

PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
CAMBRIDGE ANTIQUARIAN
SOCIETY

(INCORPORATING THE CAMBS & HUNTS ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY)



VOLUME LIX

JANUARY 1966 TO DECEMBER 1966

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*Published for the Cambridge Antiquarian Society (incorporating the Cambs and Hunts
Archaeological Society) by Deighton Bell, 13 Trinity Street, Cambridge*

Printed in Great Britain at the University Printing House, Cambridge

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ST NEOTS PRIORY

C. F. TEBBUTT, F.S.A.

THE town of St Neots owes its name, street plan and outstanding Market Square to the Benedictine Priory dedicated to the Saxon saint, but succeeding generations since the Dissolution have seen to it that today not a single stone of the edifice remains standing above ground. Before the present excavations began the only certainly known site of any building was that of the Gatehouse which for some unknown reason survived until 1814. The Ordnance Survey only indicates the general position of the Priory in gardens lying along the north side of Back (or Priory) Lane.

It had long been my ambition to try to locate and plan the Priory buildings and this desire was stimulated in 1954 when property development on the north side of St Neots Market Square (The Arcade) revealed medieval foundations inside the line of the Priory Precinct Wall (*Proc. C.A.S.* XLIX (1956), pp. 79-87).

In 1958 factory building for R. F. Development Ltd. took place on the north side of Back Lane. In the course of this the north-east corner of a medieval building in stone was found, only to be covered up within a few hours. It was all the more frustrating to realize that the foundations of the building to which it belonged lay under the new factory. Soon after, pipe-laying to the factory on its east side brought to light a ditch or rubbish pit from which came large quantities of fifteenth-century pottery and other objects (see Appendices 1 and 2) including a coin depicting the Boy Bishop (*Folklore*, vol. 71, June 1960).

It was then realized how urgent it was to undertake excavations before more building took place, and the Ministry of Works offered an annual grant to enable a small amount of paid labour to be employed. During the next two years land between the factory and Priory Path, and the Cross Keys garden, was explored, with the kind permission and co-operation of R. F. Development Ltd., Paine and Co. Ltd. and the garden tenant Mr Barnet.

As the general plan of the Priory began to unfold (Fig. 1), it became evident that the church lay under existing and long established buildings and yards on the south side of Back Lane and that its plan would not be recovered. The only piece of open land where a chance existed of locating the west end of the church was in the Barclays Bank house garden, and permission to dig here was readily given by Mr Sewell.

Having planned the sites mentioned above it became clear that much of the Cloister, Refectory, Western Range and Kitchen would be found in the garden of Priory House, but under the tennis lawn. The owner, Mr David Addington, gave generous permission to trench along his gravel paths and among flower beds and vegetables, where the position of the Western Range, Cloister, Refectory, Kitchen

and other buildings was found but could not be accurately planned. Only later, when the Cross Keys garden and most of Priory House garden was bought by St Neots U.D.C. for a car park, was it possible to explore the area of the tennis lawn and recover full plans of the buildings north and west of the Cloister.

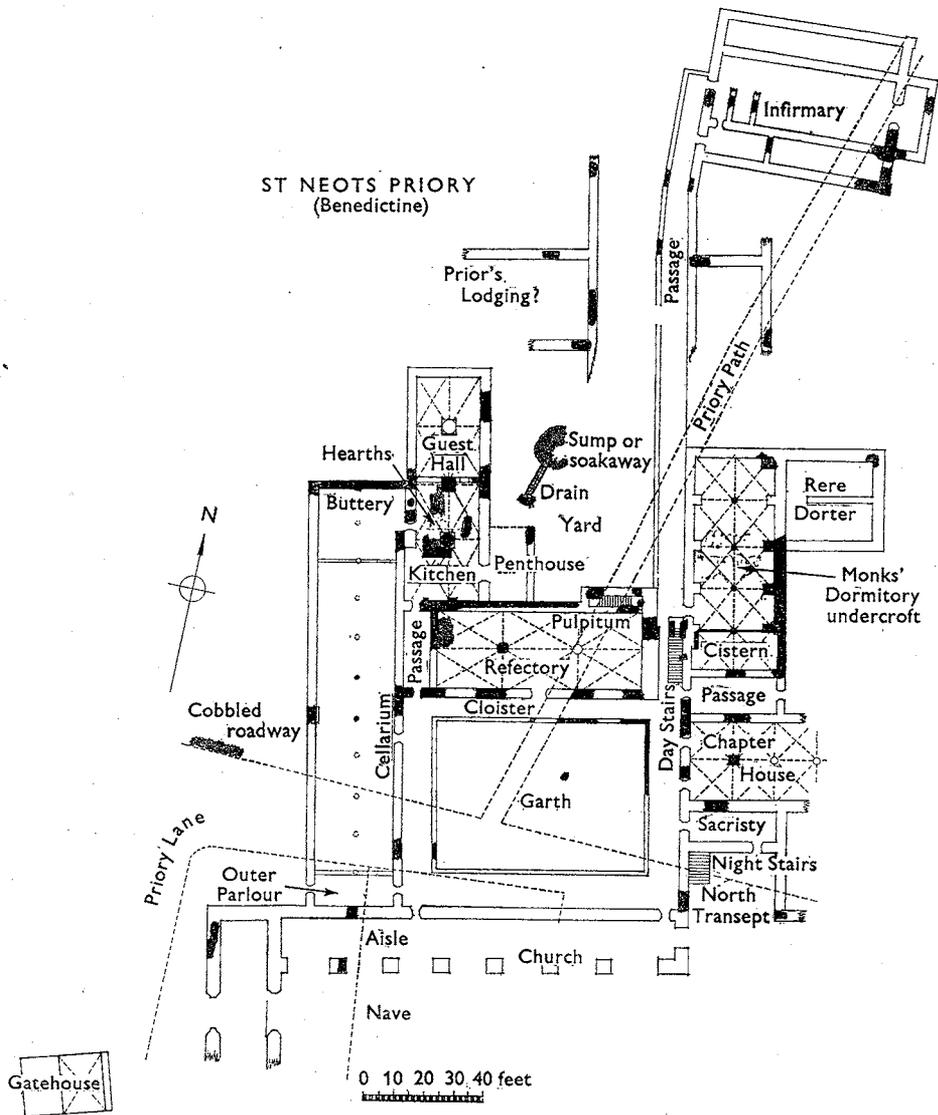


Fig. 1. Plan of Priory, St Neots.

Of those who have helped in the excavations over the five years they have been going on, I must first thank S. D. Cox, F.F.S., F.R.S.H., A.R.I.C.S., who took from my shoulders the weight of all the planning and surveying and has produced the plan accompanying this paper.

I am also grateful to S. Rigold, F.S.A., for vital help and advice in the initial stages of the work and to J. G. Hurst, F.S.A., who besides giving his advice has written

a report on the pottery; also to Miss E. Crowfoot for her note on the braid. Mrs Chibnall has added greatly to the interest of this paper by her appended historical article on St Neots Priory, and for this I am greatly in her debt (Appendix 4).

A number of young volunteers gave consistent help and hard work. In the early stages I would specially mention R. Joyce and J. Lamb, and in the later G. Rudd and C. Daines. Finally I am grateful to the St Neots U.D.C. for giving me a free hand on the land they acquired, and in their imaginative decision to preserve three of the centre column bases of the Dormitory undercroft under manhole covers in their new car park.

THE EASTERN RANGE

This was found to be in what was at the time of excavation the Cross Keys garden but is now a public car park. It extended a short distance farther northward into other property, now part of R. F. Developments Ltd. factory, and southward under Back Lane. All the evidence points to the main part being occupied by the Dormitory with an undercroft below.

THE DORMITORY

That this had been at least partly stone-built could be surmised from the foot-thick accumulation of building rubble that lay on the undercroft floor. This included both stone and clay roofing-tiles, cobble-stones with adhering mortar, broken floor-tiles glazed in green, blue and yellow, soft 2 in. red bricks, small pieces of Barnack building stone and larger pieces of worked clunch. Some of these latter could be recognized as groining ribs. Rarer finds included a short length of Alwalton marble column $3\frac{3}{4}$ in. in diameter, fragments of lead window carm and painted glass, and plaster with design lines in red and black. One design was of black lines meeting at right angles to imitate stonewall jointing (Fig. 3 *a-c*). The whole layer was heavily impregnated with lime mortar.

Pottery found among the rubble was mainly of the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century. Other finds included a French token or jetton and an early sixteenth-century metal purse mount (Fig. 5 *d, k*). The lack of later material seemed to point to demolition having taken place at or soon after the Dissolution.

The Dormitory undercroft was divided into five 14 ft. bays by a line of central pillars of which the bases still remain below ground (Pl. V *a*). They appear to be mid thirteenth-century and have 'water holding' mouldings (prohibited by papal decree in 1264). They no doubt supported the clunch groining ribs mentioned above. The outer wall-foundations were in bad condition but it could be seen that there was a 'set off' on the inside opposite each pillar base to take the springer. An interesting feature of these 'set offs' was that in each one examined there was a square hole to take an upright wooden post. One can only guess that either the whole building had originally been of wood and replaced *in situ* in stone, or, perhaps more likely, that the upper storey was in wood with the undercroft walls in stone. This latter theory is supported by the narrowness and poor quality of the wall-foundations.

The roof could have been covered by either clay or stone tiles; both were common in the rubble.

The floor of the undercroft was, in different places, of clay or mortar and did not appear to have ever been tiled, although broken floor tiles were found on it. There can be no doubt that the rubble layer contained material from buildings other than the Dormitory.

Access to the Dormitory was by outside Day Stairs, the foundation for which was found on the west side between the Western Range and the Refectory.

The south bay of the Dormitory undercroft had obviously been used for a quite different purpose from the others. It had been divided from the other bays by a partition wall in which there was no sign of a doorway and which had been imposed on the south centre pillar-base subsequent to its original building. Its floor had been dug out to a depth of 4 ft. 6 in. below that of the other bays, resulting in a cistern-like structure, the below-ground walls of which were finely rendered with cement to make them watertight. All these walls, except that on the east which was vertical, were sloped inwards.

Some time after its construction this 'tank' had been filled to a depth of 12 in. with a mixture of sand and weak mortar (which contained fifteenth-century pottery (Fig. 9)), and a clay floor laid on its surface. This floor accumulated several inches of mud or silt with pottery of the same date, before it was itself covered by 10-12 in. of blue clay levelled at the top to form another floor. This latest floor accumulated its own inch or so of deposit, upon which the destruction layer lay directly.

A curious feature of this upper clay deposit and floor was that, while it was regular over most of the bay, it stopped 2 ft. short of the line of the north wall except for a narrow strip in the centre running up to the pillar base. This left two small disconnected ditches or gullies 2 ft. wide running along the inside of the north wall and extending downwards to the level of the lower floor, a foot below. These gullies were found to be filled by black humus containing much domestic and other rubbish (Fig. 9). Among the pottery sherds was much Cistercian ware and two small sherds of South Netherlands Maiolica flower vase. There were numerous animal bones, plain and painted window glass, lead carm, nails, folded sheet-lead, ironwork and a sheet of lead pierced with holes to form a strainer. As on all the floors the pottery was of the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century.

The original use of this tank, or conduit-like structure, is difficult to determine. One suggestion is that it was part of the Rere-dormitory (Pl. *Ve*) and another that it held water to supply the lavatory handbasins in the nearby cloister.

SOUTH OF THE DORMITORY

Buildings in the Eastern Range south of the Dormitory were separated from it by a wall of clunch. They were of the same width as the Dormitory and were traced for a further 33 ft. before they passed under existing modern buildings adjoining Back Lane. It was clear that here were ground-floor rooms with substantial interior walls,

which for that reason had been completely robbed. A trench north and south down the interior revealed small portions of undisturbed floor and wide robber-trenches, going down in some cases to a depth of 4 ft. It appeared that immediately south of the Dormitory was a ground-floor room about 10 ft. wide. South of these was an area of even greater confusion, dug all over to a great depth by stone robbers and seeming to indicate the foundations of a substantial building, which from its position might be the Chapter House.

THE CLOISTER

Once the probable nature of the range of buildings described above had been surmised, confirmation that they did in fact constitute the Eastern Range was sought outside the west side at its southern end where the Cloister should lie. Here it was in fact found, with a walk consistently 10 ft. 6 in. wide.

While its inner wall was, as is usual, formed by the wall of adjacent buildings, its outer wall, next the Garth, was a weak one. Nowhere was it greater than 1 ft. 4 in. in width and was constructed of stones set in mortar with a level top. This seemed to indicate a later date, possibly fifteenth century, and that it was really a sub-wall base for timber construction. The foundations of this sub-wall were 2 ft. 6 in. wide and rather more strongly built, and thus may have once supported an original stone cloister replaced later by one of timber.

To make quite certain that the cloister had not been built in stone, some 30 ft. of the north cloister sub-wall was exposed without revealing any offsets to support stone vaulting pillars (Pl. Vd).

The roof had obviously been of clay plaintiles which lay broken in great numbers on the floor of the walk. The walk itself was of clay although it did appear that some plaintiles had been deliberately imbedded on it as floor tiling.

A number of tubular bronze rivetted lacing tags or 'points' were found imbedded in the floor.

The east-west length of the Garth was approximately 70 ft. The plan suggests that it was not square, but it may well have been so; there was no means of ascertaining the exact position of the South walk.

THE PRIORY CHURCH

The great disappointment of the excavation was the impossibility of recovering an adequate plan of the Church. From the position of the Cloister it was apparent that this must lie under the back yard and stables of the Cross Keys Hotel as well as farther west under the Arcade where wall foundations and even some floor tiles were found *in situ* in 1955.¹ The only possible site, where remains of the Church might still be found in open ground, was at the north end of the garden of Barclays Bank House. Conditions, however, were not easy. The level of the garden was found to be 3 ft.

¹ *Proc. C.A.S.* XLIX (1956), pp. 79-87.

above that of Priory Lane and, with extremely loose made-up soil, trenches at a depth of $4\frac{1}{2}$ ft. were unstable and dangerous. Nevertheless some wall foundations and robber-trenches were plotted, and on what must have been the floor of the Church a few glazed floor-tiles were found *in situ*. It was significant that in places on the floor missing or broken tiles had been repaired or replaced with clay, and clay had even been spread over tiles in the course of repairs.

It was gratifying to find at the west end of the garden a large north-and-south robber-trench that must represent the west wall of the Church. If the Cloister was square, the Church must lie somewhat further south than is suggested on the plan. It is probable that there was a tower, perhaps at the west end.

THE WESTERN RANGE

The Western Range was found by trenching among the trees and shrubs in front of Priory House where conditions were difficult for excavation. On the west of the site a 15 ft. wide roadway was found with a surface of cobbles and other stones. This seemed to be a continuation of the present Priory Lane that once led from the foot of St Neots bridge through the Priory Gatehouse to the west side of the Western Range. Farther east we were lucky to come on one of the support bases in the west wall of the Western Range which, as in the Eastern Range, contained a large square post-hole. Continuing to trench eastward we found the east wall at exactly the same measurement as that of the Eastern Range. In the centre, however, a flat platform of stones took the place of the circular pillar base. The next centre base to the north was easily found by measurement and compass. In this case it consisted of a large square posthole with a small round posthole just to the north of it, this latter possibly representing a marking out post put in when the building was set out.

In contrast to the great accumulation of building rubbish overlaying the floor of the Eastern Range, here there was none, not even roofing tiles. The wall foundations too were of poor construction and cannot have been intended to take a stone building. There seems no doubt that this building was all in timber construction and probably thatched. Foundations of an eighteenth-century brick wall were found built on top of the east wall of the Western Range; reference to eighteenth-century maps of St Neots shows that this was the boundary wall of Priory House at the date. They also show that Priory Path (known then as Priory Lane) ran along the east side of that wall, that is actually along part of the west Cloister walk. By the early nineteenth century the garden had been enlarged to its present size (1963) and Priory Path diverted to a more easterly route.

Farther north, where the Western Range flanked the Refectory, it was inaccessible on account of trees and it was not until it extended as far as the Priory kitchen that it was possible to expose it. Here in the last bay but one, where there had been much destruction and robbery and the soil disturbed to a considerable depth, it had the appearance of a filled in cellar.

A partition sub-wall of cobbles in good condition separated this bay from the most northerly one. It had a level top to take the cill of a wooden frame building (Pl. VI *d*).

The last bay had probably become ruinous in monastic times, as much building and monastic kitchen rubbish had been dumped on its floor. Also on the floor lay the remains of a thirteenth-century door with its ornamented hinges and ironwork intact (Pl. V *c*). The shape of the door with its pointed head could be seen as a black stain on the clay floor.

From these last two bays there appeared to be openings into the kitchen block, but it was difficult to be sure of this as the dividing wall was destroyed by the eighteenth-century garden wall referred to above.

THE REFECTORY

As can be seen from the plan, the Refectory occupied almost the whole of the north side of the Cloister. Its foundations were substantial to support what must have been a stone building. At the east end, one of the few places where they had not been robbed, they were 5 ft. thick. The original Refectory measured 80 × 26 ft. inside but late in the fifteenth century a 2 ft. 6 in. thick brick partition-wall had been built across the west end, cutting off a screens passage 9 ft. 6 in. wide. Through this would lie a way from the Cloister to the kitchen and the partition-wall may well have had a serving hatch to the Refectory. The wall itself was built of 2 in. red bricks laid in Old English Bond with an extremely hard rubble core and was butted up to, not keyed into, the main Refectory walls (Pl. VI *a*). The bricks were similar to those used in Buckden Palace and Diddington and Southoe Church towers, and came no doubt from the recently discovered brickworks along the Diddington Brook.¹

In the north wall of the screens passage was a recess 3 ft. long and 10 in. deep. This may have taken a recessed cupboard or been part of a serving hatch from the Kitchen to the Refectory before the partition was built.

At the north-east end of the Refectory, on the outside, it will be noted that the wall foundations are doubled in width. This would be to support, in the thickness of the wall, the stairway leading to the pulpit without which no Refectory was complete.

Outside the east end there was a space 3 ft. wide between the Refectory wall and the Dormitory Day Stairs. Through this narrow space would be the 'Dark Entry' leading from the Cloister through the buildings surrounding it out to the north.

No floor survived in the Refectory except part of a rough cobbled floor at the west end next the screens wall. This was almost certainly a stable or barn floor, put down after the Dissolution. There were, however, inside, among large quantities of other building rubble, a number of broken glazed floor-tiles. The large numbers of stone roofing-tiles included in this rubble was evidence that they had come from the roof above.

¹ *Proc. C.A.S.* LVIII (1965), p. 146.

THE KITCHEN

This building had undergone drastic reconstruction during its long period of use. The original twelfth-century Norman Kitchen was substantially built, running north from the north-west end of the Refectory in the angle of the Western Range. Its interior measurement was 21 ft. × 68 ft. and its roof was supported by three massive centre pillars. At an early date, perhaps even originally, the two northern bays were partitioned off and cooking confined to the south end (Pl. VII*c*).

Probably about 1300 the building was reconstructed. The heavy central columns were taken down and presumably a single-span roof constructed. This would give more room for storage and movement in the building. At the same time the clay plain tiles were replaced by stone slates.

The two northern central pillars were taken right down to their below-floor foundations and subsequent floors covered them (Pl. VII*d*). In the case of the south pillar, however, its base at least was left standing and is still several feet high. It may be that it was left to support a chimney, but at any rate from the earliest times its base was affected by fires and in the fifteenth-century ovens were built against it on the west side (Pl. VII*a*).

As already stated in describing the Western Range, there were probably openings in the west wall leading into the Western Range. From the two north bays there would have been a step up of 2 ft.

On the east side and at the south end of the kitchen next the Refectory, the east wall was completely missing, giving open access to further buildings, probably the Brewhouse.

It was not possible to clear the interior of the kitchen completely nor indeed was it thought desirable to do so, as here was one of the few places on the site where stratified floor layers covering perhaps 400 years remained intact. Much therefore remains here for future investigation.

At the south end, used as a kitchen up to the Dissolution, seven superimposed floors could be recognized. The practice seems to have been first to make a hard level floor of clay or mortar. When an inch or so of dirt had accumulated on this, gravel or sand was spread over it and another floor laid. The earlier floor deposits were thin and contained few identifiable objects or pottery, whereas those following had an increasing thickness of deposits and noticeably more animal food-remains (Fig. 6).

From floor no. 1 (the lowest) came only sherds of developed St Neots ware of the twelfth century. On floor no. 2 lay a slightly worn silver penny of an issue of 1280/1, together with an iron door-key dated perhaps 1256–1319,¹ some painted window-glass and a sherd with green glaze.

From no. 4 floor came another iron door key dated *c.* 1300.

Above this floor first appeared broken stone slates in addition to the clay plain tiles that had occurred at all the earlier levels. The floor too was the first to be laid over

¹ Cf. London Museum Medieval Cat. p. 135 Type 11/1111 and p. 145, no. 6.

the foundations of the destroyed centre pillar bases and was therefore presumably contemporary with the reconstruction of the building.

The last floor, presumably of the early sixteenth century, had built up without apparently any attempt at sweeping or cleaning out. There were numerous remains of domestic animals, including cattle, sheep and pigs, chickens and their eggs, fish and shells of sea mussel, cockle, oyster and whelk. Rather strangely, very little pottery was connected with this last phase, what little there was being Cistercian ware.

To this last phase could be assigned the small pair of ovens built up against the surviving central pillar-base. They were built of stone with bases of clay roofing plain tiles set on edge (Pl. VII *b*). They are too small for baking ordinary bread loaves and it has been suggested that they were used in making communion-wafers. A hearth similarly constructed of plain tiles was found at the same level slightly farther north. Staining on its surface suggested that a similar oven had once been built on it also.

Owing to the presence of a large *Ailanthus* tree, very little of the building north of the partition wall could be examined. It was, however, clear that this part was not used for kitchen purposes, and it had not the succession of floors found at the south end. It may well have been the Guest Hall.

An interesting find was a ditch which ran in an east-west direction under the extreme south end of the kitchen. It had been much disturbed by monastic foundation-trenches, but from an undisturbed part of it came sherds of black micaceous Saxon pottery and a *sceatta* of the sixth/seventh century (now deposited in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge).

BUILDINGS EAST OF THE KITCHEN

As previously stated, the south end of the east wall of the Norman Kitchen was missing and no trace was found of it ever having existed. This gap gave wide access to a building or buildings built in the angle of the kitchen and Refectory.

It seems likely that the first use of the building was as a cellar, as soil had been dug out, all over its area, to a depth of 6 ft. from the present surface. The cellar had then been deliberately filled in from the north side (as tip lines showed) to a depth of 3 ft. 6 in., with yellowish loam containing a few bones, a small quantity of coal, clay, plain tiles (no stone tiles were found) and small sherds of Saxon and Saxo-Norman pottery (Fig. 7). Over this had been laid 1 ft. of dark loam, containing twelfth-century pottery, and on its levelled surface a floor was laid. This floor consisted of 4 in. of weak mortar and sand capped by clay. In the floor base was green and yellow glazed Oxford type pottery of the thirteenth-fourteenth century, together with oyster- and sea mussel-shells. About the centre of the building, a circular hole 3 ft. 6 in. in diameter had been cut in the floor to insert a mass of blue clay 18 in. deep, set on a base of cobble stones. The top of the clay was level with the floor and it may have been used as a stand for a large barrel.

The original north wall of the building had been taken down. This probably happened at the time when the floor was laid as it extended over the foundations, to cover a building to the north. This northern extension had no north wall thus leaving the building with an open end. In the north-east corner of the extension was a low round stone platform, about 6 ft. wide, from which led, in a north-east direction, an open-top drain built of stone roofing-tiles. This drain discharged into a soakaway pit, which was about 10 ft. across, at least 6 ft. deep, and filled with large stones among which were many domestic animal bones, including cattle skulls (Pl. VI*b*). Pottery in the pit and drain was mainly of the fifteenth century. Other finds were a jetton of the same date and one blade of a pair of scissors *c.* 1300.¹

Farther east of this building were signs of clay floors; these probably belonged to light timber buildings, as no wall foundations were found.

It has been suggested that this group of buildings with the drain and soakaway may have been the priory Brewhouse, but I think it is more likely to have been part of the Kitchen.

THE PRIOR'S LODGING (?)

Excavations north of the Kitchen revealed a building running east and west, with an interior measurement of approximately 40 by 26 ft. It is thought to have possibly been the Prior's Lodging. It had almost certainly been of timber construction and had been extensively robbed. Nothing remained but the much mutilated floor and some slight traces of weak wall foundations. There was almost certainly a window containing painted glass in about the middle of the north wall, as a large number of glass fragments lay just outside at that point.

To the south of this building and between it and the Kitchen and soakaway had been open ground. It was trenched at close intervals and no trace of buildings was found. On an old surface, however, just above undisturbed ground, were numerous sherds of twelfth-century St Neots ware.

BUILDINGS NORTH OF THE PRIOR'S LODGING

North of the Infirmary were found the remains of a building with a north and south axis and with an inside measurement of 24 by 40 ft. From the remains of its wall foundations (only represented by robber trenches) and the building-rubble lying on its clay floor, it had been built of clunch and limestone and had both clay and stone roofing-tiles. At one place on its floor was the remains of a smelting-hearth where lead had been rendered down, probably during the monastic period as medieval pottery was found among the lead fragments.

It was found that the building had been superimposed on the foundations of an older building of different plan, whose dimensions, however, could not be determined without grave interference with the garden lay-out. This earlier building was probably constructed of wood and roofed with thatch, as no building material remained on

¹ Cf. London Museum Catalogue, pp. 150-3.

its floor. Several inches of humus separated the two floors and in this occurred twelfth-century pottery sherds. The lower floor was heavily burnt in many places, probably an indication that the building had been destroyed by fire.

Unfortunately the remains of these buildings were destroyed before they could be accurately plotted in relation to the rest of the site; they are thus not shown on the plan.

THE FIRST INFIRMARY (?)

This was discovered in 1959 when builders engaged in extending the R. F. Development factory came across a large number of cobble-stones while digging a rainwater soakaway 3 ft. below the present surface.

When the area was cleared down to the level of the cobble-stones it was found that they came from the foundations of an aisled building partly covered by the new factory and extending under Priory Path.

Where undisturbed the foundations were found to consist of a level double layer, mainly of cobble-stones but including an occasional piece of brown sandstone and limestone. The stones were all set in clay with no trace of mortar (Pl. VI*c*). Above the foundation-level was an unbroken layer of dark soil containing pottery, all of which was developed St Neots ware of the twelfth century. Also from this level came a small woman's or child's bronze ring decorated with oak leaves (Fig. 5*j*).

The floor inside the building was of clay and from under it came a few sherds of black micaceous Saxon pottery. There was a step of 4 in. up from the 'nave' to the 'chancel' and at one of the interior corners a small pile of snail shells.

It was evident from its plan that the foundations must have extended beyond Priory Path into the former garden of Priory House. Here search was made for them and traces were found at the same level, but other and no doubt later priory buildings had been erected here and many cobbles were found displaced and scattered.

One can only make suggestions as to what these remains represent. One possibility is that a wooden building had been erected on these foundations and had been destroyed or removed before the end of the twelfth century. Against this theory, the massive stone foundations seem out of all proportion to what would be necessary to support a wooden building. Another suggestion is that a building was planned here but was never erected. It is, I think, quite certain that no stone building was ever built here. There was no trace of lime in the overlying soil nor any scrap of stone walling or roofing-tile. This was in contrast to the foot or so of building rubble that lay over the foundations of stone buildings elsewhere on the site.

All the experts on monastic buildings who saw the foundations, or their place on the plan, seem to agree that it is most likely that they were intended as an Infirmary.

THE GATEHOUSE

The Priory Gatehouse is one of the few buildings of whose position we have a documentary record. Although it survived until 1814 no picture or description of it is

known. Even Gorham, who published his 'History of St Neot's' in 1820 and must have been familiar with it, includes no sketch or description.

It is highly probable that it was pulled down by John Day who bought the Priory House and business premises in 1814 and greatly expanded the brewing and merchants' trade there. He would be able to do this as Priory Lane, described in a deed of 1655 as extending 'from the Priory gates and Porters Lodge there unto the farthest outward gate next the islands common', was part of the property. The gatehouse was no doubt an obstacle to his heavy brewers' wagons.

The inscribed stone, set in the wall on the west side of Priory Lane to mark the position of the Gatehouse, was placed there by St Neots U.D.C. on information obtained from the Sir Stephen Anderson Survey of 1757.¹ In 1964 the correctness of its position was confirmed when gas mains were laid along the west side of Priory Lane and foundations encountered at this spot.

THE PRIORY WALL

The chief evidence for the Priory precinct wall facing the Market Square comes from the Survey of 1757, on which its line is plainly marked as the south boundary of the Priory Estate. It will be seen that the boundary at the west end starts a little south of the Priory Gate opposite the still existing open way to the river marked 'Watering Place', and continues eastward as far as New Lane (New Street). The point where it reaches the present New Street is about 25 ft. south of the corner of Back or Priory Lane.

It will be seen from the Survey that by 1757 the wall was no longer a physical barrier, as Market Square properties, at least on the western side, had extended across the boundary to 'The Passage to the Back Yards', Back Lane having not, at that date, been carried through to New Street.

Any doubts that the boundary did indeed represent the precinct wall were resolved when foundation trenches were dug during the building of the Arcade, Boots', and Woolworth's shops. In each case a large robber-trench was found in the correct measured position, and from which no doubt the wall-foundations had been dug. These excavations also established that this line of the wall was not an original one, as a number of burials from the cemetery adjoining the Priory Church have been found from time to time under 'Shop Row' properties south of the wall-line. Indeed in the Arcade a burial was found disturbed by the wall foundation-trench, although here it is possible that the south wall of the Church nave formed the boundary. In the record of the Visitation of Bishop Gray in 1432, there is mention of a door on the south side of the nave leading into the town. This would be the door used by the parishioners when the Priory Church was used as a parish church.

One can only surmise that the original Priory boundary on the south was retracted at some time, possibly in the twelfth century when the grants of charters for fairs and

¹ *Proc. C.A.S.* XLIX (1956), plate vi.

markets led to the laying out of the spacious market square with valuable letting space for shops on its sunny north side.

On the east we can, I think, assume that the line of New Street was the boundary, which must have extended at least as far north as to include the Baptist Church cemetery, in which were the Priory fishponds, before it returned west to the river. However, as far as I am aware no actual trace has ever been found of the east and north boundaries.

THE PRIORY GRAVE-YARD

Now that we know the position of the Priory Church the finding of human skeletons from time to time under properties on the north side of the Market Square is no surprise. During the nineteenth century it is recorded that they were found in the Cross Keys property and that now occupied by Barclays Bank at the corner of Priory Lane. In more recent years others have been disturbed in the building of the Arcade, Boots' (nos. 17, 19), Woolworth's (no. 31), and Hunts. Electrical (no. 33) shops. This latter site is a long distance from the Priory Church and shows that the cemetery was a large one, catering for the civil population as well as the monks. This view is supported by the fact that several skeletons examined by the writer were those of women.

No church at St Neots is mentioned in the Domesday Survey and none appears in any record until about 1183. Before this the nave of the Priory Church probably served as a parish church and no doubt the parish grave-yard was adjoining. A grave-filling on the site of the Hunts. Electrical shop was carefully examined and contained only twelfth-century pottery.

As mentioned under the heading of the Priory Wall, burials on the site of the Arcade were found on both sides of the Priory Wall and one was actually disturbed when the wall was built. All those examined by the writer were buried in the Christian east-west position.

THE MILL

There seems no doubt that one of the Priory water-mills was built on the riverside, near the Gatehouse.

In Letters Patent 4 June 1584 the Crown let a mill to Edward Catley, and it is described as 'all that Mill, Brewhouse and Millhouse situate and being at the gate of the late Priory of St Neots within the town of St Neots'. It is further described as standing in great decay and ruin and the tenant agreed to repair and maintain it.

Its actual site was almost certainly just outside the Gatehouse and immediately north of the old horse-watering place, now a public access to the river adjoining the Bridge Hotel. This is confirmed on the Sir Stephen Anderson Survey of 1757¹, where a riverside building in this position is marked 'The Mill House' (Pl. VIII).

The nearby medieval bridge, built on the present bridge site just upstream, had many stone piers close together and it is likely (as was the case with London Bridge)

¹ *Proc. C.A.S.* XLIX (1956), 79.

that some of these could be temporarily blocked to force water through the most easterly channel. From here it would be led, by means of a diagonal weir, to the mill wheel.

In 1964, when the new St Neots bridge was being built, part of a millstone of Neidermendig lava, 1 ft. 10 in. in diameter, was dredged from the river. It may well have come from this mill.

FISH PONDS AND WATER COURSES

It is well known that a running water-course was one of the requirements of all monasteries and that the position of such a stream often determined the siting of the whole institution. One of the disappointments of the excavation was that the Great Drain which should run under or near the Rere-dormitory was not found.

There is still a strong tradition in St Neots, first told to the writer by his nursemaid, that the present Priory Path crosses an underground passage leading from the Priory to Priory Hill or Monks Hardwick. Indeed the partially ruined tunnel to the ice-house in the garden of Priory Hill House used to be pointed out as the outlet at that end. One can only imagine that some sort of culverted drain was found when the walls of the new diverted Priory Path were built, very early in the nineteenth century.

At present the only open stream running through the town is Fox Brook which turns south to join Hen Brook before approaching the centre. Street excavations for public services have shown, however, that in medieval times a number of open ditches ran through the town, notably one along the north side of High Street and another crossing the Market Square. Neither of these would seem to satisfy the Priory needs and to do so a stream farther north would have to be found. The only evidence for the existence of such a ditch or stream is what appeared to be a deep filled-in ditch, containing thirteenth-century pottery, which was found when building the Russell Court flats at the corner of Russell Street in 1959. If this stream really existed, it may well have been used to fill what must be the Priory fish-ponds that are shown on the Sir Stephen Anderson 1757 Survey on the site of the present Strict Baptist cemetery in New Street. They appear as two artificial oblong ponds approximately 90 × 25 ft. and 45 × 20 ft.

BUILDING MATERIALS

As the greater part of the building materials used in the Priory had been removed, specimens could only be obtained from broken fragments scattered over the site or in the robber-trenches of its demolishers. The exceptions were the few pillar-supports still left *in situ* and some short lengths of wall foundation missed by the robbers. Thus it was almost impossible to equate particular materials with building periods.

Walling

Building stone was from two sources, the Barnack quarries and the Bedfordshire sandstone beds. The latter possibly came from Sandy where large disused quarries

can still be seen. Stones from both sources occur together in wall foundations, as they do in the walling of most of the medieval churches in the neighbourhood. Water communication was possible to both source areas.

A short length of polished marble pillar, $3\frac{1}{2}$ in. in diameter, was identified by Dr C. L. Forbes of the Sidgwick Museum, Cambridge, as Alwalton Marble.

Bricks of about 2 in. thickness were scattered all over the site in small quantities and a number were found *in situ* in the Screens Wall in the Refectory. They were not keyed into the main stone walls and so must have been a later addition. They can almost certainly be identified as coming from the Diddington Brook brickworks about 5 miles away.¹

Windows

Lead carm and broken panes of stained glass were found all over the site. Most of the glass was exceedingly fragile and quite opaque, but a few specimens of clear glass were found. Some examples, one with lettering, were kindly examined by Mr R. L. Charleston of the Victoria & Albert Museum, who wrote '...the fragments of stained glass from St Neots Priory are unfortunately too small and opaque to be dated with any accuracy. However, the thickness of the glass and the type of lettering would suggest that they are late fourteenth or early fifteenth century'.

Doors

The only example found had attached to it the fine ornamental ironwork illustrated on Pl. Vc. The door itself only appeared as a black stain on a clay floor at the north end of the Western Range.

Roofing

The only roofing materials found were stone slates, clay plain tiles and ridge-tiles, and sheet lead. From the lack of any of the above on the site of the Western Range, it can with little doubt be assumed that it was roofed with thatch.

Stone slates

With the exception mentioned above, these were widely scattered but particularly over the sites of the Refectory and Eastern Range. Seven distinct types were found (Fig. 2) but this may not have exhausted the number as few were found intact. Some large ones may have been 'tile and a half', and small ones 'half tiles'. One of a lozenge shape closely resembles a stone slate of the Roman period, but in contrast to Roman specimens, which have holes made with the blow of a pick, all the Priory slates have a drilled hole of about $\frac{3}{8}$ in. diameter.

It was at first assumed that these slates came from the Colleyweston quarries near the source of the Barnack stone. However, a number of specimens were submitted to Dr Forbes and slides were cut and examined. He had no hesitation in reporting that they certainly did not come from Colleyweston, but closely resembled slates from

¹ *Proc. C.A.S.* LVIII (1965), p. 146.

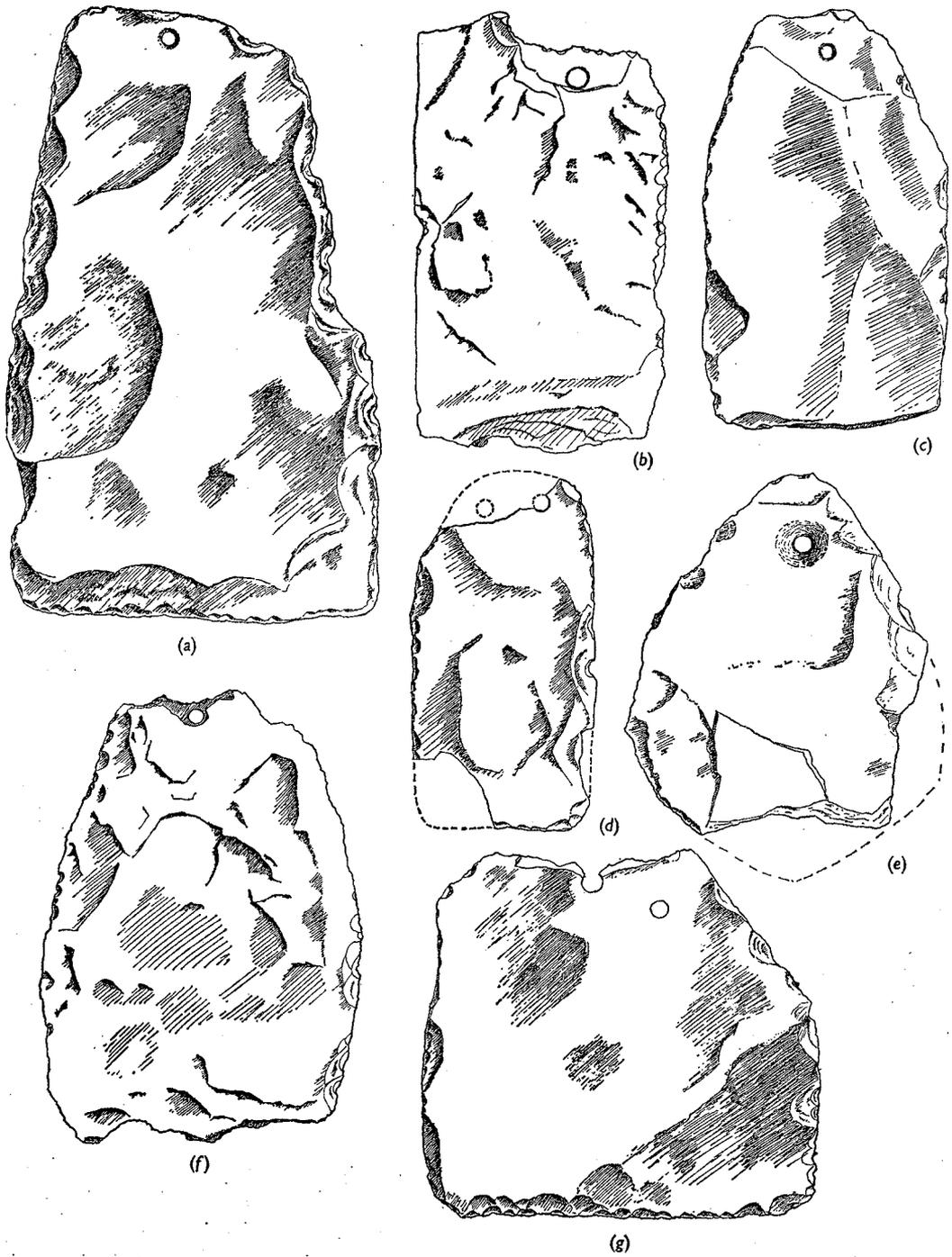


Fig. 2. St Neots Priory: stone tiles. Scale $\frac{1}{4}$.

the Oxfordshire quarries of which Stonesfield is the best known. This seems surprising in view of the greater distance and apparent lack of communications. It is, however, paralleled in the trade in Saxo-Norman St Neots Ware pottery between Oxfordshire and Cambridgeshire,¹ and is a subject that needs further investigation.

No stone slates were found on the early sealed floor-levels of the Priory Kitchen, the first appearing on a floor that was probably thirteenth century.²

Clay plaintiles

These were also found widely scattered and in all the Kitchen floor-levels. Their great abundance over the site of the Cloister make it almost certain that they formed its roof. The only whole example found measured $7\frac{3}{4}$ by $12\frac{3}{4}$ in. and was holed in each corner. This is much larger than the twelfth-century plaintiles from Sibthorpe Manor House, Ellington, Huntingdonshire, which were only 6 in. wide, and it may have been a 'tile and a half'.

Ridges and finials

A number of broken clay ridge-tiles were found, some of which were glazed or partly glazed. One example had a ridge ornament. Several examples of ornamental finials were found; they consisted of mushroom-like projections on the apex of the ridge-tile.

In the old brewery yard behind Priory House is a massive but plain ridge-finial, cut from limestone and presumably from the Priory.

Lead

Several pieces of sheet roofing-lead with nail-holes along the edge were found.

Floors

Where undisturbed floors remained they were of poor quality, usually of clay or mortar. This is perhaps not surprising in undercroft buildings. In the Kitchen, floors were renewed again and again by a new layer of clay or gravel laid on top of the accumulated refuse on the old floor. In the Refectory the original floor had all been removed, but a number of broken floor tiles were found, glazed in monochrome without pattern or device. Indeed no decorated tiles were found in the whole excavation. In the floor at the west end of the Church a few glazed tiles were found *in situ* but with intervening spaces patched with clay. The floor-tile fragments found were glazed in yellow, green and brown.

A possible source of the glazed floor-tiles was an extensive tile and brickmaking site found in 1965 in what had formerly been Littlers Wood at the west end of Diddington Reservoir (52/133681). Here, among other products, green glazed floor-

¹ *Proc. C.A.S.* XLIX (1956) pp. 43-70.

² This date was supported in the excavation, in 1965, of Sibthorpe Manor House, Ellington, Huntingdonshire. The house, built in the twelfth century, was roofed entirely with clay plaintiles and no stone slates were found.

tiles were being made, and among the wasters strewn on the site were many pottery sherds of the late fifteenth century.¹

Cobbles

A very great many cobble-stones lay all over the site at all levels and many were used in wall cores and foundations. I have no idea of the source of this stone but would imagine that it must have come from the sea coast. In the early nineteenth century, when cobbles were required for paving in St Neots, they were obtained from Spurn Head and brought by water through Kings Lynn. This may have been a traditional source of supply.

FOOD AND COOKING

In the kitchen area the deterioration in habits, regarding both cleanliness and the Benedictine Rule against eating meat, was very apparent. The earlier floors had only a thin layer of rubbish on them and when this accumulated to the thickness of an inch or so, a new floor of gravel, clay or mortar was laid on top of the old. In succeeding ages this rubbish layer became thicker before the floor was renewed and it contained many remains of domestic food animals. These included cow, sheep, pig, deer, domestic fowl and other birds. There were also egg-shells and many bones of fish. All these were probably local products, but from the coast came the many hundreds of shells of oyster, mussel, cockle and whelk found. Pottery sherds were fairly numerous on the early floors, but became scarcer on succeeding ones and were almost completely absent on the latest. This may be due to the use of metal cooking-vessels in the kitchen.

The hard floor-layers separated by soft decaying matter formed a natural home for rats and mice, with whose runs they were riddled.

The only constructed hearths found in the kitchen were made of clay roof-tiles laid close together on edge and these also formed the base of the two small ovens (Pl. VII *b*). They were so small that their use for bread-making seems to be ruled out, and it has been suggested that the sacred wafers were baked in them. They, together with the tiled hearths were, all on the highest level and so probably of late fifteenth or early sixteenth century.

ST NEOTS BRIDGE

The first known reference to a bridge at St Neots is in 1180² when it was owned and no doubt built by the Priory. It was then a wooden bridge supported on stone piers.

In 1906, when the river was emptied, my father walked across under the bridge and saw the remains of five piers of an earlier bridge under the arches. They were of Barnack stone with rubble core and approximately 6 ft. wide with cutwaters on the downstream side. Remains of three could be seen under the centre arch, allowing a passage of about 25 ft. between them.

¹ See 'Archaeological Notes' this vol., p. 138.

² *V.C.H. Hunts.* II, p. 337.

The later bridge, replaced in 1965, is thought to have been built mainly in the late sixteenth century, traditionally with stone from the Priory. When pulled down the stone was carefully examined and with the exception of a few pieces none was re-used stone.

STONE FROM THE PRIORY

Carved medieval stones have been found on many sites in St Neots, particularly in the foundations of early wooden framed houses. Examples of these can be seen preserved in the shop of the Hunts. Electrical Co. Ltd., 33 Market Sq., and in the County Library, Huntingdon Street. A fine piece of arcading is built into the cellar wall of Notts Bakers Ltd. 15 Market Sq. (Pl. Vb), unfortunately the cellar was filled in some years ago. There is a carved head in the garden of 'Ridgeway', Cross Hall Road, Eaton Socon, and another, probably a gargoyle, set in an arch in the garden behind S. J. Reed's shop, 15 High St. A carved head of a horned sheep found during trenching in the Market Sq. is in the Norris Museum, St Ives. A number of other carved or moulded stones have been collected by the Urban District Council at their offices in Huntingdon Street. These include some found built into the chimney of a late medieval wood framed house pulled down next door at the corner of East Street in 1964. Also with this collection is an arch with shields in the spandrels bearing the cross moline of William de Alwick Bishop of Lincoln (1436-9).¹

While it seems likely that these stones came from the Priory, one must not exclude the possibility that some may have come from St Neots parish church pulled down to make way for the present church in the fifteenth century.

Finds from the excavations will be placed in the Norris Museum, St Ives.

APPENDIX 1

THE FINDS

Fig. 3. Wall plaster.² (a) Design of red (hatched area) on white ground. (b) Rectangular black lines on white ground. (c) Design of red on white ground. All found unstratified in area of East Range. (d) Schist hone; from open drain to soakaway north-east of Kitchen. (e) Two sections of the lower half of a quern of lava, probably from Mayen.³ Unstratified, from different parts of the site.

Fig. 4. (a) Iron key of fifteenth-century type, with kidney-shaped bow⁴. From upper floor of Kitchen. (b) Iron hunting arrow, barbed and socketed; probably fifteenth-century. Unstratified from the area of the Guest Hall. (c) Bone double comb; a medieval type which lasted on until recent times. Unstratified. (d) Apple-corer, made from cow's metacarpal; a medieval type which lasted on until recent times. Unstratified. (e) Bone stylus; remains of an iron tip can be seen let

¹ *Trans. Cambs. and Hunts. Arch. Soc.* vi, p. 255.

² See 'Waterbeach Abbey', Appendix 1, p. 86 of this volume.

³ *Medieval Archaeology*, v (1961), p. 279, and forthcoming report in *Proc. C.A.S.* by P. Addyman on excavations at St Neots.

⁴ *London Museum Medieval Catalogue*, fig. 42, viia and Fig. 43, 8.

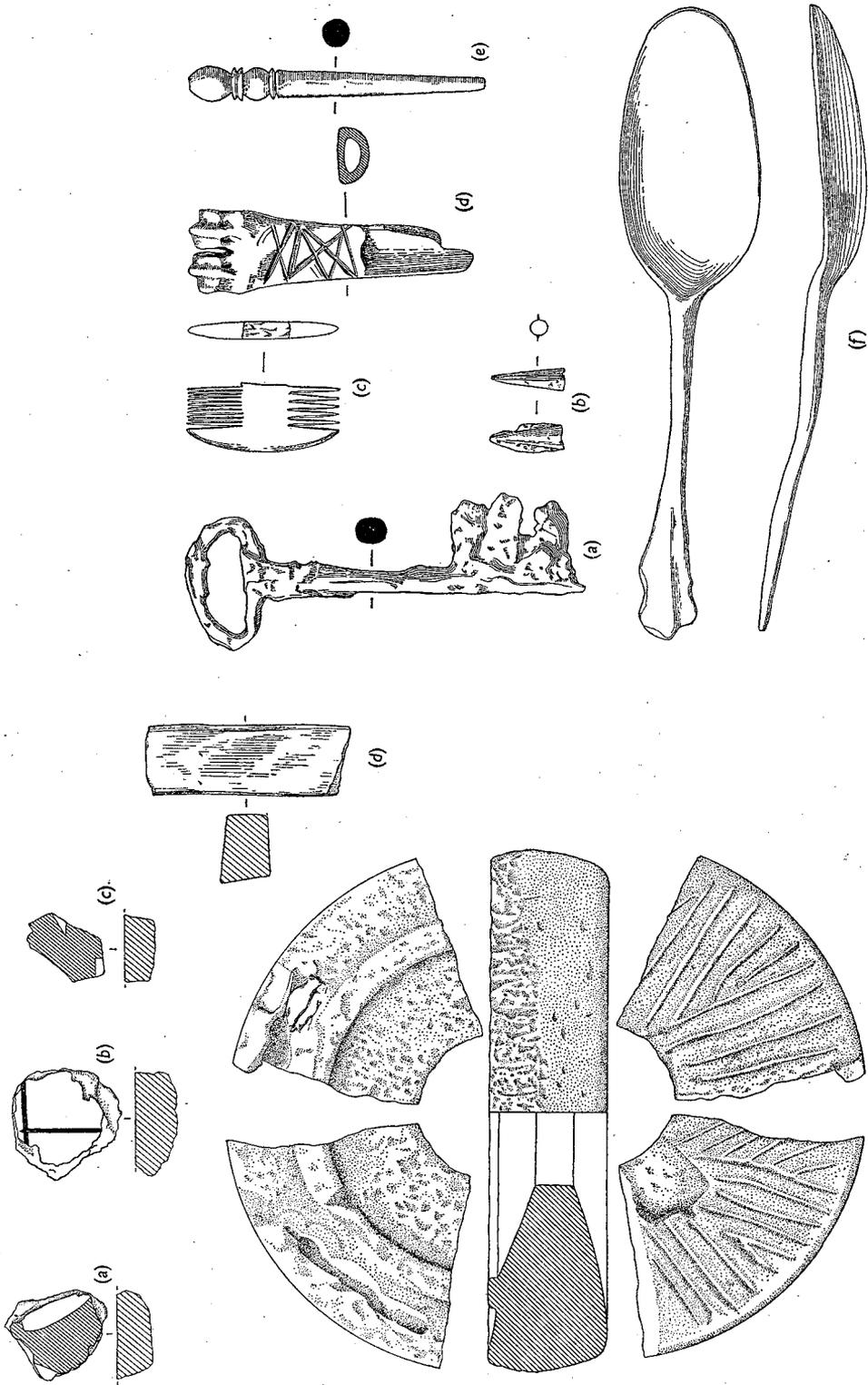


Fig. 3. St Neots Priory. (a)-(c). Wall-plaster; (d) schist hone; (e) lava quern. Scale $\frac{1}{4}$.

Fig. 4. St Neots Priory. (a) Iron key; (b) iron arrowhead; (c) bone comb; (d) bone apple-corer; (e) bone stylus with iron tip; (f) pewter spoon, probably seventeenth century. Scale $\frac{1}{4}$.

into the pointed end. Unstratified. (f) Pewter spoon with narrow oval bowl and flat trilobe handle; probably seventeenth-century. Unstratified.

Fig. 5. Bronze objects. (a) Stirrup foot-plate. (b) Bell, without any interior attachment for striker, which must therefore have been an independent one. Perhaps part of a clock. (c) Upper part of a dog or pack-horse bell. The above three objects were all found together in a pit or ditch,

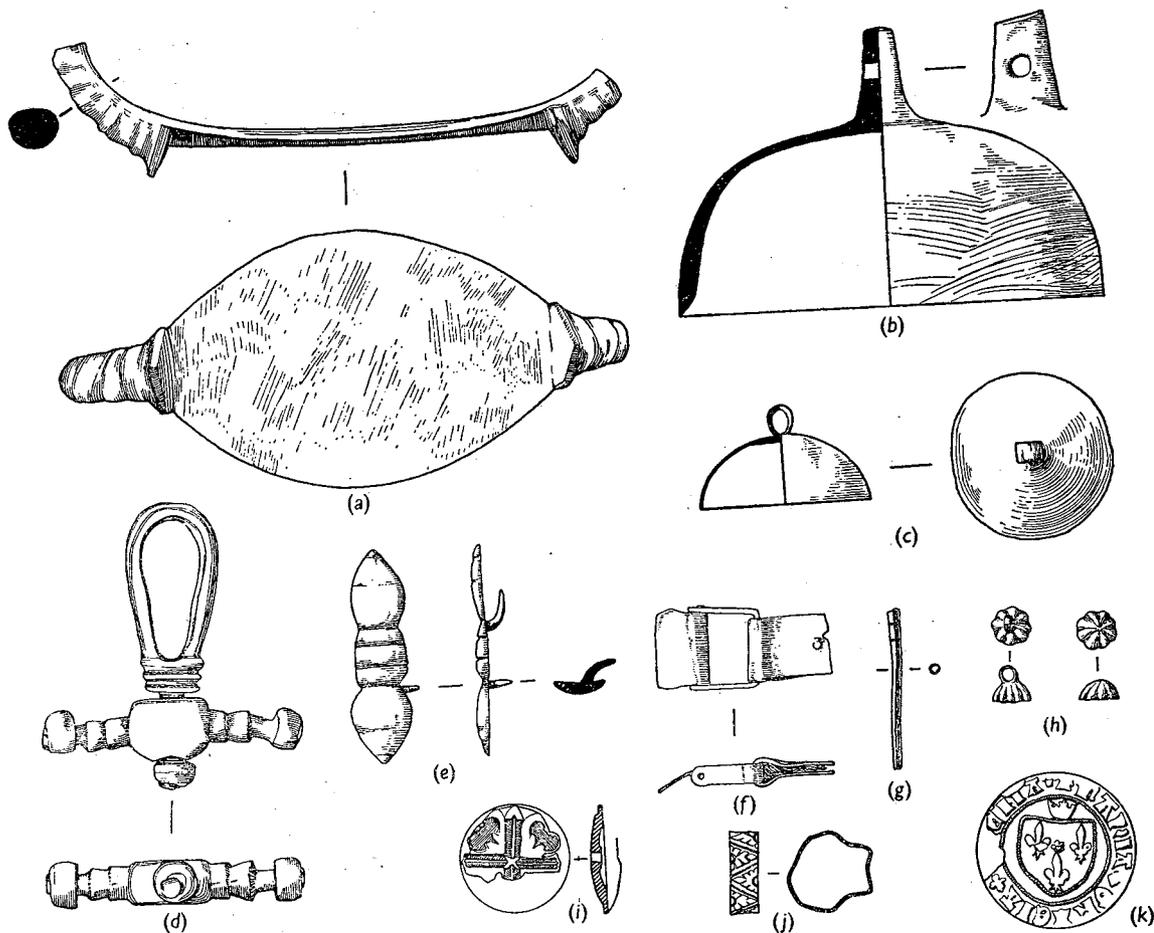


Fig. 5. St Neots Priory: bronze objects. (a) Stirrup plate; (b) bell; (c) bell; (d) purse bar, tinned; (e) belt ornament; (f) belt link; (g) lacing 'point'; (h) bell-shaped ornament; (i) button, bone with bronze plate ornamental front; (j) finger ring; (k) French jetton. Scale $\frac{1}{3}$.

during the building of the R. F. Development Factory on the Priory site, just east of the East range. They were associated with pottery of the late fifteenth century, and a Boy Bishop coin of the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century. (d) Purse bar, tinned; late fifteenth or early sixteenth century.¹ Unstratified from the south end of the East Range. (e) Belt ornament with fastenings for attachment to leather. Unstratified from north end of Kitchen area. (f) Belt link. Remains of a strip of plaited material can be seen clamped between the rivetted plate.² Unstratified from the Kitchen area. (g) Hollow 'point' or tag for leather lace, to which it was attached by two tiny rivets. One of

¹ *Ibid.* fig. 52, B 1.

² See Appendix 2.

several from the floor of the Cloister. (*h*) Hanging ornament in the shape of a tiny bell. From the second lowest floor of the Kitchen, and therefore probably thirteenth-century. (*i*) Button: bone backing, to which is fastened a thin, bronze plate, ornamented with an equal-armed cross. Unstratified from area north of the Refectory. (*j*) Finger ring. From just above foundations of the supposed Infirmary, and associated with twelfth-century pottery. (*k*) Jetton.

Note by S. E. Rigold, F.S.A. Jetton from pit or ditch under R. F. Development Factory, east of East Range.

A French official jetton, orthodox in fabric, but of unusually large size; it is evidently late in the series, when the numerous obverses of the commoner late fourteenth-century jettons had become reduced to the shield and crown only. Probably early fifteenth-century, when unofficial Tournai jettons were beginning to oust the official ones.¹

Diameter 30 mm.

Obverse: crowned shield of France modern, with small extra lys in centre. + MARIA GRACIA (slipped toothed trefoil as stop) [PL]ENA

Reverse: Cross fleury in distended quatrefoil of late type.

APPENDIX 2

FRAGMENT OF BRAID FROM BRONZE BELT LINK

ELIZABETH CROWFOOT

The rivetted place of the belt link (Fig. 5*f*) was separated in order to expose the material clamped between, which proved to be a fragment of a tablet-woven braid. Its length at the longest part was 9 mm., the remaining width 9.5 mm., and the original width probably *c.* 1.2 cm.

Warp, linen, hardly any twist visible, but it may have been lightly Z-spun; white at edge, stained by bronze in the middle. Weft ends can be seen at the broken edge, but too frayed for a twist to be seen; more brownish than the warp thread.

Tablet-weave, *c.* 11 twists to the cm. The right edge is nearly complete but the edge twists are pulled and there is no sign of weft loops, so that the last twist may be missing. It was unfortunately impossible to dissect, as apart from these right edge threads the braid is brittle and hardened. It is certainly a 4-hole tablet weave; the total width would have been 13–15 twists. The twists slant left and right, but seem to meet at an angle rather than accurately, suggesting a weave like that of the braid from Felixstowe (medieval, in a similar strap end),² and that from St John's Cricket Field, Cambridge (Saxon),³ but owing to the surface deterioration and some distortion caused by the cut end of the braid having been pressed against the metal, telescoping the twists, it is impossible to be certain. The side twists are very white, but the bronze staining in the middle section is very deep, and it is possible that the centre of the braid was blue or green.

¹ Barnard, *The Casting-counter and the Counting-board*, fig. 44, is an even more evolved example of the same sort.

² Grace M. Crowfoot, 'A medieval tablet-woven braid from a buckle found at Felixstowe', *Proc. Suffolk Inst. of Arch.*, xxv, 2 (1951), 202 ff.

³ Grace M. Crowfoot, 'Textiles of the Saxon Period in the Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology', *Proc. Camb. Ant. Soc.* XLIV, (1950), 28 ff.

APPENDIX 3

THE POTTERY

J. G. HURST, M.A., F.S.A.

A. STRATIFIED GROUPS

(I) KITCHEN LAYERS

Post-holes under floor 1

Sherds of developed St Neots ware¹ including a large sagging base possibly from a jug,² Fig. 6, no. 1.

Floor 1

Sherds of developed St Neots ware including the rim of a jug with thickened everted rim, Fig. 6, no. 2. One sandy sherd.

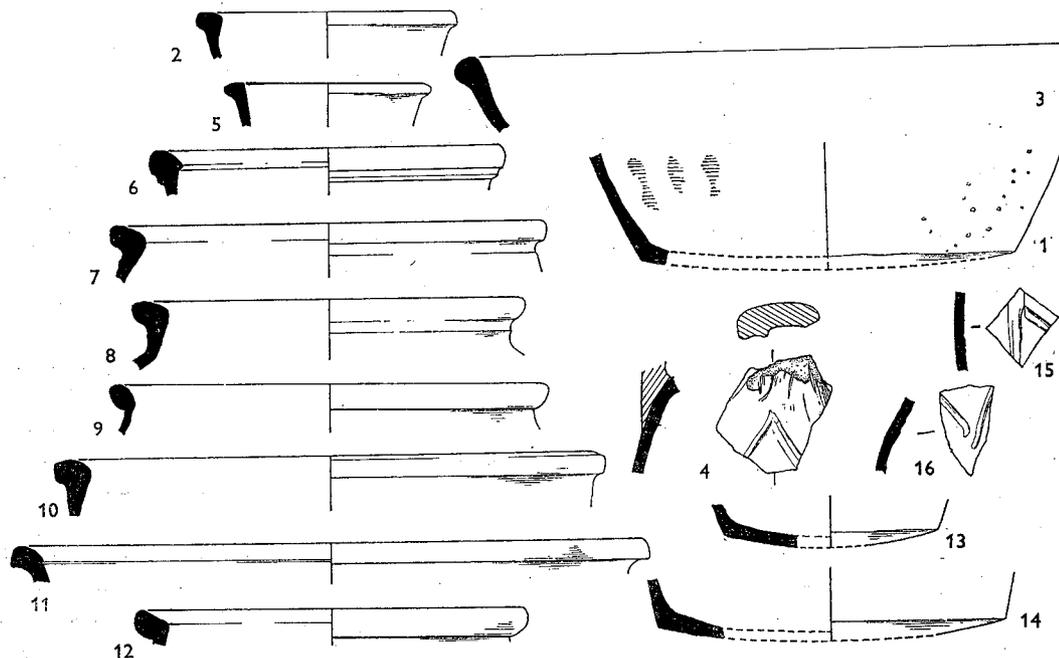


Fig. 6. St Neots Priory: pottery from the Kitchen layers. Scale $\frac{1}{4}$.

Filling between floors 1 and 2

Sherds of developed St Neots ware including rim of a bowl with thickened rim, Fig. 6, no. 3. Sandy sherds.

¹ J. G. Hurst, 'Saxo-Norman Pottery in East Anglia, Part I. St Neots Ware', *Proc. C.A.S.* XLIX (1955), pp. 43-70, and *Med. Arch.* v (1961), p. 258.

² *Proc. C.A.S.* XLIX (1955), pp. 54-6.

Base of the strap handle of an Oxford type¹ jug. Brown sandy ware with orange glaze and dark brown applied strips, Fig. 6, no. 4.

Floor 2

Developed St Neots sherds including a jug rim, Fig. 6, no. 5.

Glazed jug sherd as Fig. 6, no. 4.

Filling between floors 2 and 3

A large group of developed St Neots ware including seven rims, Fig. 6, 6-12, and two sagging bases, Fig. 6, nos. 13-14.

Floor 3

Developed St Neots ware and Lyveden ware² sherds.

Floor 4

Developed St Neots ware and Lyveden ware sherds with grid stamp as Fig. 12, no. 107. Sherds of Oxford type orange-glazed jug with dark applied strips, Fig. 6, nos. 15-16.

Dating

The pottery from these floors is of importance, since they are clearly datable to the end of the thirteenth century and the early fourteenth century by the decorated non-local jugs, which have a general date range of 1250-1350, confirmed by the coin of 1280/1 from floor 2. Most of the cooking pots associated with these jugs were developed St Neots ware with only a few sandy sherds. This suggests that at St Neots in the thirteenth century shelly wares were still very much in use. This is in marked contrast to Cambridge³ and Eaton Socon,⁴ only a few miles away, where sandy Early Medieval wares start already in the eleventh century and replace the shelly wares almost entirely by the middle of the twelfth century. This links the St Neots Priory sequence much more with the area of Northamptonshire and Lincolnshire, where shelly wares also continue throughout the twelfth and most of the thirteenth centuries.⁵ The squared moulded rims also fit very much better into a thirteenth-century context and there are too many of them to be residual. This difference emphasizes the intense regional variations of Medieval pottery and the difference of pottery found at sites quite close together if they were supplied from different kilns. There are a few early Medieval sandy wares from the site which are datable to the twelfth century. It may well be that in the thirteenth century there was a resurgence of the shelly tradition, or that pottery was purchased from kilns to the west or north rather than the east. Large groups of twelfth-century pottery which might have produced more sandy wares were not found. It is unfortunate that no kiln sites are known at all in the area. This problem will be discussed further by Mr P. V. Addyman in his report on the Saxon village site at St Neots (*Proc. C.A.S.* forthcoming).

(2) PENTHOUSE NORTH OF REFECTORY AND EAST OF KITCHEN, BELOW UPPER FLOOR

Sherds of developed St Neots ware, mainly jugs including four rims: upright (Fig. 7, no. 17), thickened sloping outside (Fig. 7, no. 18) and sloping inside (Fig. 7, no. 19), and flanged with an

¹ See p. 64 and Fig. 12, nos. 100-105 for discussion of Oxford type jugs.

² See p. 93 and Fig. 12, nos. 106-108 for discussion of Lyveden ware.

³ P. V. Addyman and M. Biddle, 'Medieval Cambridge: Recent Finds and Excavations', *Proc. C.A.S.* LVIII (1965).

⁴ P. V. Addyman, 'Late Saxon Settlements in the St Neots Area. I. Eaton Socon', *Proc. C.A.S.* LVIII (1965).

⁵ L. A. S. Butler, 'Hambleton Moat, Screddington, Lincolnshire', *J.B.A.A.*, 3rd series xxvi (1963), p. 69.

angular cordon (Fig. 7, no. 20). Fig. 7, no. 17 shows the hole where a handle had been dowed into the rim.

There were three sandy jugs. Fig. 7, no. 21: rough brown sandy ware with thickened rim and lip; band of rectangular notch rouletting. Fig. 7, no. 22: hard double sandwich (grey, red, black) with thickened rim. Fig. 7, no. 23: grey sandy ware with brown surfaces and green glaze. Fig. 7, no. 24: hard grey slashed strap-handle with brown surfaces.

Fig. 7, no. 25: rim and neck of a Lyveden-ware jug with moulded upright rim and decoration of yellow strips and pellets.

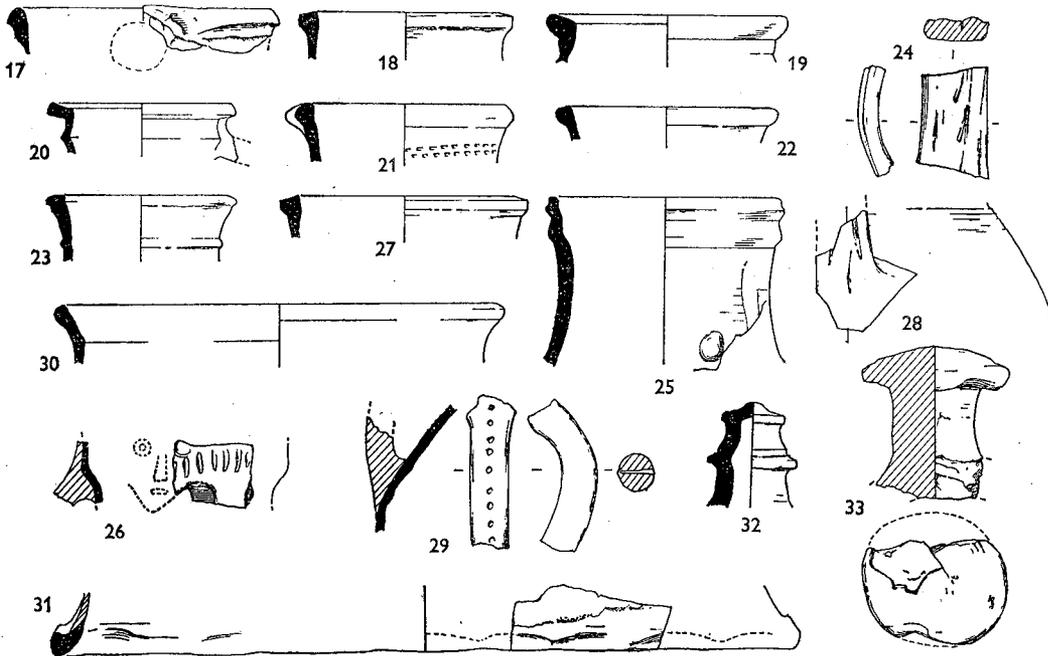


Fig. 7. St Neots Priory: pottery from the penthouse in the West Range, east of Kitchen; below upper floor. Scale $\frac{1}{4}$.

Fig. 7, no. 26: sherd from the neck of a Grimston-ware¹ face jug with circle eyes, straight slashed pointed beard and the start of small arms going down to the shoulder of the jug.

Sherds from jugs of Oxford type. Fig. 7, no. 27: smooth buff rim. Fig. 7, no. 28: shoulder of a buff jug with mottled green glaze and band of rilling on the shoulder; slashed handle. Fig. 7, no. 29: buff rod handle with deep circular stabs and mottled green glaze.

There was only one cooking pot, a rim in hard grey ware with thin everted rim (Fig. 7, no. 30).

Fig. 7, no. 31: small sherd from the rim of a firecover.² Rough brown sandy ware with intense fire-blackening and carbon deposit inside.

Fig. 7, no. 32: hollow knob in developed St Neots ware, possibly from a lid. Fig. 7, no. 33: solid rough knob in rough sandy and shelly ware, presumably from a roof crest, as it is too thick and coarse for a lid.

¹ See p. 93 and Fig. 12, no. 109 for discussion of Grimston ware.

² See *Med. Arch.* v (1961), pp. 265-7, and *Sussex Arch. Coll.* CI (1963), pp. 135-8, for description of firecovers and bibliography. Additional references in B. Cunliffe, *Winchester Excavations, 1949-1960* (1964), I, p. 126 and fig. 45.

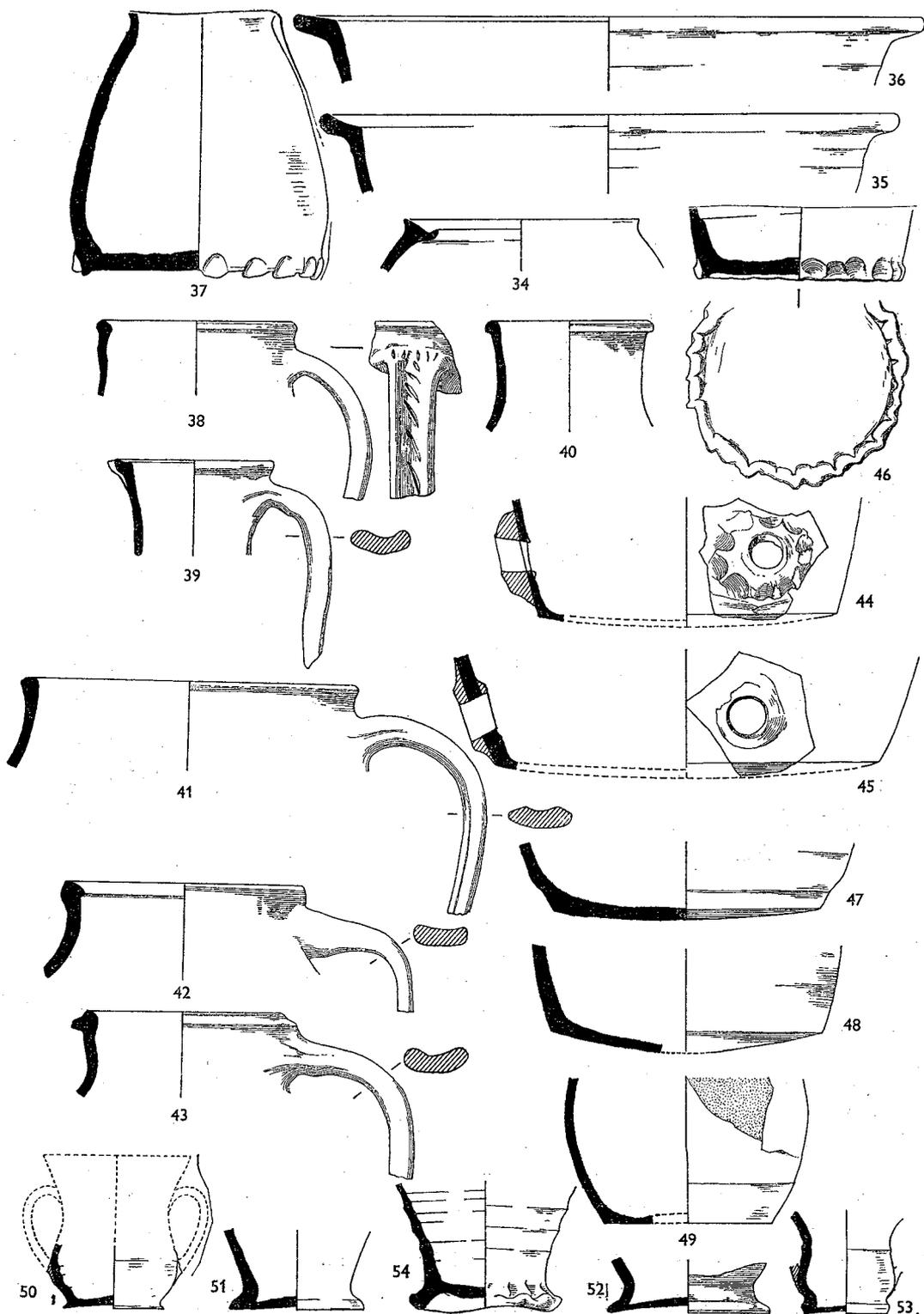


Fig. 8. St Neots Priory: pottery from ditch or pit, east of Dormitory. Scale $\frac{1}{4}$.

Dating

This group is similar in date to that from the kitchen, but there are more sandy wares. A date in the early fourteenth century might be suggested.

(3) DITCH EAST OF MONKS' DORMITORY

Fig. 8, no. 34: cooking pot with moulded bifid rim; hard red sandy ware.

Fig. 8, no. 35: flanged bowl in hard red gritty ware. Fig. 8, no. 36; similar but with double sandwich.

Fig. 8, no. 37: bottom half of a conical jug in a shelly ware, with the shell leached or fired out to give corky appearance; continuous thumbing round the base.

Fig. 8, no. 38: rim of jug and slashed strap handle in hard grey Grimston ware with green glaze.

Fig. 8, nos. 39-40: two jug necks in double sandwich ware, no. 39 with lip and strap handle.

Fig. 8, nos. 41-43: rims of three large jugs or cisterns with strap handles; hard red gritty ware, no. 43 with less tempering.

Fig. 8, nos. 44-45: bases of two cisterns with sagging bases and thumbed or plain bung holes; no. 44 double sandwich, and no. 45 red gritty.

Fig. 8, no. 46: base of a jug in hard red-brown gritty ware; continuous thumbed frilled base.

Fig. 8, nos. 47-48: plain sagging bases of jugs in hard grey gritty ware.

Fig. 8, no. 49: flat base of jug in hard red ware with a bib of white slip, glazed brown on the body and yellow on the slip, patches of glaze inside. The upper part of the bib was possibly decorated with sgraffito decoration.¹ One sherd of sgraffito ware was found in an unstratified context.

Fig. 8, nos. 50-53: bases of Cistercian ware type IV cups.²

Fig. 8, no. 54: frilled base of a Flemish-type stoneware jug, possibly from the Langewehe kilns; patchy brown and grey matt glaze.³

Dating

This group may be dated to the end of the fifteenth century or the start of the sixteenth century by the imported Flemish stoneware and the Cistercian ware.

(4) CISTERN IN SOUTH BAY OF MONKS' DORMITORY UNDERCROFT

(a) *Lower floor*

Fig. 9, no. 55: jug with lip and strap handle in hard grey ware.

(b) *Top floor*

Fig. 9, no. 56: rim of jug in hard grey gritty ware.

Fig. 9, nos. 57-64: series of type IV Cistercian ware cups.

Mrs J. Le Patourel has recently described and defined the main types of Cistercian ware.⁴

¹ G. H. S. Bushnell and J. G. Hurst, 'Some Further Examples of Sgraffito Ware from Cambridge', *Proc. C.A.S.* XLVI (1952), pp. 21-6. For later references see *Proc. C.A.S.* LVIII (1965), p. 114, fig. 16, no. A/US 4 and Pl. VB, and *Med. Arch.* VI-VII (1962-3), pp. 101-2.

² See p. and Fig. 9, nos. 57-64, for discussion of Cistercian ware.

³ B. Cunliffe, *Winchester Excavations, 1949-1960* (1964), I, pp. 142-3, for discussion and bibliography.

⁴ *Pub. Thoresby Soc.* XLIX (1962-4), pp. 116-19 and fig. 38 (type series) and fig. 39 (distribution map). For additional types and new evidence from the Potterton kiln near Leeds, see report by Mr P. Mayes in *Ant. J.* forthcoming.

Type IV is the main type found outside Yorkshire and it is likely that the St Neots examples were made at the Babylon kilns near Ely.¹ There is no dating evidence in the area, but similar cups have been found in London in late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century contexts.²

Fig. 9, no. 65, two sherds from a South Netherlands Maiolica flower vase.³ The ladder medallion is characteristic and there would most likely be the sacred IHS monogram in the centre. Nearly 100 of these vases are now known in all parts of the country and they may be regarded as a type fossil of late fifteenth-century and early sixteenth-century deposits. There is a fragment from the body of one of these vases with the IHS monogram from Chawston Manor, Bedfordshire, in the Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology.

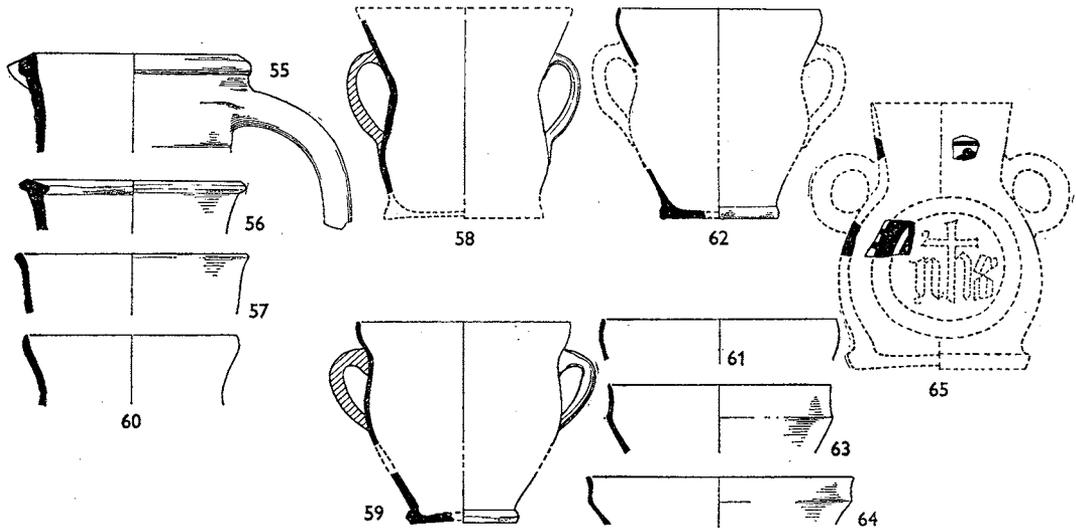


Fig. 9. St Neots Priory: pottery from cistern in Dormitory. Scale $\frac{1}{4}$.

Dating

This group is therefore also well dated to the end of the fifteenth century and the early sixteenth-century, in the closing year of the priory. Late Medieval groups are uncommon so these two groups from the Dormitory area are of considerable interest.

B. UNSTRATIFIED POTTERY OR SINGLE FINDS

The rest of the pottery is either unstratified or from mixed deposits. This has therefore been dealt with by type, rather than by area as with the four groups described above.

HAND-MADE SAXON POTTERY

A few sherds of hand-made Saxon pottery were found but nothing of any size. The presence of these and the sceatta (see p. 41) confirms occupation on the site before the ninth century, but there is hardly anything later which fills the gap between these and developed St Neots ware of the Medieval period.

¹ Material in the Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology and the British Museum.

² Gateway House pit, London, associated with South Netherlands Maiolica as at St Neot's c. 1500 (material in the Guildhall Museum), and from the Treasury site, Whitehall, stratified underneath Henry VIII's Palace of 1532 (material in the London Museum).

³ R. Rackham, 'A Netherlands Maiolica Vase from the Tower of London', *Ant. J.* XIX (1939), pp. 285-90. B. Rackham, *Early Netherlands Maiolica* (1926), pp. 96-106, and pls. XXIV and XXVI for illustrations of examples from London.

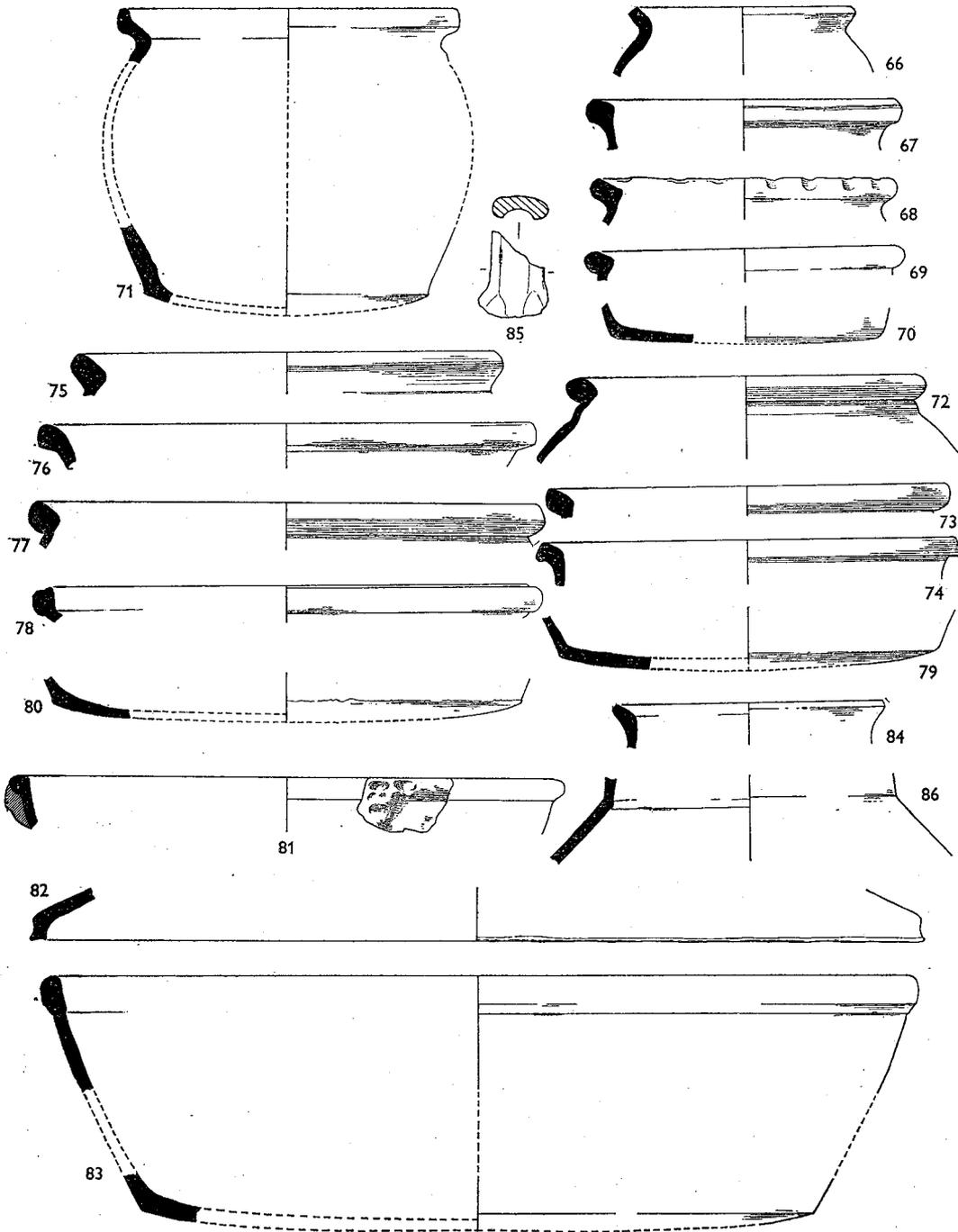


Fig. 10. St Neots Priory: eleventh- to thirteenth-century pottery. Scale $\frac{1}{4}$.

ST NEOTS WARE ELEVENTH TO THIRTEENTH CENTURY

Cooking pots

Fig. 10, no. 66: rim of small cooking pot with everted rim. This was the only example with the small 4-6 in. diameter of the classic Saxo-Norman St Neots series.¹ From the old ground surface north of the kitchen.

Fig. 10, nos. 67-80: a series of developed St Neots ware cooking pots with a considerable variation in rim form and size. All the bases are sagging. Complete profiles were difficult to obtain but they seem to be more of the Medieval squat wide shape (as reconstructed in Fig. 10, no. 71), than the early Norman tall narrow Saxon shape found at Cambridge,² thus confirming a date later than the twelfth century.

Bowls

Fig. 10, no. 81: rim of straight-sided bowl with thickened rim and applied vertical fingered strip. This type of decoration is not common. This could possibly be a small firecover, but there is no confirmation of this in the way of fire-blackening inside, so it has been drawn as a bowl.

Fig. 10, no. 82: rim of a large vessel. These have previously been published as dishes,³ but it is possible they were lids with knobs like Fig. 7, no. 32. This sherd has been drawn in this way, so that this possible interpretation may be borne in mind.

Fig. 10, no. 83: large straight-sided bowl with thickened rim and sagging base.

Jugs

Fig. 10, no. 84: rim of a jug with everted rim. Fig. 10, no. 85: a plain strap handle.

Fig. 10, no. 86: an unusual sherd with a sharp junction at the neck and shoulder. St Neots jugs usually have an even curve at this point. The form is closest to the Stamford pitchers or jars,⁴ but this type has not so far been recognized in St Neots ware.

INTERMEDIATE ST NEOTS SHELLY AND MEDIEVAL SANDY WARE

There is no clear break between the St Neots shelly wares and the Medieval sandy fabrics. Several sherds are tempered both with shell and sand.

Fig. 11, nos. 87-88: two cooking pots with moulded rims, thumb-pressed on the top.

Fig. 11, no. 89: sherd from the body of a jug with bands of rouletting. Fig. 11, no. 90: base of a stabbed strap handle.

Fig. 11, no. 91: sagging base of a jug or cistern with traces of a possible bung-hole.

EARLY MEDIEVAL SANDY WARE

Almost all the wares of the eleventh and twelfth century at St Neots are in the St Neots shell-tempered tradition (see p. 56). The ware develops into medieval forms as it does in Northamptonshire, unlike most of East Anglia where the Saxo-Norman wares continue largely un-

¹ J. G. Hurst, 'Saxo-Norman Pottery in East Anglia, Part I, St Neots Ware', *Proc. C.A.S.* XLIX (1955), p. 67, fig. 8.

² *Proc. C.A.S.* XLIX (1955), p. 59, fig. 4.

³ *Ibid.* p. 57, fig. 3, no. 21. This vessel from Elsworth (not Elmswell as in the caption) may in fact be a firecover from its large size and the thumbing on the outside of the rim, which is characteristic of these vessels, see p. 57, Fig. 7. no. 31.

⁴ *Proc. C.A.S.* LI (1957), p. 50, fig. 3, nos. 20 and 21, and 'Excavations at the Jewry Wall Site, Leicester', *Rep. Res. Com. Soc. Ant.* xv (1948), p. 225, fig. 59, nos. 5 and 6.

changed in shape, with medieval forms in a hard sandy ware running parallel with them. There is only one early medieval sandy rim from St Neots (Fig. 11, no. 92) with a thickened rim characteristic of the later forms in this series.¹ The oblique tool marks and the uneven rim are typical of these semi-hand-made early medieval cooking pots.²

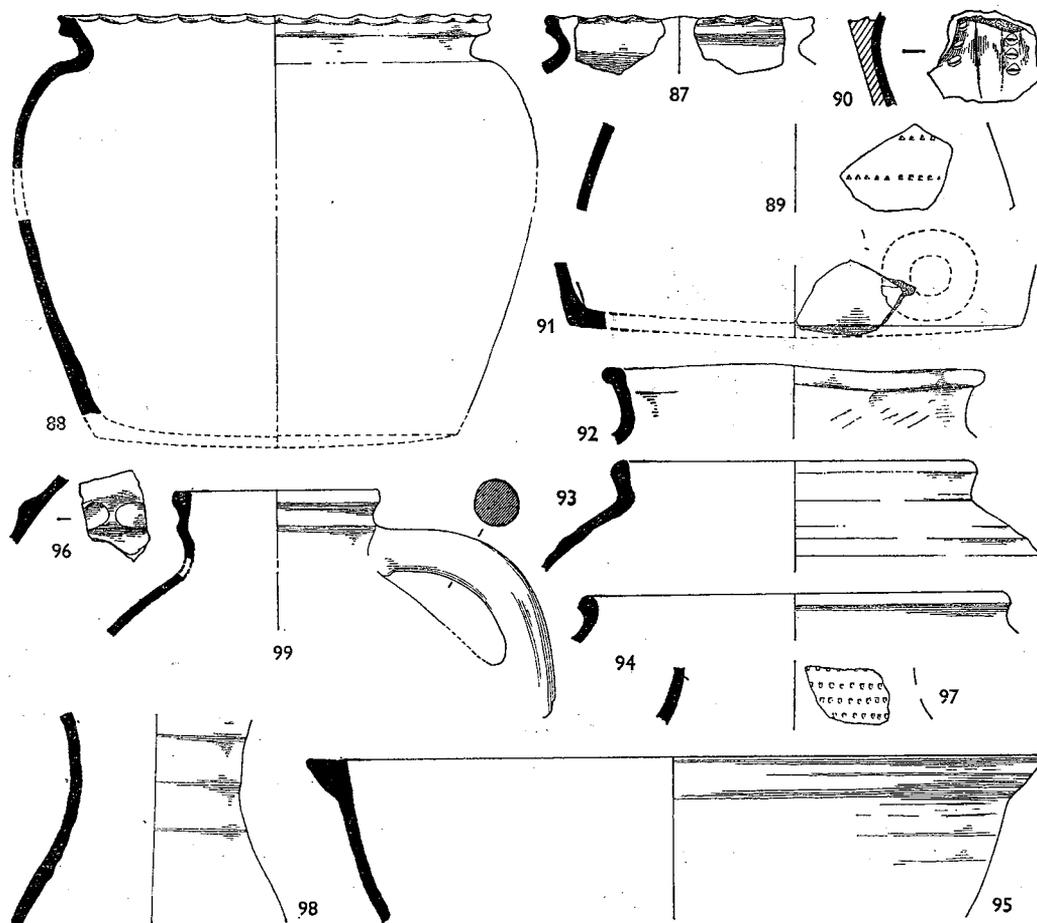


Fig. 11. St Neots Priory: thirteenth-century pottery. Scale $\frac{1}{4}$.

THIRTEENTH-CENTURY GRITTY AND SANDY WARES

Fig. 11, no. 93: cooking-pot with simple rounded rim; rough grey gritty ware. From the drain in yard east of Kitchen. Fig. 11, no. 94: cooking-pot in brown sandy ware with grey core.

Fig. 11, no. 95: bowl with thickened flanged rim; hard brown sandy ware.

Fig. 11, no. 96: grey sandy sherd with thumb band.

Fig. 11, no. 97: neck of a jug in grey sandy ware with bands of rectangular-notch rouletting; from the West Range. Fig. 11, no. 98: neck of jug in red sandy ware with black core.

Fig. 11, no. 99: top part of a globular jug with rod handle; brown sandy ware with grey core.

For discussion of this type see *Med. Arch.* v (1961), pp. 259-16 and *Norf. Arch.* xxxiii (1963), pp. 155-7. For local types see *J. Brit. Arch. Ass.* xxxvii (1964), p. 70, and *Proc. C.A.S.* lviii (1965), pp. 55, 105.

² *Norf. Arch.* xxxiii (1963), p. 157, fig. 8.

THIRTEENTH- AND FOURTEENTH-CENTURY DECORATED NON-LOCAL JUGS

(1) *Oxford type jugs*

Fig. 12, nos. 100–102: rims of jugs in hard buff sandy ware with mottled green glaze. Nos. 101 and 102 have evidence for lips.

Fig. 12, no. 103: shoulder of an ovoid jug; hard buff sandy ware with orange glaze and decoration of brown stripes. Fig. 12, no. 104; slashed strap handle. Fig. 12, no. 105: sherd with band of rectangular-notch rouletting on a vertical applied strip.

These distinctive fabrics, which were made at Brill and other kilns in the Oxford region, are found on many sites in the area, gradually thinning out towards Cambridge where they are found in small quantities.¹

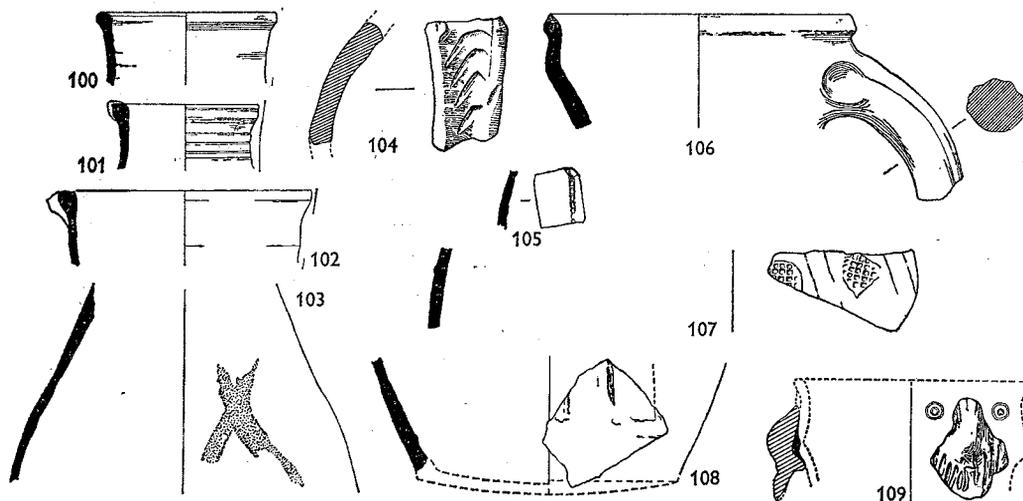


Fig. 12. St Neots Priory: decorated non-local jugs. Scale $\frac{1}{4}$.

(2) *Lyveden ware*

Fig. 12, no. 106: top of a jug with ribbed rod handle, double thumbed at the top. Corky shelly ware with patches of orange glaze. Fig. 12, no. 107: body sherd from a large globular jar with alternate vertical applied yellow strips and pellets with grid stamps. Fig. 12, no. 108: base of a more ovoid jug with vertical applied yellow strips joined at the bottom.

See p. 93 for discussion of Lyveden ware.

(3) *Grimston ware*

Fig. 12, no. 109: sherd from the neck of a face jug in hard grey ware with green glaze; fragment of pointed beard with straight slashing and projecting nose. See p. 93 for discussion of Grimston ware.

LATE MEDIEVAL

Cooking pots

Fig. 13, no. 110: cooking pot in hard grey sandy ware with strongly everted rim.

Fig. 13, no. 111: cooking pot in hard grey overfired ware, with downturned flanged rim.

¹ *Proc. C.A.S.* LVIII (1965), p. 113, with references.

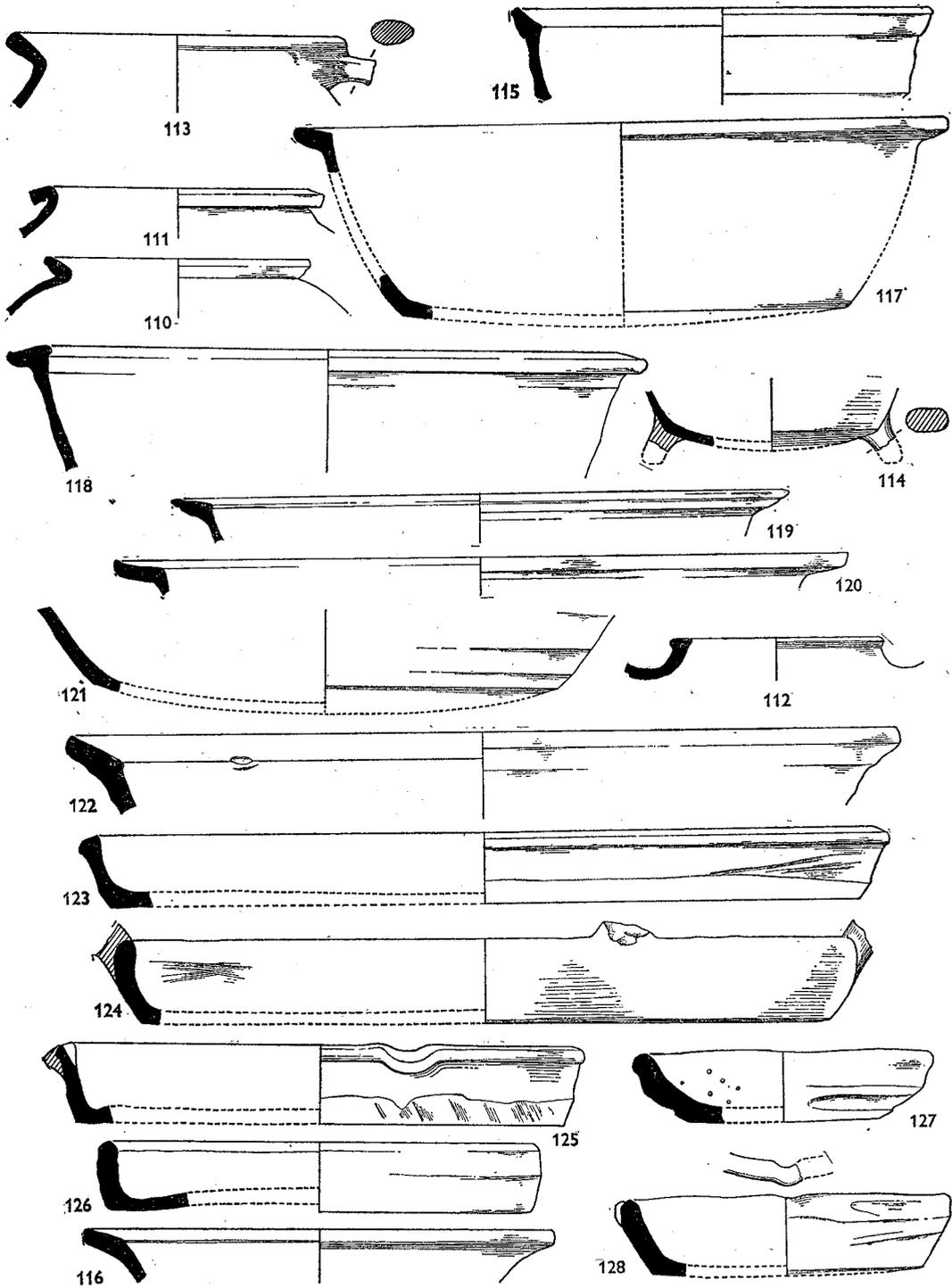


Fig. 13. St Neots Priory: late medieval cooking-pots and bowls. Scale $\frac{1}{4}$.

Fig. 13, no. 112: cooking pot in hard grey sandy ware, with sharply inturned bifid rim.¹

Fig. 13, no. 113: pikpin with oval loop handle and everted simple rim; brown sandy ware with green-brown glaze inside. Fig. 13, no. 114: tripod pipkin with sagging base and oval feet; buff sandy ware with mottled green and yellow glaze inside and out. Early sixteenth century.

Bowls

Fig. 13, no. 115: bowl in hard grey ware with moulded everted rim.

Fig. 13, nos. 116–122: a range of bowls of increasing size and with various flanged rims. All in hard sandy ware: no. 122 brown, nos. 188–120 grey, nos. 116 and 120 red with a black core, and no. 117 double sandwich.

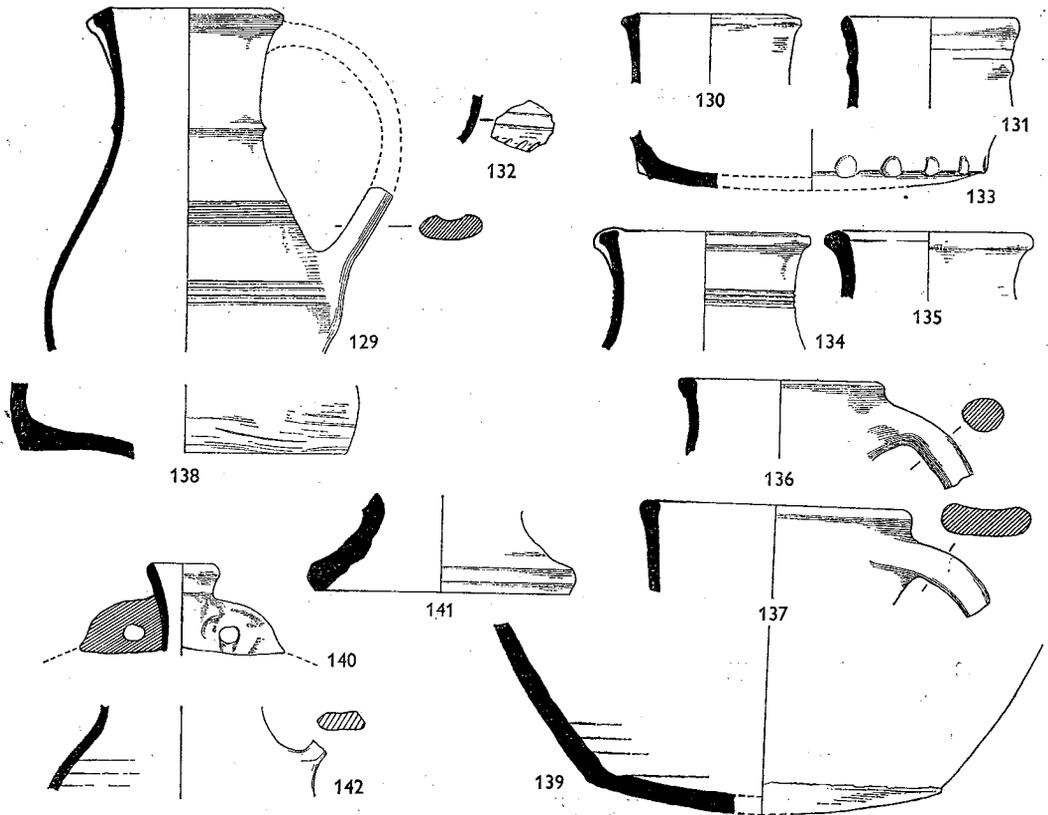


Fig. 14. St Neot's Priory: late medieval jugs. Scale $\frac{1}{4}$.

Fish dishes

Fig. 13, nos. 124–128: a series of fish dishes with various profiles in grey and brown rough sandy wares, usually glazed inside and fire-blackened outside. No. 124 has a sloping lug handle and nos. 125 and 128 have lips at the ends. No. 128 is in a smooth red ware with little tempering.

Jugs

Fig. 14, no. 129–133: jugs in hard grey sandy ware: no. 129 hard black ware with lip, grooved strap handle and bands of sharply cut grooves; no. 130 with a brown core and no. 131 overfired

¹ Compare with the Hartford coin hoard pot dated to soon after 1503, *Proc. C.A.S.* LVIII (1965), p. 140. For two similar pots from Cambridge, one of them in Sgraffito ware, see *Proc. C.A.S.* XLVI (1952), p. 23, fig. 7 and pl. VII.

with a metallic sheen; no. 132 with a band of oblique slashes between grooves as no. 129; no. 133 sagging base with continuous spaced thumbings.

Fig. 14, nos. 134-139: series of jugs in double sandwich (black, red, black) ware: no. 134 has a lip and no. 136 a rod handle; no. 134 has a band of grooves, and no. 137 a strap handle.

Other forms

Fig. 14, no. 140: neck of a costrel with two pierced ears; pink buff ware with thick dark green glaze.

Fig. 14, no. 141: base of a chafing dish; hard red sandy ware with a grey core and patches of white slip.¹ Early sixteenth century.

Import

Fig. 14, no. 142: part of the body of a Flemish stoneware jug; brown glaze with darker specks. This is likely to be from the Raeren kilns.² Early sixteenth century.

These cooking pots, bowls and jugs are typical of the late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century pottery found in the ditch east of the Monks' Dormitory (Fig. 8), or in the cistern in the south bay of the Monks' Dormitory undercroft (Fig. 9). Many of them are clearly of this date, as is shown by the late finds of Cistercian ware and Flemish and South Netherlands imports. The material from Waterbeach Abbey, however, suggests that these hard red, black, and double sandwich (black, red black) wares were already in production by the middle of the fourteenth century (see p. 92). They therefore had a long life from the time when they replaced the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century rougher sandy wares and non-local decorated jugs. Other forms such as the chafing dish (Fig. 14, no. 141) and the tripod pipkins (Fig. 13, nos. 113-114) are post-medieval in character and are not likely to date before the end of the fifteenth century.

APPENDIX 4

HISTORY OF THE PRIORY OF ST NEOTS

MARJORIE CHIBNALL, PH.D

I

Many legends surround the early history of St Neots Priory;³ and since no account of the first foundation written before the twentieth century approached the sources in a critical spirit fresh errors were introduced with each new version. The twelfth-century historians were concerned to prove the claims of Ely to be the mother house of the priory, or of Crowland to possess the bones of St Neot, rather than to establish the truth.⁴ Leland added some of the misconceptions of his day.⁵ G. C. Gorham was an indefatigable collector of early material, but not a critical historian;⁶

¹ For discussion of this type with bibliography and reconstruction of the complete form see *Proc. C.A.S.* LVIII (1965), pp. 122-4, fig. 19, no. S 28/5.

² B. Cunliffe, *Winchester Excavations, 1949-1960* (1964), I pp. 142-3.

³ I would like to thank Professor D. Whitelock for her advice on some of the problems connected with the early history of the priory.

⁴ *Liber Eliensis*, ed. E. O. Blake (Camden 3rd Series, vol. xcii, 1962) pp. 102-4, 188-9; Ordericus Vitalis, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, ed. Le Prévost, II, pp. 283-4. Orderic derived his account from the sub-prior of Crowland.

⁵ Leland, *Collectanea*, iii, 10.

⁶ *The History and Antiquities of Eynesbury and St Neot's* (London, 1820) and *A Supplement to the History and Antiquities of Eynesbury and St Neot's* (London, 1824).

and later writers selected more or less at random from the abundant and mutually incompatible materials offered by Gorham.¹ But in 1904 W. H. Stevenson began the difficult task of sifting the few reliable statements from a great mass of unsubstantiated assertion, and published his findings in the Notes to his edition of *Asser's Life of King Alfred*,² and in 1959 E. O. Blake continued the same task in his notes to the *Liber Eliensis*.³ The conclusions of both these scholars deserve both to be more widely known and to be amplified.

It seems plain that if any kind of religious foundation existed before the late tenth century nothing whatever is known about it.⁴ The *Liber Eliensis*⁵ contains the first reliable information extant about the priory, because it incorporates the substance of an Anglo-Saxon charter, though it is only trustworthy when citing the charter. The writer's suggestion that St Neot himself had founded a priory here which was destroyed in the Danish invasions is, as Stevenson said, 'evidently an attempt to account for the monastery bearing his name'. But the statements that are plainly based on the charter contain the only sound evidence we have for the foundation of the pre-Conquest priory with the encouragement of Aethelwold, bishop of Winchester.

'When [Aethelwold]', runs the narrative, 'attended the dedication of the church [of Ely] Leofric, a man devoted to God, and his wife Leoflaed sought advice from him and abbot Brihtnoth and begged them to establish monks [at Eynesbury]. They willingly granted this request, and despatched some monks from Ely and others from Thorney. Further [Leofric and Leoflaed] publicly begged the bishop and abbot to guide and counsel these monks for the love of God and holy religion as they would their own monks, to ensure that they should follow the dictates of their rule, and that the place should always be subject to the abbot of Ely and his successors; also they asked that the prior of the house should be chosen from the monastery of Ely, unless one of their own number could be found worthy of office, and then he should be appointed with the counsel and consent of the brethren at Ely. To provide for the needs of the priory they gave 18 (*sic*) hides of land as perpetual endowment for the food and clothing of the monks: namely 2 hides in the vill of Eynesbury, 6 at Waresley, and 9 at Gamlingay. The witnesses of this gift were bishop Aescwig, who then consecrated the church, ealdorman Aethelwine, Eadric Pape, Aelfhelm Polga and others who were present at the consecration, and this was confirmed in three deeds written in English. Bishop Aethelwold had one, which is still preserved as evidence in his church; bishop Aescwig another, and they themselves kept the third.'

There seems no reason to doubt that a core of truth is contained in this account. The names of the founders, however, are in some doubt. The Ely writer may be assumed to have copied them from the Saxon charter, and there is a little supplementary evidence suggesting that Leofric came of a family with land in the region.⁶ But the Valuation of the Priory made in 1534 includes alms for prayers for the souls of the first founder, who is called Earl Aylric, and his wife Elflæda.⁷ Since

¹ E.g. Dugdale, *Monasticon*, ed. Caley, Ellis and Bandinel, III, pp. 462 ff.; A. A. Porée, *Histoire de l'Abbaye du Bec* (Évreux, 1901), I, pp. 505-8; G. Houghton Brown, *History of St Neot and of his Priory* (St Neots, 1937).

² W. H. Stevenson, *Asser's Life of King Alfred together with the Annals of St Neot's* (Oxford, 1904), pp. 260, 296-8.

³ *Op. cit.*, p. 420.

⁴ Even Gorham (*op. cit.* p. 49) hesitated to accept the existence of an earlier house dedicated to St Ernulph.

⁵ See p. 103. This was written probably in the second quarter of the twelfth century; the attribution to Thomas of Ely is considered doubtful by Dr Blake.

⁶ Leofric had a brother, Aegelnoth, who made a claim to land in Wangford (*Liber Eliensis*, p. 104).

⁷ Gorham, *op. cit.* pp. 332, 48 n. 4. Leland obviously took his information from this source, and calls them Ethelric and Ethelfleda. I have been unable to discover any Earl Aethelric whose wife is known to have been called Ethelfleda. It seems too a remarkable coincidence that the endings of the two sets of names should be the same.

it is by no means clear who is meant by this statement in the Valor, and the names could have been inaccurately copied, it seems inadvisable to build speculative narrative of the foundation round them¹ and the unreliable *Lives* of St Neot. The account in the *Liber Eliensis* is more firmly grounded in objective reality.

The narrative describes two stages in the process of foundation: the first approval of the project by Bishop Aethelwold and Abbot Brihtnoth at the dedication of the restored church of Ely in 974, and the formal foundation and endowment of the priory at the dedication of the church of Eynesbury, which must have been some years later. Discussion of the date of foundation seems sometimes to have been confused by telescoping the two ceremonies. Whilst there is a strong probability that the project was approved in 974, the date suggested by Stevenson, namely between 978 and 994, or possibly more narrowly 979–84,² is a likely one for the formal foundation and dedication.

There is nothing in the substance of the charter cited by the Ely historian to suggest any connexion with St Neot at this date. His body must have been brought from Cornwall soon afterwards, and was said to lie at Eynesbury in a list of English saints and their burial places which was compiled in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries and completed c. 1020.³ If the Crowland story is to be believed the body was removed almost immediately, either because of danger from the Danish raids or because it was not sufficiently venerated. The monks of Crowland claimed that it had been entrusted by Leviova or Leofgiva of Eynesbury to her brother Osketel, abbot of Crowland, and had remained there into the early twelfth century. But this story, retailed by Orderic Vitalis, rests solely on information given to Orderic c. 1115 by the sub-prior of Crowland.⁴ It is contradicted by the evidence of the eleventh-century list of saints, which suggests that the body was still at Eynesbury after the death of Osketel, and by the testimony of St Anselm himself, who certified, probably about 1080, that he had found it intact at Eynesbury.⁵ On the whole the very scanty evidence suggests that if the relics were ever taken to Crowland it was only as a temporary refuge, and they were restored soon afterwards.

The endowment of the priory at its foundation, according to the deed cited in the *Liber Eliensis*, consisted of 18 (*sic*) hides of land made up of 2 hides in Eynesbury, 6 at Waresley and 9 at Gamlingay. Even this modest endowment must have been largely dispersed as a result of invasion or secularization before the time of the Norman conquest. According to Domesday Book, by 1086 Eudo fitzHerbert held 18 hides in Gamlingay and there is no trace of any connexion with the priory of St Neot.⁶ Probably the connexion was severed at an early date. But Robert fitzWimarc held land both in Eynesbury and Waresley by 1066,⁷ and his usurpation may have been recent since some restoration to the church was later made in both manors. Rohais, wife of Richard of Clare, who acquired the manor of Eynesbury before 1086, refounded a priory there, and the monks received rights to some of the tithes in the parish at an early date.⁸ After Waresley

¹ Gorham (*loc. cit.*) places them in the late tenth century and Houghton Brown (*op. cit.* p. 8) in the time of Alfred.

² Before the death in 984 of Bishop Aethelwold, who received a copy of the foundation charter, and after Aescwig became bishop of Dorchester, for which there is no positive evidence before 979. Both Ealdorman Aethelwine and Aelfhelm Polga appear in other deeds at about this time (D. Whitelock, *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, pp. 125, 133–4).

³ Liebermann, *Die Heiligen Englands*, p. 13, II, no. 24.

⁴ *Hist. Eccl.* II, pp. 283–4. Leviova is presumably the daughter of Leofric and Leoflaed.

⁵ *Opera*, ed. Schmitt, III, Ep. 473.

⁶ *V.C.H. Cambs.* I, p. 384. Cf. *Liber Eliensis*, ed. Blake, p. 420. The property in Gamlingay later held by the priory seems to derive from a number of small gifts in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (Gorham, *op. cit.* pp. xliii–xliv, xlvii–l).

⁷ *V.C.H. Hunts.* I, pp. 353, 348. Robert fitzWimarc was a palace official of Edward the Confessor of Norman or possibly Breton origin; he became sheriff of Essex. Cf. F. Barlow, *The Life of King Edward the Confessor* (Nelson's Medieval Texts), p. 76, n. 4.

⁸ Gorham, *op. cit.* pp. 74, 135, 302.

passed to Robert fitzWimarc's son, Swein of Essex, Swein's man Tuold granted the tithes to the priory.¹ A grant of tithes was very frequently a means of compensating a monastery for the secularization of land which had formerly been in its possession. Beyond these meagre facts nothing positive can be known of the Anglo-Saxon priory; even its exact site is uncertain. The connexion with Ely may have been very much slighter than the author of the *Liber Eliensis* alleged; the numerous land pleas of the monks of Ely do not include any attempt to recover the lands originally assigned to St Neot.²

II

With the refoundation of the priory after the Norman Conquest and its subjection to the Abbey of Bec we are on surer ground. In spite of some uncertainty about the exact date of refoundation, St Anselm's letters make it plain that monks of Bec were sent to England at the request of Rohais and Richard of Clare soon after Anselm became abbot, and therefore probably in 1080 or 1081.³ It is difficult, in view of the dating of Anselm's letters and his visits to England, to believe that the monks of St Neot who held land in Eynesbury from Rohais in 1086 can still have been monks of Ely and not monks of Bec.⁴ The first monks were sent under the direction of Richard, possibly though not certainly the Richard who later became abbot of St Werburgh's Chester, and they included Henry, a former cellarer of Bec or one of its French cells and Henry de Gournay. But in spite of Anselm's admonitions to the patrons, adequate endowment and more formal establishment of a priory seem to have been slow to come; in 1086 the monks had only three ploughlands worth 4 pounds sterling in Eynesbury, and after the death of Gilbert of Clare his son Richard became more interested in the substitution of monks of Bec for canons in the decayed college of St John the Baptist within the castle of Clare. Anselm's interest, fortunately, continued: his personal devotion to St Neot led him to take back a small fragment of bone to Bec, and establish the cult of the saint there;⁵ and he promised spiritual benefits to all who were prepared to contribute towards building a new church in honour of the saint. By 1100 benefactions were coming in; in 1113 the new church was dedicated, and Rohais gave the whole of her manor of Eynesbury with the royal assent.⁶ 1113 is the year of formal refoundation according to the Chronicle of Bec,⁷ but monks of the abbey must by then have been at Eynesbury for more than thirty years. Substantial endowment came, in particular from members of the Clare family, and within a few years Henry I had granted valuable privileges, including the Thursday market and an annual three-day fair.⁸ Before the end of the century papal privileges had secured the appropriation of churches. The priory became one of the largest of the cells of Bec in England. Moreover, its reputation as a place of pilgrimage as well as its key position at the convergence of many routes made it for about two hundred years a house of some standing among the moderately sized religious houses in England.⁹ By the end of the thirteenth century, when it was probably at the height of its

¹ *V.C.H. Hunts*, II, pp. 376, 378.

² Cf. E. O. Blake, *op. cit.* p. 188, n. 3.

³ I have discussed the question of date and the early history of the Norman priory in 'The relationship of Saint Anselm with the English dependencies of the Abbey of Bec, 1079-1093' in *Spicilegium Beccense* (Paris, 1959), I, pp. 521-30.

⁴ *V.C.H. Hunts*, I, p. 353. W. H. Stevenson, *op. cit.* p. 260, cautiously writes that 'St Neot's is mentioned in Domesday without any hint of dependence upon Bec'. But at that date the future status of the community may still have been uncertain.

⁵ *Opera*, ed. Schmitt, III, Ep. 473; F. Wormald, *English Benedictine Kalendars after A.D. 1100* (Henry Bradshaw Society, 1946), I, p. vii.

⁶ Gorham, *op. cit.* p. 299.

⁷ A. A. Porée, *Histoire de l'Abbaye du Bec*, I, p. 454, n. 2.

⁸ *V.C.H. Hunts*, I, p. 386, II, p. 341.

⁹ The statement in the *V.C.H. Hunts*, I, p. 387, that the value decreased rapidly owing to the constant change of superiors and that 'the tone was lowered as in most alien priories' is based on no evidence at all earlier than the fourteenth century, and seems quite out of line with all that is known of the priory in the earlier period. The statement that most of the revenue went to Bec is untrue.

prosperity; it had a prior and eighteen monks, and its revenues in 1294 were estimated at £206. 12s. 6d. Only a token pension of £1. 10s. was owed to Bec.¹ Priors were sent from the mother house and were removable at the will of the abbot; but their tenure of office might be for ten or even twenty years and consequently the administration was reasonably stable. So the priory had a dual role: it occupied an important place in the internal history of the order of Bec, and in addition had local standing. Naturally its existence shaped the parochial and commercial development of its own region.

In the early part of the twelfth century the priory stood in the parish of Eynesbury. Increased settlement around the priory stimulated the growth of a new parish. At first the parishioners may have worshipped at an altar in the nave of the priory church: parochial rights certainly existed in the time of Robert de Chesney, bishop of Lincoln (1148-66).² The monks were allowed to appropriate the rectory in 1183, and a church certainly existed by 1218-23.³ The separation of the two parishes must have been a gradual process; and the records of tithe disputes in the twelfth century show how many rights had to be clarified before there could be any clear territorial division. Payment of tithe might draw a hamlet into a new parish: but the presence of powerful lords of the manor in Eynesbury ensured that nothing would be lost by either side without a fight. Although Simon de St Liz had granted the advowson of Eynesbury church to St Neots in 1111 his heirs resisted the grant, and in 1204 Saher de Quincy, earl of Winchester, recovered the advowson for himself.⁴ The prior's rights were restricted to half the tithes, including tithes from Weald which had once been claimed as part of the parish of St Neots; by 1291 these were assessed as a portion of £6. 13s. 4d. payable from the rectory of Eynesbury to the Priory. But the compromise of 1204 was more a definition of rights to tithe than a formal separation of the two parishes; and there is no record of when, if ever, beating the bounds of the parishes began.

One factor hastening parochial division was the growth of settlement and increasing commercial importance. Roads from Huntingdon, Kimbolton and Bedford converged on the west side of the river, and from Godmanchester, Cambridge and Sandy on the east side. The river itself was navigable for barges carrying corn and other heavy goods to the coast, and the main road from London to York was not far away. A ford, possibly at Eaton, or a ferry certainly existed nearby from an early date. Grants of a weekly market and fair by Henry I, confirmed and augmented by Henry II,⁵ ensured that any future commercial development would be focused on St Neots. A wooden bridge had been built there by 1180. For a time the community remained essentially a thriving village community, with a village market for the exchange of agricultural produce, particularly corn. Thirteenth-century gifts and sales to the priory in the village of St Neots included a few messuages; but the names of the inhabitants do not indicate local industry apart from one fuller, the usual village craftsmen, and a number of goldsmiths, who would naturally be attracted by service to the priory.⁶ Rising market profits, however, suggest a slight expansion of trade in the fourteenth and considerable expansion in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries: market profits rose from £3 in 1324 to £6. 13s. 4d. in 1370 and £9. 6s. 8d. in 1535; and rents in the same period increased from £10. 5s. 6d. to £20. 3s. 4d. and finally £56. 8s. 6d.⁷ From an early

¹ M. Morgan, *The English Lands of the Abbey of Bec* (Oxford, 1946), pp. 121-2.

² Gorham, *op. cit.* pp. x-xi. A deed in MS Cotton Faustina A iv fo. 37^v refers to the tithes of two hides in Weald 'que monachi dicebant esse de parochia Sancti Neoti'.

³ *V.C.H. Hunts*, II, p. 341.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 279; Gorham, *op. cit.* pp. 301-2.

⁵ Gorham, p. 310, assigns the charter granting the fair to Henry I. The *V.C.H. Hunts*, II, p. 341, suggests that the fair was held under a charter of Henry II, but the monks certainly produced a charter of Henry I mentioning a fair when they defended their liberties in 1285 (*Placita de Quo Warranto*, p. 301). At this date they had three annual three-day fairs.

⁶ Gorham, *op. cit.* pp. xxi-xxiv, xlv, lix-lxi.

⁷ *English Lands of Bec*, p. 130, n. 2.

date too the shrine of St Neot attracted pilgrims, and travellers were numerous. Papal bulls of Lucius III in 1183 and Celestine III in 1194 granting the impropriation of the tithes of St Neots, Eynesbury and Turvey justified the grant on the grounds that the priory was situated at a junction of important routes and had to entertain many guests; this duty, as well as obligations to the poor and the needs of the monks themselves, made their existing revenues inadequate.¹ Some of the travellers might be persons of eminence: in 1156 the abbot of St Alban's and the bishops of Lincoln, London, Durham and Hereford met to settle a dispute;² and Henry III was a fairly frequent visitor, as the dating of his letters shows.³ Later judicial assizes were sometimes held at St Neots.⁴

A few of the priors were men of note: the first, Martin, was appointed abbot of Peterborough in 1132,⁵ and a later prior, Hugh, was one of the candidates in the Bury St Edmunds election in 1180; he was considered 'a man of great religion and very circumspect both in matters temporal and spiritual'.⁶ On the whole the priory was not involved in political events; though before the siege of Bedford in 1224 William Martel deposited some of his valuables there and they were surrendered to the crown after his execution.⁷ One prior too was summoned to Parliament by Simon de Montfort in December 1264⁸—an indication of the relative prominence of the priory among the medium-sized houses. On the whole the thirteenth-century priors seem to have been conscientious administrators and Prior Reginald (1226–30) and his successor Hugh de Fagernum (1230–48) were responsible for the compilation of the principal cartulary of the priory (MS Cotton Faustina A iv). Another cartulary of deeds relating to the property of the Sacristy dates from 1286 when John de Bois Renaud was sacrist.⁹ In addition to lands the priory acquired a small library and some handsome service books, of which the illuminated Psalter, now Lambeth Palace Library MS 563, is the finest surviving volume.¹⁰

All the priors were monks of Bec, appointed by the abbot and removable at will. In the thirteenth century a procedure of nomination by the abbot, approval by the patron, the earl of Clare, and presentation to the bishop of Lincoln for induction in the priory was hammered out in a series of controversies.¹¹ It seems plain that the bond between the mother abbey and its dependencies, though often strained, was no mere formality. Even though the priors enjoyed a very considerable degree of independence, had their own seals, and pleaded in their own names when it suited them to do so,¹² the group formed a community for many purposes. They successfully resisted the attempts of the English Benedictine abbots to impose on them statutes curtailing the monastic offices and raising taxes to support a house of studies at Oxford: the justification for their resistance was that they belonged to their own Order of Bec.¹³ In more informal ways property might be leased to another prior of Bec rather than to a stranger; the prior of St Neots leased Charlton in Blunham from the prior of Meulan, a French cell of Bec, for 12 marks

¹ Gorham, *op. cit.* pp. 303–4, 318. The suggestion in the *V.C.H. Hunts.* II, p. 339, that the grant of Pope Lucius was intended to maintain a hospice for the poor seems to be a misreading of the text: guests were almost certainly housed in the priory itself.

² Eyton, *Itinerary of Henry II*, p. 20.

³ The Close Rolls contain letters dated at St Neots in July 1229, March and November 1235, March and October 1236, etc.

⁴ E.g. *Cartularium Monasterii de Rameseia*, ed. W. H. Hart and A. P. Lyon (Rolls Series), I, 178, III, 66.

⁵ Gorham, *op. cit.* p. cxxxviii.

⁶ *The Chronicle of Jocelyn of Brakelond*, ed. H. E. Butler (Nelson's Medieval Texts), p. 22.

⁷ *Close Rolls 1216–1225*, pp. 448, 449.

⁸ Gorham, *op. cit.* pp. cxl–cxli.

⁹ British Museum, MS Stowe 941.

¹⁰ N. R. Ker, *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain*, p. 170.

¹¹ Cf. *English Lands of Bec*, pp. 25–9; Gorham, *op. cit.* p. cxlii.

¹² *English Lands of Bec*, pp. 32–3.

¹³ This dispute is fully documented; cf. W. A. Pantin, *Chapters of the English Black Monks* (Camden Series), III, pp. 263–75.

annually.¹ The kind of personal contacts that might occur are well illustrated by the deed of 1260, in which Prior William of St Neots granted a pension to Richard of Wilsford to support him in the schools until he could be presented to a rectory. The grant provided for Richard to reside at St Neots during vacation or at any other time if he wished, and allowed him a horse from the priory stables for riding to or from any schools within England. The deed was witnessed by Richard, prior of Ogbourne and proctor of Bec in England, and Henry of St Neots, prior of Wilsford. Wilsford was a small English cell of Bec, and the names indicate a somewhat complex net of personal relationships.²

The evidence for the twelfth and thirteenth centuries is uneven, but it does not bear out the picture of steady decline painted in the Victoria County History. On the contrary, the priory seems to have been fairly prosperous and well administered, with resources to spare for books and buildings and the provision of pensions for study. It suffered occasional disasters, such as the collapse of the bell-tower about 1265, when many charters were lost;³ and emergency rebuilding may have been responsible for the debt to Meulan some twenty years later. But from the end of the thirteenth century the priory suffered the fate of all alien priories, and the bulk of its resources were diverted into the royal treasury during the increasingly frequent wars with France.⁴ The first extensive seizure of property came in 1294, when Edward I demanded an annual farm of £150 from the priory of St Neots, and had the monks moved to the manor of Turvey on the grounds that the Ouse was a navigable river, and they might be guilty of spying. They returned to their priory a few months later and were not moved again, but the confiscation lasted until 1303. During the second period of confiscation from 1324-7 the farm exacted was £160; and this same farm was imposed again in 1337. The Hundred Years' War meant almost continual confiscation, apart from a few years after the truce of Brétigny in 1360; and it was during this period that the priory suffered the waste and dilapidation over-emphasized by some writers. Recruitment of monks and appointment of priors became more difficult. In 1378 three French monks were given permission to return to Bec from St Neots,⁵ whilst three others remained together with Prior William of St Vaast who combined the offices of proctor of Ogbourne and prior of St Neots. After the death of Prior William in 1404 the next prior, an Englishman named Edward Salisbury, was presented by the king. Only two French monks and a small handful of English monks remained, and continued existence as a cell of Bec was plainly impossible. The patron, the earl of Stafford,⁶ sought and obtained letters patent of denization in 1409. From that date the priory was an independent house, electing its own prior and filled mainly by monks from the district round about.

III

The last phase in the history of the priory is illustrated chiefly from visitation records and occasional valuations. The dismal picture of dilapidation painted in the petition for denization seems to have been a true one: when bishop Gray visited the priory over twenty years later, in 1432, he found the buildings still in serious disrepair, numbers small and discipline poor.⁷ His

¹ Gorham, *op. cit.* pp. xxxvi-xxxvii. This rent was seriously in arrears in 1286, when the prior of St Neots owed the prior of Meulan 186 marks (Porée, *Histoire de l'Abbaye du Bec*, II, p. 111).

² Gorham, *op. cit.* p. liv.

³ *Placita de Quo Warranto*, p. 301.

⁴ For full accounts of the confiscations see *English Lands of Bec*, part III, pp. 118 ff.; D. J. A. Matthew, *The Norman Monasteries and their English Possessions* (Oxford, 1962), pp. 81 ff.

⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 153, 157.

⁶ After the death of Gilbert of Clare at Bannockburn in 1314 the Clare estates were divided among his three daughters; and the patronage of St Neots passed through his daughter Margaret to her daughter Margaret, wife of Ralph, Earl of Stafford.

⁷ *Visitations of Religious Houses* (Lincoln Record Society, vol. 7, 1914), ed. A. Hamilton Thompson, I, pp. 109-11.

injunctions began with the preamble reserved for monasteries in the gravest state of disorder. Incidentally they contain a good deal of information about the conventual buildings. There appears to have been no proper guest house or servants' hall, and all kinds of secular persons were eating in the frater with the monks: the bishop commanded the monks to take their meals in the hall by the prior's lodging until proper provision could be made. There were no carels for the brethren in the cloister, and the bell-tower needed repair: Gray instructed the prior to install two small bells to be rung in the cloister and at meal times. Whilst there is no suggestion of gaps in the priory enclosure, the door leading to the town on the south side of the nave of the conventual church seems to have been left open at all times, and all were free to come and go as they chose.

Seven years later, when Bishop Alnwick visited the priory in 1439, conditions had if anything deteriorated.¹ There was still no separate frater; the roof of the church was so dilapidated that rain poured in, the bell-tower was still in ruins, and there was a breach in the priory enclosure through which monks and townspeople alike were free to pass as they chose. The convent was in debt, and the prior did not render account and failed to clear himself of a serious charge of simony.

Later in the fifteenth century the material condition of the priory improved. Mr C. F. Tebbutt has shown from archaeological evidence that the monks then enlarged the area available for letting by moving back the priory enclosure half way across the old cemetery, and thus increasing the area for shops around the market square.² The sharp rise in rents and market profits are additional proof of this.³ There seems to have been an improvement in temporal administration, and when Bishop William Smith visited the priory in 1507 he found the conventual buildings in better repair: the only property singled out as specially in need of restoration was the Grange at Hardwick.⁴ Spiritual recovery, however, was slower: the bishop found many irregularities in the observance of the Rule, and the whole tone of the priory suggests that it was more like a comfortable club than a Benedictine monastery. The small size of the community must have been demoralizing. Numbers were slow to rise, and throughout the century visitations show that there were only eight or nine monks with the prior. There may possibly have been a revival a little later: between 1518 and 1530 the numbers rose from nine to thirteen monks, and there was a noticeable improvement in discipline. Bishop Longland's inquiries in 1530 elicited an almost uniform chorus of 'omnia bene', varied by the reply of one monk that everything was perfect.⁵

So on the eve of the Dissolution conditions in the priory of St Neots may well have been better than at any time since the late thirteenth century. There were still eleven monks in 1534, but naturally numbers dwindled in the critical years that came after. The Dissolution followed the normal pattern. When the priory was surrendered into the king's hand in December, 1539, only seven monks and the prior, John Raunds, remained. They received pensions of varying amounts, and the priory lands were distributed to secular owners.⁶ The buildings must have been used as stone quarries for constructing new houses in the town and elsewhere, and almost all traces of the priory above ground disappeared.

¹ *Visitations of Religious Houses* (Lincoln Record Society, vol. 21, 1929), ed. A. Hamilton Thompson, III, 320-7.

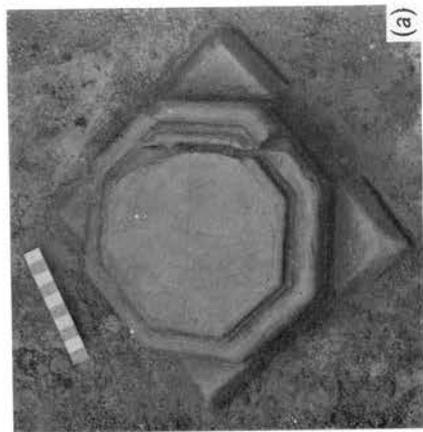
² C. F. Tebbutt, 'Excavations at St Neots, Huntingdonshire', *Proc. C.A.S.* XLIX (1956), pp. 85-6.

³ *Supra*, p. 71.

⁴ Gorham, *op. cit.* p. cxlviii. note o. Revenues should indeed have been adequate: the estimated income in the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* was £241. 11s. 4½d. (Dugdale, *Monasticon*, III, p. 483).

⁵ *Visitations in the Diocese of Lincoln, 1517-31* (Lincoln Record Society, vol. 37, 1947), ed. A. Hamilton Thompson, III, pp. 96-7. Replies range from 'Omnia bene' to 'perfecta sunt omnia'; the only criticism of one monk is unfortunately illegible.

⁶ Gorham, *op. cit.* pp. 86-7; *V.C.H. Hunts.* I, p. 387.



(a)



(b)



(c)



(d)

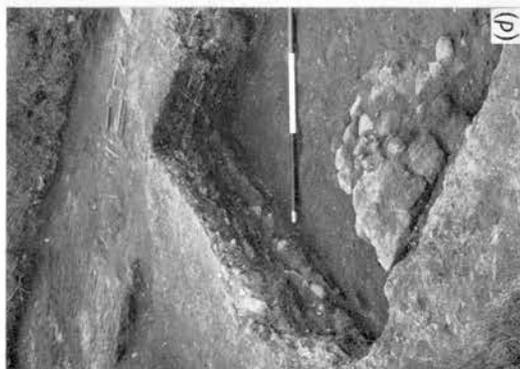
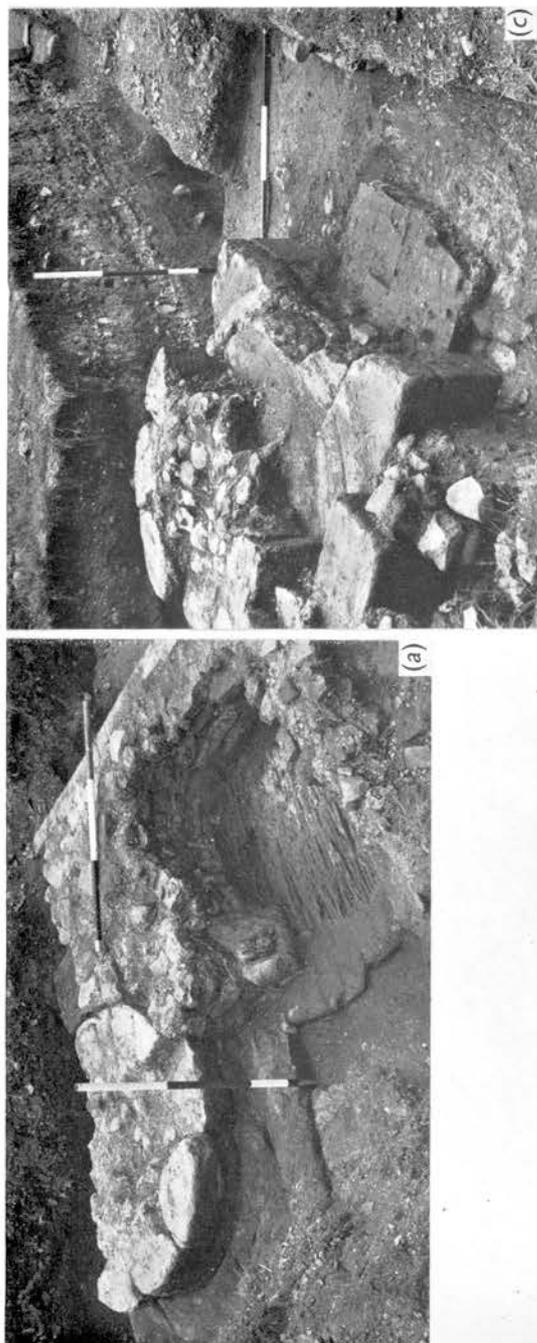


(e)

St Neots Priory. (a) Thirteenth century column base from Dormitory. (b) Arcading reset in cellar of 15 Market Square, St Neots. (c) Door-hinges from north end of West Range. (d) North-east corner of Cloister. (e) North-east corner of Rere-dormitory.



St Neots Priory. (a) Refectory wall with brick screens partition. (b) Drain and soakaway in yard. (c) South-east corner of Infirmary. (d) Wall at north end of West Range.



St Neots Priory: the Kitchen. (a) Norman column with fifteenth-century oven built against it. (b) Fifteenth-century ovens. (c) Norman column with twelfth-century hearth beside it. Section through floor layers beyond. (d) Destroyed Norman column base; ranging-pole on level of original floor. Above are later floor-levels and fifteenth-century hearth at top.

PROCEEDINGS OF
THE CAMBRIDGE ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY

VOLUME LIX
JANUARY 1966 TO DECEMBER 1966

40s. net.

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