

## BURNHAM ABBEY, BUCKS.

By HAROLD BRAKSPEAR, F.S.A.

At a short distance to the south of the Bath Road, upon the almost level tract of country between Windsor and Maidenhead, are the remains of a small monastery of Augustinian canonesses, situated in the parish of Burnham.

The history of Burnham Abbey has already been treated<sup>1</sup> by Mr. W. L. Rutton, C.E., so that it is needless to repeat it here, except those portions that throw light upon the history of the buildings.

The abbey was founded by Richard earl of Cornwall and king of the Romans, who endowed it with the manor and advowson of the church of Burnham, together with a portion of the manor of Cippenham. The foundation charter is dated from Cippenham the 18th day of April, 1266, "in the ninth year of our reign."

Margery of Eston, formerly sub-prioress of Goring, was appointed abbess the year following, though through some mistake the confirmation of the appointment is entered in the register at Lincoln under the year 1265, but the document itself says the appointment was made by the founder in the tenth year of his reign. This mistake has apparently led Tanner to ascribe the foundation to the year 1265,<sup>2</sup> and as his statement has been blindly followed by other writers, the mistake has continued to be repeated.

The abbey buildings seem to have been erected in regular sequence following the foundation, and the existing remains show little or no trace of alteration until after the suppression.

The Augustinian canonesses, or nuns, as they are frequently called, apparently followed the same rule of St. Austin as the canons of the order. Tanner claims

<sup>1</sup> *Records of Buckinghamshire*, v. 47-71.

<sup>2</sup> *Notitia Monastica* (London, 1787), s.v. Buckinghamshire, VI.

for them fifteen foundations in England,<sup>1</sup> all in the southern half of the country, but some of these are doubtful, and appear to have been of the Benedictine rule.

With the exception of Lacock, in Wiltshire,<sup>2</sup> none has left any considerable remains above ground, so that, until more sites have been excavated, it is not possible to say if the arrangement of the buildings corresponded to any marked degree. Lacock and Burnham are very similar on plan, but the older foundation at Goring,<sup>3</sup> which was attached to an existing parish church, seems to have been quite different in its arrangement. In the year 1535 Burnham was included in the list of lesser monasteries whose revenues did not amount to £200 a year, and the report of the Commissioners at that time is as follows :

“The Monastery of the Order of St. *Austin*, value £51 2s. 4d. Nunns 9 ; Incontinent none ; all desire to go unto Religious Houses. Servants 37, whereof Priests 2, Hinds 21, Women 14. Bells and Lead worth £40 16s. 8d. The House in good Estate. The value of the moveable Goods £45 17s. 9d. Stocks and Debts none. Woods 160 Acres ; whereof in Woods under 20 Years Age 80 Acres, old Woods 80 acres.”<sup>4</sup>

Accompanying the report is a letter from the Commissioners commending the religious to the King's favour, as a result of which they were allowed to continue. The licence for this is dated 9th July, 29 Henry VIII. (1537), and states that Alice Baldwin is to be abbess in place of Margery Gibson, resigned.<sup>5</sup>

The general suppression followed in a few years' time, and Burnham was dissolved on the 19th September, 1539. The deed of surrender is signed by the abbess and

<sup>1</sup> *Notitia Monastica*, preface, lv. These are Harwold, Bedford ; Burnham, Bucks ; Cornworthy and Leigh, Devon ; Acornbury and Lymeborne, Hereford ; Dartford, Kent ; Grace Dieu, Leicester ; Crabhouse, Norfolk ; Rothwell, Northants ; Goring, Oxford ; Buckland, Somerset ; Campsey and Flixton, Suffolk ; and Lacock, Wiltshire.

<sup>2</sup> In *Wilt's Archaeological Magazine*, xxxi. 196-240, is a paper by the present writer, on Lacock Abbey, accompanied by a ground plan to the same scale as

that illustrating this account, with which it can be compared.

<sup>3</sup> *Goring*, by P. G. Stone, F.S.A. (London, 1893), facing p. 30, has a plan of Mr. Stone's excavations on the site of this priory, which shows a much larger group of buildings than would be supposed to have existed from the number of inmates.

<sup>4</sup> Browne Willis, *The History of Abbies* (London, 1719), ii. 16.

<sup>5</sup> Patent Roll, 29 H. VIII. Pt. 1, m. 19.



nine canonesses, and bears the seal of the abbey in red wax.<sup>1</sup>

The seal<sup>2</sup> (opposite) represents the Coronation of the Blessed Virgin. The figures of Our Lord and Our Lady are seated under a double crocketed canopy with pinnacles over, and beneath are the arms of the abbey, *three lozenges on a chief*.<sup>3</sup> The whole is surrounded by a band, of which the upper part is covered by the tops of the canopies, but the lower portion bears the inscription :

SIGILLVM CONVENTVS MONIALIVM DE BVRNHAM.

There are four letters on the portion of the band behind the canopies, but illegible. There are also the letters S and M on either side the arms. The seal is a good example of the time of the foundation. The arms are similar to those of the Molyns family, one of whom, Sir William Molyns, gave to the abbey the manor of Silveston in Northamptonshire about 1338.<sup>4</sup> The arms are strongly suggestive of some connection between the abbey and the Molyns family.

After the suppression, the site, with the barns, stables, dove houses, orchards, and gardens included in the precinct of the abbey, were leased by the Crown upon the 20th November, 1539, to William Tyldesley, for twenty-one years.<sup>5</sup> It is probable he altered some of the monastic buildings to form a dwelling house, as he was living at Burnham Abbey in 1561. After the expiration

<sup>1</sup> The original is in the Public Record Office.

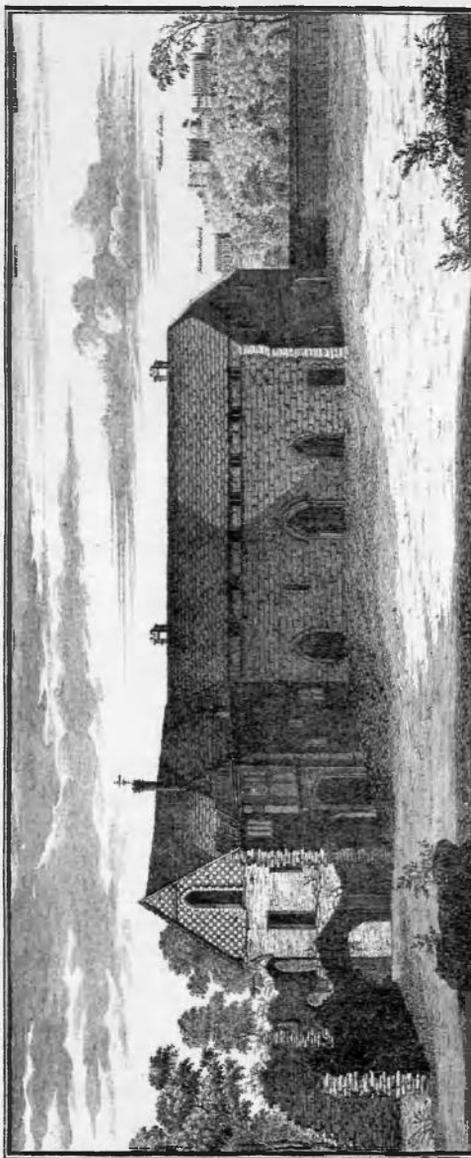
<sup>2</sup> Lipscombe's *History of Buckinghamshire* (London, 1847), iii. 210, gives a poor woodcut of this seal, and the inscription, which is perfectly legible, is not correctly copied.

<sup>3</sup> Browne Willis, *The History of Abbies*, ii. 16, gives these, but without stating his authority as "*Or on a chief Argent, 3 Lozenges Gules.*"

<sup>4</sup> Sir W. Dugdale, *The Baronage of England* (London, 1676), ii. 147.

<sup>5</sup> P.R.O., *Augmentation Office Book* 212, f. 201.

THE WEST VIEW OF BURNHAM-PRIORY, IN THE COUNTY OF BUCKS.



THIS Priory for Benedictine Nuns was founded by Richard K. of the Romans and Dedicated to God, & S. Mary's Anno: 1066. He also endow'd it with the Honor and Advowson of Burnham, and several other Lands adjacent, through which Charter of Foundation were his Brother R. K. III. Prince Edward his Elder Son, and many others. It was sold at the Dissolution by R. K. VIII at 57. 2. 4. Dugd. p. 5. 2. Speed p. 114. The present Owner is the Earl of Jersey.  
L. B. 1766. D. 114. 6. 114. 1766.

of the lease the property was let to Paul Wentworth, who renewed his lease for thirty-one years on 14th July, 1590.<sup>1</sup> He also carried out alterations to the buildings, and, according to Cole,<sup>2</sup> "turned the Nuns Hall, which was open to the Tiles, into a smaller Room and made Chambers over it." The property continued to be let on leases to various persons until 1840, when it was sold to a Mr. Pocock.

When the old house fell into decay is not known, but it must have been before the beginning of the eighteenth century, as Browne Willis,<sup>3</sup> writing in 1719, says :

"The Mansion House of the Convent seems to be entirely standing; 'tis built in shape of an L, and made use of to hold Husbandry Implements, viz. Corn, Hay, &c., the Tenant dwelling in a little House near it, where probably the chief Hind antiently lived. I cou'd learn no Account of the Church, viz. when it was pulled down."

From this period there exist, fortunately, an interesting series of views of the ruins. The earliest is that of S. and N. Buck, dated 1730, which shows the remains in the condition described by Browne Willis.

Two drawings were made in 1787 by S. Hooper. The first is taken from the north-east, and shows the west gable of the frater with a continuous wall from the frater to the north-east angle of the kitchen, slightly more ruined than in Buck's time, in which is a square doorway outside the line of the frater and a pointed window to the north of it. The second is taken from the south-east, and shows the chimney of the domestic hall standing, also an arch in a wall in line with the south wall of the frater.<sup>4</sup>

In Dugdale<sup>5</sup> is a good steel engraving from the south-west showing the two sides of the cloister, from a drawing by J. Buckler. The west gable of the frater and part of the hall chimney were then standing, and

<sup>1</sup> *Papers Dom. Eliz.*, CCXXXIII.

<sup>2</sup> *Brit. Mus.*, Cole's MS. XXXII, f. 38b.

<sup>3</sup> *The History of Abbies*, ii. 16.

<sup>4</sup> These two drawings are reproduced

as illustrations in Vol. v. being the *Supplement to the Antiquities of England* (London, 1777), by F. Grose.

<sup>5</sup> *Monasticon Anglicanum* (London 1830), vi. 545.

the roof of the dorter remained to half across the warming house.

In 1834 Dr. William Bromet, F.S.A., made four excellent coloured drawings of the remains, which, with many others, were left by him to the Society of Antiquaries of London in 1850. By the kind permission of the Society the two most important are here reproduced, and will be referred to in detail later. The others are, first, the north end of the eastern range showing the door from the dorter to the reredorter, with its head remaining, and the second, an unfinished sketch of part of the precinct wall.

A number of other early drawings are known, but they all show the features illustrated by those already described, and need not be particularised here.

As will be seen by Dr. Bromet's drawings, the ruins have suffered very severely since his time; but they still contain a number of features of great interest, so much so that at the beginning of last year it was considered by certain members of the Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society that excavations should be made on the site. The writer of this paper was asked to superintend the operations, and a week was spent in the task; but the result was not so satisfactory as had been hoped. The site among farm buildings in daily use is not the most advantageous for investigations of this nature, and the western part of the church, with the western range and kitchen (now under labourers' cottages) had to be left unexplored. For all that, the excavations have revealed sundry points of great interest, including the foundations of the eastern termination of the church, the south end of the infirmary hall, and the north wall of the frater, a result which was well worth the small expense incurred.

#### THE PRECINCT.

The original precinct of the monastery is still clearly defined on all but the south side, and is roughly in the form of a square containing  $7\frac{1}{2}$  acres, with each side facing the cardinal points.

Immediately within the boundary on the east and west sides is a deep ditch; but if one ever existed on

the south it has been entirely filled in. On the north side the two ditches were connected by the great drain of the convent at a distance of about 50 feet from the boundary. No indication remains to show how the drain was supplied by water, but it was probably taken in ditches, now filled in, from the higher ground on the north.

On the north and east sides the precinct is now enclosed by a thick cob wall with tiled top, of considerable age, that may be part of the monastic enclosure. The principal buildings of the convent were placed in the northern part of the precinct, but to the south of the drain. They surrounded, as usual, a square court or cloister, and the church was on the south side, with the infirmary to the east. The outer court would be to the west; but the buildings in connection with it<sup>1</sup> have entirely disappeared, except the fragment of the north-east angle of one, to the south-west of the church. Its position, in an ornamental garden, prevented any investigation of its nature by excavation. The lease to Tyldesley, already referred to, mentions the barns, stables, and dove houses, also orchards and gardens within the precinct.

The main gateway of the convent was probably at the north-west angle of the precinct upon the present road from Burnham village to Boveney.

The whole of the original buildings are constructed with flints and chalk, and are faced in a rough checker pattern. The dressings are of a very hard chalk bed that has withstood the weather remarkably well; some of the stones, even externally, still show the original tooling. The infirmary, which is slightly later in date than the other buildings, is faced with small pieces of chalk without flints. None of the original roofing material was found in the excavations, but was probably of red tiles, as a number of these are used in the original

<sup>1</sup> Among other buildings these would embrace the following, which are included in the suppression inventory of the sister house at Belton in Leicestershire, namely, "The Brew House, Yele House, Laundrye, Saulte House, Bake House, Kyle House, and Smythes Forge." (Nichols's *Hist. of Leicester-*

*shire*, iii. Pt. 2, 653.) In addition, such buildings as a Barn, Garner, Cow House, Swine Cote, Dove House, Guests' Stable, Coal House, and "a house to lay turves in," frequently occur in similar inventories of other nunneries, and must have been in the outer court.

walls in various places. The upstairs floors were all constructed in wood, and there are no indications that any of the buildings were vaulted. No encaustic tiles or other original flooring materials were discovered in the excavations. The additions after the suppression are mostly built in brick, except the hall fireplace of Paul Wentworth's alterations.

### THE CHURCH.

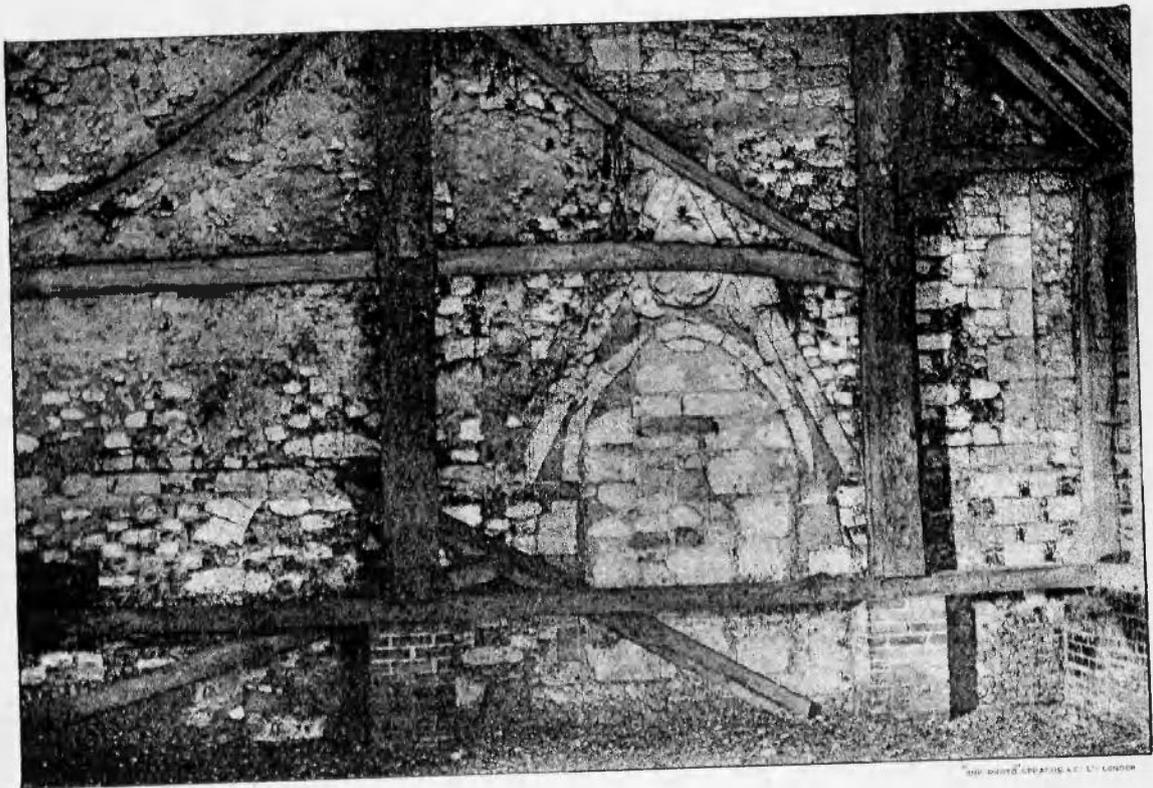
The church occupied the south side of the cloister; but has been entirely destroyed above the ground level, excepting a small portion of the north wall in connection with the range of buildings on the east side of the cloister. The foundations of the whole of the east end have been traced by excavation; but it was not considered worth while to continue the investigations to the western part of the church, as the present occupier sank a pit some years ago on the site of the north wall, and found nothing.

The church was an aisleless parallelogram, like that of the sister house at Lacock, and if the west end was in a corresponding position, measured  $108\frac{1}{2}$  feet in length by  $26\frac{1}{2}$  feet in width.

The east end had at each angle double buttresses that projected about  $3\frac{1}{2}$  feet from the walls.

The remaining fragment of the north wall is standing to almost its original height, and contains, immediately to the east of the eastern range, the jamb of a tall window. It was apparently of two or more lights, and had moulded mullions, with one moulded order outside and a column with moulded base in the angle of the internal splay. Its sill was about  $5\frac{1}{2}$  feet above the ground, and under it internally was a continuous string course.

At 17 feet from the east end of the church is a recess in the wall having a plain shallow sill about 18 inches above the floor. The jambs seem to have had nook shafts, with moulded caps and bases, and supported an arch, springing from the level of the continuous string course, and having over it a label with moulded terminals. Over the arch the string course is taken up

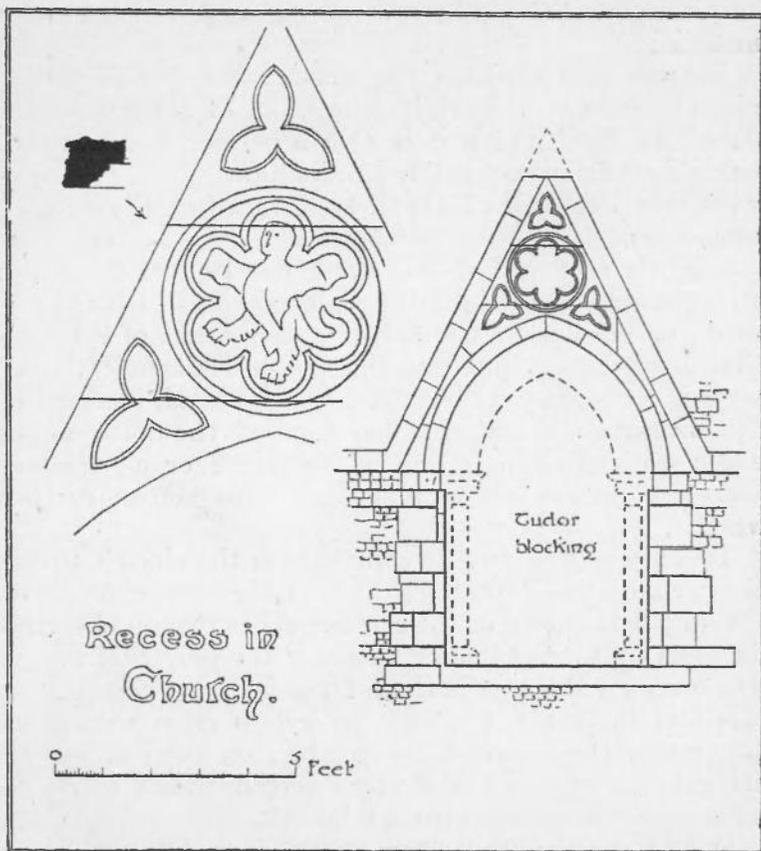


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REMAINS OF NORTH WALL OF CHURCH.

To face page 301.

in a steep pediment,<sup>1</sup> in the centre of which is a sexfoil contained in a circle, and small trefoils occupy the spandrils formed by the pediment and circle. The back of the sexfoil retains a contemporary painting, in outline, representing a nondescript animal with a man's head,



bat's wings, leopard's claws, and a curled tail. A canopied recess in this position is unusual and its use is uncertain. It resembles in a marked degree a recess, of a later date, in a corresponding position in the parish church at Amesbury, Wilts, which is claimed by some, but without any warrant, to have been that of the nunnery.

<sup>1</sup> The whole of the projecting mouldings are cut off in line with the wall, and all the recessed portions filled in

flush with the wall. The sexfoil was opened out by the writer with the permission of the tenant.

To the west of this recess is an archway with a round head, which was walled up while the original work was in progress, as will be seen by the continuous string course cutting across the arch. Its purpose was only a temporary one while the building works were in operation, and it was probably a barrow hole through which to take material.

Further westward are the remains of a trefoil-headed niche inserted in the original wall, but of not much later date. In Buck's view it is shown perfect, and was probably for a lamp or possibly a drain down which to empty what was left over of the holy water after the Sunday procession.

Slightly eastward of this niche, but 10 feet above the string course, is a hole in the wall, now filled with brickwork, which marks the end of a top beam of a screen that crossed the church at this point. Above it to the west is a doorway with a four-centred head, inserted in the fifteenth century, that led from off the dorter stairs either to a wooden loft over the screen or a *pulpitum* arranged between it and another cross screen further west.

There would be two doorways from the church to the cloister, and possibly an entrance at the west end.

So little is known of the arrangement of small churches for nuns that it is difficult to say if the *pulpitum* was as necessary for them as in those for monks and canons. If this church had a *pulpitum* over two cross screens as suggested, there would be an altar on each side of a central doorway of the western screen, which seems to have been the arrangement at Lacock.

One of the flanking altars at Burnham was dedicated in honour of St. Catharine, but whether it was that to the north or south is not known.<sup>1</sup>

Between the easternmost cross screen and the recess in the north wall of the church is space for four stalls, and against the south wall opposite would be an equal number. There would also be three stalls on either side the quire door facing eastward, making in all fourteen seats. Though this number of stalls is small in proportion

<sup>1</sup> *Collectanea Topographica*, viii. 125.



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EAST SIDE OF CLOISTER.

to the number of inmates judging from some other examples,<sup>1</sup> it is impossible to ignore the evidence of the cross screen, and this, with the recess on the north side, would completely prevent the quire from being larger. It is just possible that the recess was walled up in later but monastic times, and additional stalls carried in front of it.

The mention of bells in the suppression survey leads to the supposition that there was a belfry, but whether it was in connection with the church or detached, or whether it was built of stone or wood, is impossible to say.

### THE CLOISTER.

The cloister court was 72 feet square, and surrounded by covered alleys having wooden pentice roofs; the blocked up holes for the timbers of which remain all along the east side. Whether the roofs were supported next the court on stone walls or wooden posts there is nothing to show.

The alleys of the cloister were originally the living place of the convent, where the inmates read and studied, and in many places they remained so to the end; but in nuns' houses it appears that the order was relaxed and a more comfortable place provided. As will be afterwards referred to, the parlour and warming-house were often one building, and had bay windows, which would be hardly necessary if strictly used as a parlour or warming-house. At Kirklees there were "v. litle chambres for the ladyes and others to work yn,"<sup>2</sup> and at Esholt "at the southe end of the dorter iij litle parlors, called the laydes parlors, whereof two hathe eyther of theym a stone chymney and a glasse wyndowe and the thirde parlor a glass wyndow."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Yorks Archaeological Journal*, ix. 197-215, and 321-333. At Kirklees, where there were eight nuns, there were "xxij stalles in the quere for the nones." At Nunkeeling, where there were eleven nuns and a prioress, were "xxij fayre stalles carvid and boured wt waynescot," but at Thicket, with eleven nuns and a prioress, were "xvj

stalles in the quyre," and at Wilberfos, with the same number of religious, "xvj goode stalles in the quere for nonnes," which is about the same proportion as at Burnham.

<sup>2</sup> *Yorks Archaeological Journal*, ix. 331.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* ix. 324.

## THE VESTRY.

On the east side of the cloister and adjoining the church is an apartment 22 feet from north to south by 16 feet wide. It was entered from the cloister by a segmental-headed doorway that has lost its outer member. Inside the doorway was a square lobby, under the dorter stairs, with a second segmental archway into the apartment itself.

This was lighted by two lancet windows, in the east wall, of which one remains perfect.<sup>1</sup> It has internally a pointed segmental rerearch of two hollow chamfers, and externally the jambs and arch have a double hollow moulding, with a wide relieving arch over the latter.

The barrow hole, from the church shows in the south wall; but there are no indications of any original fittings.

The use of the chamber is uncertain, but it possibly was the vestry.<sup>2</sup> It corresponds with a similar apartment at Lacock, which has two chapels in its eastern part projecting beyond the line of the range, and a cupboard in its south wall.

In the cloister northward of the vestry door is another doorway, having a single chamfered member with pointed segmental head, that led to the dorter stairs. The stairs, which were apparently of wood, have disappeared, but they were arranged to run up southward between the main wall of the range, and a thin wall forming the west side of the vestry.

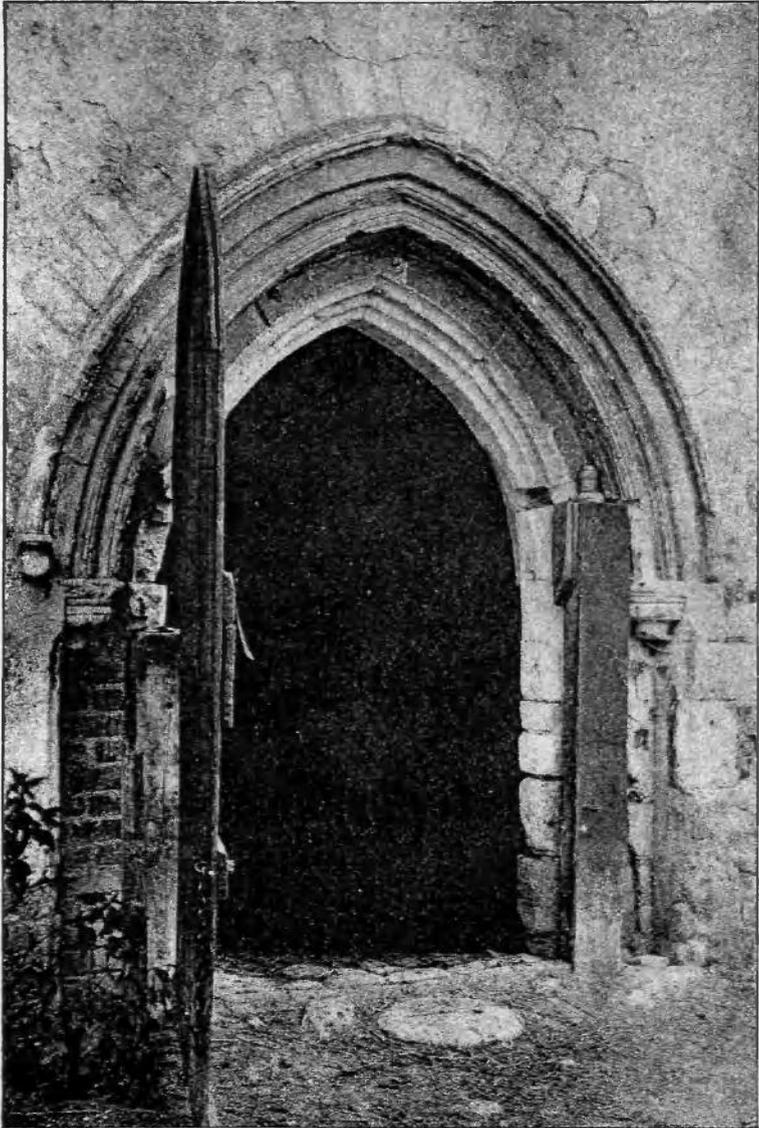
## THE CHAPTER-HOUSE.

Adjoining the vestry northward was the chapter-house, an apartment 33 feet long from east to west and 20 feet wide.

It was entered from the cloister by a wide pointed archway of two members inside and out. Externally

<sup>1</sup> The second has been entirely obliterated by post-suppression insertions, which consist of a doorway, with a four-centred brick head, next the church; a fireplace, in the centre of the wall, that has been destroyed together with its projecting breast; and a two-light window, having four-centred arched heads, to the north.

<sup>2</sup> At the small Benedictine nunneries of Little Marlow in Buckinghamshire and Kington in Wiltshire the chapter-house adjoined the church without any building in this position, and this seems to have been the more usual arrangement.



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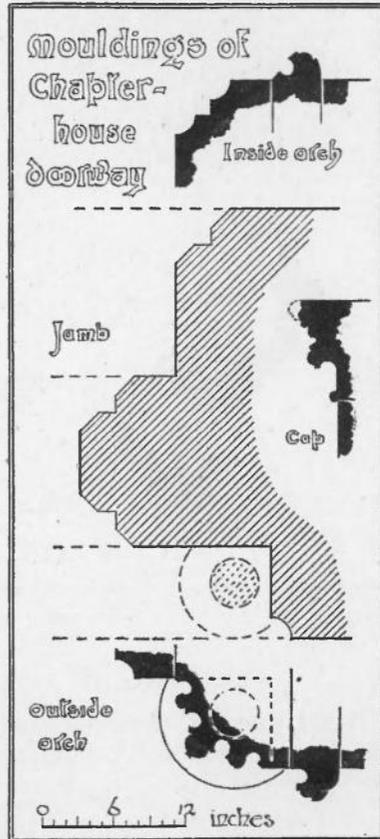
ENTRANCE TO CHAPTER-HOUSE.

the inner member is of two chamfers, hollowed in the arch and plain in the jambs; the outer member is moulded and rested on jamb shafts having moulded caps and bases, and has a moulded label with mask terminals. Internally both members are similar to the external inner member, and the arch has a moulded label which returns at the springing.

The east end of the apartment projects 11 feet from the range wall, and is now covered by a modern lean-to roof. Whether this arrangement of the roof is original or whether there was a gable over the east end forming an extension of the dormer there is nothing to indicate.

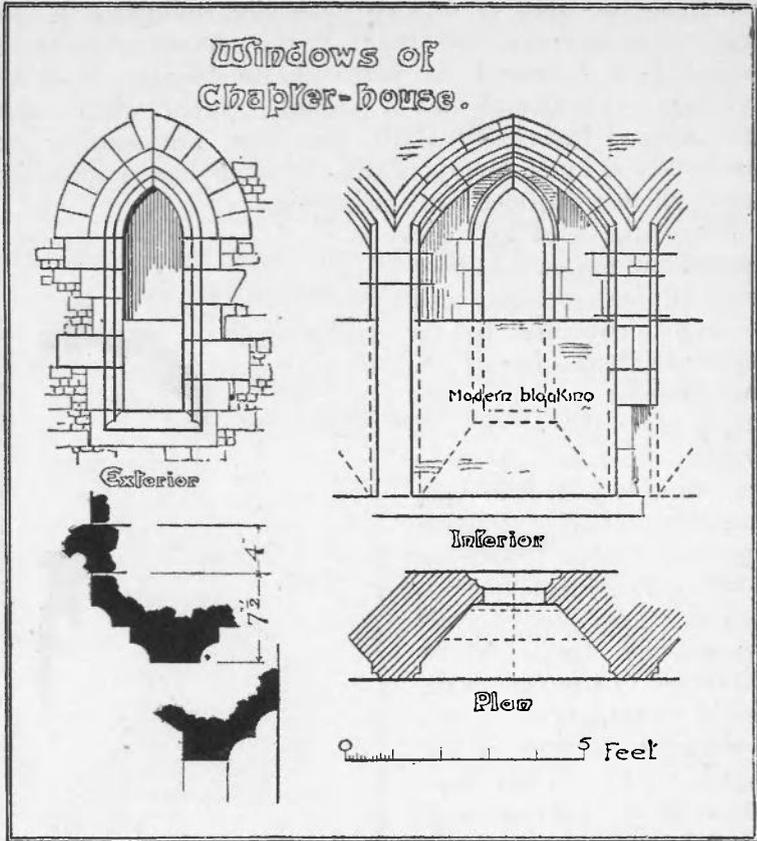
The apartment was lighted by three lancet windows<sup>1</sup> in the east wall, and a single lancet in the projecting portion of the south wall. These windows have pointed segmental rerearches of two hollow chamfers under a moulded label, and externally the jambs and arches have a double hollow moulding with a deep relieving arch over the latter.

The side and east walls would originally have had seats for the convent to sit on during chapter, which was held daily after prime; but no indication remains to show if these were of wood or stone.



<sup>1</sup> These have been filled up to within 20 inches of the springing. The side windows have had the sills destroyed

by the insertion under each of a small square post-suppression window, low down.



### THE PARLOUR AND WARMING-HOUSE.

Northward of the chapter-house is an apartment  $48\frac{1}{2}$  feet long from north to south by 22 feet wide, of which the east wall has been mostly destroyed.

The west wall had near the middle a wide doorway from the cloister, which is shown perfect in Buck's view; but has now been destroyed by the insertion of a modern square door, except the inner north jamb and the springers of the relieving arch on the east face. To the south is a small lancet window with side splays and a segmental rerearch with deep relieving arch over.<sup>1</sup>

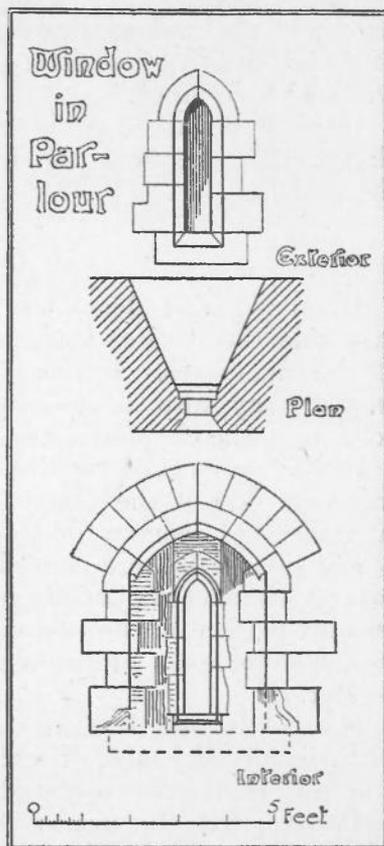
<sup>1</sup> At the extreme north end of the wall is an inserted post-suppression doorway.

The north wall has near the middle a small doorway with chamfered jambs and double chamfered segmental arch with relieving arch over.<sup>1</sup> To the east is a locker having an oak head and sill and a rebate for a door.

The east wall remains, in its lower part, for about 13 feet from the north end, and has the indication of the original fireplace, which had a projecting breast on the east side to take the chimney.<sup>2</sup>

The apartment has apparently served the double purpose of warming-house and parlour; but whether divided by a partition into these two necessary chambers is not clear. There must also have been a way across it to gain access to the infirmary. Though in larger houses the parlour, where such talking as was necessary was allowed, and the warming-house, where a fire was kept all the winter for the inmates to come and warm themselves, were distinct buildings, there is evidence that in small establishments they were combined in one room.

At the Cistercian Nunnery of Kirklees<sup>3</sup> there was "a parler under the dorter xvij foote square w<sup>t</sup> a chymney, ij bay wyndowes glasisd conteyning xxx foot of glasse." At



<sup>1</sup> To the west of this doorway is a late square-headed wooden window of post-suppression insertion.

<sup>2</sup> Between the fireplace and the north end was an inserted post-suppression window which has been nearly all

destroyed, and at the other end of the wall adjoining the chapter-house are the remains of a fireplace of the same date.

<sup>3</sup> *Yorks Archaeological Journal*, ix. 331.

Esholt<sup>1</sup> of the same order, there was at the south end of the dorter range "a ffayre parler. . . . and hathe in it a ffayre chimney of stone. . . . and hathe in it a fayre bay window glazid. . . . and hath a door w<sup>t</sup> lok and key." And at the Benedictine Nunnery of Thicket<sup>2</sup> was "the new parler at the seid west parte by the church doore, xxiiij foote longe and xx foote brode, w<sup>t</sup> one baye wyndowe glazid conteynyng xxx foote of glasse, and iij other little glasse wyndowes, and tymbre walls w<sup>t</sup> a chymney."

In none of these cases is any other chamber mentioned that could have been the warming-house distinct from the parlour.

### THE DORTER.

Upon the first floor over all the buildings on the east side the cloister was the dorter or sleeping place of the canonesses. It was 95 feet long by 22 feet wide, and it may also have extended over the projecting portion of the chapter-house.

It was approached by the steps already described on the west side of the vestry, at the top of which is the later inserted doorway on to the *pulpitum* in the church.

The side walls were pierced by small lancet windows, having chamfered jambs and arches, of which one remains perfect on the east side over the vestry.<sup>3</sup> There are gaps<sup>4</sup> for seven similar windows in the wall over the cloister.

The north wall had in the middle a small doorway with chamfered jambs, of which the lower part remains. The head of the doorway and the gable over have been destroyed; but the former is shown remaining on one of Dr. Bromet's drawings, and was in form a pointed segment.

The roof would have been originally constructed with arched rafters, but that still remaining on the portion

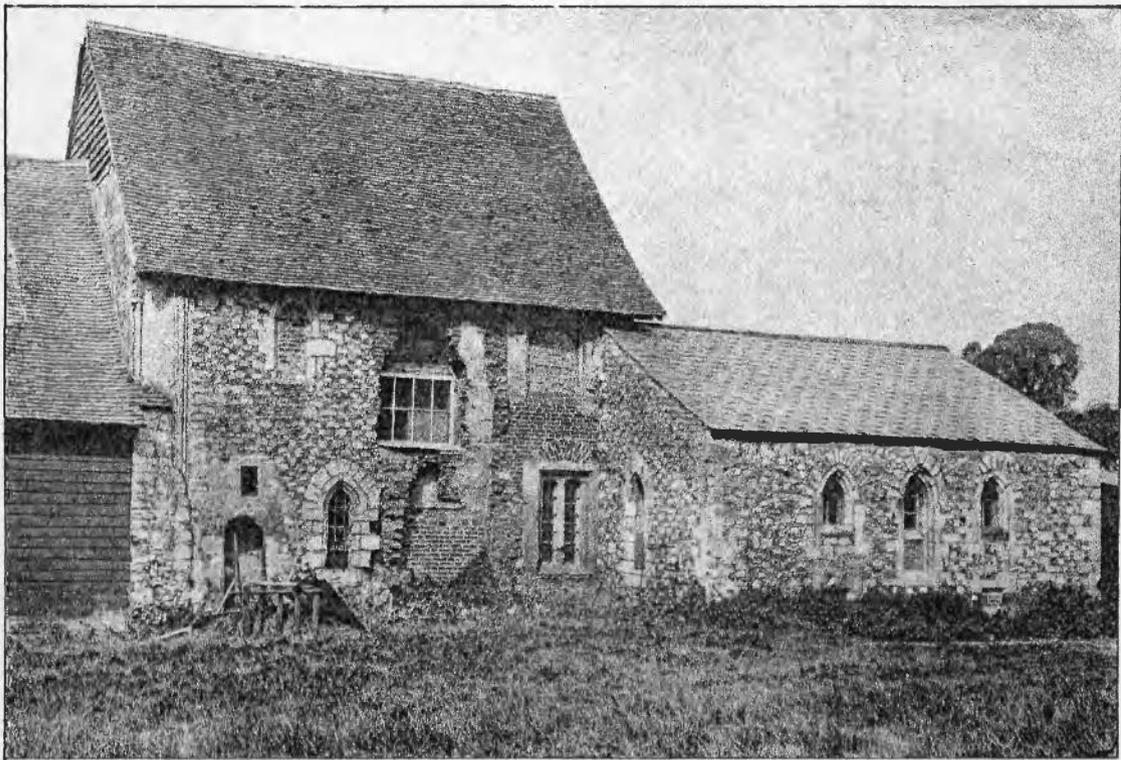
<sup>1</sup> *Yorks Archaeological Journal*, ix. 324.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* ix. 202.

<sup>3</sup> To the north of this window up to the chapter-house the wall has been destroyed by the post-suppression in-

sertions, which consist of a fireplace over that beneath and a two-light window of similar character to that below, but the latter has been partly destroyed and walled up.

<sup>4</sup> Now walled up with brickwork.



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EAST SIDE OF DORTER RANGE.

above the vestry is of considerable age, and dates apparently from the fifteenth century. The principals are formed with chamfered tie beams and queen posts with a chamfered beam from centre to centre of the tie beams to carry a ceiling. There are two purlins on either side, supported by curved wind braces. Buck's view shows this roof remaining for the full length of the range, but in a view of 1787 it only remained to about the middle of the warming-house.

The dorter floor was constructed with wood supported on beams and joists, which formed the ceilings of the lower apartments.

#### THE REREDORTER.

At the north end of the eastern range is a building on plan like the letter L, of which the upper floor, level with that of the dorter, was the reredorter of the convent.

The southern portion in line with the eastern range is  $11\frac{1}{2}$  feet wide by 25 feet long, and the rest, set slightly out of square with it, over the great drain, is  $25\frac{1}{2}$  feet long by  $7\frac{1}{2}$  feet wide. This plan is unusual, but resembles that of the reredorter lately uncovered at the small Benedictine Nunnery of Little Marlow.<sup>1</sup>

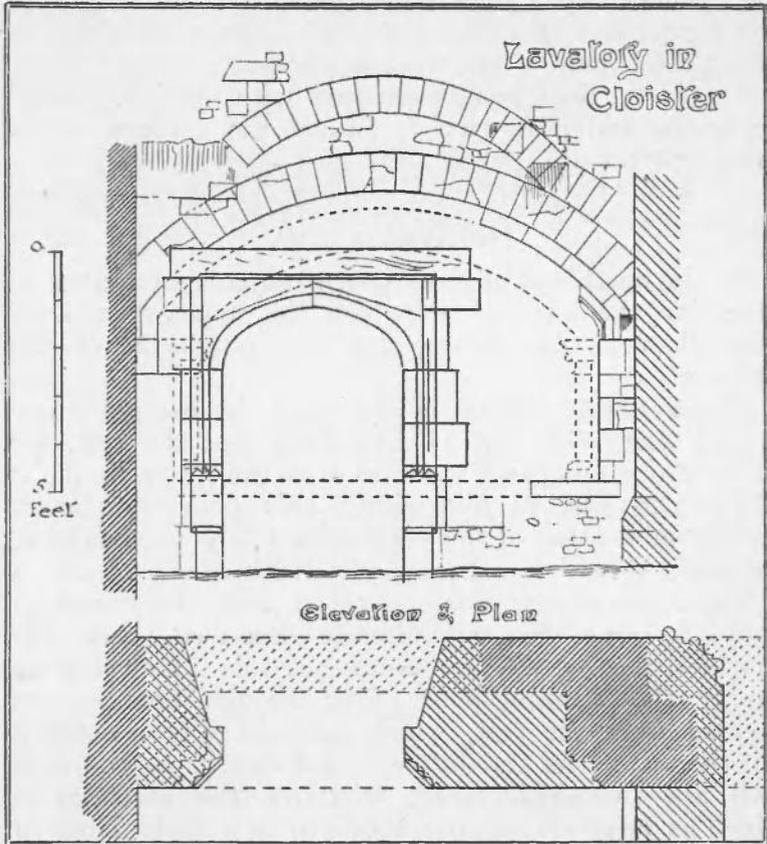
The lower storey was connected with the warming-house by the doorway already described, and the southern portion was apparently used as a fuel store to supply the warming-house fire; though how it was divided from the rest, which must have been nothing but the pit of the reredorter, is not clear. In the west wall are two small lancet windows, the northern of which is original, but the southern is a little later in date, and has been inserted in a round arched doorway.<sup>2</sup> The east wall has a wide gap in the middle, now built up, which may mark the existence of another doorway for the bringing in of fuel, after that in the west wall was done away with. The walls of the northern part are quite plain, and were carried over the drain upon arches constructed with thin red roofing tiles.

<sup>1</sup> *Archaeological Journal*, lix. 320.

<sup>2</sup> There is a small square wooden

window of post-suppression date over drain.

The reredorter was connected with the dorter by the doorway at the north end of the latter already described ; but the side walls do not remain to sufficient height to show how it was lighted.<sup>1</sup> The southern part must have formed a vestibule between the dorter and reredorter proper, which was contained in the northern



portion, over the drain. The wardrobes were placed along the north wall over this drain, and doubtless, as at Durham, "Every seat and Partition was of Wainscott, close on either side, so that they would not see one another when they were in that place."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> There is a sill of a window remaining in the east end of the portion over the drain, but it appears to be of post-suppression work.

<sup>2</sup> *The Ancient Rites and Monuments of the Monastical and Cathedral Church of Durham*, published by John Davies (London, 1672), 134.



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REMAINS OF LAVATORY IN CLOISTER



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SOUTH WALL OF FRATER, SHOWING POST-SUPPRESSION INSERTIONS.

In the north wall of the cloister, at the extreme west end, is a wide segmental arched recess,<sup>1</sup> having a bold relieving arch over and another of smaller radius above. This formed the lavatory where the convent washed their hands and faces before meals.

It has been much injured by later work, but apparently had a moulded arch with label over resting on short, detached columns in the jambs, having moulded caps and bases. A portion of a shallow sill remains on the east side, which shows that the basin was in the thickness of the wall.

### THE FRATER.

The frater or dining hall of the convent occupied the whole of the north side of the cloister; but was on the ground floor, and not over cellarage, as was more usual.

It was 72 feet long from east to west by 18½ feet wide, but the north and west walls have been mostly destroyed within comparatively recent years.

The south wall has, immediately to the east of the lavatory, a fragment of the inner relieving arch of the entrance doorway from the cloister. The rest of the wall is devoid of any original feature, and does not seem to have had any windows in it above the cloister roof.<sup>2</sup>

The east wall was blank.<sup>3</sup>

The north wall remains for a few feet in connection with the east end, and the foundations were traced nearly to the west end, but showed no projection for

<sup>1</sup> This was walled up at the suppression, and a wide doorway having a four-centred arch with moulded jambs and a wooden lintel, inserted in the western part. According to Buck's view, there seems to have been a timber built porch added outside, which had a room above. The holes for the side beams to support this work remain in the wall on either side the doorway. The porch was destroyed before 1787.

<sup>2</sup> The frater was altered by Paul Wentworth, who "turned the Nuns Hall, which was open to the Tiles, into a smaller room, and made chambers over it." The western part of the lower storey formed the hall of the

house, and had a large fireplace with segmental moulded head and projecting back, on the site of the old frater door. There was a doorway further east, and a window having a moulded brick rere-arch. Another window was at the extreme east end of the wall. The hall chimney existed until after 1787, but has now fallen down. The other features have all been walled up on the cloister side. The upper floor had a moulded brick fireplace, to a room, in the middle of the wall.

<sup>3</sup> A doorway was inserted at its extreme north end after the suppression, and the wall was decorated in colour, part of which still remains.

a pulpit for the use of the reader at table. Dr. Bromet's drawing (Plate A) shows this work standing to its full height and retaining three of its original windows, which were apparently lancets, having moulded rere-arches with labels over that were continued along the walls between the windows at their springing.<sup>1</sup>

The west wall remains for about 7 feet at its south end, but the complete gable is shown in Buck's view and that of 1787. It had a doorway in the middle on the ground floor, apparently for service from the kitchen, and a tall lancet high up of the original work.<sup>2</sup>

The west end of the building would be divided off to form a buttery about 11 feet wide. The door from the cloister would open as usual into the screens across the west end of the frater itself, and there appears to have been a loft over the screens and buttery.

Buck's view shows the roof remaining over all the frater, but it had disappeared before 1787.

#### THE WESTERN RANGE.

Of the range of buildings that occupied the west side of the cloister nothing remains except a fragment of the east wall in connection with the frater and a portion of the north wall in continuation of the south wall of the frater, enclosed in some modern cottages. This wall had in it an arched doorway at its east end, apparently for service from the kitchen to the guest house, and is clearly shown in Hooper's drawing of 1787. It is also shown in Buck's view, but the engraver has put it in the wall running south, which certainly has no such feature, and has omitted the wall running west altogether.

The uses of the various apartments this range embraced varied considerably in different houses, but generally it was of two stories in height, and contained the lodging of the superior next to the church, with halls

<sup>1</sup> In the remaining piece of the wall at the east end are traces of an inserted post-suppression window, and the view shows that there were three of these

square windows inserted in the original openings.

<sup>2</sup> There was a small square-headed doorway on the first floor, apparently inserted after the suppression.



BURNHAM ABBEY.—INTERIOR OF FRATER, 1830.

for the entertainment of guests beyond, which were served from the monastic kitchen.

At Lacock, where the whole of the lower part of the range exists entire, there was a square chamber next the church with a fireplace, a passage forming the cloister entry and outer parlour next, and a hall for inferior guests beyond. The upper floor contained the abbess's lodgings next the church with a small chapel over part of the cloister, and the rest was occupied by a large hall for superior guests.

At the small Benedictine nunnery of Kington in Wiltshire, where the cloister was on the south side of the church, the western range remains incorporated in a farmhouse. It consisted of a one-storied hall in the middle, with the cloister entry arranged within the screens at its south end. There is a small room to the south, called "the priests' chamber" as early as 1660, with another similar room above. At the north end of the hall was another room with a room above, and two small chambers projected beyond the line of the cloister, partly covering the west end of the church, and formed the prioress's lodging. A large vice occupying the north-west angle of the cloister connected the two floors.

At Burnham, owing to there being no cellars under the frater, part of this range was probably used for that purpose.

#### THE KITCHEN.

Except from analogy the site of the kitchen cannot be definitely fixed, but in all probability it occupied a position in line with the western range, from which it was separated by a yard to the west of the frater.

The writer remembers the north-east angle of a building existing some years ago at about 20 feet from the north wall of the frater incorporated in some cottages,<sup>1</sup> and by examining Buck's view it will be seen to have belonged to a building that, though ruined, was then standing to a considerable height. It appears to have had two lancet windows, at different heights, and

<sup>1</sup> This was removed about four years ago, when the cottages were re-built.

a doorway in the east wall.<sup>1</sup> There was a gap in the south wall indicating the existence of a serving doorway or hatch. From this the food could be taken to the buttery door at the west end of the frater and to the doorway at the north end of the western range. There would probably have been a pentise along the west end of the frater to protect these serving doors.

A kitchen in this position is not usual, but is similar to that at Little Marlow. At the Benedictine nunnery of St. Radegund, at Cambridge, the kitchen was in this position, but formed a continuation of the western range without any court at the end of the frater. The kitchen at Lacock is at the west end of the frater, and immediately adjoins the north end of the western range.

#### THE INFIRMARY.

The monastic infirmary, or fermery as it was more usually called for shortness, was not only for the use of the sick, but, as its name implies, for the accommodation of the aged and infirm religious who were physically unfit to endure the rigorous life of the cloister. It was generally a detached group of buildings containing a hall, a chapel, and, in larger houses, a kitchen, perfectly distinct from the rest of the convent.

At Burnham the infirmary was to the east of the claustral buildings, and consisted principally of a hall 43½ feet long by 23 feet wide, placed north and south.<sup>2</sup> The whole of the north wall and part of the west still remains standing. The entrance was apparently in the west wall at the south end, and was connected by a pentise with the east side of the warming-house.

Of the west wall, the southern portion has been destroyed, but the foundations have been traced. The northern part remains to almost its full height, and contains two lancet windows.<sup>3</sup> These are, externally,

<sup>1</sup> This is shown in Hooper's view of 1787, but it is not visible in Buck's owing to another wall being in front of it.

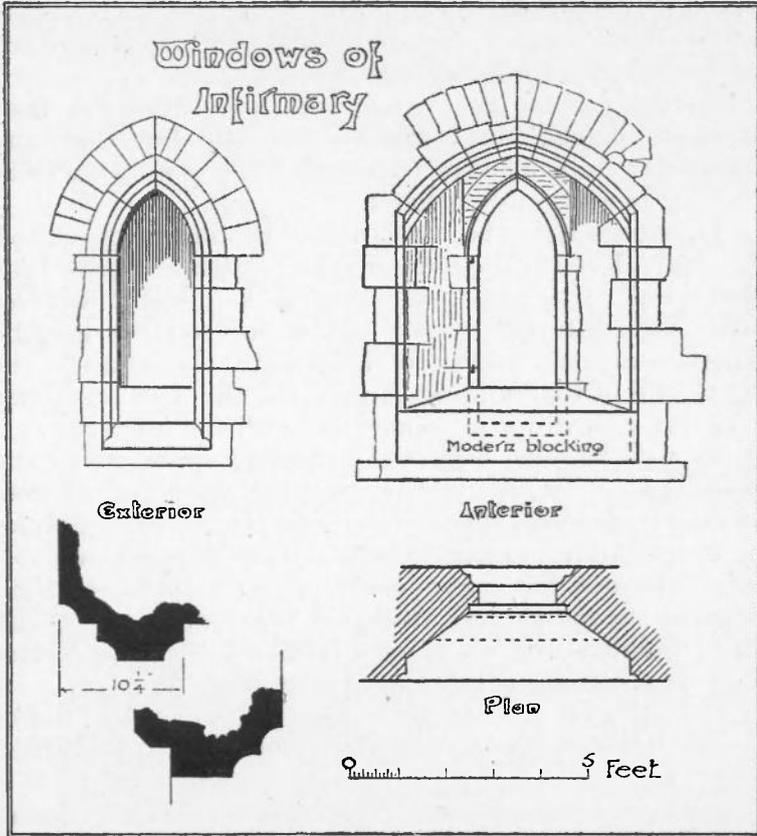
<sup>2</sup> After the suppression the infirmary was retained as part of the new dwelling house, and was then divided by a floor into two stories.

<sup>3</sup> To the south of these windows is

an inserted square window of post-suppression date, now walled up with bricks on the inside. Connecting the infirmary with the warming-house is a post-suppression wall, in which, at the west end, is a walled-up doorway, and at the east a walled-up window. There is a modern doorway in the middle.

like those of the chapter-house, but slightly wider in the openings; internally they have wider splays, with a rebate for a shutter, and a relieving arch without a label over the rerearch.

The north wall has at the extreme west end a small doorway with a pointed segmental head, of which the jambs and arch have a double roll moulding with a



fillet between. To the east of this doorway is a small locker with a rebate for a door similar to that in the warming-house.<sup>1</sup>

The east wall has been mostly destroyed above

<sup>1</sup> Further east is a three-light brick window of similar character to that in the vestry, and over it is another

window of the same nature to light the first floor.

ground; <sup>1</sup> but was traced to its south end by excavation.

The south wall has now entirely disappeared except the foundations, but was standing complete as late as 1834. This is shown very clearly in Dr. Bromet's drawing (Plate B), and then had two original lancet windows in the lower part, with a blocked brick-lined doorway towards the east.<sup>2</sup> The gable above was standing to its full height, and it appears to have had originally a lancet in the middle, which had been destroyed by an inserted square window.

To the east of the hall would probably have been a small chapel, and perhaps a kitchen, but the foundations could not be traced satisfactorily owing to those of later buildings being found on the site.<sup>3</sup>

The doorway in the north end of the infirmary led to a building of which the west side and north end have been destroyed. The east wall remains, and had a window with wide internal splays in the centre of its length.<sup>4</sup> There is a small recess for a lamp to the south. The north end of the building covered the drain of the abbey and was a wardrobe in connection with the infirmary.

As will be seen from the foregoing description, the buildings at Burnham, though small, are yet of considerable interest, despite the ravages of the despoiler in comparatively recent years. It is hoped that, now some attempt has been made to learn more of their original character and the uses they were put to by their builders, the ruins will be cared for in a better way than has been their fate in the past.

In conclusion, the writer wishes to tender his thanks to the present occupier of the premises, Mr. J. White,

<sup>1</sup> Adjoining the north wall is the breast of a post-suppression fireplace, in brick, at the back of which was a wall running east. There appears to have been a small window inserted between the fireplace and the north-east angle of the building.

<sup>2</sup> This doubtless was inserted to lead to a small projecting building on the south side, of which the foundations were found. It had the eastern part paved with tiles, and was apparently a privy.

<sup>3</sup> These later buildings were all of

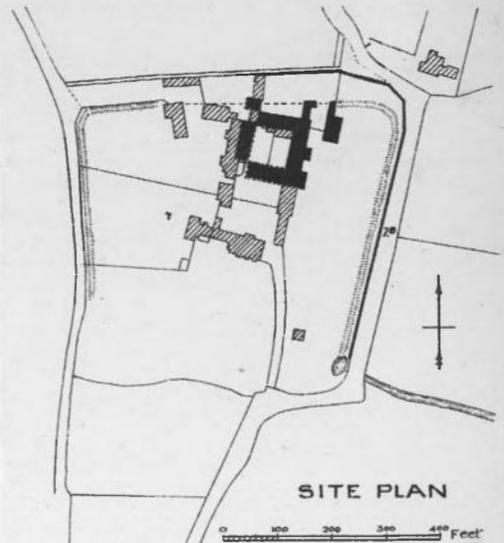
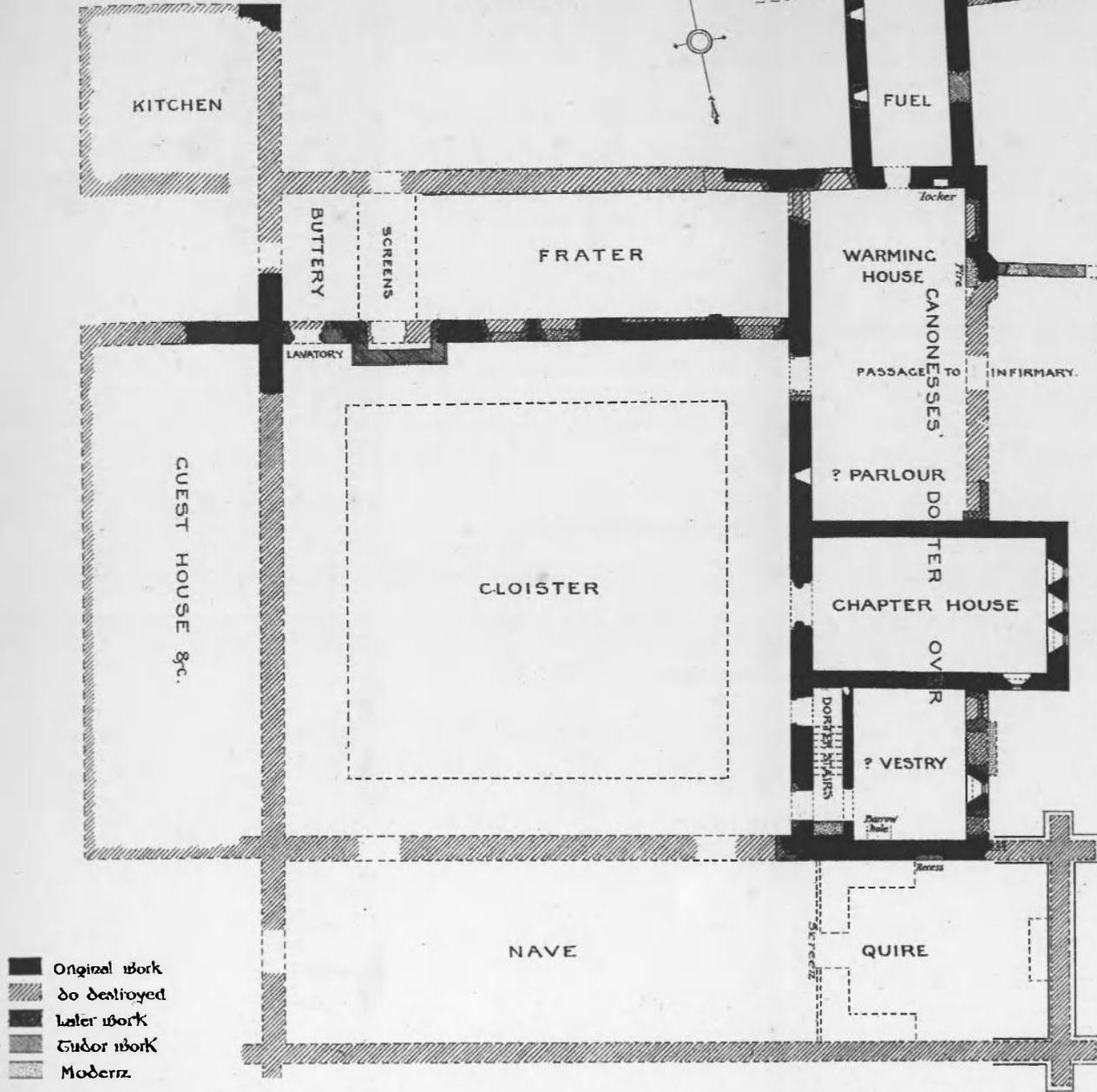
brick, and very difficult to elucidate. There was a wall running east in continuation of the south wall of the infirmary hall, and masses of brickwork and tile flooring to the north of it.

<sup>4</sup> The exterior of the window has been destroyed, and the space filled up with brickwork. Running northward in line with the east wall of this building up to the precinct wall is a good brick garden wall with a four-centred arched and moulded doorway in the middle.



BURNHAM ABBEY.—VIEW FROM THE SOUTH EAST, 1830.

# BURNHAM ABBEY BUCKS



Scale of 0 10 20 50 100 feet

who has given every assistance to enable research to be made; to the Society of Antiquaries for permission to reproduce Dr. Bromet's valuable drawings; to Mr. William Brown, F.S.A., for the transcript of the suppression surveys of small Yorkshire nunneries which has been so constantly referred to, and especially to Mr. W. H. St. John Hope for help of various kinds in the preparation of this paper and overlooking the proofs before publication.