THE FOUNDATIONS OF MERTON PRIORY.[1]

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FEW important churches can have disappeared so completely as that of Merton Priory. At the Dissolution it was pulled down, and the stones utilised (it is said) at Nonsuch Park. It was so completely razed to the ground that, till a few weeks ago, no trace whatever was visible to show where it had been, and nothing was known of its character, its position or its dimensions.

Now its foundations are being traced out once more. A piece of concrete masonry having come to light in the ground of Trafalgar Works, Merton, the clue was followed up, and the north wall and part of the east and west walls have been definitely located. The nave and south wall lie under Merton "Abbey" Station approach and the station building.

The plan of the church appears to consist of a nave and two aisles 136½ ft. long—the nave continued in a square choir 39 ft. long. The nave is divided from the aisles by a row of columns 19½ ft. from centre to centre. This 19½ ft. appears to be the unit upon which the plan is founded—the length of the nave is seven units, of the choir, two units: the breadth of the aisle is one unit. It is conjectured that the breadth of the choir, as of the nave, will be two units, or 39 ft.

[1] This interesting article is in the nature of a preliminary note. It is much to be hoped that further discoveries may be announced later.—ED. *Surrey Arch. Soc.*

The footings consist of a hard mass of flint and cement, the breadth of the footings of the choir and the eastern half of the nave is uniformly 5 ft. 8 ins. to 5 ft. 10 ins., or approximately $\frac{3}{10}$ of a unit. The western half of the nave wall has footings only 3 ft. broad. A 6 ft. doorway comes at the division.

The line of columns is continued beyond the west end by a narrow wall, one unit long—presumably a western porch. An extension of the west wall, north of the line of the north wall, suggests a wing of the west front. It is one unit long.

Interesting discoveries are expected when the Metropolitan Water Board drives its large main through the road by the station this autumn.

Nothing has been found during the explorations except a few 14th-century floor tiles with scraps of design upon them.

That it has been possible to start investigating the site of the church has been due to the courtesy and interest shown by Mr. John Corfield, of the Trafalgar Works.

Note.—Since the above was written, I find that the mediæval foot (like the Roman, the Celtic and the British) was about $11\frac{1}{2}$ inches, and in particular instances a foot of 11·7 inches has been indicated. A simple calculation shows that $19\frac{1}{2}$ feet of the present standard is equivalent to 20 feet of 11·7 inches while the footings would be 6 feet broad.

An interesting forecast of the position of the church was made by my collaborator, Canon Westlake, before the concrete foundation appeared. In building a shed, an interment with a 14th-century spur was found, and the ground in the neighbourhood was full of mason's chips. This led to the guess that the spot was probably outside the church and on the site of the mason's yard, which would be likely to be in the angle between the north wall of the choir and the body of the church—a surmise that proved correct.—H. F. B.