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ON THE PRÆMONSTRATENSIAN ABBEY OF ST. RADEGUND, BRADSOLE IN POLTON, NEAR DOVER.

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THE Præmonstratensian Order of Canons Regular derives its name from Prémontré in France, where it was founded in 1120 by St. Norbert, Bishop of Magdeburg. Its members were sometimes called Norbertines, after their founder, or White Canons, from the colour of their habit.

The order was first introduced into England in 1143 by the foundation of the Abbey of SS. Mary and Martial at Newhouse, Lincolnshire, and at the suppression of the monasteries in 1538 its houses were thirty-six in number.

Of these, two were in Kent, viz., the Abbey of SS. Mary and Thomas of Canterbury, at West Langdon, which was colonized from Leiston in 1190; and that of St. Radegund at Bradsole, colonized directly from the mother Abbey of Prémontré in 1191,—an honour it shares with Bayham.

There is much confusion amongst historians as to the founder of Bradsole. Weever says the Abbey was founded by Hugh, first Abbot of St. Augustine's, who died 1124, but this would be prior to the introduction of the Præmonstratensian Order into England. Philpott (p. 278) says the first Abbot was Hugh, who was before a monk of the Priory of Christ Church, Canterbury, in the reign of Stephen. According to Tanner,* the foundation was due to King Richard I, or Geoffrey, Earl of Perche, and Maud his wife, or "some other charitable and pious persons."

The early history of this Abbey is somewhat obscure. Shortly after its foundation it appears to have fallen into great distress, for the General of the Order proposed to unite the Abbeys of Bradsole and Langdon. There seems

* *Notitia Monastica.*

also to have been, in 1207 (9 John), a design of translating it to River, near Dover.

After the settlement of its troubles, St. Radegund's increased in wealth and reputation; and many were the notable personages who desired to be buried in its church after their decease.

In September 1302, King Edward I received the Great Seal with his own hands in the King's Chapel* at St. Radegund's; and delivered it to William Greenfield, his chancellor.†

Little or nothing has come down to us of the later history; but, towards the end of the fifteenth century, a ray of light is thrown upon it from a Visitation Book,‡ between the years 1472-1501, of Richard Redman, Bishop of St. Asaph,§ and Commissary-General of the Præmonstratensian Order in the British Isles.

We have not space for the entire series of visitations, but it is evident that successive Abbots and Priors had allowed the buildings to fall into a sad state of decay. In 1482 the Visitor reports:

Aug. 31. *Distinctissime precipimus Abbati ut pro toto posse et omni celeritate reparare et sustentare festinet tam Ecclesiam claustrum quam omnes alias domos interiores et exteriores que vero modo verisimile usque ad terram ruitura videntur.*

Fratres a mane usque ad vesperam faciant opus in ortis (? hortis).

Doubtless this latter mandate points to the incompatibility of devotion and meditation with the noise and bustle of building operations.

In 1488, the Abbot is again urged to hasten on the reparation of the buildings, and a list of the names of the brethren is given:

Henricus, *abbas*; Thos. Raypese, *prior*; Will. Kyrkeby;

* Perhaps one of the chapels in the church, which had been endowed by one of the three previous sovereigns.

† Lord Campbell's *Lives of the Lord Chancellors*, i., 182.

‡ Ashmolean Library, Oxford, MS. 1519.

§ The Order was exempt from all episcopal jurisdiction, and Bishop Redman was Commissary-General, not from his office, but because when first appointed he was Abbot of the Monastery of S. Mary Magdalene at Shap, in Westmoreland.

Thom. Canterbury; Thom. Howlett, *vicarius*; Robt. Johnson, *vicarius*; Will. Heysted; Dominus Jugerinus, *quondam abbas*; Joh. Newyngton; Rich. Belton; Will. Bylloke; Thom. Martyn.

Three years later, the following are the *Nomina Canonicorum*: Dominus Johannes Newyngton, *abbas*; Dominus Jugerinus Franceys, *quondam abbas* (Vicarius de River); Fr. Willielmus Kyrkeby, *supprior*; Fr. Thomas Howlett, *vicarius de Schepwold*; Fr. Thomas Canterbury; Fr. Willielmus Wyngham, *presbiter*; Fr. Edmundus Norwich, *presbiter*; Fr. Gylbertus Babram, *accolitus*.

The indefatigable Leland also visited (in another sense) the Abbey a few years before its suppression, and recorded:*

"S. Radigundis standeth on the toppe of a hille iij litle myles by west and sumwhat by sowth from Dovar. There be white chanons and the quier of the chyrche is large and fayr. The monastery ys at this time netely mayntayned, but yt appereth that yn tymes past the buildings have bene ther more ample than they be now. There ys on the hille fayre wood, but fresch water lakyth sumtyme."

The Abbey was suppressed in 1538, with the lesser monasteries; its clear annual value being £98 9s. 2½d.; and its total value £142 8s. 9d. The house was then under the rule of Thomas Dale, prior; the abbacy being vacant.†

The site‡ was granted by the King to Archbishop Cranmer, but shortly afterwards returned by him to the King, by way of exchange. Leases for lives were subsequently granted to various tenants, but Hasted's account of the grant to the Earl of Essex, and its forfeiture, is an error. Queen Elizabeth, by deed dated Jan. 31st, in the 32nd year of her reign, sold and granted the Abbey and its appurtenances to Simon Edolph in fee, he having previously been a lessee for life. This grant and the subsequent title-deeds are now at Pett Place, Charing. Simon Edolph altered the buildings and resided there. The flint chequer-work,

* *Itin.*, vii., p. 127.

† Or perhaps the Abbot, like his brethren at Glastonbury, Reading, etc., refused to surrender the Abbey, and was turned adrift in the world without losing his life, as they did.

‡ For these notes I am indebted to the owner of St. Radegund's, John Sayer, Esq., of Pett Place, Charing.

and the picturesque porch and carved door on the north side of the Fraternity, are his work. The Abbey continued in the Edolph family until 1719, when it passed by purchase to Sir Peter Eaton; and subsequently, by marriage with one of his descendants in 1750, to George Sayer of Pett Place, Charing, Kent; whose great-grandson, John Sayer of the same place, is the present owner.

The remains of the Abbey occupy a prominent position, on a hill, about three miles equi-distant from Dover and Folkestone. Visitors are doubtless familiar with the ivy-clad ruins of what has hitherto been called the gatehouse, but which is really the tower; also with the remains of the nave, transept, chapter house, cellarer's buildings, and the refectory, with its quaint sixteenth-century alterations. The extent of the church was, however, quite unknown; and in order to ascertain this point excavations were commenced, in the spring of 1880, by myself and Mr. Richard Ussher; the cost being defrayed by the owner, assisted by Canon Jenkins, Mr. Robert Furley, and others.

Operations were commenced on March 29th with four men, and the first day's work sufficed to discover and lay bare the foundations of the east end of the church. In the course of the next three days the whole of the walls of the eastern arm and transept, excepting a small portion of the south aisle where a tree intervened, had been traced out. The east and south walls of the chapter house were also defined and the extent of the infirmary hall. Many of the doors and other details had become obscured by the accumulation of soil and *débris*; this was removed, and part of the tower area cleared, to shew the bases of the arches. The arch, from the latter into the transept, had been much mutilated and then blocked up; the material was all removed and many of the stones found to be portions of tombs, floriated Transitional or early English capitals, and arch voussoirs with dog-tooth ornament. A beginning was also made on the extreme western range of buildings, but this portion still needs excavating.

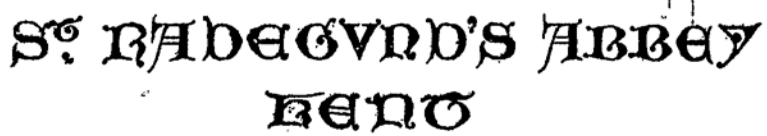
In the following November, the balance of the excavating fund having been increased by a grant from the Kent

Archæological Society, operations were resumed, under Mr. Ussher's superintendence; the work undertaken being chiefly the clearance of the area of the church. Amongst the more important discoveries were the bases of the reredoses of the altar of our Lady and of the high altar; together with the base and part of the platform of the high altar itself. In the middle of the choir was also found the rough foundation of the base of a tomb; in all probability that of Thomas de Poynings, who, by will dated 6 Edw. III, directed his body to be buried in the Abbey of St. Radegund's, "*q'est de ma fundacion droit en my le coer devant le haut alter;*" and a tomb to be placed over his grave with the image of a knight thereon made of alabaster. John Criol of Lympne, by his will dated 1504, directs his body to be buried in this church, next to the sepulchre of Bertram de Criol, in the high chancel.

During both excavations numerous tiles and other ornamental details, such as mouldings, fragments of carved work, and portions of tombs, and marble shafts and capitals, were discovered; all of which are carefully preserved at the Abbey.

The whole of the existing buildings date from the foundation in 1191, and are of the earliest type of pointed architecture. Much of the work is exceedingly simple in design, and in some parts plain to a degree. There is also a marked absence of ornamental details, although the beautiful fragments discovered shew that some portions of the buildings, at any rate, were adorned with carved work. The walls are of flintwork with ashlar quoins. The jambs, etc., of windows, doors, and arches, are also of ashlar.

The ground-plan exhibits a long and narrow church, consisting of an eastern limb of six, with aisles of four, severies; north and south transepts, each of two severies, one severy opening into the choir aisle, the other into a square eastern chapel; and an aisleless nave of four severies, having on its north side a square tower with singular east and west adjuncts. On the south of the nave is the cloister quadrangle, with the chapter house, parlour, and common house on its eastern side; on the south the



Whitman & Bana Photo-Litho London

refectory above an undercroft, and the kitchen, etc.; and on the west the cellarer's buildings of two stories. From this there extends westwards a long series of chambers, perhaps part of the accommodation for guests. The infirmary lies to the south-east.

Of the Abbey Church considerable remains exist. The nave walls, and the west and south walls of the transept are more or less entire, and the north tower with its wings is still standing to a height of 40 or 50 feet. The eastern limb was laid bare during the excavations.

The most singular feature about the church is the tower. Instead of being placed over the crossing or at the west end as is more usual, it stands on the north side of the nave, at a distance of six feet from the west wall of the transept. This peculiar position has a parallel in several Kentish churches, *e.g.*, Rochester Cathedral, Offham, Orpington, Thanington, Dartford, Chelsfield, Brookland, St. Mildred's in Canterbury, Godmersham; but a singularity here is the addition of a flanking wing on the east and west side.*

It is difficult to find a satisfactory reason to account for this; perhaps the builders adopted these means to mask the huge buttresses which were necessitated by the material—flint; or the lack of aisles to the nave rendered it desirable to provide a processional path through the basement.

In support of this latter theory it should be observed that the lowest stories of all three divisions were vaulted, and open into each other and into the nave and transept by arches, not doors, thus forming one continuous passage. It has been suggested that the entire block was also used for defensive purposes.

Owing to the destruction of the upper part of the tower, the three divisions are now all of equal height, but the unfortunate luxuriant growth of ivy with which the whole is mantled makes it impossible to say whether the side portions retain their original altitude, or nearly so, or

* The western tower of St. Nicholas Church, New Romney, has a low lean-to aisle on each side, but not of such importance as the wings here. See Mr. Scott Robertson's Paper in *Arch. Cant.*, XIII. Mr. Scott Robertson informs me that similar appendages are found on each side of Sandhurst tower.

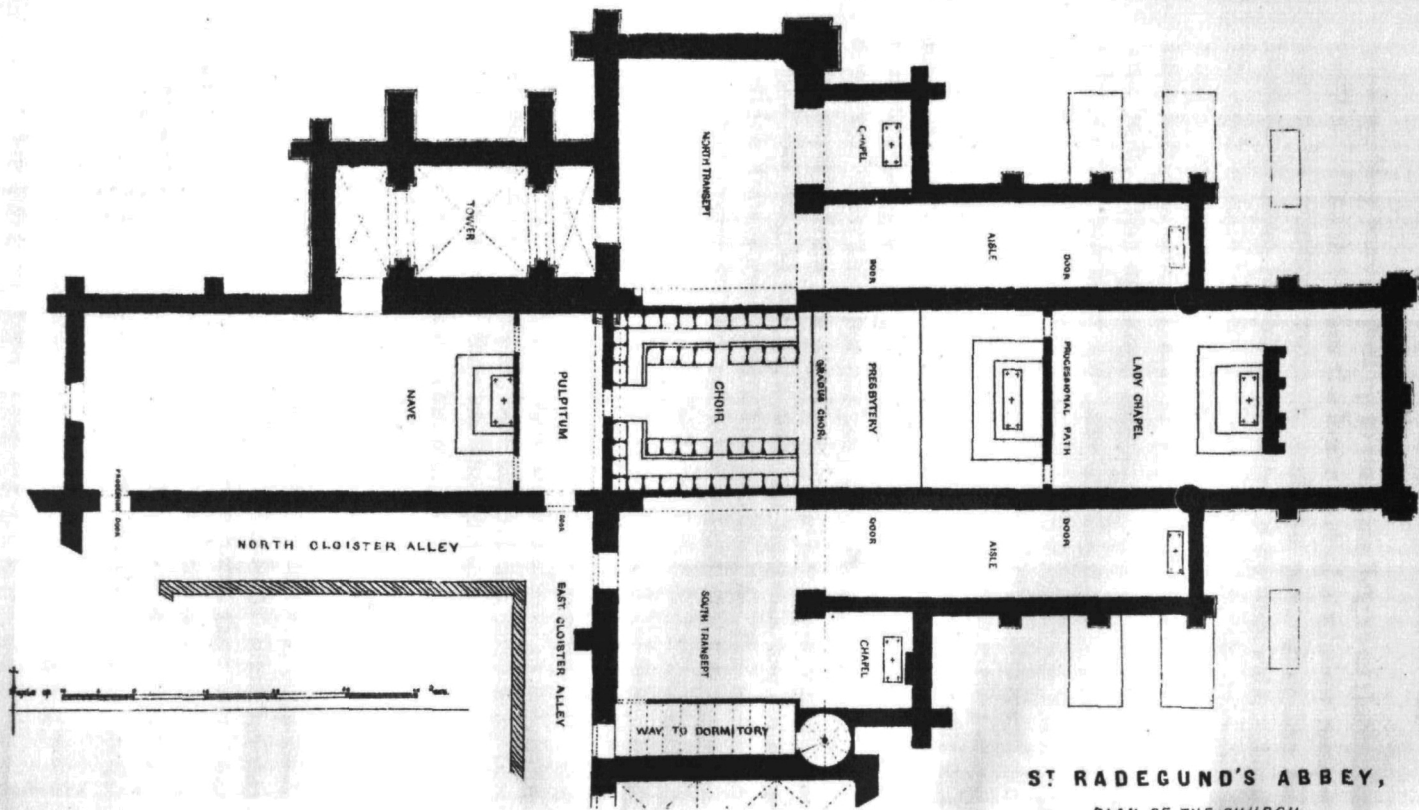
whether they were carried up to the same height as the central portion. The latter has the lower part of a window remaining on its northern summit, and the west wing has two blocked windows (visible internally) on its west side. Above the arch opening from the east wing into the transept is another of large size, now completely blocked, which may have been the west window of the transept before the wing was built. The openings visible on the north and south sides of the basement are comparatively modern, and did not exist originally.

It has been already stated that the lowest stories of the tower were vaulted, but there is no staircase giving access to the floor above,* and at first it is not apparent how it was reached. There is, however, a gap in the south wall at the first-floor level; which proves on examination to have been a doorway. Now this door can only have been reached in one way, namely from the *pulpitum*, or place from which the gospel was sung at the high mass on festivals, the staircase to which thus served a double purpose, as the ascent by which the gospeller and epistoler gained the loft, and the sacrist the tower to ring the bells.

The nave, as at Cokersand, Eggleston, Titchfield, Beauchief, and other Præmonstratensian abbeys, is without aisles. It has a west door, and the two usual doors opening into the cloister. The walls are now too much reduced in height to shew traces of the windows, but there must have been two on the north side and four on the south—these last sufficiently high up to clear the cloister roof—and probably a western triplet. In the middle of the north wall is a pointed arch (not a door) leading into the basement of the west wing of the tower.

The nave opened into the crossing by an arch, supported on short circular shafts ending in corbels at some height from the floor. It is evident, from this, that the two screens usual in our old collegiate and monastic churches existed here; the one, a solid structure of stone, beneath the arch of the crossing, against which the canons' stalls

* This is a point in favour of the tower being a defensive structure.



ST. RADEGUND'S ABBEY,

PLAN OF THE CHURCH.

were returned; the other, some distance farther west against which was erected the rood altar between two doorways. These two screens were ordinarily distinct; the eastern one, the *pulpitum*, being provided with a loft, from which the gospel was sung, and on which the organs stood; the western one merely serving as the reredos to the nave altar. There are instances, however, where the whole space between the two screens appears to have been floored over, and from the existence of the upper door in the tower wall this seems to have been the plan adopted here. The cloister door, owing to the absence of aisles, must have opened into the space between the two screens.*

We now come to the eastern arm, and its ritual arrangements. The stalls probably occupied the space under the crossing; which would allow room for at least ten on each side, making, with three on either side the screen door, a total of twenty-six. At the east end of the stalls, beneath the arch, the *gradus chori* would be placed. Eastward of this, at a distance of thirty feet, our excavations disclosed the base of the reredos of the high altar. This base, which is constructed of well-built ashlar, is 1 ft. 3 in. broad, and extends to within 1 ft. 6 in. of the side walls. Originally, I think, it reached from wall to wall. Three feet distant from its western face is the base of the high altar itself, measuring 8 ft. by 2 ft. 6 in. Doubtless the reredos was pierced with side doors, as at St. Albans and Winchester, opening into the Lady Chapel behind. The Lady Chapel was 47 ft. long, and extends from the high-altar reredos to the east end. It still retains the broad base of its altar reredos, the west face of which is distant 17 ft. from the wall.

The side walls of the presbytery appear to have been solid as at Rochester and St. Albans, with the *ostia presbyterii* in the most western severy. The Lady Chapel must also have had two side doors, opening into the aisles, to provide the usual processional path.

Outside the church, opposite each of the three buttresses

* To assist those who are not conversant with the arrangements of monastic churches, I have drawn a plan of the church of this Abbey, shewing the probable disposition of its principal fittings, etc., at the time of the Suppression.

between the last four severies, is to be seen a mass of masonry of extraordinary solidity.* These masses mark the position of six flying buttresses built, as at Rievaulx, to carry the thrust of the roof.

The aisles to the presbytery, the north transept, and transeptal chapels, do not present any remarkable features. The south transept, on the other hand, exhibits a most singular and, so far as I know, unique arrangement. It will be seen that the west wall has *two* doors, both communicating with the cloister. The northern one occurs at Torre, Bayham, Shap, and Dale—Præmonstratensian abbeys—and in most houses of Regular Canons;† the southern one, however, is not found elsewhere, and must therefore have been for some special purpose. Now it was generally considered necessary that the dormitory, when in its normal position over the eastern range of buildings, should be provided with two staircases; one leading directly into the church, to enable the canons to descend for the nocturnal offices; the other for ordinary use in the day-time, communicating with the cloister. In the south wall of the transept, at the level of the first floor, is an irregular opening which has been formed by tearing out the ashlar jambs of a doorway; and at the same floor line, extending along the wall the width of the transept, is a row of holes in which have rested the ends of wooden joists; but upon what did the opposite ends rest? In the west wall, 7 ft. 6 in. from the south-west angle, is one of the iron hooks from which a door has been hung, and in the south-east angle are the remains of an ample circular staircase, or vice, which was carried up to the roof of the transept, but has no doors opening out of its *south* side. From these *data* we are able to learn what the peculiar arrangement was, and what purpose it served. Across the south end of the transept was a screen or partition which carried a gallery. This gallery was reached by the circular stair, through upper and lower

* Only shewn in outline on the plan.

† This door is invariably found in monastic churches which are destitute of an aisle on the side of the nave adjoining the cloister, and was probably used to enable processions to pass down the cloister alley, through the western cloister door, and up the nave in the usual way. Other instances than those named above are Dorchester, Brinkburn, Bolton, and Newstead—all houses of Austin Canons, who frequently built churches with but one, or no aisles.

doors both in its *west* side, and had a door opening on to it from the room over the chapter house, which was either a part of the dormitory itself, or an intervening chamber also used as a passage. When the canons left their beds to go and say the night offices, they passed through this last-named door, along the gallery, down the staircase, and through a door in the screen to which the iron-hook belongs, into the church—returning to their beds by the same way. In the morning, when they had to descend into the cloister, they used the same gallery and staircase, but instead of passing into the church the southern of the two west doors of the transept admitted them into the eastern cloister-alley.

Immediately adjoining the transept is the chapter house, which was a fine apartment of three bays, 34 ft. by 21 ft., doubtless divided into two alleys by two piers supporting the vaulting.* The west and north walls are entire, but the others remain to the height of but a few feet. The doorway and its flanking windows are unfortunately blocked.

South of the chapter house is an apartment 22 ft. long by 12 ft. wide, which may have been the regular or common parlour, where conversation was allowed.†

Running southwards from this is the common house, which was provided with a fire-place; hence its other name—calefactory. As a modern kitchen and several cisterns encumber the site of this portion of the buildings, it is not possible to ascertain how it was reached from the cloister, what was its extent southwards, or whether the way to the “farmory” and cemetery led through it. For this latter purpose a slype is often provided, on either side of the chapter house, but though at first sight this seems to have been the case here, it was not really so, for there is no door in the east end of the parlour, and the two parallel walls which run eastwards from it evidently belong to the *necessarium*.‡

* This need not necessarily have been the case, but the existence of a wall above between the two eastern severies, seems to require a pier beneath to carry the weight. The chapter house at Dale was precisely similarly arranged.

† The statutes of the Præmonstratensian Order strictly enjoined silence in the church, cloister, refectory, and dormitory.

‡ Called the “Third dormitory” at Canterbury and the “Rere-dorter” at Westminster.

Over the whole of this eastern range the dormitory extended, communicating with the church and cloister by the gallery and stair at its north end. Some remains of its western windows may be seen over the chapter house and parlour. The space over the most eastern severy of the chapter house was divided off, by a wall, from the dormitory; and perhaps served as the muniment room and treasury.

At a distance of $47\frac{1}{2}$ ft. from the east wall of the common house, and parallel with it, are the remains of the infirmary hall, which was a large apartment 47 ft. by 27 ft. This hall forms one side of a quadrangular court, of which the common house and *necessarium* formed the west and north sides. The south side was bounded by a wall, which perhaps had a pentice communicating with the common house. North of the infirmary was the canons' cemetery. Other portions of the infirmary, south of this hall, still await the spade and pick of the excavator.

The cloister quadrangle, 72 ft. 3 in. by 70 ft. 5 in., is nearly complete; the south-west angle being the only portion quite destroyed. The north wall has at present four openings, of which the most western is the procession door, and the most eastern the cloister door; the other two are recent gaps in the masonry, which ought to be filled up. The east wall is quite complete, and pierced by four doors; one into the transept; a second for the quasi-daystairs; a third into the chapter house, having a window on each side with marble jamb-shafts; and a fourth into the regular parlour. On the south side is what looks like a modern farm-house, with a very picturesque Elizabethan porch; but which, on examination, proves to be the refectory or fraternity. This very necessary apartment is, unlike the other buildings, raised upon an undercroft of four severies, which were vaulted with quadripartite groins, of which only the springers now remain. The easternmost severy is walled off, apparently to form a slype, but its entrances are now blocked. There is another curious feature about the refectory. While the undercroft is only 20 ft. wide, the apartment above it, which was the fraternity proper, was 24 ft. wide and extended for about 42 ft. from the west wall of the common house. The increased

width was gained by carrying the south wall upon arches, constructed between the buttresses, which have a projection at the base of 9 feet. The two middle severies extend yet farther south, to provide the necessary space for the refectory pulpit, from which the weekly *lector* read during meals. This appendage is I believe quite complete; but it cannot be made entirely visible without sweeping away several of the many partitions, which now block up the interior. The buttery and kitchen were placed at the west end of the frater, with an undercroft beneath, in continuation of the one still existing. This undercroft was most likely used as cellarage; hence its being provided with an entrance archway on its south side wide enough for carts to enter from the outer or base court. This part of the Abbey is unfortunately much destroyed, and it is difficult to say how the refectory and other buildings above the undercroft were approached. The west wall of the cloister is only standing for a portion of its length, but retains the lower courses of the jamb of a door opening into the western range of buildings.* With the exception of the south-east angle, this range is fairly complete on the ground floor. It is divided by a cross wall into two apartments. The north one is lighted by a single lancet in the north end, and two others on the west. There is also a doorway into the Abbey precinct, and another in the south wall into the southern apartment. This latter is twice as long as the other, its dimensions being 49 ft. by 19 ft. 9 in. In its east wall is a fire-place, and opposite this a row of four elegant lancets. These lancets are square-headed, but those of the north chamber are pointed. A most effective feature is the segmental rear-vault over each light. The windows were not glazed, but protected by iron bars, and furnished with shutters. Beyond the group of lancets is a considerable interval of blank wall;† then, quite in the angle, a doorway with a small spying-loop on the right. The north wall has the remains of a square almy or niche. The upper range, which I think was gained by a staircase in the south-

* This door appears to have been inserted by Simon Edolph in lieu of the Early English one.

† Caused by the western extension abutting here.

west chamber, is nearly all destroyed; its floor was supported by beams, not by groining. The north gable, however, remains, and portions of the west windows, which were pointed lancets. From the good character of the work in this block, as well as the existence of a fire-place and outer doors, it seems most reasonable to suppose we have here the cellarer's buildings; the larger apartment being the hall of the guests. The smaller room has been conjectured to be the forensic parlour.

Extending westwards, from the south end of this range, is a long series of small chambers. These may have formed part of the cellarer's lodgings for guests. Only a portion of this building has been excavated.

It only remains to mention in our survey the outer or base court. There are some fragments of buildings on the east side, but on the south we have a very perfect specimen of a tithe barn. This is, like the rest of the Abbey, of twelfth century date, with long narrow slits widely splayed within in its ends. The projecting entrance porch is in the middle of its north side, and has had a living room over it, with a fire-place, gained by a stair. The roof does not appear to be original.

There are also remains of two gatehouses. One stands a few paces to the north of the church and retains some traces of the almonry and porter's lodge. The other is placed south-east of the Abbey at a distance of about 200 yards.

The accompanying ground-plan was drawn by me from measurements taken during the progress of the excavations.

Dimensions of the Buildings.

Church—total interior length— $183\frac{3}{4}$ ft. \times $25\frac{1}{4}$ ft.; width across transept $98\frac{3}{4}$ ft.

Cloister— $72\frac{1}{4}$ ft. \times $70\frac{1}{2}$ ft. Chapter House—34 ft. \times 21 ft.

Parlour—22 ft. \times 12 ft. Common House— $52\frac{1}{2}$ ft. \times 22 ft.

Cellarer's Buildings—24 ft. \times $19\frac{1}{2}$ ft., and 49 ft. \times $19\frac{3}{4}$ ft.

Refectory—42 ft. \times 24 ft. Infirmary Hall—47 ft. \times 27 ft.

Infirmary Court—54 ft. \times $46\frac{1}{2}$ ft.