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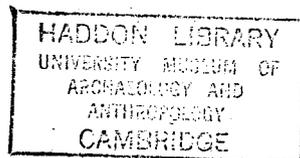
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(INCORPORATING THE CAMBS & HUNTS ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY)



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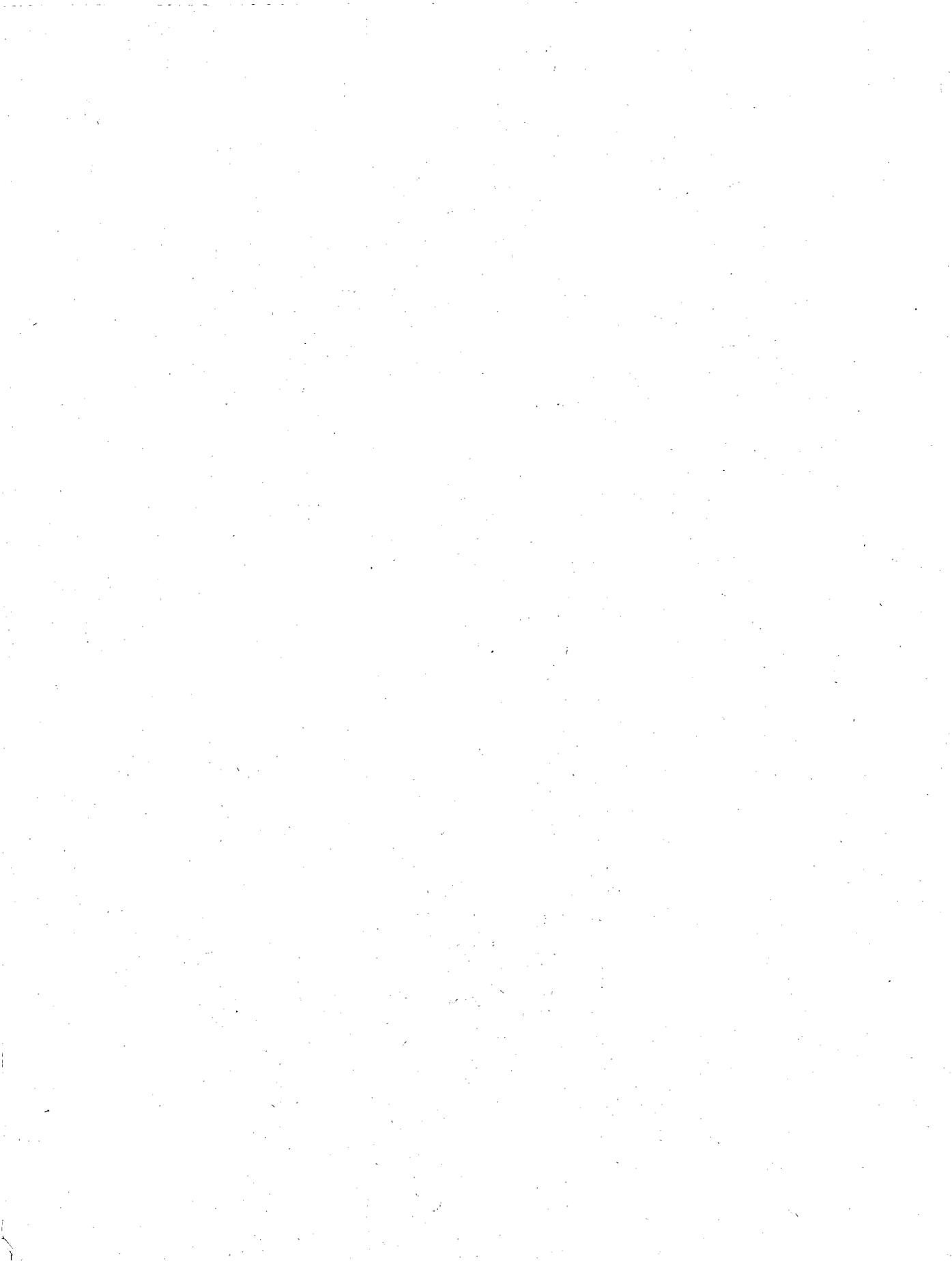
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1969

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THE CHURCH OF THE CAMBRIDGE DOMINICANS

F. H. STUBBINGS

THE Dominican Priory in Cambridge was founded in 1238, or not long before (Hinnebusch, p. 89; cf. Palmer, p. 137). Between its dissolution and the foundation of Emmanuel College in 1584 it is known that the site and buildings, lying in the angle of Preachers Street (now St Andrew's Street) and Preachers Lane (now Emmanuel Street), passed through the possession of various private owners; but we have no record of the uses to which they were put. There may have been some demolition for the sake of the materials; but when Ralph Symons was appointed as architect for the new foundation at least parts of the conventual buildings were still standing, and it is well known that the Dominican church was by him converted into the buttery, hall, and fellows' parlour of the College. This change of function is perhaps the only basis for the statement often made that, *per contra*, the original chapel of the College (now known as the Old Library) was an adaptation of the Dominican refectory. The clunch core of the Old Library walls, it is true, may be medieval, but beyond this we cannot go; and those who seek in this alleged transposition of uses an index of the Puritan founder's scorn for past traditions might well notice instead the perhaps significant coincidence that his new college was designed to produce, from the site of the learned Friars Preachers, an educated preaching clergy. Some of the red brick buildings to be seen along the St Andrew's Street side of the site in Loggan's engraving of 1688 (and in an oil painting of similar date in the College) may also be Dominican in origin: there are medieval-looking buttresses (one is visible at the right-hand side of Fig. 1), and a Gothic doorway or two; but these ranges have been long since replaced, and we cannot be sure. Richard Lyne's engraved map of 1574 (reprinted by Clark and Gray) is of no assistance in showing what survived the interregnum between priory and college, for the buildings he depicts on the site (duly labelled *Blacke Friers*) are but crudely drawn.

Superficially the hall range nowadays shows few marks of its medieval origin: the stone facing to Front Court and New Court was carried out by James Essex around 1760, when the interior also was remodelled, with the present fine plaster ceiling and presumably the present panelling to the walls and screens. The roof trusses now hidden by the ceiling are Elizabethan in style, doubtless the work of Ralph Symons.¹ Their moulded beams are matched in the framework behind the screens panelling. Beneath the skin, however, a good deal remains to tell us what the

¹ R.C.H.M. *Cambridge*, I, p. 67, with figure. The statement in *Emmanuel College Magazine*, xxxv, p. 21 is erroneous.

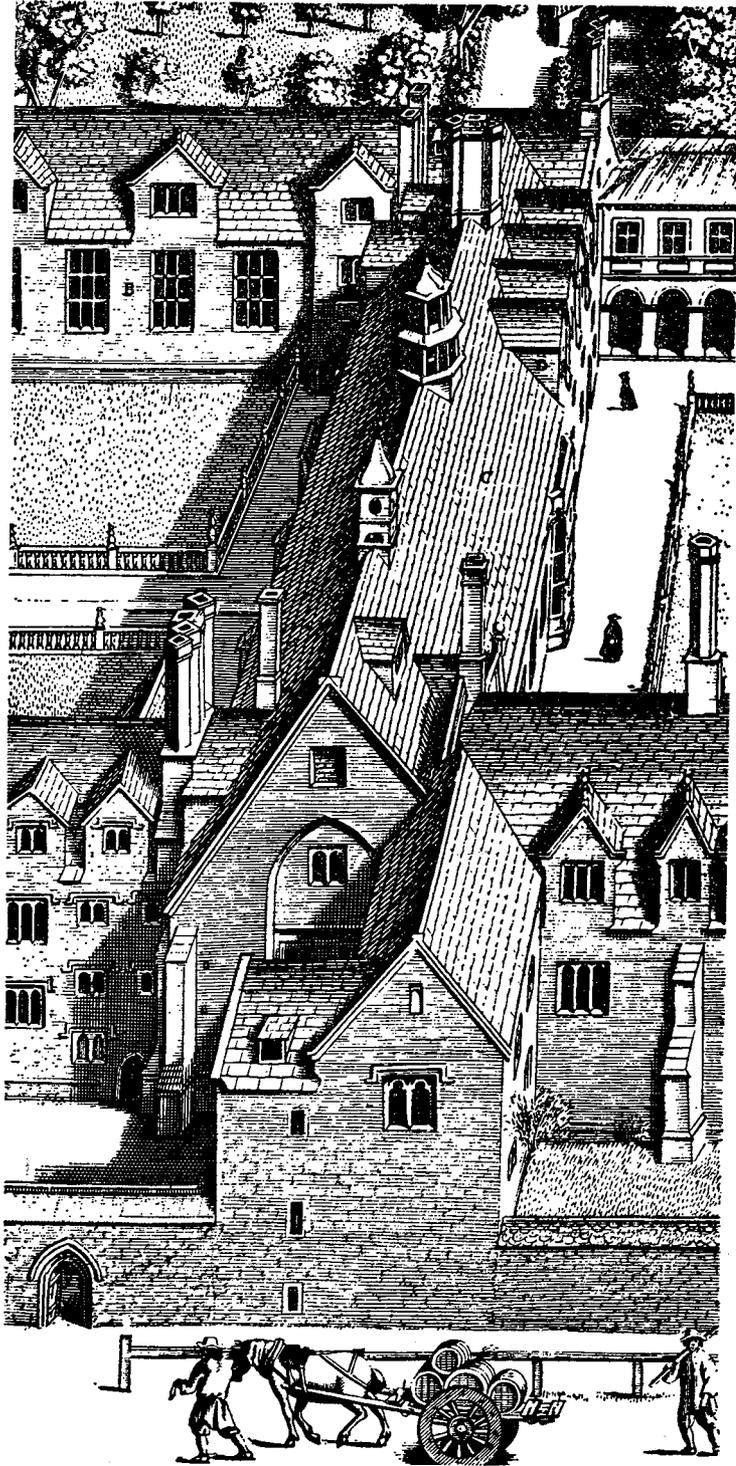


Fig. 1. Detail from Loggan's engraving of Emmanuel College, 1688.

original church was like, and repairs undertaken in recent years have given opportunities to record some of this hidden evidence.

The west wall of the church, clearly identifiable in Loggan's engraving (Fig. 1) by the outline of the blocked west window, was taken down to make way for the north pavilion of Essex's present entrance façade in 1769. Its position has been marked on the plan (Fig. 2) from the evidence of the survey made by Essex in 1746, before he began his improvements. (This survey is still preserved in the College, and was reproduced, from a copy, by Willis and Clark (iv, plan 25).) The east wall is fairly certainly identifiable as the east wall of the Parlour: it is of the thickness (approximately 3 ft) for an external wall; and the eighteenth-century College historian William Bennet records in his manuscript notes (i, p. 166) that during repairs in the Parlour in 1762 'traces of the High Altar were very apparent near the present fireplace'; in another note, later crossed out (*ibid.* p. 77) he refers to 'Pictures of the Saints' there.

In Loggan's general view of the College (Fig. 1) there are two buttresses at the N.W. corner of the church (lettered *a*, *b*, on the plan, Fig. 2) which of course disappeared in Essex's alterations. On the north side, west of the Hall oriel, can be seen two more (*e*, *f*, of which *e* still survives and *f* was removed only a few years ago), and another (*j*) to the east of the oriel. Buttresses *e*, *f*, and *j* are shown in Essex's 1746 plan also, as is *k* at the east end of the north wall. Buttress *j* disappeared when the present Parlour oriel was added in the nineteenth century; *k* still survives, though partly hidden by a further addition. All are indicated on the plan (Fig. 2), and it will be seen that *e* and *f* are approximately centred between the present Hall windows, suggesting that these occupy the same places as the original nave windows of the church.

This last assumption was confirmed when the panelling of the north wall of the Hall was partly removed for repairs in December 1966. Beneath all three of the present windows the outline of the medieval ones is clear, and the history of the later alterations can be readily traced. Window A (Fig. 3 and Pl. I*a*) is typical: above the original sill-level (1) the opening was filled with brick and rubble to a height of about 18 in. to form a new sill-level (2), presumably when Ralph Symons first adapted the buildings in 1584. The wainscoting would have reached to this sill-level, and the dressed clunch facing of the wall was therefore left unaltered, and nothing was done to disguise the junction of face and filling. Above the sill-level (2), however, the arris alongside the hollow moulding which outlines the splay was roughly rounded off. Excavation of a portion of the in-filling revealed the angle of the splay; and among the rubble extracted was a short piece of Purbeck marble shafting of 4 in. diameter, which prompts (but cannot satisfy) speculation about the decorative treatment. A second raising of the sills, to the present level (3), most probably dates from Essex's improvements about 1760. This second stage of in-filling is faced with two courses of clunch slabs, much larger than those of the medieval wall-facing, and very obviously distinguishable from the earlier filling (see Fig. 3 and Pl. I*a*). Careful study of Loggan's engraving of the Front Court shows that the window sills were in his time a little over 2 ft lower than today—which agrees with the evidence now presented.

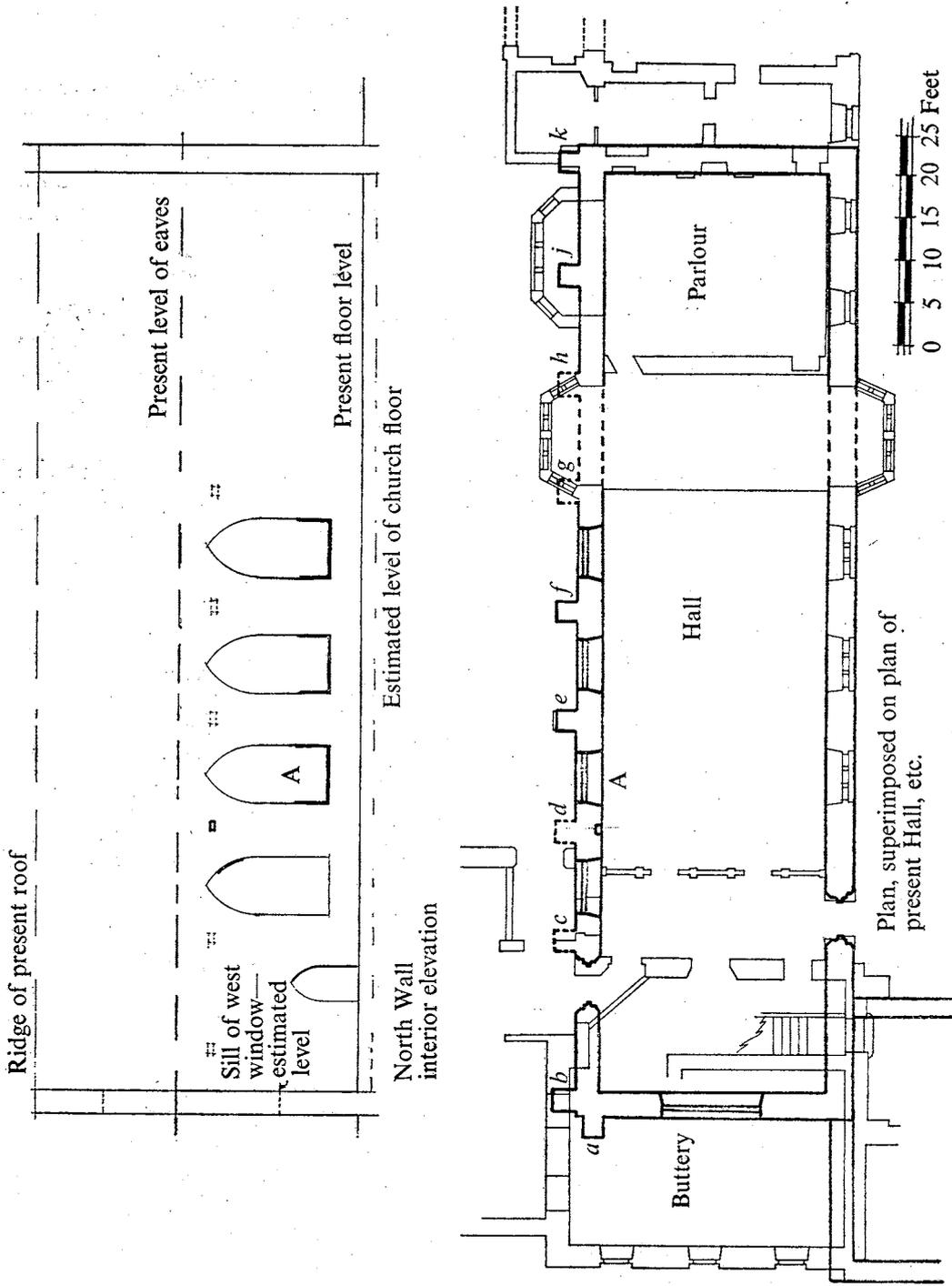


Fig. 2. Partially restored plan and interior elevation of the church. Windows and doors are shown only where positively attested; there probably were others also, in the south and east walls. Bold outlines in the plan denote features for which there is fairly certain evidence in actual remains or in Essex's survey or Loggan's views. Broken outlines denote features inferred or doubtful.

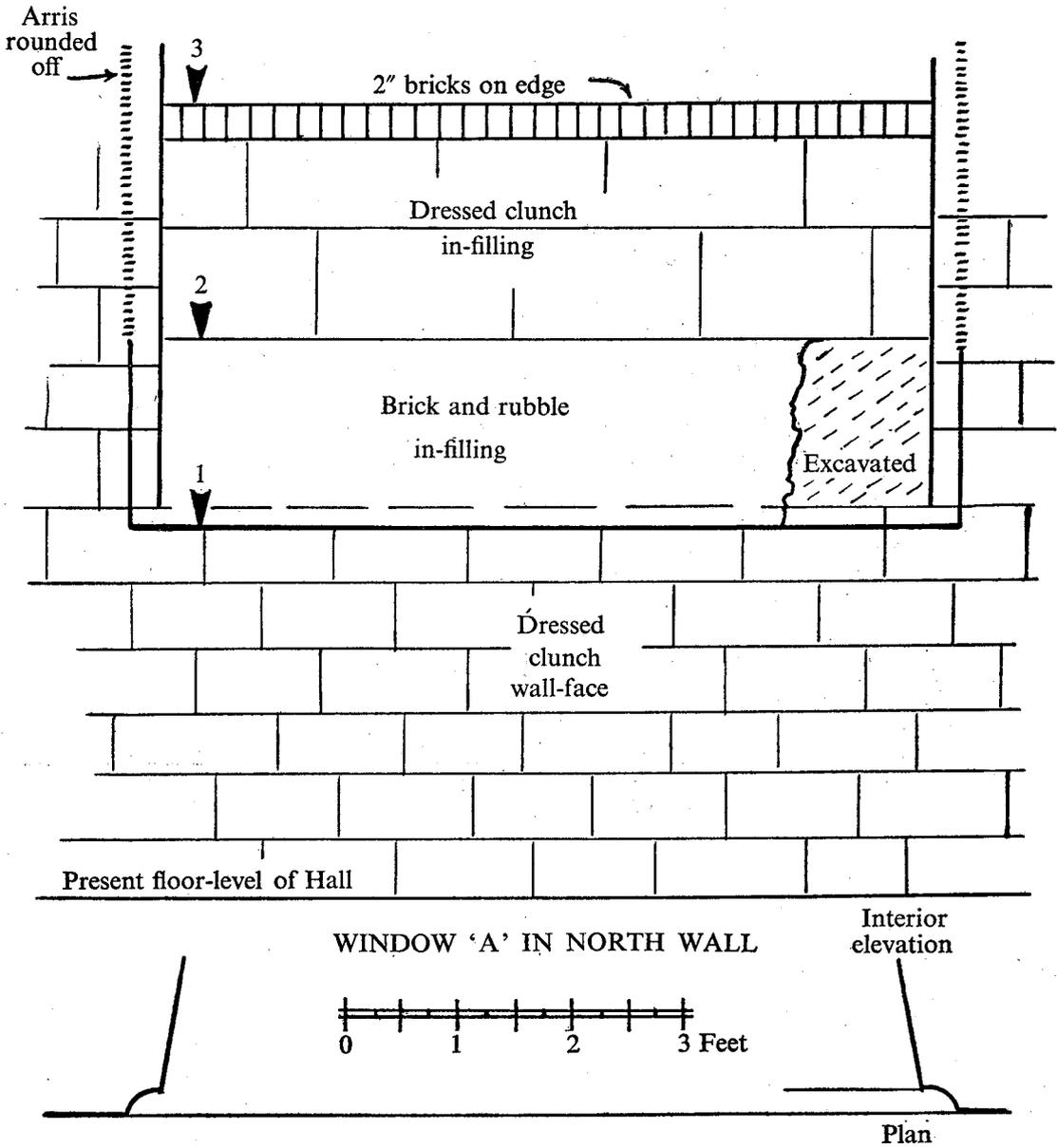


Fig. 3. Window A, showing alterations of sill-level.

Behind the panelling on the *south* side of the Hall the facing of dressed clunch (similar to that on the north wall) seems to be continuous and uninterrupted. Any windows on that side may therefore be assumed to have been at a higher level, which would be compatible with the existence of a cloister along the outside, though this is conjectural.

To return to the north side, the medieval window sills are only about 3 ft 4 in. above the present floor level; but the former Ketton stone floor of the Hall, laid in

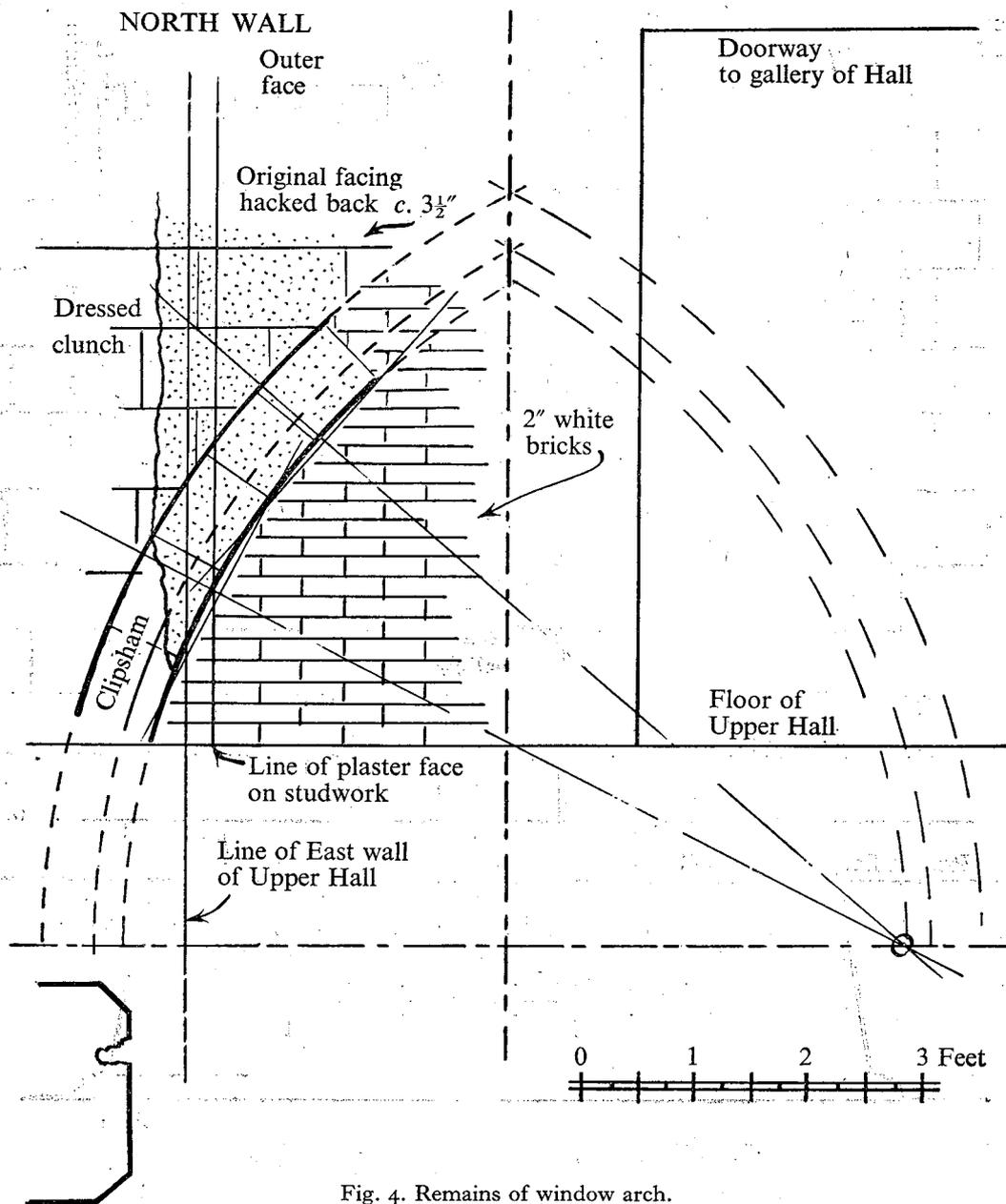


Fig. 4. Remains of window arch.

1763, was perhaps a good deal lower, and we may reasonably estimate that the original church floor was 18 to 20 in. below the present wooden one. Precise investigation has not so far been practicable: though the Ketton stone floor was removed in 1866, nothing can at present be said as to the material of its predecessors. Digging below the Front Court lawn in November 1949 accidentally turned up some frag-

mentary fourteenth-century floor-tiles (not *in situ*), the patterns on which show that they were made at the known factory of Bawsey near King's Lynn, where wasters with the same designs have been found. (Compare Pl. II with Eames, pl. xxiv, no. viii and pl. xxviii, no. lvii.) It is mere speculation to suggest that they came from the church, but further examples will obviously be something to look out for in any future work under the Hall floor.

The formation of the square-headed Hall windows has of course destroyed or obliterated the upper parts of the church windows they replace; but at the west end of the Hall, above the gallery, where there is now solid wall, the stripping of plaster in January 1968 to eradicate dry rot in the studwork revealed part of a large blocked arch, illustrated in Pl. Ib and Fig. 4. As the photograph shows, both the Clipsham stone voussoirs and the dressed clunch outer face of the wall have been hacked back for about $3\frac{1}{2}$ in., but some of the original surface of both could be observed by excavating the vertical joint between this wall and the east wall of the kitchen range at right angles to it. There are no mouldings beyond a simple chamfer. (In restoring the wall plaster these remains have been left accessible.) From the surviving curve the centre could be approximately deduced and (assuming it was 'equilateral') the rest of the arch extrapolated. The centre line so inferred is in phase with those of the other windows, and the width of the arch also corresponds (see the elevation, Fig. 2).

East of this window arch, and a little lower than its apex, there was on the inner side of the wall a roughly filled cavity (see Fig. 5) which very probably housed a corbel to support the wall-post of one of the medieval roof-trusses. Its position halfway between two windows supports this assumption; and in the elevation in Fig. 2 similar corbels have been tentatively indicated between the other windows. The present roof trusses are, as mentioned above, Elizabethan, and the character and height of the church roof remain unknown.

West of the partially surviving window arch, there is sufficient width of wall for a further window, though one of the same height is precluded by the north door of the church (Fig. 2). One jamb and part of the arch of this doorway (Fig. 6) were discovered in 1957 when the old College kitchen was being pulled down for rebuilding; they have been left visible in making the present doorway from the kitchen to the buttery (cf. *Emmanuel College Magazine* xli (1958-9), p. 42 and pl. v). The small *south* door shown on the plan is somewhat hypothetical, but is based on the fact that in Loggan's view of the Front Court the door at this point has a pointed arch of medieval appearance. That it is not axial with the north door could be due to the position of the adjoining N-S range.

How far east the series of nave windows continued is uncertain. It is possible that there were only the four so far attested, and that the part of the church to the east of them, occupying roughly the area which is now the Parlour, had a different scheme of fenestration. But if so, any possible traces of it are pretty certainly destroyed on the north side through the construction of the nineteenth-century Parlour oriel. Whether anything survives on the south side it is impossible to say without removing more of the panelling.

The division between nave and choir must be equally conjectural. It was not uncommon in English Dominican churches for them to be completely disjunct areas, separated by two walls with a passage or 'walkway' between. Over the centre of this passage there would commonly be a small bell-turret (Hinnebusch, pp. 140 f.). If such were the arrangements here they must have been wholly effaced when Ralph Symons built the two oriels and the new roof for the College Hall. Against such a

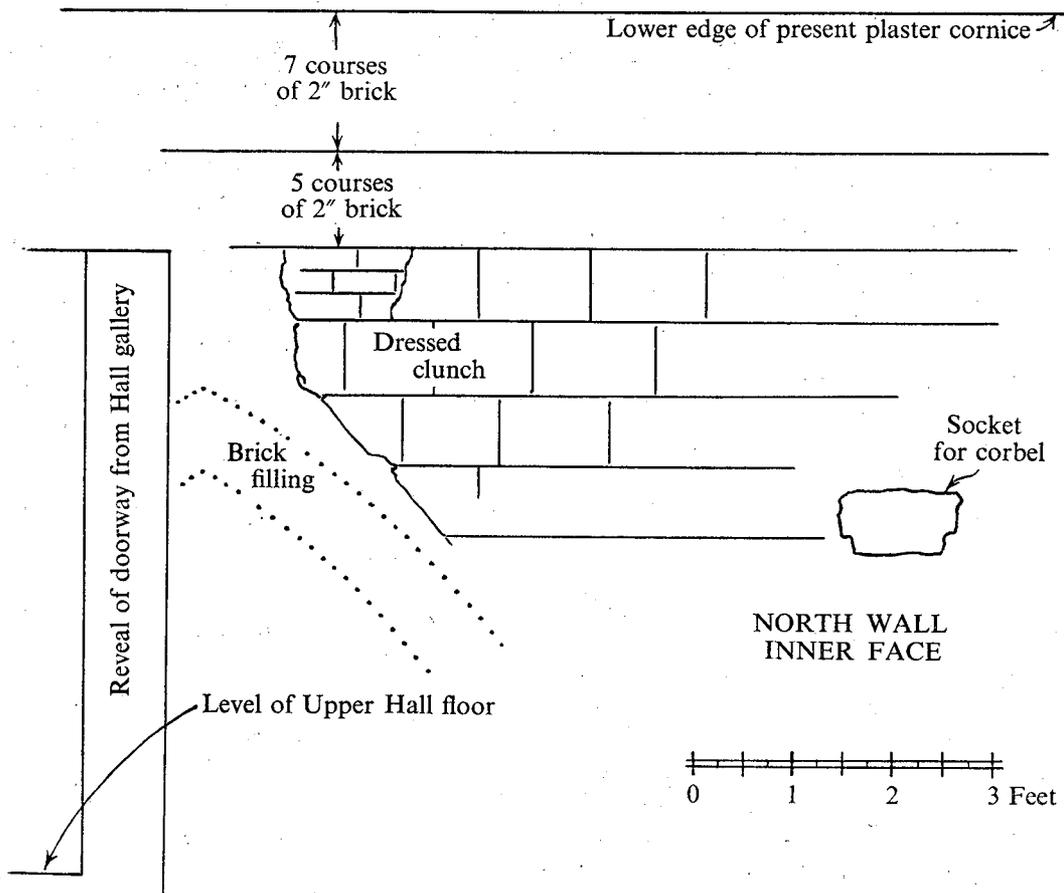


Fig. 5. Interior wall face, showing position of corbel in relation to window arch.

scheme is the fact that it would have made a very short, squarish choir, probably too small to hold stalls for all the brethren, who by the end of the thirteenth century already numbered about seventy (Palmer, p. 139; cf. Hinnebusch, pp. 273, 274). Alternatively, the traceable series of windows could have continued eastwards for another three bays.

What is the date of the surviving features of the church? The Priory was founded, as mentioned above, in the first half of the thirteenth century, and a church was doubtless among the first buildings. The simple rectangular form attested by the

remains, without aisles or structural chapels, has its parallels in other early Dominican churches in England and Wales, as at Brecon, Bangor, Canterbury, Gloucester, and Ipswich; and the size of the Cambridge church (approximately 112×26 ft inside) well bears comparison with some of these: Brecon (nave only) $95\frac{1}{2} \times 26$ ft; Bangor 120×26 ft; Gloucester 80 to $100 \times 26\frac{1}{4}$ ft (Hinnebusch, p. 136). The windows

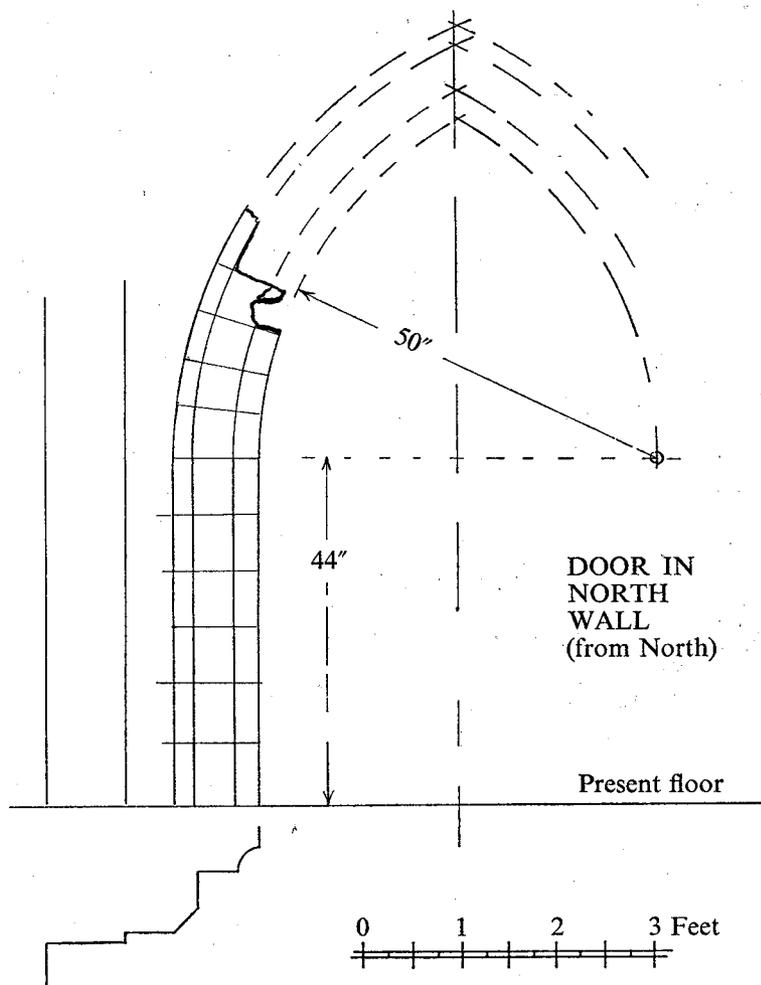


Fig. 6. Remains of north door: elevation and plan.

and north door discussed above are at least compatible with a thirteenth-century date; and though we have a very incomplete story our evidence includes nothing to imply alteration of the building while it was still used as the Dominicans' church.

Further investigation may one day chance to tell us more; but the College Hall and Parlour have recently been fully redecorated, and curiosity must rest awhile.

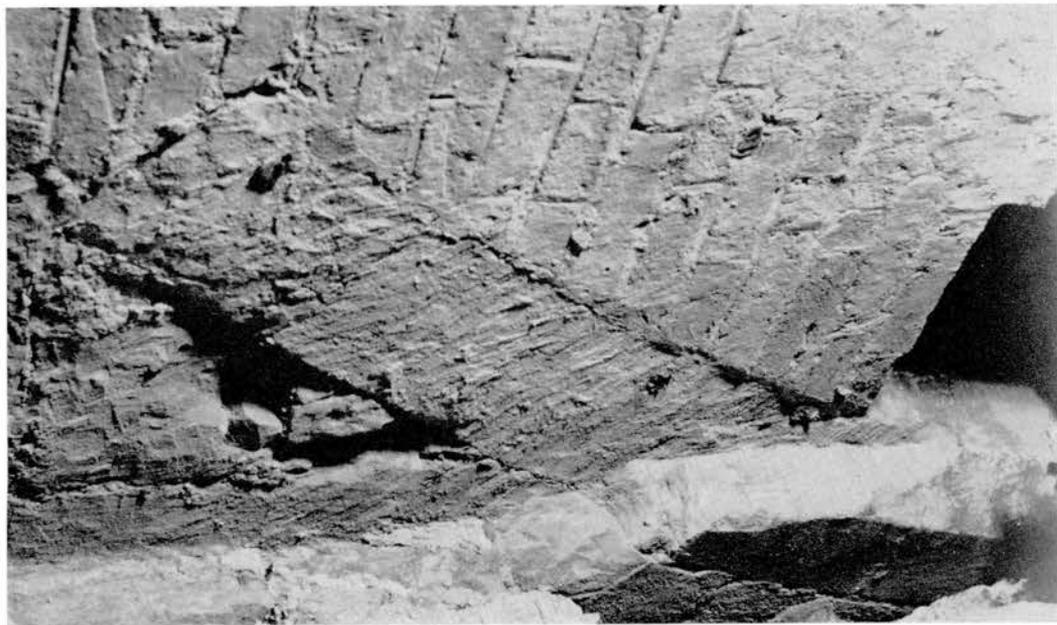
I should like to record my thanks to those Fellows and officers of the College who have encouraged or promoted this study, and notably to Dr J. R. Garrood, who as Bursar for Buildings has readily found practical reasons for moving this or that stone or panel that might have impeded our joint archaeological enquiries; to the masons and joiners engaged in repair work on the buildings for their knowledgeable and helpful interest; to Mr R. Fuerni of the College Bursary and Mr E. E. Jones of the Museum of Classical Archaeology who took the photographs; and to Mr Denys Spittle, F.S.A., of the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, for his expert advice and criticism.

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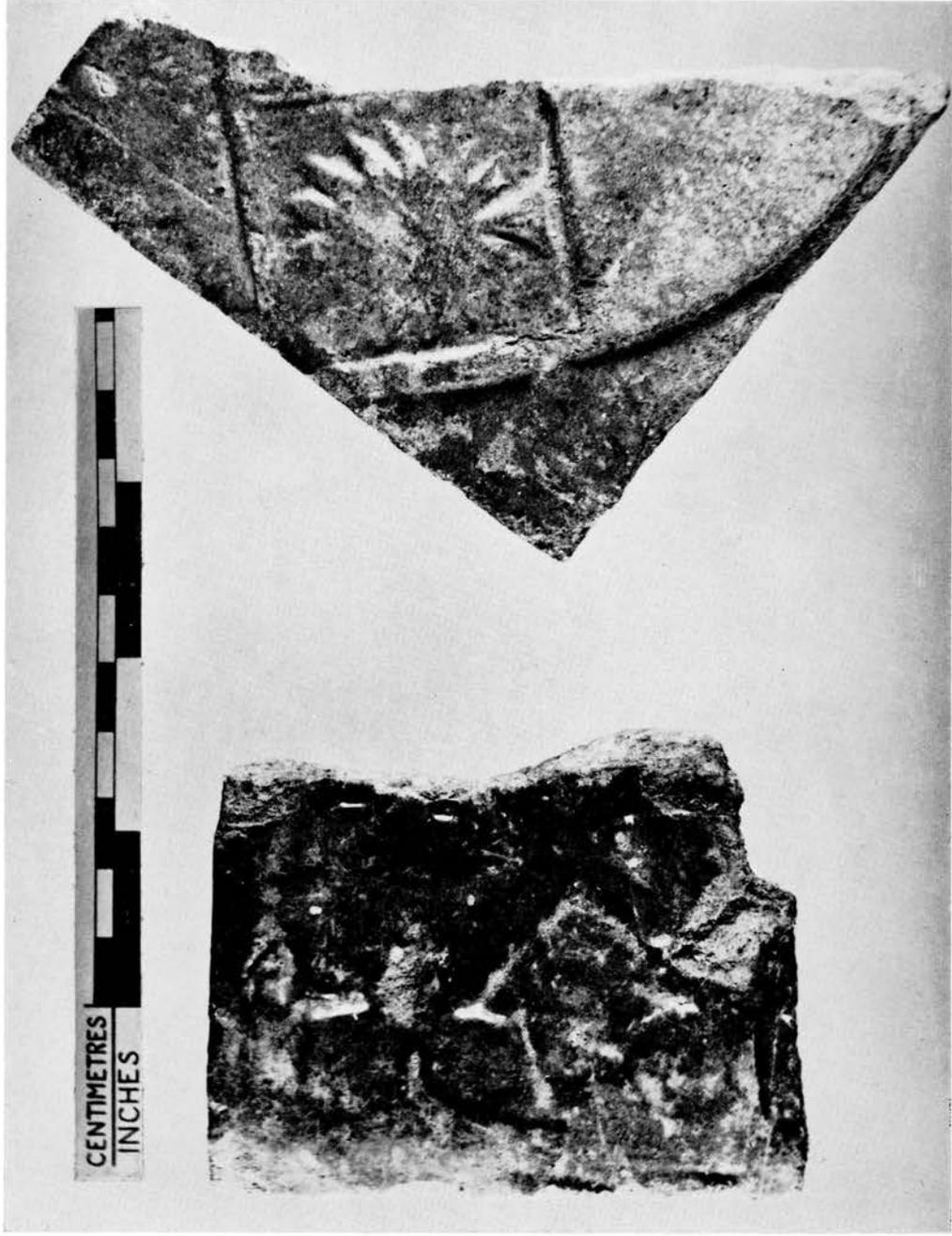
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(a) Window A: bottom right-hand corner, showing medieval sill and splay, and later in-filling.



(b) Remains of window arch.



Fragmentary floor-tiles: (a) with pattern of diagonal cross with trefoil ends; (b) with shield showing a tree (?) in the first quarter.

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