig 7**). The top layer [2] was dominated by tile and mortared flint, the next layer down [3] had more mortar and flint and much less tile. At the base of these even layers was a patchier thin layer of brown clay with some charcoal flecks [7], overlying a thin black burned layer [8] which itself partially overlay a patchy deposit of hard white chalky- mortar like material [11]. These layers can very clearly be seen in section against the unexcavated section of the fill. [11] sits straight onto the natural brickearth [23] (**Fig 5**).



**Fig 4: Interface between layers [8] and [11] and the natural [23], in west facing exposure of unexcavated fill.**



**Fig 5: East facing side of west wall showing the base of the tower. The brick is Roman in origin.**



**Fig 6: 'Working floor' at base of tower.**



**Fig 7: Finds from [2] and [3] tower fill.**

Four postholes (three small and one larger) penetrate [8] and [11] but not [7], and run down into the natural. There were also patches of greenish clay [18] amongst the white and burnt layers. This complex area can be seen in **Fig 6** (one small post hole yet to be excavated). There is a strong hint at a circular feature, cutting into the white and burnt layers. This activity floor (if that is what it is) lay level with the very lowest point of the west wall foundation. The basal part of the wall [5] had a peculiar orangey mortar and seemed to be composed almost entirely of Roman tile and brick [24] (**Fig 5**). The base of the east wall was not revealed but around the outside of the north and east wall ran a small plinth or ledge, except where the north east corner buttress stood. This buttress is shown in the cover picture from 1803. The north west buttress area was left unexcavated because of shortage of time.

The diversity of building materials in both the foundation structure and the fill was even more impressive than that in the standing building. It included:

- simple medieval glazed tiles (13<sup>th</sup> century).
- late medieval Flemish tiles in yellow or green glaze<sup>8</sup> (**Fig 8b**).
- a substantial amount of lead window came fragments, mostly found in context [11] the white hard layer.
- thin window glass, some with traces of gilt lines.
- large chunks of Roman tegulae and imbrices, some of these mortared into the walls.
- Roman box flue tiles, both combed and roller stamped (type 14, according to Ian Betts)<sup>9</sup> (**Fig 8a**).
- part of a very large Roman tile, probably a sesquipedalis.<sup>10</sup>
- peg tiles.
- mortared, roughly shaped flints.
- dressed stone blocks.
- iron nails.

Significantly, hardly any brick was found in the fill.

<sup>8</sup> Pringle S. 2008 'Ceramic Buildings Material' in Stevens, S. *The Vicarage Garden, Causeway, Horsham Archaeology South East*

<sup>9</sup> Betts I., MoLA, pers.comm.

<sup>10</sup> BBC History of the World website, sesquipedalis tile from Brading Roman Villa





**Fig 8a: Roller stamped Roman flue tile.**



**Fig 8b: Flemish tiles, 16<sup>th</sup> - early 17<sup>th</sup> century.**

A few small pottery sherds were found mixed in, either medieval or early 19<sup>th</sup> century. An oddity was a large fragment of animal bone (cow) which seemed to be built into the rubble infill of the east wall.

## 7. Interpretation

Identifying the actual tower foundations was not difficult. What did prove challenging was the dating of the burnt [8] and white [11] layers. As said above and seen in **Fig 4**, [11] rested on the natural brickearth. This might seem to imply that this is an old surface, contemporary or earlier than the wall foundations. Perhaps the postholes were for wooden scaffolding used in the building of the tower? The burnt layer, however, did *not* run underneath the base line of the wall - on the contrary, the lowest stones next to the burnt layer appeared somewhat scorched (**Fig 5**). So was this floor created after the tower collapse, with debris having been completely cleared away, including any floor coverings, right down to the natural soil? Was the sheltered area between the wall stumps used as a work area whilst the church was being restored? Were those came the remnants of the smashed windows (small tower windows are visible in the 1803 print)? Or are these leftovers from the making of the windows on site in around AD 1100? Was the circular mark made by a brazier (**Fig 6**) at either of these times?

In short, we have a 600-year age range for the dating of the 'working floor'. There were no dateable finds to help us, no handy clay pipe or pottery fragments dropped by the workmen. Radio carbon dating of the burnt layer could solve the problem but at enormous cost. For now this must remain a question that perhaps further excavation (removal of the untouched fill) would be able to answer, although we do lean towards the later date.

The abundance of Roman material was another aspect easy to explain. Quite apart from the tower remains, the north and south west corners of the church are lined with Roman bricks. Obviously a high status Roman building lies nearby, one with hypocausts using expensive imported roller stamped flue tiles. It has been known for some time that there is a lot of evidence for Roman settlement in this area but it has never been surveyed and recorded.

The finding of medieval floor tile was also significant. The interior of Luddenham Church nowadays has no trace of medieval tile or other features, the only surviving early floor feature being a small area of very badly damaged post medieval tin glazed tiles in front of the altar step. It has been suggested that the church was earth floored in the medieval period.<sup>11</sup> The material found in the tower foundations fill,

<sup>11</sup> Percival op.cit. p8



however, does say with some certainty that at least part of the church was tile floored in the late medieval period, and that these tiles survived until the tower collapsed in 1806.

Less easy to interpret was the presence on the corners of the buttress foundation of two large pieces of high-quality dressed stone with chamfered edges (see **Fig 9**). This is part of the second stage of buttress building, an event for which we do not have a date except that it is pre 1803 (the buttress is present in the print). It is odd to find such handsome pieces of stone underground as part of a foundation - perhaps the stones are also recycled 'rubbish', this time from a medieval building. Where would there be a medieval building nearby which could be robbed for stone? There are three obvious possibilities - Stone Chapel or Buckland Church, both of which went into ruin in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and Davington Priory Church where the nun's part of the Priory church was demolished at the Reformation around 1538. All of these ruins are in neighbouring parishes.



**Fig 9: Vertical view of the buttress foundation with dressed stone at the corners. Note the Roman imbrex on the right.**

Although it is impossible to be certain without further fieldwork, these stones are identical to medieval stonework visible in the parish church of St Lawrence, the surviving section of Davington Priory Church, where they form part of the pillars. Although the 1977 excavations of the lost part of Davington Priory<sup>12</sup> do not report having produced stonework of this kind, it is not unreasonable to suppose that the nuns section had columns the same as the surviving part. At times, Luddenham church has shared a rector with Davington and Oare e.g. Robert Harrison 1715-1755,<sup>13</sup> so there are clear connections whereby material for shoring up the shaky tower at Luddenham could have been brought in from Davington.

## **8. Final comments**

Carrying out this investigation was a great privilege. This was our first experience of excavating in a churchyard and we were determined to do the task as thoroughly, respectfully and carefully as possible. What we found was very exciting especially where there were links to outside the churchyard. We also enjoyed the Open Day, talking to members of the public, and hope that what we found can be used to enhance visitor experience.

## **9. Acknowledgments**

Great thanks to Tim & Caroline Stevens for inviting us to carry this out and letting us use the facilities in their house. Thanks also to Jane Stevens for putting up with us - I hope we did not cause any inconvenience to the farm itself. Big thanks to John Vigar of the Churches Conservation Trust for trusting us with one of the Trust's precious old buildings - I hope that what we found made it all worthwhile.

**Dr Pat Reid. November 2011**

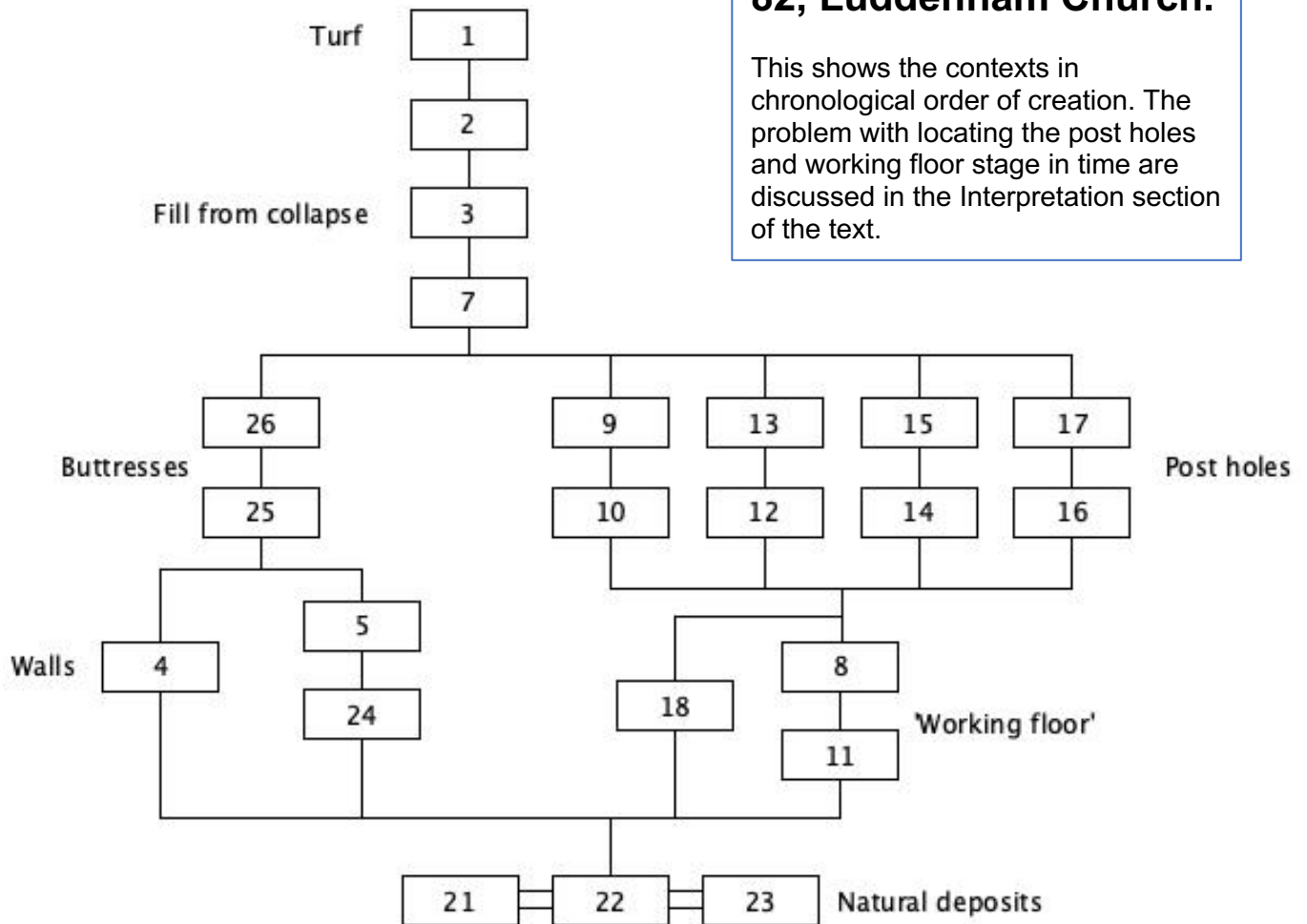
<sup>12</sup> Tester, P, 1977 A Plan and Architectural Description of the Medieval Remains of Davington Priory Arch. Cant. XCV pp 205- 212

<sup>13</sup> Melrose op.cit. p 38

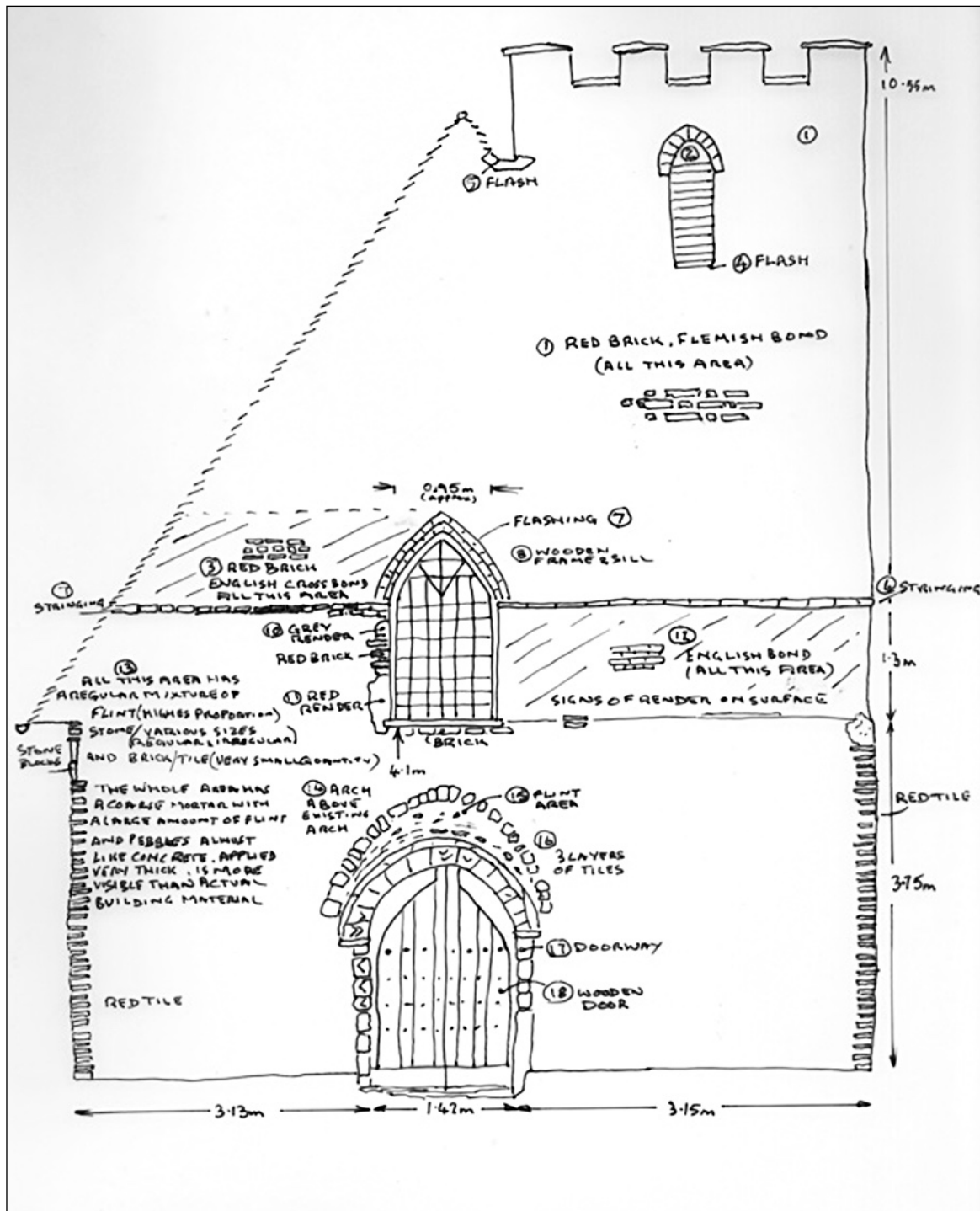
## Appendix 1: Harris Matrix

### Harris Matrix for Trench 82, Luddenham Church.

This shows the contexts in chronological order of creation. The problem with locating the post holes and working floor stage in time are discussed in the Interpretation section of the text.



Appendix 2:  
Example of recording of building materials.  
Similar records were made for the rest of the building.





**Appendix 3:**  
**More pictures of the Tower, both by courtesy of the Kent Archaeological Society.**



**a) 1803 Ink drawing, from the south. A Norman arch (location uncertain) is shown to the right.**



**b) 1806 Water colour by H Petrie From the south, with the manor house in the background.**

## Appendix 4: Small Finds.

SF No.	Context No.	Simple Name	Material	Count	Written Description	Completeness	Earliest Topological Date	Latest Topological Date
1	02	Ball	Lead (Pb)	1	Musket ball with concretions (of mortar). Black, and shiny where no concretion. Reference: info at finds.org.uk. Portable Antiquities Scheme.	Complete	AD1500	AD1800
2	02	Slag	Glass(?)	1	Blob of slag with typical bubbly surface. Lightweight, therefore possibly of glass; also indicated by shiny surfaces. Other content ?mortar. Perhaps used in building.	Partially Complete	AD1500	?
3	02	Mortar	Mortar	20	?OPUS SIGNINUM: several fragments comprising white/cream, pink and black. Much of it is very small and crumbly. Three larger pieces measuring as below.	Partially Complete	AD43	AD410
4	03	Tile	Ceramic	1	Fragment of red imbrex tile, pockmarked, coated in mortar - sporadically.	Partially Complete	AD43	AD410
5	02	Came	Lead (Pb)	1	Lead came framing for stained glass: two pieces joined by pin. Dirty grey colour. Ref: Wikipedia. lead and copper foil glasswork – Article.	Partially Complete	AD1100	AD1803
6	08	Metal Fragments	Lead (Pb)	33	Fragment of lead (came) window frame, of many shapes and sizes. Some are arc- shaped, some straight; much encrusted with ? mortar. Many fragments recessed for glass in I Section.	Partially Complete	AD1100	AD1803
7	02	Box flue fragment	Ceramic	1	Fragment of roller-stamped box flue with chevron, diamond and triangle design. Red fabric, with traces of mortar. Pattern is Type 14 (Ian Betts pers.comm).	Partially Complete	AD100	AD200
8		Tile Fragment	Ceramic	1	Red fragment of shaped tile, used for ornamental purposes. Has curved edge with groove beneath; gritty with traces of mortar.	Partially Complete	AD43	AD410
9	02	Tile	Ceramic	1	Fragment of very underfired imbrex with coating of mortar on underside and one end. Fired, red, side only approx 1mm thick, otherwise grey. Top quite discoloured with varying shades of grey.	Partially Complete	AD43	AD410
10	05	Tegula fragment	Ceramic	1	Red tegula fragment, much worn, with traces of mortar and black marks from soil contact.	Partially Complete	AD43	AD410
11	02	Tile Fragment	Ceramic	1	Box flue fragment having coarse edges. Red/orange fabric with traces of mortar on all surfaces, particularly on the bottom. The top has a combed pattern, created by using a three/four toothed comb: diagonal bands form a V-shape. N.B. Darker layer in centre = underfired. No evidence of vent, diagonal bands do not cross. Most probably 'box flue type 2' (see 'Early box flue tiles from London', Susan Pringle, London Archaeologist, Summe 2006, pp 124-129). SP says not type 2, but clear 2nd century type.	Partially Complete	AD110	AD200
12	02	Tile Fragment	Ceramic	1	Fragment of orange unglazed tile with quite damaged surface. There are traces of mortar on all sides, even a little on top.	Partially Complete	AD1100	AD1500
13	02	Tile Fragment	Ceramic	1	Corner fragment of Flemish tile with green glaze, much scratched and gouged, and with traces of mortar and soil marks. Green glaze is on white slip. Slip shows on elevations as shown in sketches.	Partially Complete	AD1450	AD1550
14	02	Tile Fragment	Ceramic	1	Corner fragment of orange/red Flemish tile with yellow glaze. Traces of mortar on most sides. Groove cutting through glaze across top.	Partially Complete	AD1450	AD1500
15	02	Tile Fragment	Ceramic	1	Fragment of Flemish tile, orange fabric with green glaze. Includes a corner with trace of glaze on side. Top surface scratched and gouged. Sketch shows plan view on glazed surface and two side elevations A & B.	Partially Complete	AD1450	AD1500
16	06	Tile Fragment	Ceramic	1	Tile fragment( possibly brick). Orange fabric, much overlaid with with soil marks with traces of mortar.	Partially Complete	AD1100	AD1500
18	06	Tile	Ceramic	1	Edge fragment of Flemish tile: orange fabric with dark green glaze, much scratched. Few / no traces of mortar.	Partially Complete	AD1450	AD1500
19	06	Brick / tile	Ceramic	1	Brick / tile fragment in red fabric. Roughly triangular, with one smooth side and one smooth edge.	Partially Complete	AD1100	AD1500
20	02	Brick / tile	Ceramic	1	Fragment of orange / red brick, diamond shaped with a coating, thick in parts with mortar. Groove, stepped on one side (see sketch).	Partially Complete	AD1100	AD1500
21	02	Brick / tile	Ceramic	1	Fragment of unglazed orange brick, corner piece with mortar on three sides and bottom, and traces on top.	Partially Complete	AD1100	AD1500
24	03	Tile	Ceramic	1	Fragment of orangey ceramic tile with light brown, golden glaze on top and splash of dark brown glaze on one side. Sandy well-mixed clay with no obvious inclusions. Some mortar on the well-formed sides. In sketch glaze is indicated by dotting.	Partially Complete	AD1450	AD1550
25	05	Tegula fragment	Ceramic	1	Fragment of tegula, of orange fabric with much mortar.	Partially Complete	AD43	AD410
26	05	Tegula	Ceramic	1	Fragment of Roman orange tegula roof tile. There are three small holes on the top, possibly for / from nails. There is mortar on the bottom with a splash of mortar on the top surface. In sketch mortar is shown shaded.	Partially Complete	AD43	AD410
27	02	Brick / tile fragment	Ceramic	1	Fragment of sesquipedalis floor tile (for hypocaust) of red/orange fabric with mortar on all side. Oblong in shape.	Partially Complete	AD43	AD410

28	02	Brick / tile fragment	Ceramic	1	Triangular fragment of sesquipedalis floor tile (for hypocaust) of red / orange fabric with mortar on all sides. Dotted area on drawing represents mortar.	Partially Complete	AD43	AD410
29	02	Brick / tile fragment	Ceramic	1	Fragment of unglazed orange brick / tile with tiny fragments of grog (pottery) content. There are a few traces of mortar on outer edge. In sketch: surfaces shown in A and B are original edges. B has mortar attached as show shaded; A has score marks for adhesion(?) Grog is on face C.	Partially Complete	AD1450	AD1500
30	02	Brick fragment	Ceramic	1	Edge fragment of orange unglazed brick with mortar on top, bottom and two sides plus traces elsewhere. On sketch dotting represents mortar.	Partially Complete	AD43	AD410
31	02	Brick fragment	Ceramic	1	Corner Fragment of red / orange brick, unglazed, with mortar on all surfaces.	Partially Complete	AD1100	AD1500
32	02	Brick fragment	Ceramic	1	Edge fragment of red unglazed brick, thickly mortared on all sides but top, which has thick traces. Mortar contains pebbles and grit.	Partially Complete	AD43	AD410
33	02	Brick fragment	Ceramic	1	Edge fragment of red/orange unglazed brick with mortar traces on all sides but limited in quantity. There is a shallow groove at one end of the face. In sketch C is the original edge.	Partially Complete	AD1450	AD1500
34	02	Brick fragment	Ceramic	1	Long diamond-shaped fragment of red, unglazed brick. From edge of brick mortar traces top and bottom. There is one red flint pebble in the fabric.	Partially Complete		AD1500
35	03	Fragments	Glass	5	Five fragments of stained glass: two colourless with markings; 1 dark (colour hard to determine); 2 dark (also colour hard to determine). First three very thin; last two thicker. All with concretions. Sketch: fragmented while being drawn.	Partially Complete	AD1100	AD1803
36	03	Tile Fragment	Ceramic	1	Corner fragment of red / orange fabric Flemish tile with traces of green glaze on top surface. There are traces of mortar plus lichen spots, and soil marks. Cream slip on edges and underside. In sketch: Green glaze shown with dark shading. Cream slip with cross shading.	Partially Complete	AD1450	AD1500
37	03	Tile Fragment	Ceramic	1	Corner fragment of red/orange glazed Flemish tile; yellow glaze is chipped. There are soil marks and patches of lichen, plus traces of mortar.	Partially Complete	AD1450	AD1500
38	06	Fragments	Stone	1	Triangular fragment of stone, yellowish-grey in colour. Two sides bear mason's: oblique cut marks; one side cut across at an angle.	Partially Complete	AD1100	AD1500
39	19	Fragments	Stone	5	Fragments of stone of pale creamy-grey sparkly content with rough surface. The largest piece has engraved lines on one surface which seem decorative rather than functional. On the other side is a curved form with what seems to be the letters 'L.T' engraved above the curve.	Partially Complete	AD1100	AD1500