

ST OSYTH,
ESSEX
ST OSYTH'S PRIORY
HISTORIC BUILDINGS REPORT

Pete Smith



This report has been prepared for use on the internet and the images within it have been down-sampled to optimise downloading and printing speeds.

Please note that as a result of this down-sampling the images are not of the highest quality and some of the fine detail may be lost. Any person wishing to obtain a high resolution copy of this report should refer to the ordering information on the following page.

Research Department Report Series 074-2011

**ST OSYTH'S PRIORY
ST OSYTH
ESSEX
HISTORIC BUILDINGS REPORT**

Pete Smith

NGR: TM 12114 15747

© English Heritage

ISSN 1749-8775

The Research Department Report Series incorporates reports from all the specialist teams within the English Heritage Research Department: Archaeological Science; Archaeological Archives; Historic Interiors Research and Conservation; Archaeological Projects; Aerial Survey and Investigation; Archaeological Survey and Investigation; Architectural Investigation; Imaging, Graphics and Survey, and the Survey of London. It replaces the former Centre for Archaeology Reports Series, the Archaeological Investigation Report Series and the Architectural Investigation Report Series.

Many of these are interim reports which make available the results of specialist investigations in advance of full publication. They are not usually subject to external refereeing, and their conclusions may sometimes have to be modified in the light of information not available at the time of the investigation. Where no final project report is available, readers are advised to consult the author before citing these reports in any publication. Opinions expressed in Research Department reports are those of the author(s) and are not necessarily those of English Heritage.

Requests for further hard copies, after the initial print run, can be made by emailing:

Res.reports@english-heritage.org.uk

or by writing to:

English Heritage, Fort Cumberland, Fort Cumberland Road, Eastney, Portsmouth PO4 9LD

Please note that a charge will be made to cover printing and postage.

SUMMARY

This report summarises the known history and architectural development of St Osyth's Priory and its gardens. It contains detailed assessments of each of the structures which make up this disparate complex of buildings, plus an overall assessment of the importance of the surviving buildings and their landscape setting.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Sargeant family for allowing access to the site and for allowing photography. Kathryn Morrison for advice and editing. Amanda Atton and Katie Graham for their assistance with the preparation of this report.

ARCHIVE LOCATION

NMR, Swindon

DATE OF REPORT

2011

CONTACT DETAILS

English Heritage

24 Brooklands Avenue

Cambridge

CB2 8BU

Pete Smith, 01223-582793; peter.smith@english-heritage.org.uk

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
HISTORICAL ANALYSIS	2
St Osyth's Priory	2
FABRIC ANALYSIS	4
The Buildings	4
1. The Gatehouse	5
2. The Tithe Barn	7
3. The Stable	8
4. The Cart-shed	8
5. The Brewhouse	9
6. The Drying House	9
7. The West Barn and the Bailiff's Cottage	11
8. The 18 th Century House	15
9. The Bishop's Lodging	16
10. The Service Wing	20
11. The Clock Tower and South Wing	22
12. The Abbot's Tower and the Chapel	24
13. The Boundary Walls and Gates	30
The Gardens and the Landscape	34
The Ruins	40
CONCLUSION	42
ENDNOTES	45

INTRODUCTION

St Osyth's Priory is a country house which is somewhat different from most other English country houses. Instead of the usual large house with service ranges, St Osyth's Priory survives today as a group of disparate buildings and ruins sited within a mature landscape garden setting (fig. 1). These buildings range in date from the 12th to the 19th centuries and they each contribute something to the fascinating history of this site. The disparity in their individual architectural importance is enormous, from the magnificent late 15th century Gatehouse (fig. 2), the most significant survival of the Augustinian abbey, to the Victorian service wing which was altered when the building was used as a convalescent home in the mid-20th century (fig. 23). In order to understand the individual complexity of these buildings they will each be considered individually. The park and gardens are assessed separately and the report concludes with an assessment of the site as a whole.

Many of the more important buildings on this site are in a ruinous state and have been for centuries. Their present condition is not the direct concern of this report. Instead this report has been written to provide an historical context for English Heritage's assessment of the present owners' proposals for development to fund the repair of the Priory.

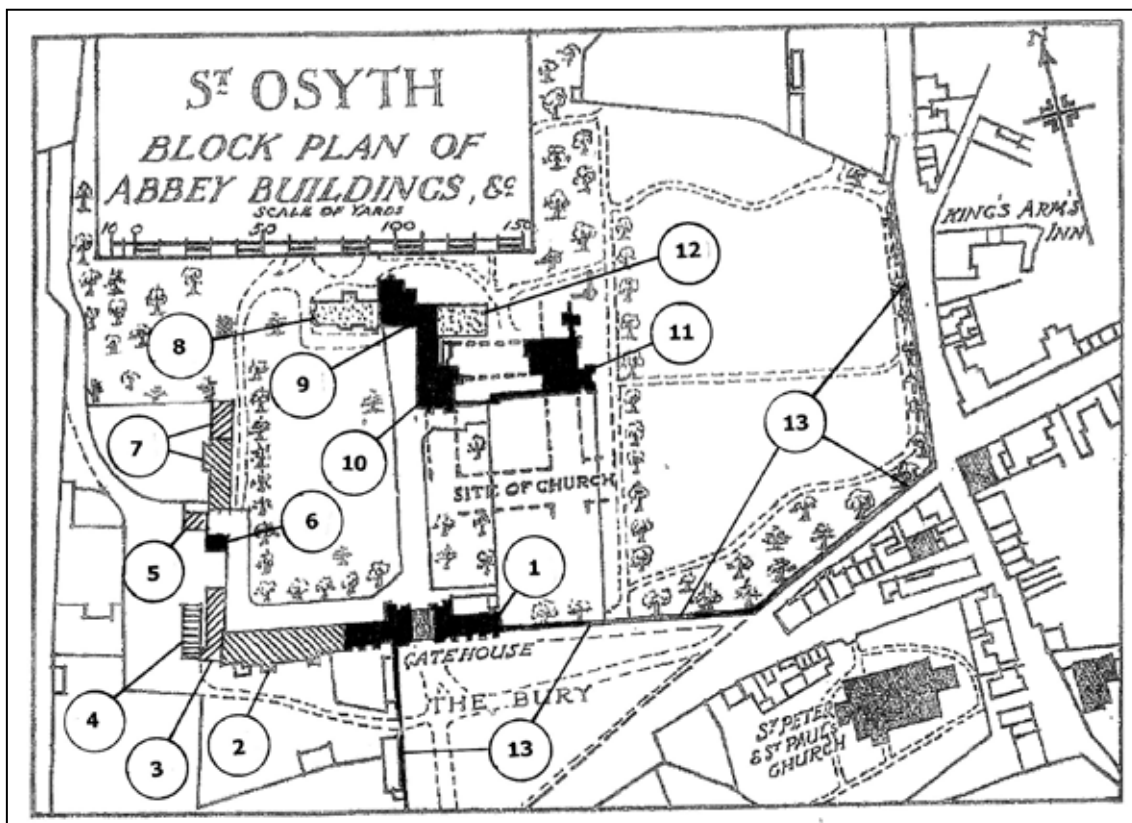


Fig. 1. A block plan of St Osyth's Priory. 1. The Gatehouse, 2. The Tithe Barn, 3. The Stable, 4. The Cartshed, 5. The Brewhouse, 6. The Drying House, 7. The West Barn and Bailiff's Cottage, 8. The 18th Century House, 9. The Bishop's Lodging, 10. The Clock Tower and South Wing, 11. The Abbot's Tower and the Chapel, 12. The Service Wing, 13. The Boundary Wall and Gates. Pete Smith RCHME

HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

St Osyth's Priory

The basic history of St Osyth's Priory has been elucidated in a number of publications.¹ The Augustinian abbey was founded shortly after 1120 by Richard de Belmeis, Bishop of London, and significant elements from these monastic buildings survive, principally the late 15th century Gatehouse and the Bishop's Lodgings added for Abbot John Vyntoner in 1527. The abbey was dissolved on July 28, 1539 and passed first to Thomas Cromwell and then to Princess Mary. In 1553 the estate was granted by the crown to Thomas, 1st Lord Darcy (1506-58), for the sum of £3,947 9s 4d.² Lord Darcy was a courtier and administrator, who rose to become lord chamberlain of the household under Edward VI. Darcy and his successors transformed the abbey, demolishing the church, which probably stood to the north-east of the Gatehouse (fig. 1), and extending Abbot Vyntoner's domestic accommodation into a substantial house. The Abbot's Tower and the Clock Tower and its attached ruined ranges, with their distinctive chequered walling, survive from the period of the 1st Lord Darcy whilst the brick range, linking the two towers, was added by his son, John, 2nd Lord Darcy, in around 1600. Queen Elizabeth I visited St Osyth's Priory twice on her royal progress, in July 1561 and again in August 1579.

The property was inherited in 1639 by Elizabeth Darcy, daughter of the 3rd Lord Darcy, who married Sir Thomas Savage, afterwards Earl Rivers and Viscount Colchester. Lady Savage inherited Melford Hall in Suffolk on her husband's death in 1635 and St Osyth's Priory from her father in 1639, and in 1641 she was created Countess Rivers in her own right.

She was a staunch catholic and Royalist with the result that she suffered cruel depredations upon her property in the Civil War. In 1642 the rabble sacked her house at St Osyth, chased her to Melford, and sacked that too. All the furnishings were stolen, or destroyed, and the deer in the park carried off. She escaped to London, and was forced to compound for her lands to the extent of being reduced to the debtor's prison, where she died in 1650.³

The severely damaged house was allowed to decay and remained un-inhabited for the next half-century. Thomas, 3rd Earl Rivers, purchased Marbury Hall near Macclesfield in Cheshire in 1684, and he, and his brother Richard, the 4th Earl, who succeeded him in 1694, preferred to reside here rather than at St Osyth's Priory.⁴

The Savage family continued to own St Osyth's Priory with its 6,800 acre estate until

1714, when the Hon. Richard Savage bequeathed it to his natural daughter, Bessy, wife of Frederic Nassau de Zuylestein, 3rd Earl of Rochford (1682-1738).⁵ The 3rd Earl, who eventually took possession of the estate in 1721,⁶ made St Osyth's Priory his main seat in England and began to restore the property.⁷ He added a new house to the west of the Bishop's Lodgings, which he partially restored, allowing most of the remainder of the property to continue to decay. His son, the 4th Earl (1717-81), who inherited in 1738, added a two-storey range - the surviving 18th Century House - which linked his father's new house to the Bishop's Lodging. A courtier and diplomat, the 4th Earl ran up huge debts and was forced to sell off parts of the estate in 1775. The 4th Earl died childless in 1781 and the reduced St Osyth estate passed to his natural son, Frederic Nassau, whilst the title passed to his nephew. On Frederic's death on 3 July 1845 the estate passed to his eldest son, William Frederic Nassau. He left the property, on his death in 1857, to his two daughters, Elizabeth Kirby and Eliza Brandreth who put the property up for auction in 1858. The contents were sold in April and the estate was auctioned in August; the estate fetched £211,685 in total.

Charles Brandreth (husband of Eliza), purchased St Osyth's Priory itself, though not the estate, for £12,000. He demolished most of the Georgian house in 1859. St Osyth's Priory was briefly lived in by the Brandreths though in 1862 it was leased to Hyman Allenby for a year. Eventually in 1863 Mr (later Sir) John H Johnson, a London corn merchant, purchased the property. In the 1860s he remodelled the Bishop's Lodging, and added an extensive kitchen range. Later he re-fitted the range attached to the Clock Tower and created the Chapel. When Johnson died in 1909 the property was inherited by his adopted daughter, Lady Mabel Cowley (nee Watts), and when she died in 1920 the house and its remaining estate was again put up for sale.⁸ The property was then purchased by General Kincaid-Smith.

The house was requisitioned during the Second World War and then sold in 1948 to the Loyal and Ancient Order of Shepherds who founded a convalescent home here. Their alterations were largely confined to the Victorian service range. In 1954 Mr Somerset de Chair, a popular novelist and MP, purchased the property, allowing the convalescent home to remain in the main building for many years (closed 1980), and converting the Gatehouse into a separate residence, as described by Mark Girouard in *Country Life* in 1958.⁹ De Chair developed the gardens and opened the property to the public. He also gradually sold off parts of the estate and allowed large scale gravel extraction to disfigure much of the surrounding landscape. After his marriage in 1974 to Lady Juliet Wentworth Fitzwilliam, the Wentworth Woodhouse art collection, which she had inherited, was displayed here. On de Chair's death in 1995 the property was put up for sale by his widow, and it was eventually purchased by the present owners, the Sargeant family, in 1999.

FABRIC ANALYSIS

The Buildings

The buildings which comprise St Osyth's Priory are mostly situated around a large rectangular court, sometimes referred to as the Green Court (fig. 1). The Gatehouse (1) and the Tithe Barn (2) form the southern side of this court. The Stable (3), the Cart-shed (4), the Brewhouse (5), the Drying House (6) and the West Barn and Bailiff's Cottage (7) are situated on the west side. The 18th Century House (8) and the Bishop's Lodging (9) occupy most of the north side, whilst and the Clock Tower and South Wing (10) form the northern section of the east side of this court. The Abbot's Tower and the Chapel (11) are sited further to the east and the former Victorian Service Wing (12) adjoins the Bishop's Lodging. The Boundary Walls and Gates (13) extend around the southern and eastern sides of the property.



Fig. 2. The late 15th century Gatehouse.

© Pete Smith P5132809A

I. The Gatehouse

LISTED AS 'GATEHOUSE AND EAST AND WEST RANGES' AT GRADE I, ITEM 15/186. SCHEDULED ANCIENT MONUMENT

Undoubtedly the most important building to survive on the site, the Gatehouse is, to quote Mark Girouard 'among the finest monastic buildings surviving in England'.¹⁰ It was built as the new main entrance to the monastic complex in the late 15th century (fig. 2). The Gatehouse survives today largely intact externally, though it had been allowed to fall into disrepair by the early 18th century and it was restored for the 3rd Earl of Rochford after 1721. The main façade with its knapped flint and stone flushwork is one of the best preserved examples of this type of late-medieval decoration to be found in East Anglia. The façade has three ornate canopied niches, now empty, and the central entrance archway contains fine quality sculptured reliefs of St Michael and the Dragon in the spandrels (fig. 3). Within this archway is an elaborate two-bay lierne vault with carved bosses. Internally the building retains a number of original features, such as chimney pieces, pointed-arched doorways and fragments of wall painting, plus a number of features from its early 18th-century restoration. There are lower two-storey lodging ranges flanking the gatehouse to the east and west. The final bay of the east range retains evidence that it was built as the original gatehouse in the late 13th century. The Gatehouse and its wings were converted into a separate dwelling in the 1950s by de Chair. The late 17th century staircase, with its barley-sugar balusters, was inserted at this time; it came originally from Costessey Hall in Norfolk. These alterations were designed by the architect, Darcy Braddell, and carried out by Henry Everett & Sons of Colchester.



Fig. 3. A sculpted relief of St Michael in one of the spandrels of the entrance arch to the Gatehouse.

© Pete Smith
P5132815A.JPG



Fig. 4. The north stone wall of the Tithe Barn.

© Pete Smith P5132906.JPG



Fig. 5. The south front of the Tithe Barn.

© Pete Smith P5132879.JPG



Fig. 6. The interior of the mid-16th century timber-framed Tithe Barn looking west.
© Pete Smith P5132878.JPG

2. The Tithe Barn

LISTED AS 'BARN ADJOINING THE WEST RANGE OF GATEHOUSE' AT GRADE I, ITEM 15/187. SCHEDULED ANCIENT MONUMENT

The mid-16th century Tithe Barn is a large timber-framed structure which adjoins the Gatehouse to the east. Its north and east walls are rubble stone (fig. 4) and its south and west walls are clad with horizontal timber boarding (fig. 5). The south front has three porches and the north wall has a deep moulded plinth, an upper chamfered band and three four-centred arched doorways (fig. 4). The roof has plain tie-beams with curved braces and plain collar-beams. The posts on the south side are more substantial than those on the north, indicating that this barn was built against the existing stone wall. A number of the posts on the north side have been cut away or removed completely (fig. 6). Part of the eastern end of the building has been converted to domestic accommodation.



Fig. 7. The east facade of the late 18th century Stable, altered in the late 19th century
© Pete Smith P5132905A.JPG

3. The Stable

LISTED AS 'STABLE BLOCK ADJACENT TO NORTH WEST OF BARN' AT GRADE II, ITEM 15/192

The Stable occupies the southern section of the west side of the main court, adjoining the west end of the Tithe Barn. This late 18th century stable building (fig. 7) with hay lofts above was remodelled in the later 19th century for Sir John Johnson when it was given its distinctive two-light mullion windows with cusped heads, its four-centred arched doorway and its ornate iron hinges. The interior retains its late 19th century stalls and other equestrian fittings.

4. The Cart-shed

LISTED AS 'CARTLODGE ADJACENT TO WEST OF BARN' AT GRADE II, ITEM 15/191

This long low timber-framed cart-shed dates from the late 18th century (fig. 8). It is partially clad in horizontal timber boarding and has a red tile roof. This roof has staggered side purlins and a ridge-piece with bracing to the posts. This building does not appear on either the 1762 survey (fig. 41) or the 1814 survey (fig. 44), but it does appear on the 1874 OS map (fig. 45). This building is therefore either an extremely late example of this type of timber-framed structure, or more likely it was dismantled and moved to its present site sometime between 1814 and 1874.



Fig. 8. The late 18th century timber-framed Cartshed, probably moved to its present site in the late 19th century. © Pete Smith P5132882.JPG

5. The Brewhouse

LISTED AS 'OUTBUILDING ADJACENT NORTHWEST OF BREWHOUSE' AT GRADE II, ITEM 15/188. SCHEDULED ANCIENT MONUMENT

This small rectangular Brewhouse has a deep rubble stone plinth which appears to be much earlier in origin than the brick superstructure, which is overtly late 18th century (fig. 9). But there is no sign of any building on this site on the 1762 survey (fig. 41), though it is clearly marked on the survey of 1814 (fig. 44), suggesting that the whole of this building dates from the late 18th century. The plinth was presumably constructed at this time of stone – limestone and septaria - robbed from the ruins of Lord Darcy's mansion.

6. The Drying House

LISTED AS 'BREWHOUSE NORTH WEST OF GATEHOUSE' AT GRADE II, ITEM 15/193.

This square brick Drying House, with a pyramidal plain tile roof and a single chimney stack at its north-west corner, has distinctive louvred openings on its west front (fig. 10).



Fig. 9. The Brewhouse.

© Pete Smith P513288IA



*Fig. 10. The
Drying House.*

© Pete Smith
P5132883A.JPG

Though probably rebuilt in its present form in the later 18th century, the chamfered brick plinth on its west front suggests that it incorporates part of a much older building, and the consistency of the size and quality of the bricks suggests that these too were re-used from an earlier building.

7. The West Barn and the Bailiff's Cottage

LISTED AS 'OUTBUILDING ADJACENT TO NORTH OF DAIRY, NOW A BARN' AT GRADE II*, ITEM 15/189, AND 'COTTAGE ADJOINING OUTBUILDING' AT GRADE II, ITEM 15/190. SCHEDULED ANCIENT MONUMENT

This building which occupies the central section of the west side of the main court consists of a barn, converted into a cowshed in the mid-20th century, and a lower cottage to the north.

The irregular rubble stone walls of the West Barn are most likely 16th century, though they may well contain fragments of earlier monastic structures. They have been rebuilt, patched (with brick in places) and repaired on many occasions. Much of the stone – limestone and septaria – has been robbed from the ruins of the mid-16th century house and from the original priory. The east front has a first-floor stone band, an ashlar doorway with a stone hood, three sash windows and a number of single light ventilators. The even more irregular west front has a partial plinth and a partial first-floor stone band, and evidence of a former cart entrance to the north (fig. 11). The various openings include doors, windows and ventilators plus two taking-in doors on the upper floor. Internally there are large-scale chamfered oak beams (fig. 12). The upper floor is now unsafe and inspection of the roof was not possible. This roof is also unsafe, the roof ties have rotted and the roof is spreading, pushing the walls outwards. This fascinating architectural conundrum with its many building phases may well prove to be monastic in origin.



Fig. 11. The west front of the West Barn.

© Pete Smith P5132918A.JPG



Fig. 12. The interior of the West Barn.

© Pete Smith P5132885.JPG



Fig. 13. The east front of the Bailiff's Cottage.

© Pete Smith P5132891A.JPG



Fig. 14. A former medieval capital re-used as a corner stone to the Bailiff's Cottage.
© Pete Smith P5132889.JPG

The adjoining Bailiff's Cottage (fig. 13) is built of the same mixed rubble stone as the barn, a former cushion capital can be clearly seen re-used as one of the quoins at the north-east corner of the building (fig. 14). The east wall has been buttressed and patched in brick in order to stop the overburdened roof from pushing the wall over. Recently the tiles have been removed from much of the roof in order to lighten the load on the structure. This roof timbers reputedly dates from the 13th century (not inspected). The front wall has 19th-century casement windows and three large 20th-century dormers. This building was probably converted from a farm building in the 19th century.

Both these buildings are identifiable as part of the west range of buildings around the precinct or main court. This range is shown as virtually continuous on both the 1762 and 1814 surveys (figs 41 and 44), and these two buildings are all that survives of the service buildings constructed here for Lord Darcy; the remainder were demolished in 1859. These buildings re-use fragments of the monastic buildings and are probably also sited on monastic foundations.



Fig. 15. An engraved view of St Osyth's Priory from the south-west, from Excursions Through Essex, 1819. The 18th Century House which was largely demolished in 1859 is partially visible on the left.



Fig. 16. The south and west fronts of the 18th Century House.
© Pete Smith P5132909A.JPG

8. The 18th Century House

LISTED AS PART OF 'ST OSYTH'S PRIORY, CONVALESCENT HOME' AT GRADE I, ITEM 15/197. SCHEDULED ANCIENT MONUMENT

Sometime after the 3rd Earl of Rochford made St Osyth's Priory his principal residence in 1721 he added what appears to have been a new house to the west of the Bishop's Lodging. This range was then extended right across the north side of this court, probably by William Henry Nassau de Zuylestein, the 4th Earl.¹¹ The 3rd Earl's new house was three-storey with a central doorway topped by a swan-necked pediment (fig. 15). The surviving two-storey brick range with astylar window surrounds and sashes appears to date from the mid-18th century (fig. 16). The western section of this range, which probably contained the most impressive reception rooms, was demolished in 1859. The present west front of the 18th Century House, with its canted two-storey bay window, must therefore have been built after this range was demolished (fig. 17). It is built of the similar brick to the remainder of the 18th Century House, brick which was presumably reused from the demolished range. A distinct break in the brickwork is still clearly visible at the western corner of the south front. The 18th Century House has a two-storey



Fig. 17. The north front of the 18th Century House. This front was rebuilt in 1859 after the remainder of this wing was demolished.

© Pete Smith
P5132887A.JPG



Fig. 18. The interior of the 18th Century House altered in the 19th and 20th centuries.
© Pete Smith P5132899.JPG

bow window at the centre of its south façade and a two-storey porch on its north side. The plan of this building consists of a corridor and stair on the north side (fig. 18) and a range of rooms to the south. This range has been altered internally in the 19th and 20th centuries. Two 18th-century chimney pieces survive though they may have been moved. One room has panelling made from 18th-century box pews, introduced in the late 20th century, when the rooms in this section of the house were redecorated. One of the windows contains 18th-century painted glass panels depicting various female occupations.

9. The Bishop's Lodging

LISTED AS PART OF 'ST OSYTH'S PRIORY, CONVALESCENT HOME' AT GRADE I, ITEM 15/197. SCHEDULED ANCIENT MONUMENT

The Bishop's Lodging was originally built by Abbot Vyntoner in red brick with black brick diapering in 1527 (fig. 19). After being damaged in the Civil War, this building was eventually incorporated into the new house built by the Earl of Rochford in the 18th century. It was then largely rebuilt, apart from its south wall, in 1866-69 for Sir John Johnson. This south wall is dominated by a huge first-floor oriel window, itself largely rebuilt in the 19th century, though retaining its frame and its fine carved head and carved



Fig. 19. The south front of the Bishop's Lodging.

© Pete Smith P5132910A.JPG

base with corbelling. The broad four-centred archway below with its deeply moulded frame and cusped spandrels survives together with a doorway to its left; that to the right is a Victorian copy. This wall retains much evidence of its original form including the brick moulded hoods to the large upper-floor windows which originally flanked the oriel. The 19th-century north front is dominated by a two-storey bay window designed in imitation of the oriel on the south front (fig. 20). The resulting large room on the first floor has huge bay windows at its north and south ends (fig. 21). That to the south retains sections of its original early-16th century surround with carved shields and bosses bearing heraldic emblems and figures. The apparently wooden cross beams with their ornate wooden brackets presumably hide the iron girders which span this broad space. The panels



Fig. 20. The north front of the Bishop's Lodging rebuilt 1866-69.

© Pete Smith
P5132845A.JPG



Fig. 21. The interior of the first floor room in the Bishop's Lodging rebuilt for Sir John Johnson 1866-69.

© Pete Smith P5132834.JPG



Fig. 22. The west doorway flanked by gasoliers in the first floor room of the Bishop's Lodging.
© Pete Smith P5132835.JPG

within the ceiling were painted with flowers by Edward Ladell. The elaborately decorated wooden fittings, all in the Gothic Revival style, include dado panelling, pointed arched doorcases, shutter boxes and a suitably exuberant chimney piece. The room also retains a set of fine Gothic Revival-style wall gasoliers (fig. 22). This is by far the most interesting and important 19th-century interior in the whole complex. The equally large but lower room below has a similar ceiling and plainer wooden fittings.

10. The Service Wing

LISTED AS PART OF 'ST OSYTH'S PRIORY, CONVALESCENT HOME' AT GRADE I, ITEM 15/197. SCHEDULED ANCIENT MONUMENT

This Service Wing was added onto the east end of the Bishop's Lodging in the 1860s for Sir John Johnson. The building probably stands on the site of the original monastic kitchen. The Service Wing is built of machine-made bricks and has stone mullion windows with Tudor hood moulds (fig. 23). Its hipped slate roof is hidden behind a brick parapet. This range was extensively remodelled internally in the 1950s during the building's use as a convalescent home.



Fig. 23. The Service Wing built in the 1860s and altered internally in the 20th century.
Pete Smith P5132850.JPG



Fig. 24 The northern section of the east front of the South Wing. © Pete Smith P5132912.JPG



Fig. 25 The south and east fronts of the South Wing. © Pete Smith P5132913.JPG



Fig. 26. The Clock Tower. © Pete Smith P5132866A.JPG

II. The Clock Tower and South Wing

LISTED AS PART OF 'ST OSYTH'S PRIORY, CONVALESCENT HOME' AT GRADE I, ITEM 15/197. SCHEDULED ANCIENT MONUMENT

The northern end of this range was constructed as part the Bishop's Lodging created by Abbot Vyntoner (fig. 24). The southern section originally formed part of the northern end of the cellarer's range of the priory. It was rebuilt largely in brick for Lord Darcy in the mid-16th century (fig. 25). His additions also included the tall octagonal Clock Tower on the east side of this range, which is faced with distinctive chequer-work in two colours of stone - limestone and septaria - with flint galleting and has two-light mullion windows (fig. 26).¹² The tower is crowned by an octagonal wooden cupola with a lead roof added in the 18th century. This cupola is not shown on the engraved view of the Priory published in 1772.¹³ This tower also has copper clock dials on its south and west faces, these too date from the later 18th century.

This whole range is shown as a roofless ruin in an engraving of 1819 (fig. 16). The east front



Fig. 27. The medieval vaulted rooms on the ground floor of the South Wing.
© Pete Smith P5132820.JPG

of this range is divided into two sections: a lower two-storey section to the north which was built in 1527 as part of the Bishop's Lodging (fig. 24) and a taller two and a half-storey mid-16th century section to the south (fig. 25), both with straight gables. The brick and stone south front was built in various phases (fig. 25). It is unified by a gable and parapet with the same distinctive chequer-work and two unusual stone chimney stacks added for the 1st Lord Darcy. Internally the southern end of this range retains a number of vaulted rooms with chamfered ribs and pointed arched doorways which date from the 13th century (fig. 27). The upper floors were rebuilt in the 1860s. The northern section of this range is still shown as partially roofed in views of the priory published in 1847 (fig. 28) and 1895.¹⁴ It was reroofed and refitted for Sir John Johnson in around 1900 and all the internal fittings are of this date.



Fig. 28. An engraved view of the Bishop's Lodging and the Clock Tower and South Wing, in 1847. Showing the then roofless north range.

12. The Abbot's Tower and the Chapel

LISTED AS 'WALL BETWEEN SOUTHERN WING OF CONVALESCENT HOME AND DARCY TOWER' AT GRADE II*, ITEM 15/198, 'THE DARCY TOWER, ALSO KNOWN AS THE ABBOT'S TOWER AND VAULTING TO WEST' AT GRADE I, ITEM 15/199, 'THE CHAPEL OF ST OSYTH AND RUINS ATTACHED TO NORTH' AT GRADE I, ITEM 15/200, AND 'RUINED EAST RANGE AND TOWER' AT GRADE I, ITEM 15/201. SCHEDULED ANCIENT MONUMENT

The Abbot's Tower survives as the single most important part of Lord Darcy's new house built in the mid 16th century, and it is still the most prominent building on the site. At present the building is hidden beneath scaffolding (29). The tower has three tall octagonal corner turrets which are square in plan on the ground floor and octagonal above. The fourth corner is topped by an elaborate brick chimney stack. The tower is constructed of the distinctive chequer-work in two colours of stone, limestone and septaria, with flint galleting (fig. 30) which is indicative of the additions made for the 1st Lord Darcy. Internally the three tower rooms retain little original fabric apart from a single chimney piece with an additional early 18th-century surround (fig. 31). Unlike almost all other towers on contemporary country houses this tower was not part of a gatehouse, instead it seems to have functioned as a prospect or viewing tower. It would have provided spectacular views of the gardens and the park. It may also have functioned as a beacon given its coastal position. Stretching to the north are the substantial ruins of a further range of Lord Darcy's house. This range retains much of its east wall with extant window and door openings and at least one complete chimney stack. The tower was attached to the eastern end of the former refectory range which was also remodelled for Darcy. The fragmentary remains of the building at the eastern end of this range - the former passage to the frater range - was transformed into the Chapel by Sir



Fig. 29. The Abbot's Tower at present clad in scaffolding and undergoing restoration.
© Pete Smith P5132915A.JPG



Fig. 30. A detail of the distinctive limestone and septaria chequerwork with flint galleting on the Abbot's Tower.

© Pete Smith
P5132853A



Fig. 31. A surviving 16th century fireplace with an added early 18th century fire surround, and a late 18th century basket grate in the Abbot's Tower.

© Pete Smith
P5132863A.JPG

John Johnson in the late 19th century (fig. 32).¹⁵ This chapel incorporates important original medieval fabric, including its ribbed quadrupartite vaults of c. 1230. The earlier appearance of this space was recorded in an engraving published in 1873 (fig. 34). The present interior is an interesting mixture of the medieval and the Gothic Revival style (fig. 33). Most of the adjoining range, apart from its brick south wall (figs 29 and 35), probably built by the 2nd Lord Darcy around 1600, was severely damaged in the Civil War and then allowed to fall into a ruinous state. The surviving brick wall retains its blocked windows with Tudor hood moulds, their original brick mullions and transoms can still be seen on its northern side (fig. 36). A large brick four-centred archway was inserted through the western end of this wall in the late 19th century.



Fig. 32. The west front of the Chapel created in the late 19th century for Sir John Johnson
© Pete Smith P5132861



Fig. 33. The Chapel created for Sir John Johnson from the former passge to the frater range of the monastic buildings.
© Pete Smith D513856.JPG



Fig. 34. An engraving published in 1873 showing the ruined former passage to the frater range of the monastic buildings before its conversion into the Chapel.



Fig. 35. The surviving brick front wall of the south range, probably built for the John, 2nd Lord Darcy c. 1600, overlooking the topiary garden created by Somerset de Chair.
© Pete Smith P5132867.JPG



Fig. 36. One of the blocked windows in the surviving brick front wall to the south range of Lord Darcy's former house.

© Pete Smith
P5132862A.JPG

13. The Boundary Walls and Gates

LISTED AS 'PRECINCT WALL TO SOUTH WEST OF GATEHOUSE' AT GRADE I, ITEM 15/204, 'PRECINCT WALL CONTINUING SOUTH OF WALL' AT GRADE II, ITEM 15/205, AND 'PRECINCT WALL RUNNING EAST OF GATEHOUSE TURNING NORTH EAST AND FLANKING COLCHESTER ROAD' AT GRADE II, ITEM 15/206. SCHEDULED ANCIENT MONUMENT

The boundary wall, which extends around the south and east sides of the site, includes two important gateways. The wall follows the line of the monastic boundary wall and in places incorporates extensive sections of medieval rubble masonry (fig. 37). The northern end of the wall on the east side of the site was rebuilt and extended in brick, probably in the 16th century. The wall has been damaged, repaired and rebuilt on many occasions. The section of wall on the north side of what was once called Cow Lane, between the Bury and the Colchester Road, was rebuilt further north in order to allow for the widening of this road in 1927. There is a gateway to the south-west of the Gatehouse which has a large round-headed stone archway that appears to date from the early 13th century (RCHME says late 14th century) (fig. 38). The gateway to the east of the Gatehouse, which has been blocked in brick, dates from the 16th century (fig. 39). This latter gate formed the main entrance to Lord Darcy's new house; the Gatehouse being relegated at this time to the entrance to the service court.



Fig. 37. The much repaired and restored Boundary Wall running along the east side of the park and the west side of Colchester Road. © Pete Smith P5132804A



Fig. 38. The early 13th century gateway inserted into the southern section of the Boundary Walls at St Osyth's Priory © Pete Smith P5132811A



Fig. 39. The now blocked gateway inserted in the precinct wall as the main entrance to Lord Darcy's new house built in the mid-16th century.

© Pete Smith P5132807A

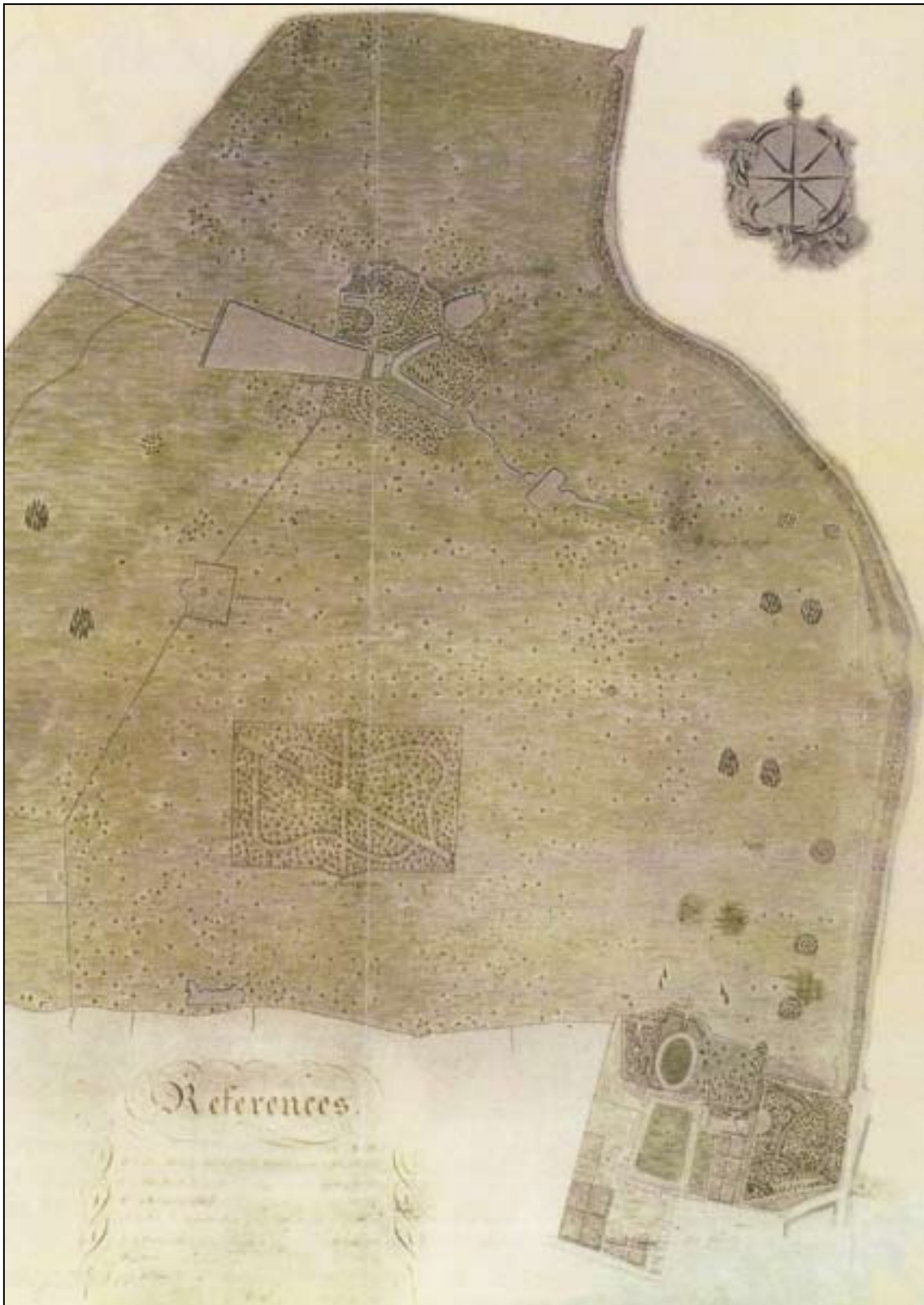


Fig. 40. Edward John Eyre survey of St Osyth's Priory estate of 1762 showing the house, its gardens and the park.
© Essex Record Office

The Gardens and the Landscape

A detailed study of the historic landscape was carried out in 2003 for the Sargeant family.¹⁶ The main rectangular court, between the Gatehouse and the Bishop's Lodging, probably represents the main precinct of the monastic buildings, and the later service court to Lord Darcy's great house. The extent of the present park follows roughly the same boundary as the 'Little Parke, with deer and game and liberties', that was granted to Lord Darcy in 1553.¹⁷ The deer were probably removed (stolen) and much of the timber felled from the park during the Civil War. The formal gardens which were presumably laid out by Lord Darcy were probably sited to the west of the now ruined main range of his house, overlooked by the Abbot's Tower, and in the walled enclosure to the south of this range which was presumably part of the entrance court, accessed through the gateway (now blocked) in the former precinct wall (fig. 38). These gardens must have been badly damaged when the house was ransacked in 1642 and presumably remained largely neglected until 1721.

The detailed survey made by Edward John Eyre in 1762 of the landscape park (fig. 40) shows the landscape garden created by the 3rd and 4th Earls of Rochford.¹⁸ Its basic layout still survives today and the layout of the gardens is also still recognisable (fig. 41). The precinct is shown down to grass, as it is now, the present walled garden was then divided into six kitchen garden beds, the informal gardens to the west were at that time a wilderness with broad grass paths and the main pleasure grounds were sited to



Fig. 41. A detail of Edward John Eyre's survey of 1762 showing the gardens at St Osyth's Priory.

© Essex Record Office



Fig. 42. *The Grotto in 2003.*

© Debois Landscape Group

the north of the house. These pleasure grounds were obviously focused around the new Georgian house. A large oval formed the centre piece of this north garden leading from the house out into the landscape park. To the west Eyre's plan shows an intricate garden planted with shrubs and an elaborate arrangement of serpentine paths and to the west a much looser form of informal planting on grass. Out in the park the hand of a follower of 'Capability' Brown can be clearly seen (fig. 40). A deep belt of trees runs along the eastern side of the park, hiding the line of the road. The largely flat parkland is punctuated with clumps of trees and to the west a rectangular block of trees is marked as the 'New Plantation'. At the western edge of the park is a rectangular enclosure marked 'The Hermitage'. This contained the Grotto (fig. 42) with its ancilliary building the Kitchen (dem). The Grotto is constructed of bands of rough and smooth flints, has a thatched roof and is elaborately decorated internally with shell-work. It is a fine example of the type of rustic accommodation occasionally provided for a resident hermit, though the internal shell-work suggests it was used more as a summerhouse. The Grotto is the only garden building reputed to survive (not inspected) within this 18th-century landscape. To the south this survey shows that an elaborate water garden had been laid out.

A new north drive was constructed by 1777, and two lodges were subsequently built either side of the resulting new entrance to the park, they were demolished in the 1970s. This drive is the only major alteration to this landscape shown on a survey plan of 1814 by John Wiggins (fig. 43).¹⁹ This later plan also shows that the shape of the canal has been softened and the water gardens simplified. The plan shows that there had been more



Fig. 43. John Wiggins survey of St Osyth's Priory estate of 1814 showing the house, its gardens and the park.
© Essex Record Office



Fig. 44. A detail of John Wiggins survey of 1814 showing the gardens at St Osyth's Priory.

© Essex Record Office

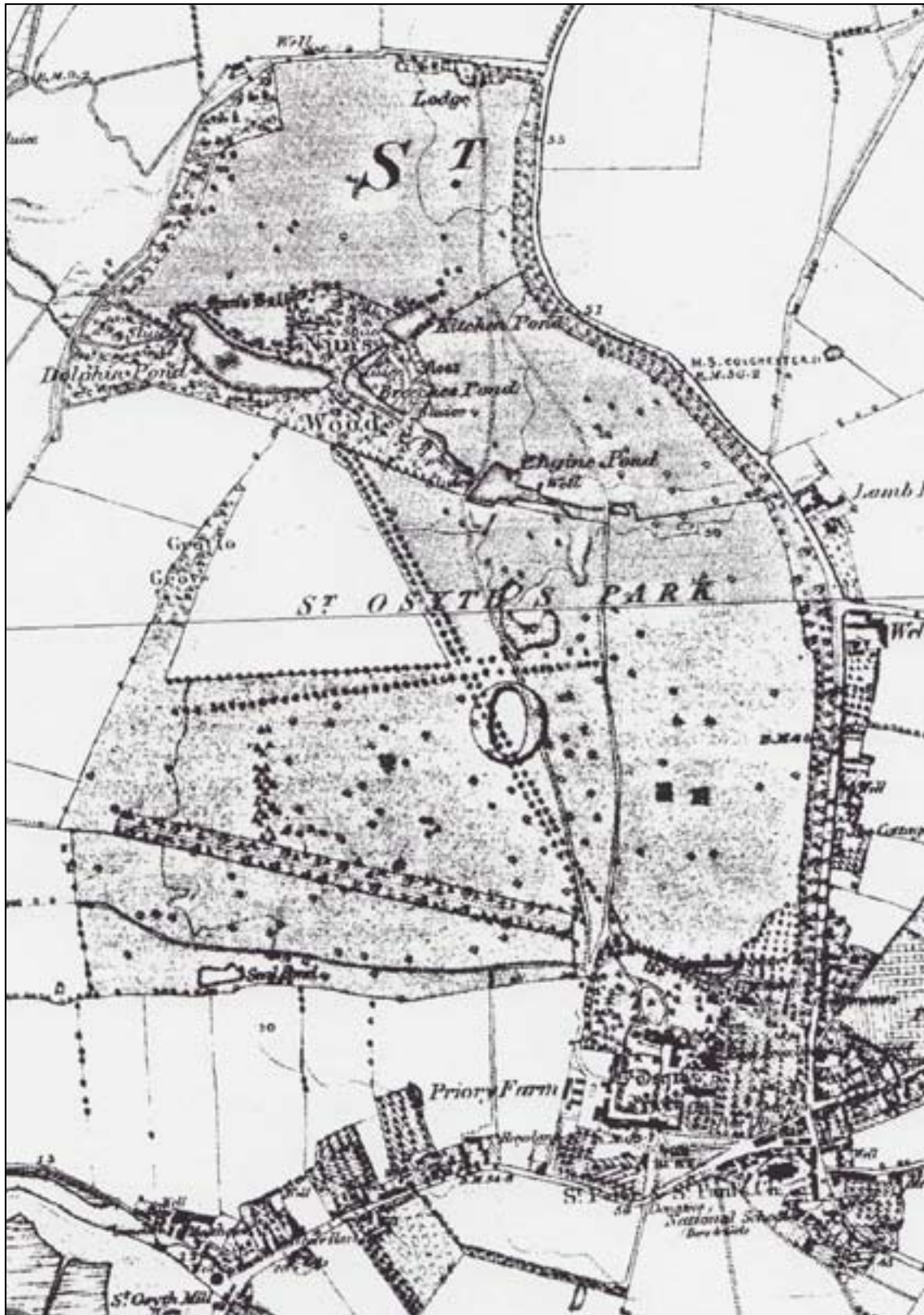


Fig. 45. A detail of the Ordnance Survey Map of 1874 showing the layout of the park and gardens at St Osyth's Priory, Essex.

© Crown Copyright and database right 2011. All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey Licence number 100024900



Fig. 46. An early 20th century postcard showing the elaborate flowerbeds created for Sir John Johnson in the late 19th century. © Debois Landscape Group

alteration within the gardens. A new garden had been created at the northern end of the western garden and the walled garden was now incorporated into the gardens, whilst the western section of the precinct was by this date laid out with formal beds (fig. 44).

The earliest Ordnance Surevy map of 1874 (fig. 45) shows that during the 19th century an avenue of trees had been planted across the park, linking the house to the water gardens, now referred to as Nun's Wood, with another partial avenue crossing it. A long straight shrubbery walk had also been added stretching westwards from the house, whilst a triangular-shaped plantation of mulberries and medlars was added in the south-east corner of the park, probably to hide the new Gas Works which had been built to the east. This map also shows that the garden north of the house had been extended out further into the park and that its planting had been made less formal. In the later 19th century Sir John Johnson had elaborately shaped flower beds cut into the main precinct court, which were then planted out with summer bedding plants (fig. 46). He also had an enormous L-plan pergola, known as The Screen, erected around the north-west corner of this court. It was described in *The Gardeners' Chronicle* for January 12th 1895:

The rustic work, clothed in Roses, Clematis, Virginian Creepers, Ivies, Jasmines, is boldly designed, and cleverly carried out, forming a link between the past and the present.



Fig. 47. An early 20th century postcard showing the Screen or pergola erected for Sir John Johnson in the late 19th century. © Debois Landscape Group

This elaborate structure was constructed of tree trunks and branches formed into pointed Gothic arches, with a parapet and finials; it was demolished in the early 20th century (fig. 47). The same article also records that 'the Priory gardens to-day cover about 10 acres, six of which are kitchen gardens, well furnished with collections of fruit and vegetables'. These kitchen gardens occupied the walled enclosure to the south of the main range of Lord Darcy's ruined house and the much larger area to the east, between the Abbot's Tower and the Colchester Road. There were a total thirteen glasshouses. The largest, dividing the southern garden into two, 'consisting of [a] large Vinery, Peach-house, stove and Cucumber house'. This garden was tended by Mr Kent, the gardener and a staff of ten men.²⁰

During the late 20th century a series of new gardens were created for Somerset de Chair. Two rectangular formal gardens, the rose garden and the topiary garden (fig. 35), were created within the earlier walled kitchen garden, after the Vinery had been demolished. The other kitchen garden, to the east, was eventually layed out as a more informal space with lawns, shrubs and trees. The north drive across the park was abandoned and the Gatehouse once again became the main entrance. The gardens to the north of the house were thinned and the complex Victorian flower beds grassed over.

The Ruins

Many former monastic sites, like St Osyth's Priory, were converted into houses during the 16th century, and many contain small vestiges of their medieval past, as at Welbeck Abbey in Nottinghamshire which retains a single early doorway and a vaulted undercroft. A few retain prominent monastic survivals, like Newstead Abbey in the same county, which retains the magnificent west front of the former abbey church, or Laycock Abbey in Wiltshire which retains its complete cloister at the core of the new house; but these were the exception. A small number of conversions included the preservation of gatehouses as at Battle Abbey in Sussex and at Buckden Palace in Bedfordshire, though the two most important local examples of surviving monastic gatehouses, at Colchester and Bury St Edmunds, were never converted into country houses. St Osyth's Priory is therefore unusual in having such a large quantity of surviving monastic fabric.

St Osyth's Priory is certainly not unique in having been damaged during the Civil War. Large numbers of country houses were garrisoned for one side or the other and many of these were badly damaged in subsequent military actions. Most were restored, though a number, like Burley-on-the-Hill in Rutland were demolished and later rebuilt, and some like Baconsthorpe Castle in Norfolk or Moreton Corbet Castle in Shropshire were never rebuilt and survive today as consolidated ruins. But St Osyth's Priory was never garrisoned and it was attacked, not by a military force, but by a local Puritan mob intent on ransacking the house of a Roman Catholic. This mob then pursued Lady Savage to Melford Hall in Suffolk, a property she had inherited from her husband, and this too was ransacked and looted. These attacks took place in 1642, at the very beginning of the Civil War. They were not part of any military campaign, rather they seem to have been the work of a local religious group who resented the presence of such a prominent Roman Catholic and royalist supporter in their midst. This local antipathy to Lady Savage and her family probably explains why the house was abandoned after the Civil War, and why her immediate descendants chose to move to Cheshire, a county well known for its Catholic sympathies. There is no detailed record of the actual damage done to St Osyth's Priory, though it appears to have been largely looting and theft, and it seems likely that the ruination of Lord Darcy's house was largely due to neglect in the ensuing 50 years.

These ruins were not saved as a proud record and reminder of the struggles of the Civil War, as was the case at some houses, like Brampton Bryan Castle in Herefordshire where the Harley family built a new house nearby and displayed the ruins of the former castle as a garden feature, which survives to this day as a reminder of the family's sacrifice in the Royalist cause.²¹ At St Osyth's the owner who restored the property was Frederic Nassau, a Dutch Protestant who can have had little or no sympathy with his wife's Catholic ancestors.²² Though Nassau appears to have built himself what amounted to a new house to the west of the main ruins of the abbey and Lord Darcy's house, he must have made a conscious decision not to have these ruins removed. Unlike the Earl of Halifax, who expressed his pleasure in a letter of 1680 that '*there were no rags of Rome remaining*' at Rufford Abbey his seat in Nottinghamshire which had recently been remodelled.²³ In fact Nassau appears to have restored the Gatehouse as a fitting entrance to his new house. The earliest topographical record of the Priory, produced in around 1720, shows the Gatehouse in what appears to be a semi-ruinous state, whilst the next image of the Priory by Samuel and Nathaniel Buck produced sometime after

1738, shows it restored.

The increasing Romantic appreciation of ruins and the burgeoning antiquarian interests of the later 18th century will have been responsible for the survival of the ruined sections of the property through the early 19th century. An increasing number of engravings of these ruins were published at this time, though interestingly only one of these records the Georgian house, and then only in passing (fig. 15). Considering the more aggressive antiquarian interests of the Gothic Revival it is not at all surprising to find Sir John Johnson employing and an unknown architect to 'restore' the Bishop's Lodging and to create a brand new chapel within the ruins. Other houses, left ruinous after the Civil War, were restored and re-inhabited within their ruins at this time. At Sudley Castle in Gloucestershire for example, two brothers, William and John Dent, glove manufacturers from Worcester, restored a section of the Tudor house and left the remaining ruins as the backdrop for a new garden from 1837 onwards.²⁴

Most early photographs show the ruins, and the house itself, draped in creepers and climbers as was then the fashion. Even the photographs in the *RCHM* volume of 1922 and in *English Home, Period II* published in 1924, show the ruins still partially hidden by ivy. There exposure to the ravages of wind and weather must have taken place only in the middle years of the 20th century. Since there are no surviving building accounts for any building works at St Osyth's Priory it is impossible to know when, or how often, these ruins have been restored or consolidated in the past, but it is hard to believe that they have never been repaired, since so much has survived from the 15th and 16th centuries.

The ruins of the abbey buildings and the much more extensive ruins of Lord Darcy's great house have been little studied since Alfred Clapham produced his first assessment of the buildings for the *RCHM* volume published in 1922 and no detailed archaeological recording or assessment of the site has taken place since. Any consideration of the future of these nationally important ruins should of necessity include some form of recording of their extent and present condition.

CONCLUSION

This group of buildings has had a chequered history since the site was granted to Lord Darcy in 1553. Never owned by one family for more than 150 years, and owned by no less than five different owners in the 20th century, these buildings have undergone huge changes in the past 500 years.

The monastic buildings, apart from the Gatehouse, fragments of the north range of the cloister and the recently built domestic additions made for Abbot Vyntoner, were swept away by Lord Darcy and the surviving sections converted into a large and important mid-16th century house. This was extended by his son in c.1600, but the catholic affiliations of Countess Rivers meant that the house suffered severe damage during the Civil War and was then allowed to decay for over 50 years. The estate was re-inhabited by Frederic Nassau, but most of the earlier buildings appear to have been left to decay, whilst Frederic set about building what amounted to a new house in the Georgian style to the west of the Bishop's Lodgings. This was extended by his son to make a house impressive enough to accommodate George III on three separate occasions. But this house seems to have fallen into disrepair relatively quickly and been largely demolished by 1859. When Sir John Johnson purchased the property in 1863 he restored and remodelled some sections of the 16th century house, particularly the Bishop's Lodgings. In the later 20th century the Gatehouse became the centre of Simon de Chair's residence and the garden the main focus of his endeavours, whilst the largely Victorian main house remained a convalescent home. It is the disparate nature of the fragments from all periods that survive here which make this such an interesting and important site.

Many of these buildings are of outstanding importance and they are rightly scheduled and listed at grade I, but some of the lesser buildings, though perhaps of relatively minor architectural importance on their own, form an important part of the whole group. Equally important is the un-investigated archaeological evidence which must lie beneath these buildings and their grounds. Together they tell the continuous story of the site and how it has functioned at different periods.

This is more than just a visual association, though the visual effect of the mixture of whole and ruined structures, plus the enormous variety of their building materials, means that they form endlessly picturesque groupings; something which has been fostered and encouraged by the planting of more recent owners. Many of these buildings are in fact linked together physically (fig. 1). The Gatehouse (1), with its side wings, adjoins the Boundary Walls and Gates (13), to the south and east, and the Tithe Barn (2) and Stable (3) to the west. Whilst the 18th Century House (8), the Bishop's Lodging (9), the Clock Tower and South Wing (10), the Abbot's Tower and the Chapel wing (11) and the Service Wing (12) are all linked together. In fact these two groups of buildings are

themselves linked by the brick garden walls. The Brewhouse (5), the Drying House (6) and the West Barn and Bailiff's Cottage (7) also adjoin each other, whilst the Cart-shed (4), which is the only building that is actually detached, is less than a metre from the Tithe Barn and Stable (fig. 8). These physical links mean that these disparate buildings form a single unit, which only strengthens the need to see this group of disparate structures as a unified whole. These buildings are also linked across time, each representing different aspects of the building's history and together they form an integral grouping of national importance. The preservation not only of the buildings themselves, but also the ruins and their layout, plus the spaces between and around them, must be the goal of any proposals to restore and conserve these buildings.

In many ways the disparate nature of these buildings is not unusual for an English country house. Other houses also contain fragments from different periods and in different styles. Many originated as monastic foundations, though very few can boast such extensive survival from this period as can be found here at St Osyth's. A number of houses have a significant amount of 16th-century fabric surviving, though again, few have such extensive structures as the Clock Tower (fig. 26) and the Abbot's Tower (fig. 29). The hugely important house which Lord Darcy created here has been preserved by neglect following its ransacking in the Civil War. Many houses were similarly treated during the Civil War, though few still bear witness, so obviously, to this pivotal moment in English history. The 18th Century House which was added onto these earlier fragments is almost as illusory as the 16th-century house. The surviving wing (fig. 14) was its least impressive part and its full appearance is only recorded in a single very poor quality engraving (fig. 15). The introduction of mid-Victorian interiors within an earlier house, like those in the Bishop's Lodging, the most impressive and unexpected rooms in this complex (figs 21 and 22), is not at all unusual in an English country house. Neither is the lack of architectural evidence for the 20th century anything out of the ordinary. It simply reflects a lack of funding which helps to explain the poor condition of many of the buildings today. It is not the combination of different periods which is unusual. It is the survival of so much early fabric and the layout of the buildings which is unique. Even now much of the monastic layout still survives, as does the shape of the late medieval park. Each progressive owner built on the footprint of earlier structures. No owner after Lord Darcy appears to have had the desire or the finances to start anew, as so often happened at other country houses. It is the resulting intermingling of so many different eras within its basic outline that gives St Osyth's its true historical significance and architectural character.

Though the external structure of many of these buildings survives (often in poor condition) relatively little survives internally. The plain interiors of the Gatehouse survive, as does the Chapel (fig. 33), the early vaulted rooms in the Clock Tower range (fig. 27) and the rooms in the Abbot's Tower (fig. 31). But the destruction of all the interiors of Lord Darcy's house in the Civil War and the subsequent large-scale destruction of the house built to replace it in the 18th century, means that most of the surviving interiors date from after 1850. The two huge rooms in the Bishop's Lodging, so radically

reformed and lavishly redecorated, by an unknown architect (figs 21 and 22), are the most important domestic interiors to survive. Even the surviving section of the Georgian additions was altered in the 19th century and then refitted in the 20th century (fig. 18). This relative lack of high quality interior spaces only highlights the fact that it is the exteriors of these structures and their combination together which is the most important element of this site.

Though many of the buildings on the site are of enormous architectural significance, especially those linked to its monastic past and the ownership of Lord Darcy, the true significance of this complex of buildings is the story which it so clearly tells. In many ways the history of the past 500 years can be read in the structures which survive at St Osyth's Priory. The Gatehouse stands for its catholic and monastic beginnings, whilst the Abbot's Tower and the Clock Tower represent its conversion to a protestant and domestic usage in the 16th century. Its extensive ruined walls quite literally represent the result of the religious and political upheavals of the Civil War, whilst the 18th Century House represents the consequences of the constitutional settlements of the late 17th century, when the property was inherited by a cousin of William III. The new commercial and industrial wealth of the 19th century is epitomised by the extravagant remodelling of the Bishop's Lodging carried out by Sir John Johnson, a successful corn merchant. Whilst the 20th century is encapsulated by its institutional use and its ownership by a popular novelist, who created an interesting garden here and briefly brought a great art collection to the house. But it was de Chair's selling off of the remaining estate and his granting of rights for mineral extraction which have made the biggest impact on the wider landscape in the 20th century. It is to be hoped that the purchase of the property by the Sargeant family will see the restoration of this disparate group of historic buildings and a brighter future for this complex of buildings and their important landscape in the 21st century.

ENDNOTES

- 1 John Watney, 'St. Osyth's Priory', *Transactions of the Essex Archaeological Society*, Vol. V (old series), 1873, 1-51. 'St. Osyth's Proiry', *The Gardeners' Chronicle*, Jan 12, 1895, 37-39. 'St. Osyth's Priory, Essex', *Country Life*, Vol. 14, Aug 29, 1903, 304-08. 'St Osyth's Priory, Essex, I, II, III', *Country Life*, Vol. 44, Dec 7, 14, 21, 1918, 524-29, 550-56, 576-83. (Alfred Clapham) RCHM(E), *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in Essex*, Vol. III, London, 1922, 195-204. H Avray Tipping, 'St Osyth's Priory, Essex', *English Homes*, Period II, Vol. I, 1924, 271-93. Somerset de Chair, *St Osyth's Priory*, Guidebook, English Life Publications, Derby, No date (c.1960). James Bentley and Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Buildings of England, Essex*, 2007, 671-75.
- 2 Maurice Howard, *The Early Tudor Country House*, London, 1987, 138, n. 9.
- 3 *Melford Hall*, National Trust Guidebook, 1990, 34.
- 4 Peter de Figueiredo and Julian Treuherz, *Cheshire Country Houses*, Chichester, 1988, 31 and 252, pl. 176.
- 5 Frederic's grandfather, William Henry was a cousin of William III and he accompanied him to England in 1688, he was created 1st Earl of Rochford in 1695. Kenneth Walker, 'William Henry, Earl of Rochford, An Essex Diplomat', *The Essex Review*, No. 182, Vol. XLVI, April 1937, 65-72.
- 6 The will was contested by the Rivers family and the case was finally settled in Bessy's favour in 1721.
- 7 His family's traditional country estate was Kastel Zuylestein in Utrecht in Holland. A copy of an engraving by Daniel Stoopendaal of Kastel Zuylestein and its gardens as they were in 1690 is included in Debois Landscape Survey Group, *St Osyth Priory, Essex*, Historic Landscape Survey Report, Volume 2: Archival Sources, revised 2003.
- 8 Sale Catalogue, 1920, Essex Record Office (hereafter ERO). Acc. C32 C20
- 9 Mark Girouard, 'From Medieval Gatehouse to Modern Home', *Country Life*, Aug 21, 1958, 360-61.
- 10 Girouard, *op. cit.*, 360.
- 11 Kenneth Walker, 'The Nassau Family of St Osyth: A Royal Genealogy', *The Essex Review*, Vol. LI, 1942, 75-85. *Excursions through Essex*, 1819. 96.
- 12 Bentley and Pevsner, *op. cit.*, 674.
- 13 *A New and Complete History of Essex*, Vol. VI, 1772.
- 14 Samuel Carter Hall, *The Baronial Halls and Picturesque Edifices of England*, Vol. I,

London, 1847. *The Gardeners' Chronicle*, *op. cit.*, 38.

15 Watney, *op. cit.* 48. Pevsner states that the chapel was created in 1866, but this engraving suggests that the work wasn't carried out until after 1873.

16 Debois Landscape Survey Group, *St Osyth Priory, Essex*, Historic Landscape Survey Report, 3 volumes, 2003.

17 Calendar of Patent Rolls, 22 May, 1553.

18 'A Plan of the Park, Gardens at St OSYTH in the county of ESSEX of the Seat of the Rt Hon Earl of Rochford, taken in 1762 by Edwd. John Eyre, Surveyor'. ERO, D/DU 268/15.

19 'Plan of the Parish of Chich St Osyth in the County of Essex, the Estate of Frederick Nassau, Esq. Surveyed 1814 with alterations of fences to 1819, by John Wiggins'. ERO, D/DCr PI; related terrier D/DHw E43.

20 *The Gardeners' Chronicle*, *op. cit.*, 38-39.

21 Ron Shoesmith, *Castles & Moated Sites of Herefordshire, Monuments in the Landscape II*, 2009, 59-68.

22 There is no suggestion that Bessy Savage was brought up a catholic, in fact, after the 3rd Earl's death she married the vicar of St Osyth's church, the Rev. Philip Carter. Walker *op. cit.*, 77.

23 Pete Smith, 'Rufford Abbey and Its Gardens in the 17th and 18th Centuries', *English Heritage Historical Review*, Volume 4, 2009, 129.

24 Nicholas Kingsley and Michael Hill, *The Country Houses of Gloucestershire, Volume Three 1830-2000*, 2001, 231-36.