

THE BENEDICTINE NUNNERY OF LITTLE MARLOW.

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The Nunnery of Little or Minchin Marlow, *Prioratus de fontibus de Merlawe*, may be said to have no history. It must always have been a small and not a wealthy house; its founder and the date of its foundation are both uncertain, and it never, probably, came into public notice or attracted the favour of any great family during the course of its existence. In the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* its revenues stand at £37 6s. 11d. gross and £23 3s. 7¼d. net.

Dugdale (*Mon. Ang.*, IV. 419, ed. Caley, 1823), gives a list of the few documentary notices of the house; the earliest of these are of the thirteenth century. In the Close Roll, 13 Hen. III., m. 10 (1228-9) is the following order:

“Mandatum est Jordano forestario et Willelmo de Coigner quod assumptis secum viridariis et aliis probis et legalibus hominibus de balliva sua, assignent monialibus de Merlawe duas acras terre in loco competenti in foresta nostra pertinente ad manerium de Cokham, ad domos in eis construendas ad animalia et peccora sua in eis receptanda.”

This grant is confirmed, and its execution ordered without delay, in the Roll for the next year, 14 Hen. III., m. 11.

In the Register of Missenden Abbey, written 1331 (MS. Harl. 3688), there is entered a copy of a deed relating to Little Marlow, at f. 101. It is an obligation from A., prioress *de fontibus de Merlawe*, to pay four shillings a year,

“p grava q̄ appellat^o ludeput juxta fossatu terr' ecclie de hedesor¹,” and for an acre and a half of land lying next the land of the church of the same town towards Woburn, together with a certain angle lying next the road.

Tanner (*Not. Mon.*, 29, ed. 1744) gives a reference from

¹ Read December 3rd, 1902.

the episcopal registers of Lincoln, of the year 1217, mentioning the nuns of Marlow. Leland (*Collect.*, I. 90) says that the founder was Geoffrey Lord Spencer, and gives a passing reference to the house in his *Itinerary* (II. 6); "Little Marlaw, wher the Priorie of Nunnes was."

Tanner (*op. cit.*) quotes from the Episcopal Registers of Lincoln to the effect that in 1244 application for leave to elect a head of the house was made to the Countess of Hertford and Gloucester and Sir Ralph Danvers. This would suggest that they were, whether by grant or inheritance, representatives of the original founder. And in the list of permanent charges on the income of the Nunnery given in *Valor Ecclesiasticus* is this entry:

"Elimosina distribut' p aia Dni Regis nunc fundatoris monasterii p'dici div's' pauperib; p annum vj viij"

which would imply that the founder's rights were at the time vested in the King.

In passing, it may be of interest to note the use of the word founder at this time, to denote the person who by descent or otherwise was the representative of the original founder of a monastic house.

Sir Thomas West, Lord Lawarr, wrote to Cromwell thus (MS. Cott. Cleop. E. iv, f. 280): "I have a power howse callyd Boxgrave . . . wherof I am ffounder." He was the owner of Halnaker House, formerly belonging to the family of Haye, one of whom, Robert de Haye, founded Boxgrove Priory in the reign of Henry I.

Sir Philip Edgecumbe to Cromwell (MS. Cott. Cleop. E. iv, f. 313):

"But trew hyt ys, that I am by the kynggē ffather by hys graunt to my poar ffather made to hym and hys isue male, ffounder of the pryory of Tottenes and the nunry off Cornworthye in Devonsschyr."

Richard Strete to Cromwell (MS. Cott. Cleop. E. iv, f. 283):

"The first founder ther [Calwich in Staffordshire] was Nich. Gresley, in whose title now claymyth Mr. Longford (as men here report)."

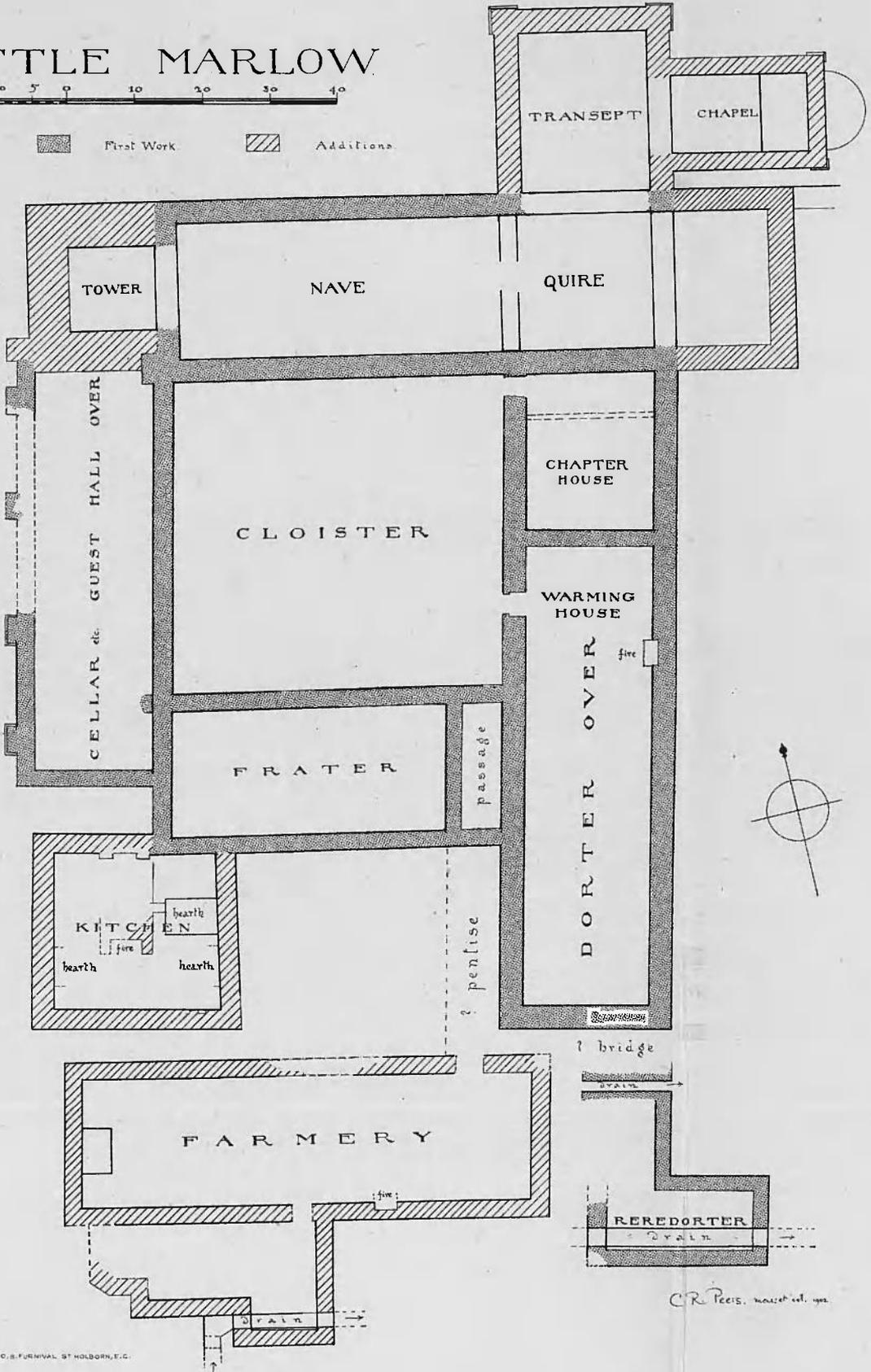
Humphrey Stafford to Cromwell (MS. Cott. Cleop. E. iv, f. 242):

"a house of chanons yn Somersett shiere called Worspryng, where my seyd ffather is ffounder therof."

LITTLE MARLOW



■ First Work ▨ Additions



C.R. Peers. March 1892

Dugdale (*Mon. Ang.*, IV. 419, *ed.* Caley, 1823) quotes a passage from Browne Willis mentioning three shields in the windows of the "hall."

- "i. Gules a lion passant guardant langued or, over all a bend of the second. Probably King John when Earl of Gloucester.
- "ii. Azure two wings conjoined tenné by a silk twist with tassels; over all a fesse.
- "iii. Quarterly. 1 and 4 Argent a bear saliant proper muzzled or; 2 and 3 Gules three pikes argent in fesse (Lucy); Crest, a bear's head on a wreath coupé tenné, muzzled or."

This passage does not occur in the 1719 edition of Willis's *History of Abbies*,¹ pp. 28-9. And in any case there is no direct evidence that these arms refer to the founder or founders of the house.

On the whole, Tanner's suggestion that the foundation of the house was due to the de Clare family seems the most likely. The Countess of Hertford and Gloucester in 1224, above mentioned, would be the wife of Richard de Clare, second Earl of Hertford and Gloucester, who succeeded his father in 1230, and died 1262. The de Clares were at the time lords of the manors of Little Marlow and Great Missenden, which may have something to do with the connection between the two houses. See for this Lipscomb's *History of Buckinghamshire*, (1847), where, however, the genealogies given are very confused. It may be noted that the de Clare arms occur on one of the glazed tiles found on the site of the Priory.

The nunnery, being a small house, below the value of £200 a year, was suppressed on June 23, 1536, the Prioress at the time being Margaret Vernon.

The Commissioners' report on the state of the house at the time is as follows:—

"Clere value £23 3s. 7d. per annum.

"Nunns two, both desyren capacitys. Servants two, women servants two, and one priest. Bells, lead, etc. worth by estimation £4 10s. 8d. The house in good estate. The value of the goods £17 0s. 2d. Debts, none. Woods, eight acres, six above twenty years' growth."

At the previous preliminary visitation, made in the autumn of 1535 or shortly after, the Commissioners had prepared the way for the final surrender of the house

¹ Vol. II. of his book, usually quoted as *Mitred Abbies*, though this title belongs to Vol. I. only.

by "discharging" three out of the four nuns, leaving only Margaret Vernon, the Prioress, and one "pore madyn" to keep her company. Her letter to Cromwell on the subject is a pathetic instance of the efficacy of the Commissioners' proceedings.

MS. Cott. Cleop. E. iv, f. 71.

"After all dew cōmendacyons had unto yowre good mavstershpy w^t my most umble thankes for the greate cost mayd on me and my pore madyn at my last beyng w^t yowre maystershpy / farthermore plesyth yt yow to understonde that yowre vysytors hath bene here of late who hath dyscharged iij of my systers / the one ys dame Katheryn the other ij is the yonge women that were last professyd whyche yt (*sic*) not a lyttyll to my dyscomforte / nevertheless I must be cōtent w^t the kynges plesure / but now as towchinge my nowne parte I most umbly besече yow to be so specyall good mayster unto me yowre poore bedewoman as to geve me yowre best advertysment and counseyle what waye shalbe best for me to take seyng there shalbe none left here but my selfe and this pore madyn / ad yf yt w(yll) please yowre goodnes to take thys pore howse Into yow(re) owne hondes ether for yowre selfe or for my nowne [torn] yowre soune / I would be glad w^t all my hart to geve yt into yowre maystershypes hondes w^t that ye wyll comaunde me to do therin / Trustyng and nothyng dowptyng in yowre goodnes that ye wyll so provyd for us that we shall have sych a onest lyvyng that we shall not be drevyn be necessyte nether to begge nor to fall to no other uncōvenyence / and thus I offer my sylfe and all myne unto yowre most hygh and prudent wysdome / as unto hym that ys my onely Refuge and comfort in thys World besechyng god of hys goodnes to put in yow hys holy sprete that ye maye do allthyng to hys lawde and glory /

" by yowre owne assured bedewoman

"Margaret Vernon.

"To the Ryght onurabyll and
hyr most specyall good mayster
mayster secretory unto the
kynges most nobyll grace."

Stowe's account of the usual procedure at such visitations is worth giving, as a commentary on Margaret Vernon's letter. The visitors, he says, "put forth all religious persons that would goe, and all that were under the age of foure and twentie yeares, and after closed up the residue that would remeine, so that they shuld not come out of their places, and took order that no man shuld come to the houses of women, nor women to the houses of men, but onely to heare their service in the churches; all religious men that departed, the abbot or prior to give them for their habite a priestes gowne,

and forty shillings of money; the nuns to have such apparell as secular women weare, and to go wher thei wold."

Margaret Vernon accepted the inevitable with the best grace she could, and gained the approval of the "visitor," William Cavendish, by whom the house was dissolved, as is shown by his letter of Sep. 23, 1536, to Cromwell. P.R.O. State Papers, H. VIII. 1536, 1188.

"Right worshipfull Sir my duetie as yo^r humble s^vunte premysed Thes shalbe to advertyse you that we have ben at the priorye of litle Marlowe and their have dissolved the same accordyng to the kinge cōmaundement to us directed / and have also discharged my lady and the other religious psons of the said house which I ensuer you takith the matier verey well lyke a wyse woman and haith made delyverye of every thing whiche we made o^r Inventarye of at o^r first repayer thether / and also of many other thyngē more which was nat conteyned in o^r said inventarye w^t such circuspectōn and diligens that the kinge highnes (as fare as we cane learne or appceyve) shall nat be the loser of one penny belongyng to the forsaid porye Sir hir hole trust and confidence ys in yo^r maistershipp that you wilbe so good m^r unto her to helpe that she myght have some reasonable pencōn, or elce some other lyvyng as to you shalbe thought good accordyng to her demyrytte / She haith no cause of dispacon after my judgement / and forasmoche as I pceyve her onlie trust and effyaunce is in yo^r maistership, and also haith none other socower ayde or refuge but only to yo^r maistershipp / I shall therfore most humblie bysiche yo^r maistershipp (as fare as y^t may become one beyng yo^r poore s^vnt) to be good unto her and for her to provyde whan oportunytye shall geve place ether some honest yerelye pencōn or elce thadvncement and preferment of the govⁿnce of some other hono^rable howse of her religion / ffor in my opynyon she is a psonage right mete apte and able to have the govⁿnce of the same as well for her yeres as for her discrecōn / as knowith the holy Trynytie who sende yo^r maistershipp longe lyf / good helth w^t moche increase of wo^rshipp. ffrom lytle Marlow the xxiiijth daye of June.

"Yo^r most bounden s^vunte

"Willm Cavendyssh.

"To my right wo^rshipfull and
singul^r good maister m^r
Thom^s Crumwell chief
Secretorye to the kinge
highnes geve this."

The Prioress had not long to wait for the reward of her "circuspectōn and diligens." William Cavendish was in the right when he judged that she had "no cause of dispacon." Within three months of her dismissal from Little Marlow, she was appointed abbess of Malling, in succession to Elizabeth Rede, resigned.

There exists a letter of Sep. 24, 1536, from Sir Thomas Willughby, brother-in-law of Elizabeth Rede, to Cromwell, desiring from him a letter to the Abbess of Malling that the late Abbess, his sister-in-law, may have the lodging in the monastery which her predecessors that have likewise resigned have had, also that she may have the plate which her father (Sir Robert Rede, chief justice of the Common Pleas, *ob.* 1510) delivered to her "to occupy in her chamber." Margaret Vernon did not long enjoy her promotion, as Malling Abbey was suppressed in 1538; but her further history does not fall within the limits of this paper.

The lands and possessions of the Nunnery of Little Marlow were granted in 29 H. VIII. to Henry's re-foundation of Bisham or Bustlesham Abbey, but after the suppression of that house were given (32 H. VIII.) to John Tytley and Elizabeth Restwold.

The grantees do not appear to have lived on the site, or attempted to convert the Conventual buildings into a residence for themselves. The buildings were small and simple, as will be shown, and were probably used as farm buildings, and quarries for farm buildings, from the sixteenth century onwards. The gradual process of destruction may be to some extent traced from the following notices:

1719. (Browne Willis. *Hist. of Abbies* (Vol. II.), pp. 28-9.)

"Great part of this convent is still standing, tho' in Ruins. The Tower stood at one corner, separate from the rest of the Office. The church or chapel was a small tyled Building ceiled at the top. Against the east wall are still to be seen some Painting (*sic*) of the Virgin Mary; on each side her was a saint."

1797. (Langley. *History of the Antiquities of the Hundred of Desborough*, p. 318.)

"At present there are scarce any remains of the convent. Part of the wall of the tower is standing, but the other ruins have been taken down, and a farmhouse built with the materials."

1801. (*The Beauties of England and Wales*, I. 382.)

"Scarcely any part of the convent is now standing, the principal materials having been used in the construction of a farmhouse."

1813. (Lysons. *Magna Britannia*, I. pt. iii, 601.)

“The hall, which was 60 feet in length, was pulled down in 1740. There are now no remains of the conventual buildings.”

1823. (Dugdale. *Mon. Ang.*, IV. 419, *ed.* Caley.)

A quotation from Browne Willis, that the hall was twenty yards long and five wide, and had in the windows the arms given above. This statement does not occur in the 1719 edition of Browne Willis.

Neither Camden nor Grose make any mention of the site.

At the present time a small house with outbuildings, garden, an orchard, and a meadow occupies the place of the monastic buildings, bounded on all sides by water-courses, which are filled by the strong springs which rise to the east and west of the site of the nunnery, and to which it owed its name “*de Fontibus de Merlawe*,” being thus a humble namesake of the great Cistercian Abbey of Fountains in Yorkshire.

The site does not at the first seem a well-chosen one, being on the level marshy land by the bank of the Thames, and apparently well within the reach of the periodical floods which make some of the less fortunately placed inhabitants of Bourne End realize for a short time what must have been the mode of life of their remote predecessors who lived in pile dwellings along the Thames valley. But Mr. Vaughan Williams, the present owner of the monastic site, tells me that the slight sandy rise on which it is placed makes it secure from even the highest floods, and its position was no doubt determined by the plentiful supply of pure water from the springs before mentioned, a prime necessity in a monastic house.

Until the beginning of the present year, the only indication of the site of the buildings of the nunnery was a piece of rough stone walling, which has since proved to be the north-east angle of the frater, forming part of a summer-house to the east of the comparatively modern dwelling-house which now goes by the name of the Abbey.

But in the course of making a roadway through part of the orchard, in the north-east part of the “Abbey” grounds, Mr. Vaughan Williams came upon the lower

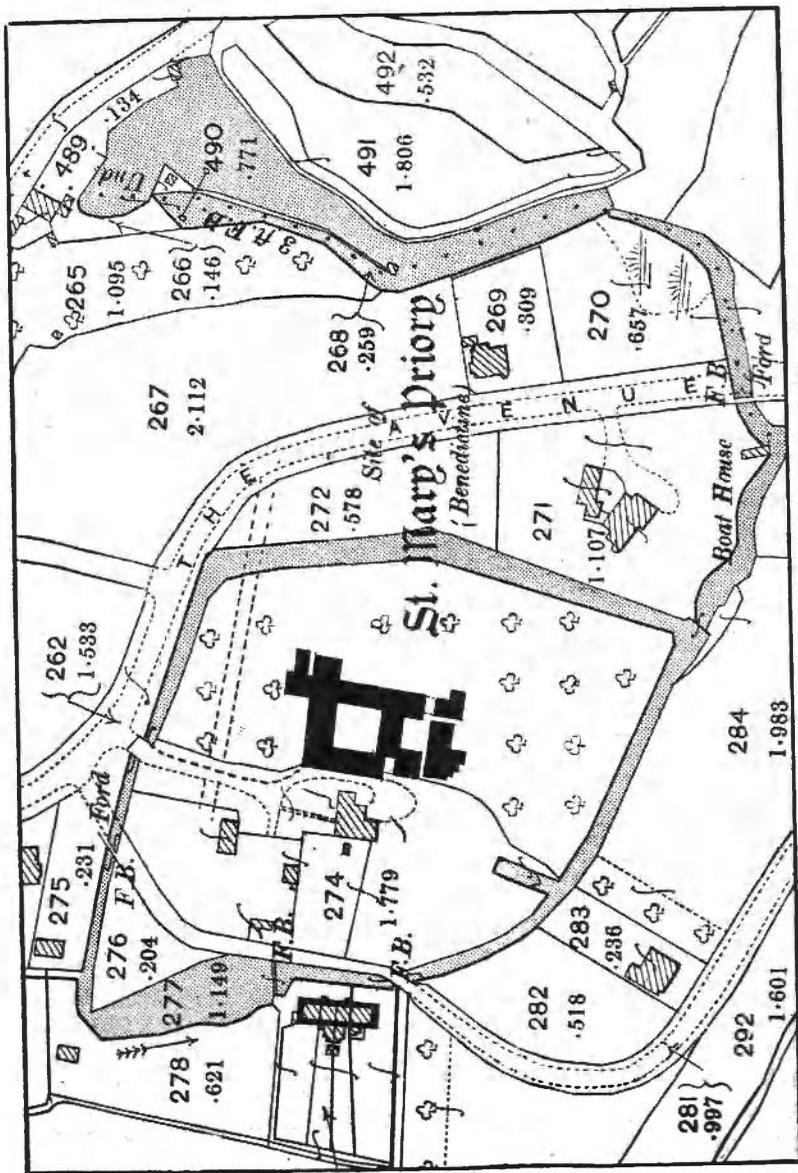


FIG. 1.—SITE PLAN, LITTLE MARLOW NUNNERY.
Scale 3/4" = 100 yds. (From Ordnance Survey.)

courses of several walls, built of flint and chalk, with angles formed chiefly of thin red roofing-tiles, which were at once seen to be part of the monastic buildings. Through my friend Mr. Goolden I came to hear of the discovery, and eventually it fell to my lot to superintend, as far as weekly visits to the site permitted, a complete excavation of the remains of the nunnery, carried on most energetically and efficiently by Mr. Vaughan Williams.

The result of the work has been the recovery of the plan of the whole establishment, with the possible exception of some detached outbuildings. This plan forms Plate I of the present description, and is of considerable interest from the fact that although the plans of some of the larger Benedictine houses have been already measured and published, there does not at present exist any very detailed account of a small nunnery such as this. It is probable that in its most prosperous days the house had not as many as twenty inmates—in 1535 we know that it had only five, though the house was in good order, and there were no debts—and its plan may be taken as showing the irreducible minimum of accommodation needed in one of the smallest of Benedictine monasteries.

The buildings consist of an aisleless church to the north of the cloister, with a north transept and chapel, and a western tower; a chapter-house, parlour (?), warming-house, and dorter to the east of the cloister, with rere-dorter south of the dorter; a frater on the south, with kitchen adjoining its south-west angle; and the cellar with a hall and probably other accommodation for guests on the west. South of the frater, and forming as it were the south side of a second cloister, lie the farmery buildings. The inclusive measurements of the whole group are about 203 feet north to south by 120 east to west.

In no place, except, as has already been said, at the north-east angle of the frater, are the walls standing more than six inches above floor level, and in many places little beyond the footings exists. No traces remain of doorways from the church to the cloister, or from the cloister to the frater, and indeed the only evidences of

anything of the sort beside those in the farmery buildings are to be found in two openings in the east wall of the cloister, one very ill defined, leading into what I think must be considered the vestibule to the chapter-house, the other, better preserved, to the warming-house under the dormer.

It is evident from what is left that all the buildings were of the simplest kind. And the difficulty in obtaining anything better than chalk for quoins and window dressings must have been another obstacle. A little freestone remains, but evidently the question of ashlar for quoins was a difficulty, as the chalk stood badly when exposed to the weather, and the angles which remain sufficiently entire to show their construction are chiefly formed with thin red roofing tiles laid flat,¹ bonded to the flint rubble of which the walls are composed. No part of the building was vaulted, and, though this cannot be definitely stated, I think that none of the walls had plinths. With so little masonry remaining, it is a matter of some difficulty to fix accurately the dates of building of the different parts of the nunnery, but for several reasons it is probable that the earliest work, which on the accompanying plan is distinguished from subsequent additions, must be assigned to the opening years of the thirteenth century. So clean a sweep has been made of the building material on the site that the only architectural features found in the course of the excavations were some stones from the jambs of windows, one stone of a label, and a few pieces of Purbeck marble shafts; all of which may date from 1220 or thereabout. Even these were preserved only by having been used up in the foundations of later work.

In taking a more detailed examination of the buildings, the church (*oratorium*) naturally claims attention in the first place. It lies to the north of the claustral buildings, and as first built was an aisleless rectangle 20 feet 6 inches wide from wall to wall internally, the walls being of flint rubble, 3 feet 6 inches thick. The position of the original east end is not quite clear. A

¹ Similar tiles are used in the external plinths at Little Marlow Church.

strong flint foundation runs north and south across the church on the line of the east wall of the dormer range, which may be either a sleeper wall marking a structural division, or the foundation of the first east wall. It belongs, I think, to the first work, but everything eastward of it is a re-building in chalk ashlar of the fourteenth or fifteenth century, on foundations largely composed of the chalk jambs of thirteenth century windows, probably lancets, of two plain chamfered orders with a reveal for a wooden frame, which must have belonged to the east part of the original church. As all walls at this corner of the buildings were destroyed soon after their discovery, in the process of making a road across the site, it was possible to ascertain that no foundations of an earlier date than the re-building remained here. It is, however, unlikely that the east wall of the church was in a line with the east wall of the dormer range, and the position of the added north transept gives some support to this view. The transept measured internally 24 feet by 19 feet, with walls 3 feet 6 inches thick, having broad clasping buttresses of shallow projection at its north-west and north-east angles. On the east was a chapel 24 feet by 11 feet 9 inches wide, with walls only 2 feet 3 inches thick. All salient angles in chapel and transepts had plain weathered plinths of freestone, the quoins being for the most part of thin red tiles.¹ The walling was of coursed rubble of flint and chalk. In the chapel the step of the altar platform remained, and a small piece of glazed tile pavement. The whole church, and probably most of the other buildings of the nunnery, were paved with these tiles, a great number of which were found in the course of the excavations.

The date of the building of the transept and chapel may be placed about 1250; the clasping buttresses and character of the masonry make a later date unlikely; and the finding of one stone of a moulded chalk label of c. 1220 in the foundations of the north wall gives a limit in the other direction.

¹ In the aisles and south chapel of the parish church of Little Marlow similar tiles are used for the external plinths.

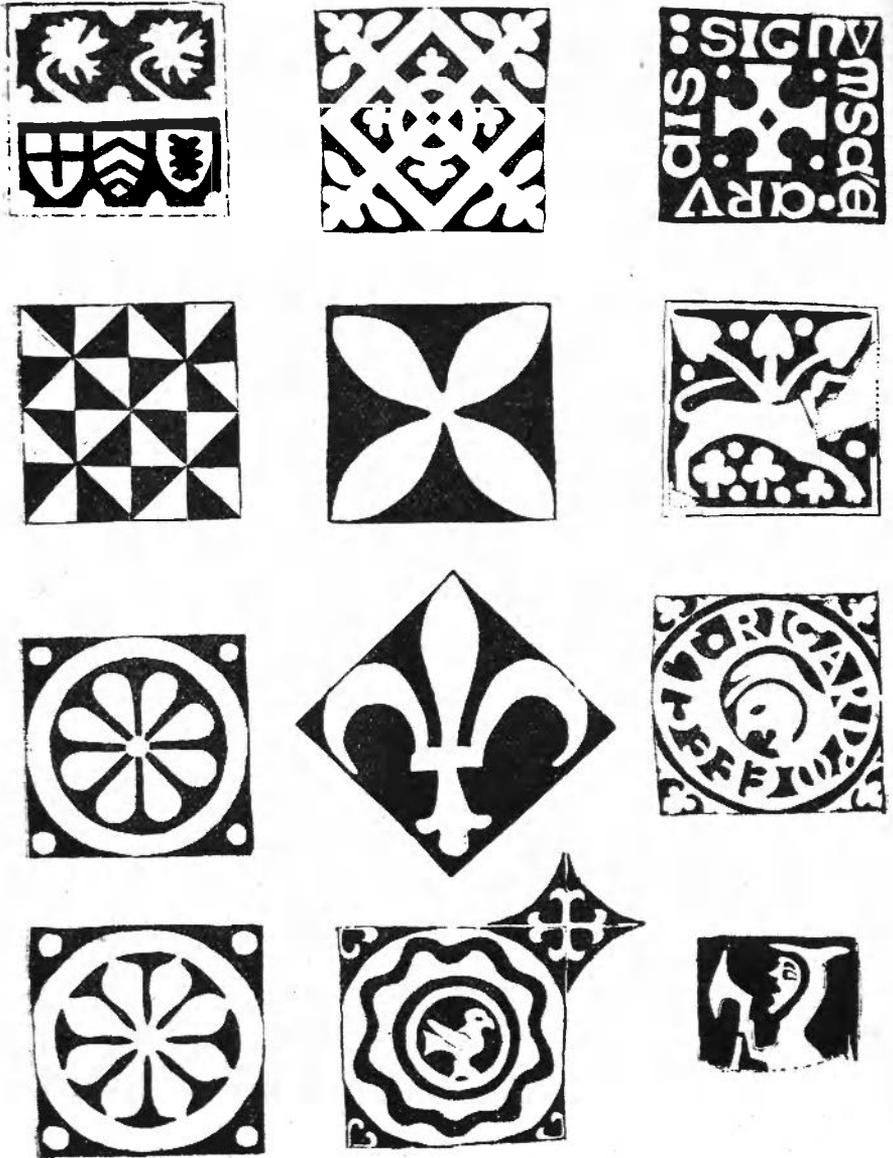


FIG. 2.—PAVING TILES FOUND AT LITTLE MARLOW NUNNERY, 1902.
SINGLE-TILE PATTERNS. (Scale $\frac{1}{4}$ full size.)

On the south side of the altar platform at the east end of the chapel a burial was found; the body had been placed in a wooden coffin, of which the nails were the only remaining traces. Both transept and chapel have been destroyed since their discovery by the making of the road above-mentioned.

Against the outside of the east wall of the chapel a semi-circular platform of broken tiles and mortar rubbish was found, evidently of comparatively modern date. In it were several pieces of chalk ashlar from the destroyed thirteenth century buildings.

Of ritual arrangements in the church no remains exist, with the exception of a shallow foundation across the nave in a line with the west wall of the north transept, which probably marks the position of the *pulpitum*, and consequently the western limit of the quire.

At the west end of the church are massive foundations 6 feet wide of a tower 12 feet 6 inches square inside, evidently an addition to the original nave. All this part of the church is destroyed below the floor level, and no evidence remains as to whether there was a west doorway, or whether the entrance to the church was from the north, as at Romsey. It is not clear whether the first church had a tower; on the whole, the probabilities are that it had not.

The irregular setting out of the cloister and surrounding buildings is very noticeable, and may have been due to the marshy nature of the site, which in the thirteenth century was not so well drained as it is now, and consequently afforded a smaller area for the erection of buildings than is at present the case.

No traces of the inner walls or paving of the cloister were to be found.

The eastern range of the claustral buildings is 100 feet long over all, with walls 3 feet 6 inches thick, and was, at any rate as regards its southern part, two stories in height.

At the northern end, divided from the church by a passage 6 feet wide, is the chapter-house (*capitulum*), which is 17 feet long by 18 feet 10 inches wide. There is no sign of any entrance to it from the cloister on the west,

and it seems probable that the passage just mentioned served the double purpose of inner parlour and chapter-house vestibule. This passage has a somewhat ill-defined doorway at its west end, and retains at the east a good part of its flooring of glazed tiles. It was separated from the chapter-house by a 6-inch wooden partition, traces of which remain. Whether it also had a doorway at its eastern end, and served as a passage to a cemetery round the east end of the church, is not clear. The tile pavement is perhaps hardly such as would be placed in a passage way open at both ends, and shows little signs of the wear and tear which would have taken place in such a case. The flooring of the chapter-house has wholly disappeared.

The rest of the eastern range is taken up by one long chamber 69 feet 9 inches by 18 feet 10 inches, divided from the chapter-house by a wall 2 feet 6 inches thick, and entered from the cloister by a doorway in its northern half. Nearly opposite the doorway, in the east wall, is a fireplace with tiled hearth, and a (possibly modern) brick curb, and this end of the room was most probably used as the warming-house (*calefactorium*). It is likely that the room was divided up into one or more chambers by partitions, but too little of the building is left to make it possible to fix their positions. The doorway to the warming-house seems to have been the only entrance. The precise use of the long spaces which are always to be found on the ground floor of the dormer range of a monastic house is by no means clear; to call them day rooms is a general but not an entirely convincing solution of the difficulty. They were a natural result of the customary arrangement of the dormer on the first floor, and in many cases may have had no special use assigned to them.

Nothing can be said of the length of the dormer (*dormitorium*), which occupied the first floor of this range of buildings, as to whether it extended over the chapter-house or not, and how it was reached from church or cloister.

South of the dormer, but apparently not connected with it on the ground level, is the rere-dormer (*necessarium*), L-shaped in plan, the northern arm forming the passage

from the dorter, the southern containing the latrines, which have a drain 2 feet 6 inches wide, with a hard gravel bottom, and arched over with tile arches where it runs through the east and west walls of the building; otherwise it was open, the seats being doubtless carried over it on wooden joists. When found it was filled in with mortar rubbish and glazed paving tiles from the destroyed buildings.

The northern end of this building, which formed the approach from the dorter, has been completely destroyed, but the south wall of the dorter is sufficiently preserved to show that no walls have been bonded to it at the ground level, and it seems likely that the communication between the two buildings was by a bridge on the first floor. A narrow drain 1 feet 6 inches wide runs parallel to the south wall of the dorter across the breadth of the rere-dorter passage; its west end was blocked up when the farmery was built, and no direct evidence as to its use is now obtainable. It may have served as an overflow to the rere-dorter drain, by a channel along its west wall, or it may have been intended to drain the open space south of the frater.

The south side of the cloister is taken up by the passage to the farmery, and the frater (*refectorium*).

The latter stood east and west, as usual in a Benedictine house, and being of one storey only, had thinner walls than those of the eastern or western ranges (2 feet 6 inches as against 3 feet 6 inches). The internal dimensions are 40 feet 6 inches by 19 feet.

The kitchen (*coquina*), an addition of later date, adjoins its south-west angle, overlapping on the south sufficiently to allow space for a passage from kitchen to cloister across the west end of the frater, screened off by a wooden partition.

Although, as has been already mentioned, the north-east angle of the frater still stands to some height, forming part of the walls of a summer-house, the rest of the building is so thoroughly ruined that no traces of a doorway from cloister to frater are to be found. The site of the lavatory, which should be somewhere near the frater door, cannot be determined.

The kitchen shows remains of a central chimney stack

with two fireplaces back to back, and several hearths against the side walls, made of roofing tiles bedded on edge. In modern times the kitchen has been used for its original purpose, as the brick jambs of a fireplace of eighteenth century date are to be seen in the north wall. The position of the kitchen is well adapted to serve both farmery and frater, but no traces of a doorway in the south wall remain.

The western range of buildings was probably of more architectural pretensions than the rest, and had four broad and shallow buttresses along its west face. It was most likely two stories in height, having the cellar or storehouse (*cellarium*), with perhaps an outer parlour (*locutorium*) on the ground floor, and on the first floor the guest hall (*hospitium*). My reason for this suggestion is that the dimensions, 60 feet by 17 feet, tally so nearly with those recorded of the "hall" which was pulled down in 1740, and which contained in its windows the heraldic glass already mentioned (p. 309). The frater, the only other building likely to have been called the "hall," is of such different size that it cannot have been the one referred to. At the south end of the western range two rows of large green-glazed tiles were found in position on the floor.

The farmery (*infirmarium*) lies to the south of the main buildings, forming with the dormer, frater, and kitchen a small second quadrangle, which may have been used as the cloister generally attached to such a building. It is of a different build to the first work, and from the details of its masonry is probably of the same date as the kitchen—perhaps fourteenth century. It consists of a hall 67 feet by 19 feet 6 inches, opening on the south to a smaller building of irregular shape, which was in part a latrine, and may also have contained the room of the sister-in-charge of the farmery. Part of the hall may have been used as the chapel, but there is no trace of this. There is a fireplace in the south wall, with a hearth of thin tiles laid on edge. The doorway in the eastern part of the north wall has modern brick jambs, but seems to occupy the place of an older one, and its position suggests that a pentise or covered way ran from the passage east of the frater to this doorway. It is,

however, possible that there was a cloister with walks on all four sides of the space north of the farmery.

It is worth noting that at all four angles of the farmery hall a large block of sarsen stone was found built into the bottom of the foundations.¹

During the course of the excavation many pieces of metal, stone, pottery, *etc.* came to light, but none of any great interest. A piece of the leg of a mailed effigy in Purbeck marble was found in the church, and in the foundations of the sleeper wall between nave and north transept was a stone coffin containing parts of a skeleton. Many domestic objects of post-suppression date were turned up, but the most interesting find was the large number of flooring tiles of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. These were not of a fine quality, either in material or execution, and were probably of local make, but formed none the less a very good series, some of the typical specimens being here reproduced (pp. 318, 324). The fabric is the same in all, a coarse red body, inlaid with white slip, with a yellow-brown lead glaze over all. A few plain green-glazed tiles were also found. The most important are two having inscriptions. The first has **SIGNUM SC'E CRUCIS** in fourteenth century lettering, in a square with a cross in the centre; the second **RICARD' ME FECIT** in a circle, with lettering of a later type, enclosing a roughly-designed head. An example of the second may be seen within the altar rails at Cookham Church; whether brought from Little Marlow or not I do not know.

The boundaries of the monastic precincts were probably marked out by water-courses. That at present existing to the west and south of the group of buildings is ancient, but those on the north and east are modern, as are all roads shown on the site plan here given. To the north of the church runs a wide ditch, now dry, which may have formed the ancient boundary on that side, and probably stretched from one set of springs on the west to another on the east. Abreast of the nave

¹ Such stones are not uncommon in ancient buildings. In the west tower of Little Marlow Church there are several blocks, at the base of the south-

western buttress. An early instance of their use occurs in the eastern angles of the nave of Iver Church, Bucks.

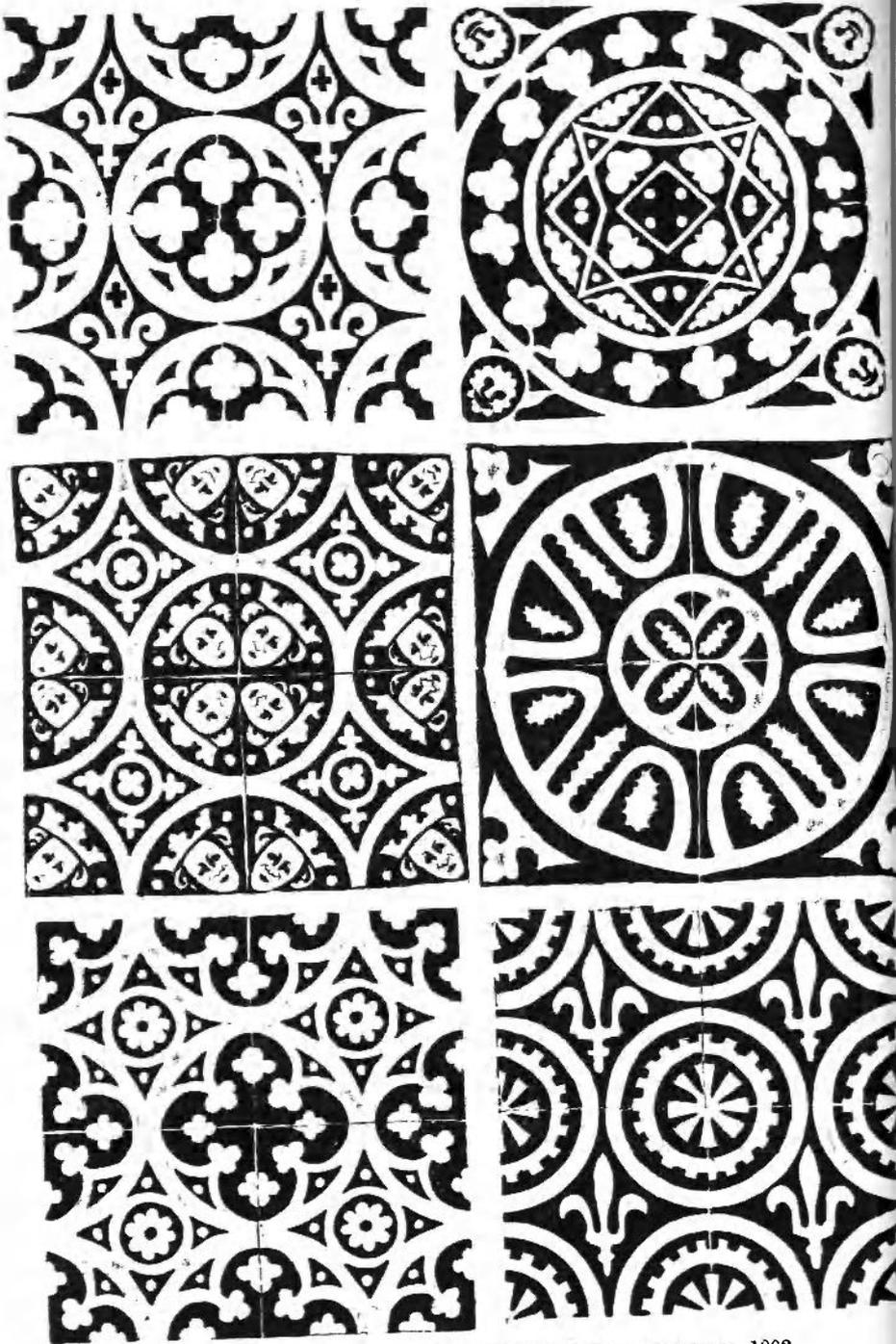


FIG. 3.—PAVING TILES FOUND AT LITTLE MARLOW NUNNERY, 1902.
FOUR-TILE PATTERNS. (Scale $\frac{1}{4}$ full size.)

of the church are signs of masonry on either side of the dry ditch, which may mark the position of a bridge by which the precinct was entered.

No traces of any buildings belonging to an outer court now exist, but to the west on the further bank of the stream is a fine timber barn, apparently ancient, now fitted up as dwelling-houses. The house known as the Abbey, to the west of the church and cloister, now in the possession of Mr. Vaughan Williams, is largely built of the materials of the monastic buildings, and parts of it may date back to the end of the sixteenth century, but not earlier.

From the foregoing account it will be seen that the thorough destruction of the buildings on this somewhat unusual site has caused the loss of many interesting details which might have helped towards the explanation of doubtful points in the archaeology of religious houses; this much, however, may be claimed, that the excavations have brought to light a fairly complete example of the plan and arrangement of a small Benedictine nunnery of the beginning of the thirteenth century, a specimen of a class of monastic remains which has not hitherto received at the hands of antiquaries as much attention as it undoubtedly deserves.