

THE SOUTH WEST VIEW OF THE CLOISTER FROM BRAND'S *Hist. of Newcastle.*

VIII—MONASTERY OF THE BLACK ERIARS, NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE.

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[Read on the 25th August, 1920].

The foundation of nearly the whole of the monastice houses in England occurred before the end of the 12th century. In the 13th century the various orders of Friars Preachers were established. That under St. Dominic was founded in the rule of St. Augustine and introduced into England about the year 1221. Unlike the monks who were content to exercise a certain self restraint and to save their own souls, the friars were concerned for the bodies and souls of others, and zealously engaged in teaching and preaching among the people.

The increasing laxity of the monastic orders, moved to activity the preaching friars, a body of church reformers, who speedily became popular, and rapidly established their order throughout England. Unfortunately few records are obtainable regarding the mendicant orders and but slight remains of their buildings now exist. This is largely due to the fact that the friars were not usually endowed with big estates but relied for their subsistence on the free-will gifts of the people, and that their houses being chiefly erected in busy towns were soon destroyed after their disuse by the order.

Of the fifty-eight houses of Black Friars at the time of the suppression of monasteries, three only are recorded in Northumberland, viz., at Newcastle, Bamburgh,¹ and Berwick. Within the walls of Newcastle there existed convents of the

¹ *New Hist. of Northumberland*, 1, 138.

Dominicans, Franciscans, White and Austin friars. That of the Dominicans was the earliest and most important. Their dress was a white cassock and hood under a black cloak and cowl. They were known as Black friars from the colour of their habit, in Paris also called Jacobins from their residence in Rue St. Jaques, and in Newcastle 'Shod Friars' in contradistinction to the Grey friars who went barefooted.

It has been variously stated that the Black friars at Newcastle was founded about the year 1260, by Sir Peter Scott and his son Sir Nicholas Scott, on a site given by three sisters whose names are unknown. Sir Peter is said to have been the first chief magistrate of Newcastle who bore the title of mayor. The date must however be advanced by at least twenty years, because before March, 1239, the Friar Preachers dwelling in Newcastle received from Henry III '150 ells of white cloth valued at 4*d.*,'² proving that a community existed at the time, whilst present investigations demonstrate that Sir Peter Scott died in 1251.

Among a few recorded references to the fabric and site, the following may be mentioned. On the 6th Nov., 1263, an inquisition made by Adam de Gesemuth, sheriff of Northumberland and the mayor of Newcastle, determines that 'the aqueduct which the Friar Preachers of Newcastle, by grant of the king, have brought from a well without their court to their house and thence to the said town, is to remain, as it will not be to the damage of the king and will be for the improvement to the town.'³ On Sept. 18th, 1280, a 'licence is granted for the Friars Preachers of Newcastle-upon-Tyne to make a narrow gate through the new wall surrounding the said town, which will have to be made through the garden of the said friars, for

² *Cal. Liberate Rolls*, 23 Hen. III, p. 368, M. 23.

³ *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 48 Hen. III, p. 291.



Fig. 1.— SOUTH VIEW BY ROBERT JOHNSON (1770-1796).



Fig. 2.—EAST SIDE BY T. M. RICHARDSON.

ingress into the said garden, and for them and their successors to hold the same on condition that the sheriff of Northumberland or the constable of the castle of the said town may stop it when they please for a time.' Also 'a grant to them of the moiety of that street which adjoins their own place on the west for the enlargement of the same.'⁴

On June 4th, 1312, 'Licence for the Prior and Friar Preachers of Newcastle-upon-Tyne to erect a wooden draw bridge (*pontem versatilem*) five feet wide across the new dyke of the town, by which they will be able to go from their house within the wall of the town through a postern of the wall to their garden beyond the dyke, and also to erect a paling round the garden where the garden wall formerly was. If any danger threatens, the paling and bridge are to be removed.'⁵

On March 1st, 1318, Grant to the Friars Preachers of Newcastle-upon-Tyne of a messuage in that town, late of Gilbert de Middleton, a traitor,⁶ adjacent to their dwelling place and cemetery for the enlargement thereof, to be held by the services by which it was held before it was escheated into the king's hand for the felony committed by the said Gilbert, for which he was hanged.⁷

On May 16th, 1329, the king granted a licence for the alienation in mortmain by John Baroun of Newcastle-upon-Tyne to the prior and friars preachers in that town of a plot of land contiguous to their dwelling place for the enlargement of the same.⁸

That the ditch without the town wall in peaceful times was turned to profitable use may be gleaned from the lease of a great close granted July 13th, 1476, by prior John Rokesburgh

⁴ *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 8 Edward I, p. 397.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 5 Edward II, p. 461.

⁶ Scarcely a traitor. See an able vindication of Sir Gilbert's action in the rebellion against Edward II. *Sir Gilbert de Middleton*, by Sir Arthur E. Middleton, bart.

⁷ *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 11 Edward II, p. 112.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 3 Edward III, p. 392.

and the brethren, to William Hays at 25s. per annum, carrying with it the privilege of fixing a leaden pipe to the aqueduct, previously mentioned, in order to supply water to his fish ponds.

The Friars Preachers shared the usual minor bequests made to the mendicant orders, and the alms distributed by royalty when visiting the town. Among these the following may be recorded :—

On 29th March, 1275, Walter de Merton, bishop of Rochester, bequeathed ten marks to the Friar Preachers of Newcastle, and, an indication that the friars possessed a valuable library, directs that the *Epistolae Pauli Glossatae* which he had borrowed from them should be returned.⁹

On the 9th October, 1332, Griffen, son of Sir Griffin Thloyt [Lloyd], kt., was buried in the church of the convent, towards the expenses of whose funeral the king gave 40s.

In Sept., 1323, for attendance at the burial at Tynemouth of Ada, illegitimate daughter of the king, the brethren of the order of preachers, and others, each received 5s., by the hand of John Leck, brother of the order of preachers.

In April 1378, Margaret, relict of Sir John Eure, knight 'directs that her body be buried in the choir of the church of the Preaching Friars or Dominicans, near the West Gate, and bequeaths to Robert Gategang, for masses for her soul, 5 marks ; to William Laton, prior of the Dominicans 5 marks ; to John Galloway, chaplain, 5 marks ; . . . to every preacher of the order of Preaching Friars there 12d., to every brother of the said order not a priest, 6d., . . various bequests of plate, linen, and apparel to John Galloway, William Laton, Sir Thomas Surtees, knight, and the house of the Preaching Friars ; residue to her executors, prior William Laton, John Sadberge, Robert Heron and John Galwey.'

⁹ Documents relating to Merton College.

On two occasions, firstly in the will of lord Scrope (1415) and secondly, in that of Roger Thornton (1430) mention is made of bequests 'to the recluse of the house of the Black Friars,' showing that an anchorite abode within the precincts of the convent.

Following on the frequent visits of the Edwardian kings when passing to and from Scotland, occasionally accompanied by the royal household, the friars were the recipients of considerable gifts of money and kind. Sometimes the accommodation demanded extended to the whole of the buildings, and occasionally necessitated their alteration.

It is clear that the community experienced considerable inconvenience on the occasion of these visits, which was accentuated when high festivities were indulged in, and yet more so when state officials with their doubtful attendants claimed hospitality.¹⁰

On the 10th Sept., 1322, the king with the queen stayed at Newcastle for a fortnight. In honour of the royal visit, and of the victory which the English forces had achieved at Norham, the monasteries of Newcastle received on the 14th Sept., each

¹⁰ The Friar Preachers of Newcastle-upon-Tyne have represented to the king that, whereas they and their predecessors have been wont to have in the past gates on their soil for entering and closing their manse in the said town, in a contention which arose between men of the county of Northumberland and certain of the town at the time when the earl of Surrey, then Warden of the Marches of Scotland, was lodged in the said manse, their gates for no fault of theirs were broken down, and although they, as lawful was, would have replaced their gates and set them up again, some men of the town have hitherto with little justice, prevented them from doing so, and he out of reverence for God to whose service the said Friars are specially bound, continually celebrating for his good estate, and the souls of his progenitors, has granted licence for them to replace their gates [*Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 15 Edward III].

That a fighting strain among the brethren was not entirely absent may be inferred from the fact that four years later (1345) the king granted a 'pardon to Adam de Alnwyke, friar of the order of Friar Preachers of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, of the king's suit against him for the death of John de Denton, and of any subsequent outlawing.' [*Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 19 Edward III].

About 1390 the king because of the misconduct of several of the brethren prohibited the conferring of the degree of master on certain apostate brethren of that community.

6s. 8d. Subsequently the Dominicans or preaching friars were forgiven the sum of 12*l.* which they owed him for victuals formerly sold to them; also on June 16th, 1329, a 'Pardon to the Friar Preachers at Jarrow and Newcastle-upon-Tyne of the respective sums of 12 marks and 6*l.* due for certain victuals sold to them by the late king.' ¹¹

In 1335 'as a return for the hospitality which the king and the royal family had received in this house during a great part of October and November, he gave 10 quarters of corn worth 50s., a tub of flour worth 40s., and a cask of wine worth 5 marks. 20 quarters of corn worth 100s. recompensed them for sheltering royalty again for a short time.'

On March 7th and July 3rd, 1335, an alms of 100s. each time, through F. Adam de Alnwyk, went to satisfy for the damages which the friars had suffered in their buildings during the royal abode there. ¹²

In 1334 the Dominicans were specially honoured by the presence of both the English and the Scottish kings, and their retinues. In the church of the convent on the 19th June, occurred the historical event when Edward Baliol, king of Scotland, with the earls of Athol, Dunbar, Mar and Buchan, did homage to Edward III for the kingdom of Scotland in the presence of the earls of Cromwell and Warren, the archbishop of York, the bishop of Carlisle and a large concourse of clergy and people.

In the troublous years preceding the reformation the friars found themselves at variance with the king whose ecclesiastical supremacy they refused to acknowledge, and it was with difficulty that they were able to maintain themselves. In the spring of 1537, Prior Richard Marshall suddenly quitted the country because he advocated the authority of the pope, notwithstanding

¹¹ *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 3 Edward III.

¹² *Lib. Gard.*, 8, 9, 10, 11, Edward III; Cotton MSS., Nero viii.

the command of the king to the contrary. He was succeeded as prior by Roland Harding who for himself and brethren in their great need, received from Robert Davell, archdeacon of Northumberland, the sum of £6 18s. 0d. and entered into a covenant to sing anthems and devoutly pray for the souls of William Davell, John Brigham, their wives and children, with their benefactors and all christian souls.

Three leases effected about this time were doubtless also due to the impecunious state of the community, inasmuch as some of the leases comprised part of the monastic buildings. Of the leases one consisted of a tenement nigh the White cross granted to Anthony Godsave [? the gatehouse], at the rent of 9s per annum. Another of a meadow close called the 'Horte Close' to Andrew Bewicke at 6s. 8d. per annum. The third to Robert Davell, clerk, and George Davell, of this town, for fourscore years at 3s. 4d. a year, 'a tenement on the south side of the friars (in which Mrs. Davell, late widow, had dwelt) both above and below, with the malt loft being between the friars' kitchen and the far end of the prior's garden on the north side of the same tenancy.'

Two years later the king's visitor, Richard, suffragan bishop of Dover, arrived in Newcastle, and on the 10th Jan., 1539, received the act of surrender tendered and signed by Roland Harding, prior; David Symson, priest; John Sowerby, priest; Charles Newton, priest; Thomas Wyeher, priest; George Borrodon, priest; Andrew Marshall, priest; George Tait, priest; Thomas Bowllok, priest; Andrew Pye, priest; Lawrence Robson, John Watson and Ralph Trotter.

The sale which followed realized, for the vestments and the utensils in the house 4l. 13s. 4d. together with 10s. for the paving tiles in the church and everything in the cells of the dormitory, making 5l. 3s. 4d. in all. No pensions were granted, but the

prior received 6s. 8d., the other priests 5s., Watson and Trotter 3s. 4d. and Barrell 10s., making 3*l.* 13s. 4d., and leaving a balance to the king of 30s. In addition 18 fother of lead on the church roof, and the bells weighing 5 cwt. were reserved for the king, together with two chalices weighing 58 oz. which were forwarded to the royal jewel house.

Soon afterwards the house and lands were let and appear of the annual value of 2*l.* 19s. 4d. the details as enumerated being 'for the site of the house and the buildings, with the garden and orchards pertaining, in the tenure of Henry Adamson (mayor) at will 8s., a hall with two chambers and at the west end of the hall a cross chamber with upper buildings, and two small gardens leased to John Davell, clerk, 13s. 4d.; a close within the west gate demised to Andrew Bewick, 5s.; a close within the walls near the site [Horte Close], in the tenure of Andrew Bewick 6s. 8d.; an orchard on the north side of the site [near White cross] demised to John Noble 3s. 4d.; the close of three acres outside the town wall, with a small house in it, demised to James Lawson, 20s.; and the gatehouse near the street with three burgages annexed to it let to various tenants at will 3s.

It was not until July 7th, 1543, that the mayor and burgesses of Newcastle acquired the whole for the sum of 53*l.* 7s. 6d. for the use of the town. The purchase included the church, belfry, and churchyard, and all buildings and lands; but the bells, lead (except gutters and windows), stone, iron and timber of the church were reserved for the king.

In 1552, the monastery was granted to nine of the mysteries or most ancient trades of the town, at 42s. per annum. To this act the preservation of portions of the buildings on three sides of the cloister garth is due. These are still in the occupation of the companies who have rebuilt some and adapted other parts of the buildings. In a general way the upper floor is divided

into guild rooms, and the lower into tenements in the occupation of freemen of the companies.

THE SITE AND BUILDINGS.

The general arrangements and details of the Dominican houses erected at Gloucester (*Arch. Jour.* xxxix, 296) and Cardiff (*Jour. of the Arch. Assoc.*, xlix, 306) have been carefully recorded, and a very complete and lucid investigation of the disposition and extent of the Black Friars abode at London has also been made (*Archæologia*, lxi, 57). With the assistance of these we can allocate with fair approximation the purpose of the buildings spared to us in Newcastle.

THE PRECINCT.

The site may be regarded as occupying approximately the area lying between the town wall on the west, and Low Friar street on the east. The northern boundary extending from a point near the Morden tower to the junction of Low Friar and Newgate streets, and the southern reaching in a pointed form to the Westgate, making with three acres without the town wall in the vicinity of the present Rutherford church, school and college, some ten or twelve acres in all.

On the reproduction (fig. 3), of a portion of Bourne's plan of Newcastle, dated 1736, the presumed boundary on the north is from 'M' (the Morden tower) to the 'gate of the Black Fryers' (15); on the east by 'Fryer chare' (17), on the west the town wall (M. L. K.), and on the south, Herber tower to the Westgate (K to H). It is interesting to note the proximity of the gate (15 on plan) with the White cross (16) which it may be assumed is to be associated with the monastery.¹³

¹³ The whole of Newgate Street hereabouts was the ancient market place of the town in the early 18th century; if it was so in pre-reformation times, verily the Black Friars of Newcastle lived with and among the people.

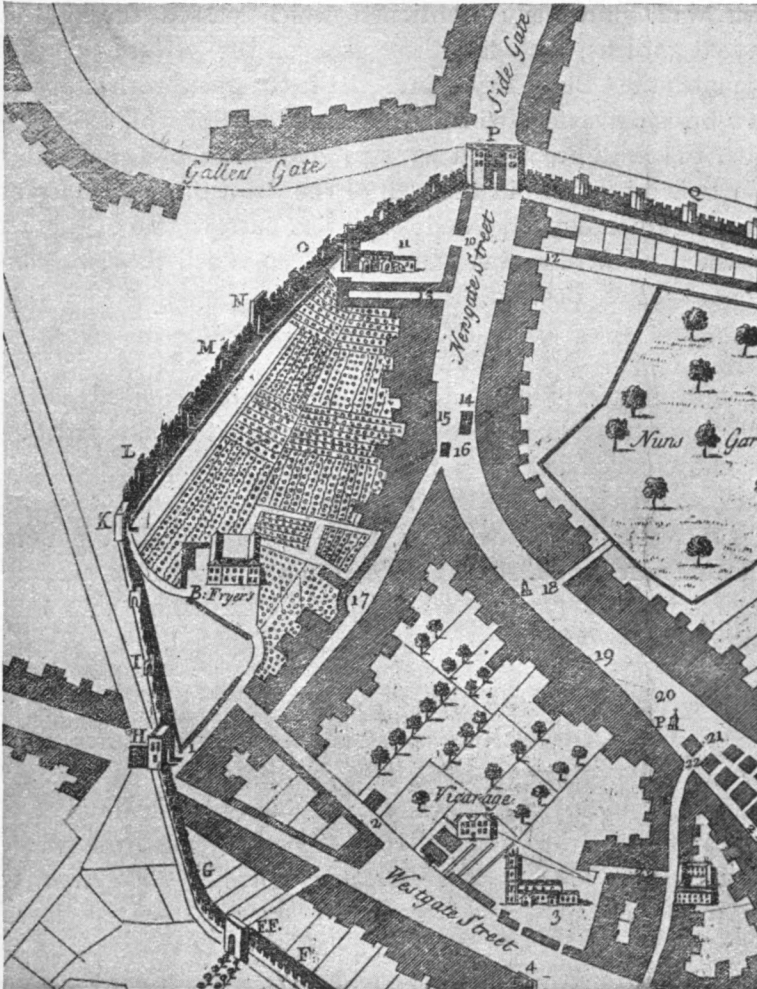


Fig. 3.—PART PLAN FROM BOURNES' *History of Newcastle*.

The letters M. L. K. on the plate indicate the portion of the town wall, previously mentioned which passed through the convent gardens, excluding three acres on the western side of it. L denotes the 'Black Fryergate.' It is the gate 'with a wooden draw-bridge five feet wide across the new dyke of the town,' which the king licensed in 1312 to enable the brethren 'to go from their house within the wall of the town through a postern to their garden beyond the dyke.' The narrow gate in the wall for which permission was granted in 1280 is a little distance to the north of the postern.

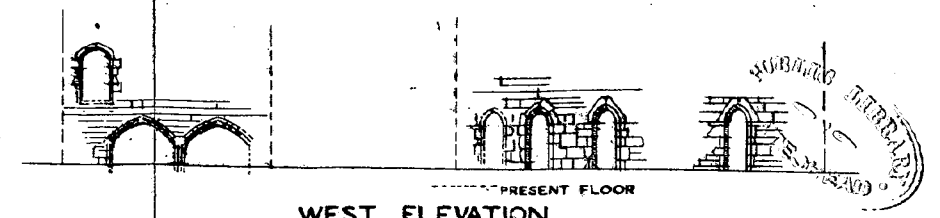
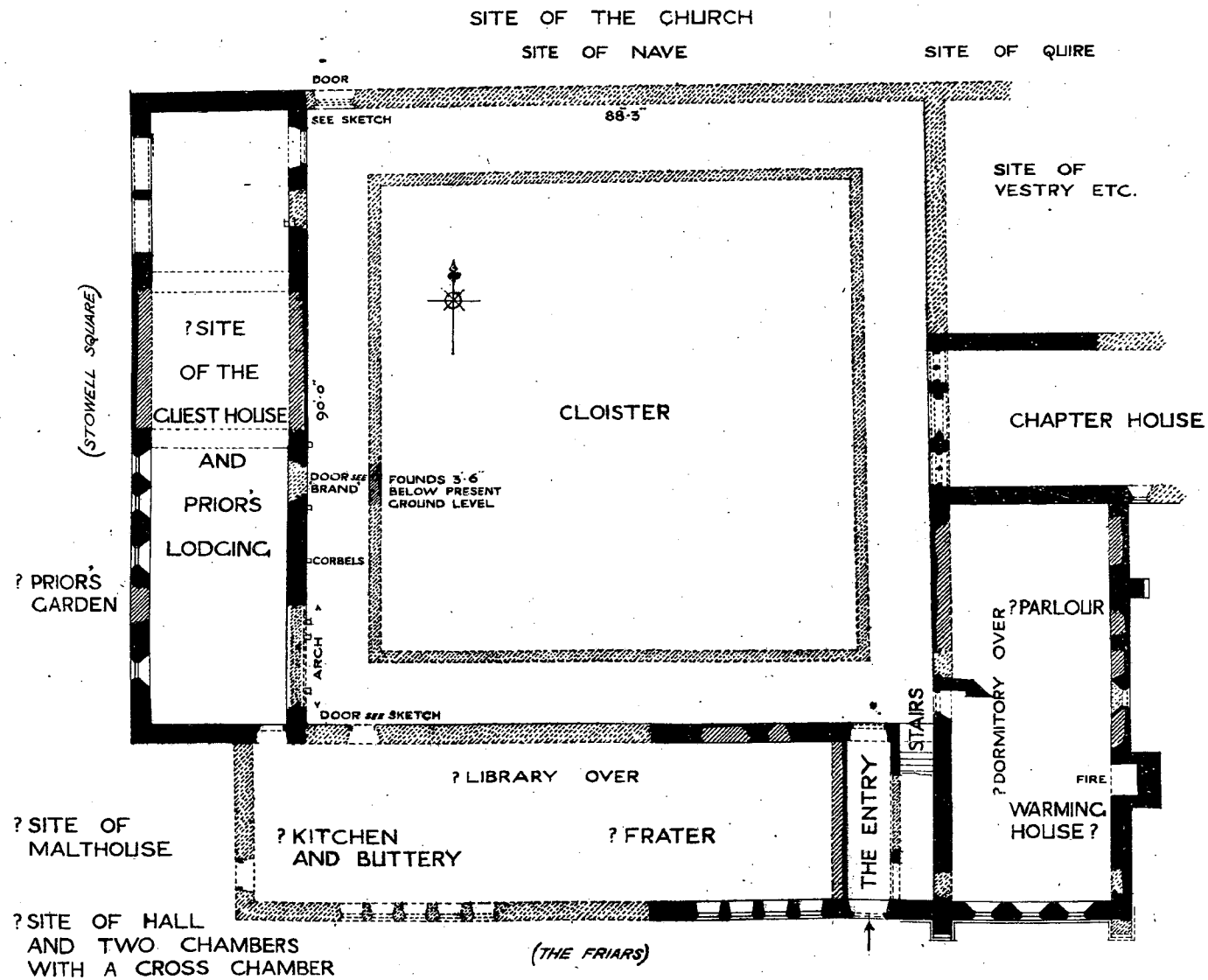
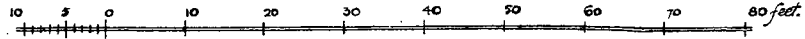
THE BUILDINGS.

The church and monastic buildings were arranged on the usual conventual plan, around a cloister garth (plan plate ix). The church occupied the north side, and the chapter house, the frater, the dormer and other buildings the east, south and west sides, except the portions of these three ranges of building indicated on the plan all else has perished. Yet such as they are, the architectural remains are comparable in extent, with those of any other house of the order extant in England.

THE CLOISTER.

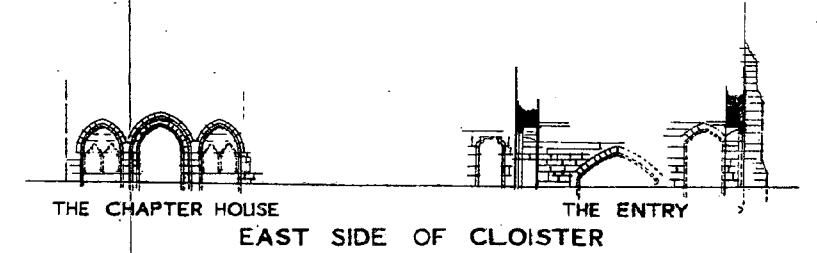
The area of the cloister court is intact, it measures about 90 feet square. Larger than both Cardiff, 83 by 81 feet, and Gloucester, 73 by 73 feet. There is now no indication above ground of the width of the alleys which surrounded the cloister and afforded a covered communication between the apartments that enclosed it, but excavation has revealed at 3 feet 6 inches below the present surface the foundation of the outer wall indicating that the width of the alley was 9 feet. It had a wooden pent roof as is indicated by the string moulding on the west side and the corbels which carried the roof timbers (see elevation

THE BLACK FRIARS NEWCASTLE.



WEST ELEVATION

----- FOUNDS OF CLOISTER WALL
WEST SIDE OF CLOISTER

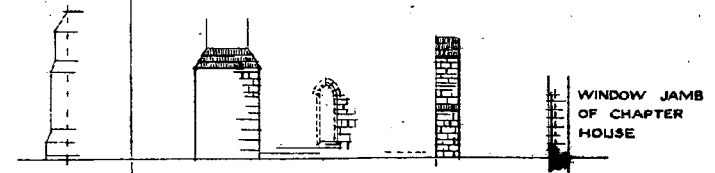


THE CHAPTER HOUSE

THE ENTRY

EAST SIDE OF CLOISTER

EAST ELEVATION



THE ENTRY
SOUTH ELEVATION

W·H·KNOWLES. F·S·A
MENS ET DEL · 1920 ·





Fig. 4.—WEST SIDE OF CLOISTER.



Fig. 5.—NORTH-WEST ANGLE OF CLOISTER.

plate ix and fig. 4). But whether the outer wall was of stone with traceried openings, or of wood on a dwarf wall it is impossible to say.

THE CHURCH.

Of the church which stood on the north side of the cloister and possessed a bell tower, no vestige exists. It was probably soon demolished and the materials used elsewhere, inasmuch as the king at the time of the surrender reserved to himself all the lead, stone, bells, etc., and the 'visitor' immediately disposed of the paving tiles of the church.

At Gloucester and Cardiff, the nave was to the west and the quire to the east of the prolongation of the east wall of the cloister. At London the preaching nave extended along the north wall of the cloister and the quire to the east was divided from the nave by a bell tower, the space which it occupied being opposite or in continuation of the eastern alley of the cloister.

As the north cloister wall at Newcastle, was in length sufficient only for the nave, in all probability a similar arrangement to that of the London church obtained at Newcastle. Luckily the sketch (fig. 5), made by M. A. Richardson in 1843, can be certainly identified as delineating the north west angle of the cloister, and enables us to affirm that a south door into the nave existed at the point. The arch was of two moulded orders supported by attached nook shafts.¹⁴

THE CHAPTER HOUSE.

This was midway in the length of the east cloister wall and was 20 feet in width. The west end comprised the usual triple arches (fig. 6), the middle one forming the entrance was of two chamfered orders on jambs of similar section. The side arches had a single

¹⁴ The external staircase, and the pointed door, at the north end of the western range still exist. The same grouping is to be observed in Brand's view (*Hist. of Newc.* i, 122), but unfortunately subsequent alterations have obliterated the church door.

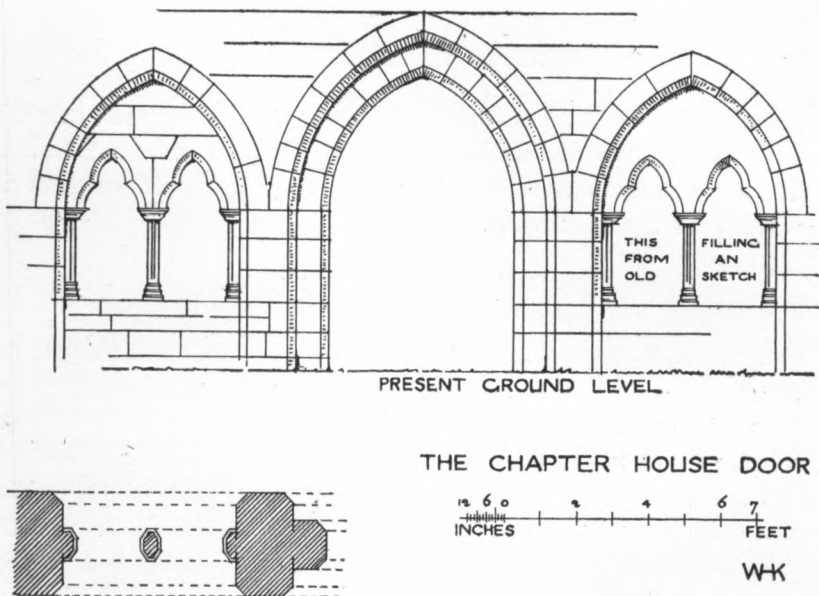


Fig. 6.



Fig. 7.—FROM GROSES' 'ANTIQUITIES OF ENGLAND,'

chamfered order, and enclosed a double trefoiled opening carried on octagonal shafts with moulded caps and chamfered bases. The only other feature now visible is the chamfered jamb of a window in the south wall (see plan).

REMAINDER OF EAST RANGE.

The area to the south of the chapter house is divided into two chambers 23 feet in width, and 25 and 30 feet respectively in length, possibly the parlour and the warming house. The northern apartment has a buttress on its eastern exterior. The southern apartment or warming house is entered by a shoulder-headed door, and was warmed by a fireplace on its eastern side. The chimney stack enclosing it has a big projection and is weathered as shewn on the elevation. The room was lighted at the south end by three small lancets, flanked on the exterior by buttresses which enclosed a gable pierced by a four light decorated window at the level of the upper floor seen in Grose's view (fig 7).¹⁵ The upper floor of this range was no doubt used as the dormitory. It extended from the south gable with the four-light window just mentioned, northwards to a point at or beyond the chapter house.

THE SOUTH RANGE.

It is probable that this comprised the frater with the kitchen at the west end, and on the upper floor the library. At the east end is a space wide enough for a staircase up to the eastern range and adjoining it the entry or passage leading to the cloister (see plan). At either end of the passage is a chamfered pointed doorway with a flat segmental rere arch. On the eastern side of the passage the masonry is much altered, but at the north end the lower courses are bonded into the door jamb. Two built up arches occur in the wall (see the section on the elevation

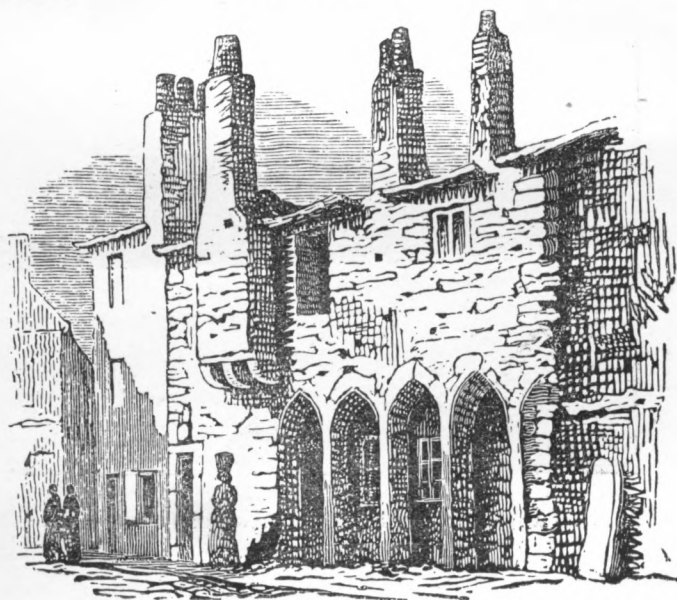
¹⁵ Grose's *Antiquities of England and Wales*, IV, 59, dated 1773.



Photograph by]

Fig. 8—SOUTH SIDE.

[J. W. Robinson.



PART OF THE BLACK FRIARY, NEWCASTLE.

Fig. 9.—West end of South Range by Richardson.

of the east side of the cloister, plate ix). Only half of the low flat pointed arch is old work, the remainder is of doubtful origin. Possibly the narrow opening is an insertion of the same period as the door opening off the warming house which is plastered over but appears of 17th century date. The arch of the wide opening may have carried the ends of the steps of the conjectured staircase.



Fig. 10.—PART SOUTH RANGE OF BUILDING DURING DEMOLITION,
by M. A. Richardson,

In the much disturbed masonry forming the south wall of the range are four large lancet windows of the frater with chamfered jambs (see the elevation and fig. 8). In 1843 five other windows existed near the west end of the same wall (fig. 9) and the intervening space was doubtless similarly treated.

For the features indicated on the plan at the west end of this range, we are entirely dependent on a number of pencil sketches by Mr. M. A. Richardson taken previous to, and during its demolition.

The top of a flat pointed door, with a flat segmental rere arch, leading from the south to the west range of buildings can be traced. A door in the west wall of the south range was similar to the last whilst that in the north wall, opening into the cloister, was shoulder-headed. The five windows shewn in the south wall (fig. 9) were identical with those still existing (figs. 8, 9 and 10).

From the sketch (fig. 11) we clearly see the form of the destroyed upper floor windows which lighted the library on the cloister side. Similar windows now built up can be traced above the entry (see fig. 8) and the south elevation. They had widely splayed jambs to the exterior, with hollow shouldered stones supporting square heads. On the south side also (fig. 9) is a projecting chimney stack oversailed on corbels rounded on the underside. Bourne writing in 1736 makes reference to a winding stair hereabouts, but no evidence of it is disclosed in Richardson's sketches.

THE WESTERN RANGE.

There is more of the ancient work in this range than exists on the other two sides of the cloister. The two cross walls dotted on the plan are shewn because although their character is not visible their thickness suggests original walling.

Towards the cloister and at the south end is a flat pointed arch, with a relieving arch over. It is entirely built up and its

section cannot be ascertained. Its purpose was doubtless to enclose the frater lavatory or washing place. Above the arch (see elevation west side of cloister and fig 4) is a moulded string course which protected the junction of the alley roof and the masonry, there are also several corbels, which supported the roof timbers. On the upper floor level are several small square-headed windows with chamfered heads, jambs and sills, and over them a chamfered or weathered course. Similar windows to the north and in continuation of the last are shewn in Brand's

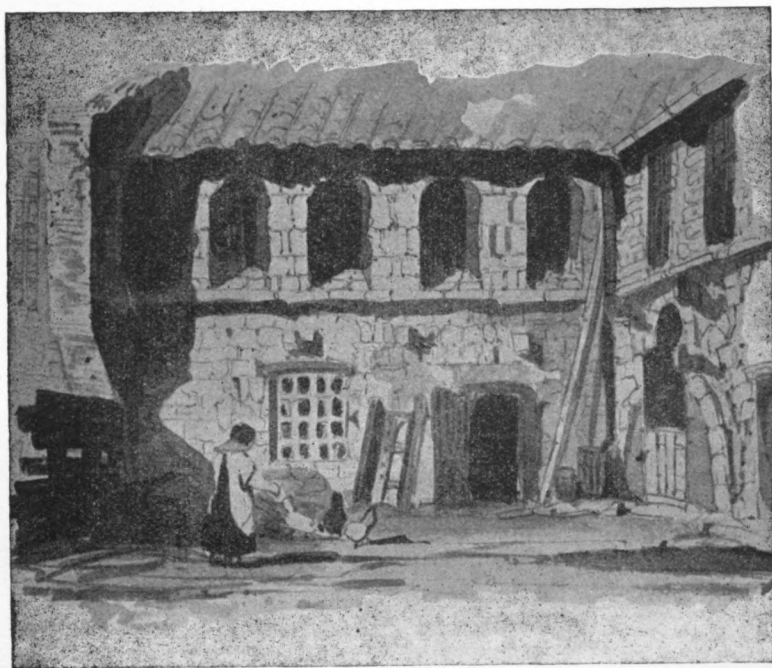
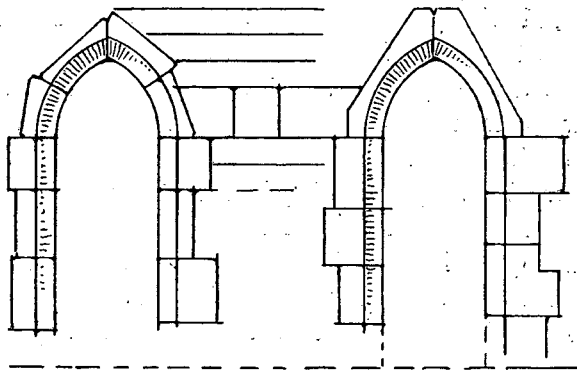


Fig. II.—SOUTH-WEST ANGLE OF CLOISTER

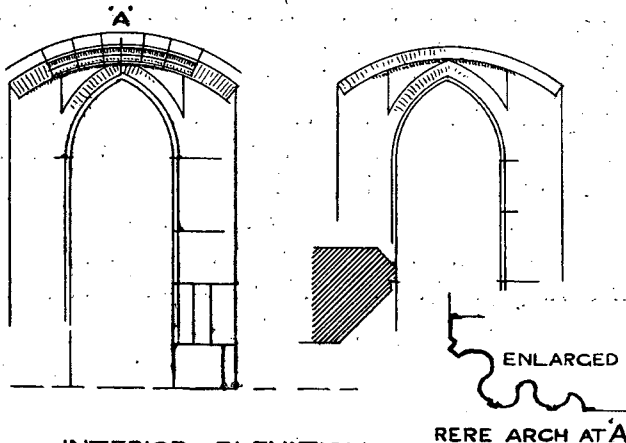
by M. A. Richardson.

view also a pointed door at the ground level where is now a modern window.

At the extreme north end is a pointed door with chamfered arch and jambs and segmental rere arch (fig. 5). Near to this



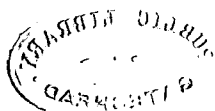
EXTERIOR WINDOWS WEST ELEVATION



INTERIOR ELEVATION

RERE ARCH AT A

INCHES 12 6 0 2 4 6 8 FEET WK



door is a window with a jamb having a double corbel, the lower chamfered in the recess, the upper rounded and projecting into the chamber.

On the west side are three, and traces of a fourth window. To the exterior they have chamfered pointed heads worked in two stones and widely splayed jambs on the interior, the rere arch to the northernmost is chamfered, but the two others have moulded rere arches (fig. 12). At the north end of the wall are two low pointed arches formed of a single order continued through the thickness of the wall and chamfered on both edges (see west elevation). They spring in the centre from a shaft of similar section. On the inside of the north jamb is a vertical strip of masonry $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches wide projecting 2 inches, and about 3 feet above the arch springer is a single stone worked as a springer. The unusual section of the arches is suggestive of containing arches filled by sub-arches or tracery.

On the level of the upper floor is an external door opening, with a flat arch much worn. Whether flat pointed or four centered it is difficult to say.

There is now no vestige remaining of the tenement let to the Davells comprising 'a hall with two chambers, and at the west end of the hall a cross chamber, together with the malt loft.' Its position 'between the friars' kitchen and the far end of the prior's garden' was apparently near to the south-west angle of the convent buildings. The accommodation recited corresponds with that usually provided for an infirmary or guest house.