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THE TRINITARIAN PRIORY OF MOTYNDEN AT HEADCORN

NEIL ALDRIDGE

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

The priory and the majority of its estate was situated 1¼ miles (2.7 km.), north-west of the village of Headcorn, (N.G.R. TQ 818404), and 8 miles (13 km.), south of Maidstone on the west side of the A274 road (Fig 1.) Within a large moated enclosure there stands a timber-framed house dating in part from the mid-sixteenth century. This appears to incorporate a portion of the western range of the medieval priory.

An architectural study of the house has shown that at least three periods of building exist within the present structure, extending from the sixteenth to the mid-nineteenth century.

Around three-quarters of the monastic boundary currently survives; this comprises a hedge and ditch enclosing an area of approximately 35 acres. Within the south-eastern quadrant are clear traces of a ditched field system of probable medieval date and associated with the monastic site.

The results obtained from a resistivity survey of part of the moated area to the east of the house suggested the presence of apparently significant features of uncertain date. Subsequent trial excavation confirmed the position of the priory church together with part of the cloister, and a stone culvert. A complex of monastic fish-ponds and leats are closely associated with the western arm of the moat.

GEOLOGY

The site is known as Moatenden; it lies within that area of Kent known as the Low Weald. This is a landscape bisected by the sluggish River Beult with soils consisting largely of heavy clay. At intervals through

this run thin beds of a shelly freshwater limestone known as 'Bethersden Marble' or, more correctly, 'Paludina'.¹

Part of the western side of the site is covered with a spread of alluvium which originated from the periodic flooding of the small water-course which fed the moats and fish-ponds. The site lies at 23 m. O.D.

HISTORY

Moatenden, variously spelt earlier as Moddenden, Mottenden or Motynden, was one of four manors in the parish of Headcorn, the others being Rushford, Kelsham, and Bletchenden.

Before the arrival of the Trinitarians, it would appear that it was the site of a moated farmstead owned, in the early thirteenth century, by Robert de Rokesley, seneschal to the archbishop of Canterbury.

Fieldwork has shown part of the moated site to be the remains of this earlier manor, probably dating from the twelfth century. Robert accompanied Henry III on his campaign into Gascony, where it is recorded that he 'wore out a pair of shoes of the price of fourpence'.² Tradition states that he founded a Trinitarian house on land which he already owned, probably in 1224, which would make it the first foundation of the order in England. However, the earliest written reference is 1235-36 when the prior and Robert de Rokesley were named in a royal writ.³ It is worth recording that at this period there were other significant developments taking place in this part of the country, which suggest an increasing interest being taken by Henry III. In 1222, Henry appointed the first rector of the parish of Headcorn and, in 1251, a weekly market was set up there. These are further evidence of a growth in population and increased prosperity in the Weald.⁴

Some 1½ miles (2.7 km.) to the north of Moatenden lies the small but strategically placed castle of Sutton Valence, a stone watch-tower guarding the old route from Rye as it emerged from the Weald and ascended the ragstone ridge. From 1225-1265 this was held as part of

¹ Institute of Geological Sciences, Map, Sheet no, 288, 1976.

² I am indebted to the late L.R.A. Grove for this information based on his own research.

³ *VCH (Kent)*, ii (1926), 205.

⁴ Additional evidence for increased economic growth in this part of the Weald is suggested by a profusion of recently identified high quality timber-framed houses: Sarah Pearson, *The medieval houses of Kent: An historical analysis*, R.C.H.M.E., London, H.M.S.O., 1994, 140-1.

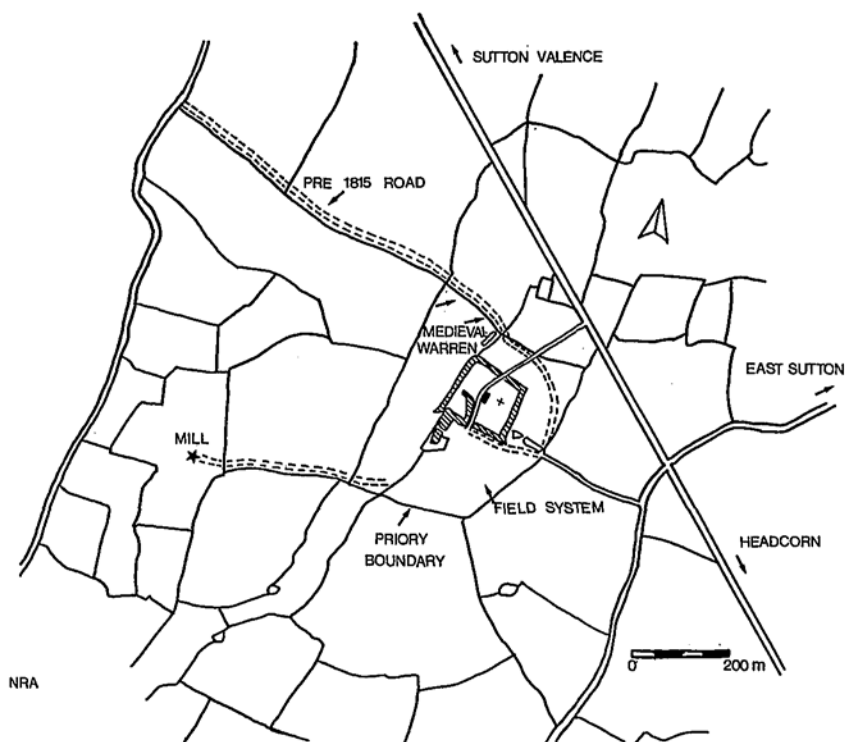


Fig. 1. Location map.

the three manors of Sutton by Henry III's sister Eleanor; after 1265, these were transferred to William de Valence, Henry's half brother.⁵

These facts combine to underline the not inconsiderable influence that the Crown appears to have had on this part of Kent during the early part of the thirteenth century. There were nine other Trinitarian foundations in England and several more in Scotland. A comprehensive gazetteer of these is to be found in an Appendix to the recently published study of the Trinitarian priory at Thelsford, Warwickshire.⁶

⁵ Harold Sands, 'Sutton Valence Castle', *Arch. Cant.*, xxv (1902), 198–206.

⁶ Margaret Gray, 'Excavations at Thelsford Priory', in (Eds.) Lorna Watts and Philip Rahtz, *The Trinitarian Order in England*, BAR no. 226, Oxford, 1993.

This is the only other religious house of this order to have been studied in some depth. Extensive excavation was undertaken on the site ahead of a major road widening project. Moatenden suffered deprivations during the fourteenth century largely as a result of the severe depression caused by the ravages of the Black Death. As well as removing a significant proportion of the population one of its main side effects was to cause the near collapse of agriculture and the production of pottery. It is noteworthy that the admittedly limited excavations at Moatenden revealed a relative absence of ceramic material from the period between the mid-thirteenth and the early fifteenth centuries. The priory was granted land and other possessions in various parts of Kent and, somewhat further afield, in Hertfordshire,⁷ and within the City of Oxford.⁸ During the latter part of the fifteenth century the prior, or 'minister', of Motynden was one Richard of Lancing, who appears to have been instrumental in increasing the influence of the priory, and improving some of the conventual buildings, in the period just prior to the Dissolution. The priory was valued by the minister in 1535 at £60 13s. 0½d.⁹ All of the establishment, together with its possessions, was surrendered to Thomas Cromwell in November 1538.¹⁰

THE MOATS, FIELD SYSTEMS, AND FISH-PONDS

A large moat surrounds the site of the priory. The north, south, east and west arms of this measure, 145 m., 155 m., 130 m., and 140 m. in length, respectively. The moat averages some 11 m. in width. The area enclosed is around 4 acres and includes the house known as 'Moatenden Priory'.

Some three quarters of the total circuit of the moat is normally water-filled. The source for this is the stream which enters the site from the north-east and flows through the western side of the moat. This stream was also the source of the water which fed the system of monastic fish-ponds. The north west corner of the moat is reinforced by a substantial outer earthwork. This was probably deemed necessary as it appears to be the lowest part of the site.

The north-west, north-east, and south-east corners also have internal

⁷ *Ibid.*, 107.

⁸ *VCH, op. cit.*, 207.

⁹ *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, P.R.O., E344/2/fo 154.

¹⁰ *VCH, op. cit.*, 207.

earthen banks which in places survive to a height of 3 m., with a width of 7 m.

The majority of moated sites appear to have been built during the period from the mid-twelfth century through to the mid-fourteenth century. They are, not surprisingly, more prevalent on low-lying, clay soils.

Although the most common types of sites thus protected are manorial, it is not uncommon for monastic settlements also to be moated.

Monastic communities were particularly adept at providing protection for their establishments in the form of earthworks and moats, as well as organising other forms of water management. These included the raising of fish for consumption within the community often via sophisticated systems of fish-ponds and stews.

A comparable example to that at Moatenden is the Augustinian priory of Michelham, near Hailsham, in East Sussex. Among the reasons for providing a moat were a need for a defensive enclosure, improved drainage of a low-lying site, social prestige and, in the case of a religious establishment, possibly to emphasise a sense of spiritual isolation. Although in this particular case this would not have been necessary as the Trinitarians were not an enclosed order. The priory would have relied for alms on those travellers who passed along the nearby road which was, prior to 1815, the main route across the Weald from Maidstone to Rye. In fact, as can be seen from the location map (Fig. 1), this road actually passed through the Outer Court of the priory, from the direction of Sutton Valence along the north and east sides and thence along a still surviving, sunken track to join the road via Plumtree Green to Headcorn. The closest comparable example of a moat of the size of that at Moatenden is that at Sissinghurst Castle some 5 miles, (8 km.) to the south west. Only two sides of that moat survive intact, the south side is now a drained walk, and the west was destroyed when the sixteenth-century mansion was built on the site of an earlier medieval manor house of which the moat is probably the sole vestige.¹¹ It is a distinct possibility, but unproven, that both these moats could have been excavated at around the same period and possibly by the same construction team. Certainly, the large scale of the earthworks at Moatenden appears to be beyond the capabilities of a relatively small monastic community.

¹¹ Nigel Nicholson, *Sissinghurst Castle, An illustrated history*, The National Trust, 1972, 5.

It is worth recording that at several times in the life of the priory there were Trinitarian brethren from Motynden serving in the manorial chapel which was situated within the moated enclosure at Sissinghurst.¹²

In the south west corner of the larger moat at Moatenden there is a smaller 'horseshoe'-shaped moat (Fig. 2). Within this enclosure most probably stood the buildings of the manor of the De Rokesley's. These were most likely of timber construction as no traces of more substantial features were observed when the present bungalow was erected on the 'island' during the mid-1960s. It is not known whether the manor continued to be occupied during any or part of the life of the priory. Close inspection of several aerial photographs of the site has revealed a number of features of interest.

A photograph taken around 1966 shows that at that time there still remained the complete circuit of priory outer boundary which was formed by a hedge and ditch (Plate I). This appears to represent the 'outer court' of the monastic community. The priory church was sited within the inner enclosure (indicated on three sides by the dark mass of trees that surround the moat), in the upper centre of the photograph directly above the 'E' profile formed by the roof of the house. Since the photograph was taken the north-east quadrant of the enclosure has been removed.

This arrangement has a parallel at Topholme, a Premonstratensian abbey in Lincolnshire.¹³ The monastic site there was also bounded by an enclosure hedge and ditch while within the enclosure were sited the claustral buildings and, as at Moatenden, an apparently earlier moated site, also probably manorial in origin.

In the southern half of the enclosure at Moatenden are the clear traces of a system of silted ditches which appear to be contemporaneous with the priory (Plate I). These features are in an area of pasture land which is thought unlikely to have ever been under the plough, thus preserving what may well be a unique survival in the county of a network of medieval fields. There do not appear to be any traces of medieval ridge-and-furrow at the site, although until recent times the field that lies immediately to the west of the large moat (known as the Moat Meadow), did possess an example of nineteenth-century ridges formed to allow various crops to be grown on the low-lying, heavy Wealden soils. The vertical air photograph has been examined by the R.C.H.M.E. where Mr Christopher Taylor has given the following report:

¹² *VCH, op. cit.*, 207.

¹³ David Knowles and J.K.S. St. Joseph, *Monastic sites from the air*, Cambridge, 1952, 172-3.

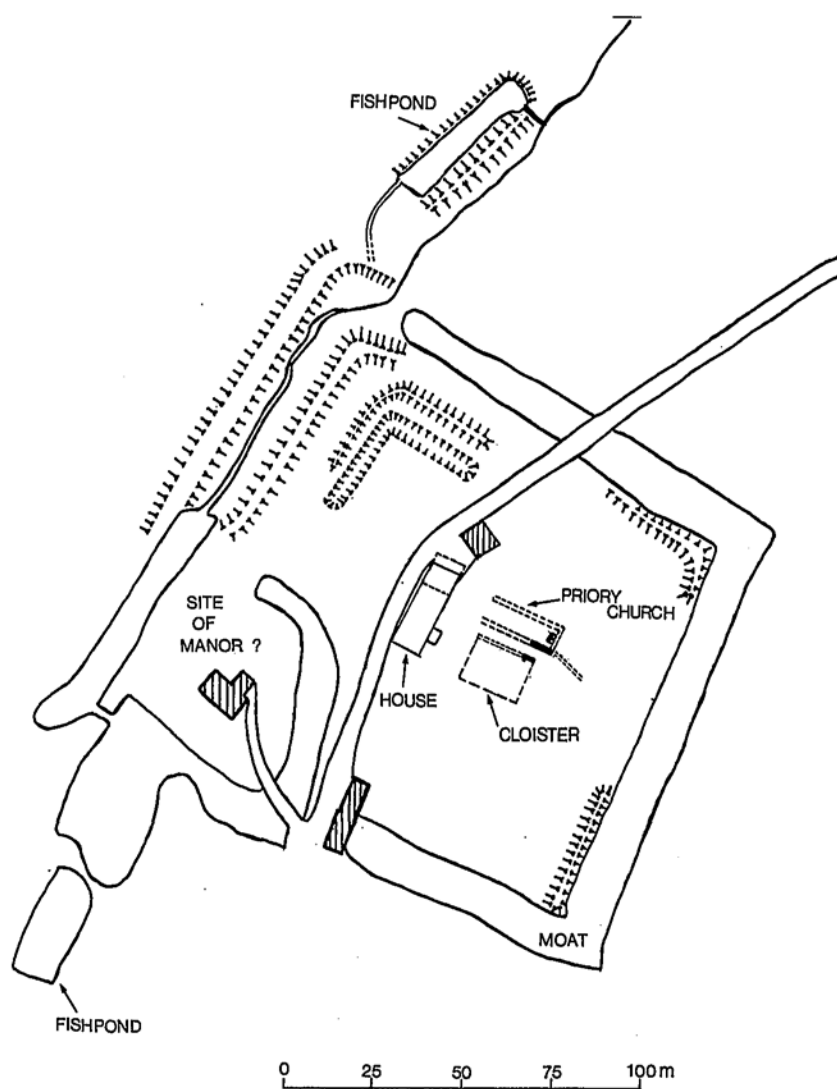
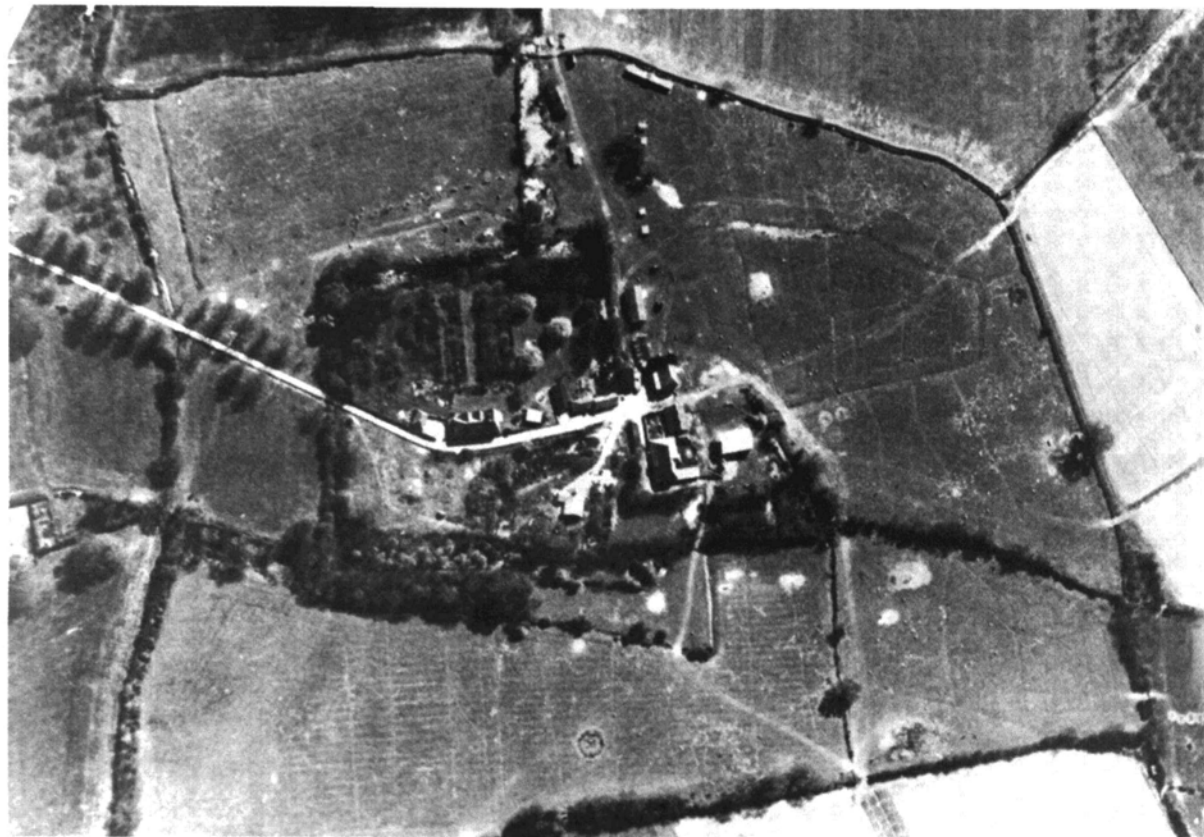


Fig. 2. Plan of the earthworks, moats, and associated features.



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Moatenden Priory, Headcorn. Vertical air photograph, 1966

[Photo.: Robert Payne]

'The remains in the field to the south of the moat can tentatively be grouped into four types, which may or may not have a chronological significance:

1. An area immediately adjoining and to the south of the farm buildings, bounded on the south by a broad ditch. There appears to be uneven ground and some ?rectangular features of a form which are usually interpreted as the sites of former buildings lying between this ditch and the south side of the moat. The slightly bowed appearance on the bounded ditch may follow a similar slight bowing of the south ditch of the moat, and in any case is roughly parallel to it. This suggests that the area was closely associated with the moat and was perhaps once occupied by buildings. That is, there may have once been a ditched enclosure attached to the south side of the moat, occupied by buildings. No date can be assigned to these buildings and they may well have been post-medieval or even relatively recent in date.
2. An irregular ditched enclosure attached to the south side of 1, with a curving east side and a straight west side. The boundary ditch is probably for drainage as water was intended to discharge from it via a short length of ditch running from the south-east corner into the adjacent field boundary (and drain?). The date or purpose of this enclosure is unknown. It may have been merely a close or small field attached to the moated site.
3. A system of small rectangular ditches which occupy the interior of 2, but which also extend west of it and just possibly to the east as well. A similar set of ditches lies in the small field to the west. Again, it is not possible to tell from the air photograph whether these ditches are later than 2. Most seem to respect it and even link into it and might therefore be later. However, those which approach 2 from the west might extend over the western ditch. The air photograph is not clear at this point.
4. A possible circular ditched area occupying the south end of 2, and almost certainly later than the ditches, 3. No purpose can be assigned to this curious feature.

Conclusion.

... given the history and the moated form of the site, one would expect there to have always been a series of ditched enclosures around it as part of its normal agricultural basis, in medieval times. A Trinitarian house such as this, with the usual limited number of brethren, common in this Order, would mean that, in effect, it was always in economic terms a small farm. At least some of the visible remains may, in origin, be connected with this function.'

MEDIEVAL RABBIT WARREN

Along the inner side of the north-west boundary of the outer court is a substantial earth bank which stands, in places, around 2 m. high with an average width of 5 m. This feature ends quite abruptly at the point where the boundary turns towards the south-west. There are no traces of such a substantial bank along the other sides of the priory boundary, although the possibility exists that they could have been destroyed in the past. It is suggested that part of this bank could represent a medieval 'warren'. This was a place where rabbits were contained within an artificial mound in order to provide an additional supply of meat for the community.

Hasted, in his *History of Kent*, mentions the fact that this priory was in possession of '20 pairs of coneyes' at the Dissolution.¹⁴

¹⁴ E. Hasted, *The history and topographical survey of Kent*, 1st edn., 1786, 392.

MEDIEVAL FISH-PONDS

Situated to the north-east of the north-west corner of the moat is a substantial rectangular fish-pond. This pond is aligned with the western arm of the moat and was evidently intended to be an integral part of the system of monastic water management. The pond received a supply of water from the same stream that filled the moats. This entered the pond via a short leat and exited from the pond from an outlet leat at the southern end of the pond. The water appears to have been discharged and re-entered the stream just before it flowed into the moat. The pond is 38 m. in length and 6-7 m. in width and is surrounded with a retaining bank consisting of the excavated spoil. A somewhat larger rectangular pond is situated immediately to the south-west of the farmyard complex. It is possibly another of the priory fish-ponds or, alternatively, may have been part of the manorial site.¹⁵

AN ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY OF THE HOUSE KNOWN AS 'MOATENDEN PRIORY'

A detailed study has been made of the house and three distinct periods of construction can be recognised from evidence that survives both within and in parts of the exterior structure of the building. Reference should be made to the accompanying ground floor plan of the house together with the architectural section drawing A-B (Fig. 4). At the

Key to Fig. 3

1. Staircase of c. 1850.
2. Position of earlier staircase, sixteenth-century?
3. Backstairs giving separate access to servants' attic quarters, c. 1850?
4. Fireplace for 'new' kitchen inserted c. 1850 to replace earlier arrangement at 8.
5. Part of the base of a sixteenth-century chimney stack incorporated into a nineteenth-century wall at the northern end of the house.
6. Late medieval stone door and hatch incorporated into brick wall of mid-sixteenth century date. Probably part of monastic 'western'-range surviving *in situ*.
7. Brick wall contemporary with those at the north end of the house.
8. Inglenook fireplace/chimney: on west side are the marks of a spit machine indicating that this part of the house was at one time used as a kitchen (prior to 1850).
9. Probable position of original end wall of house.
10. Brick wall of nineteenth-century date.

¹⁵ (Ed.) Michael Aston, *Medieval fish, fisheries and fishponds in England*, BAR no. 182, Oxford, 1988.

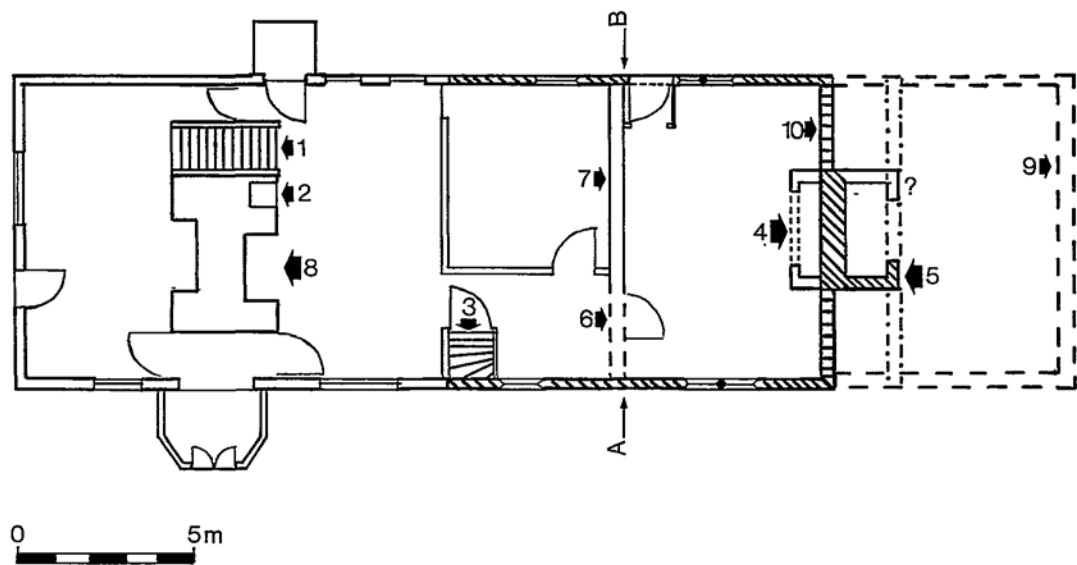
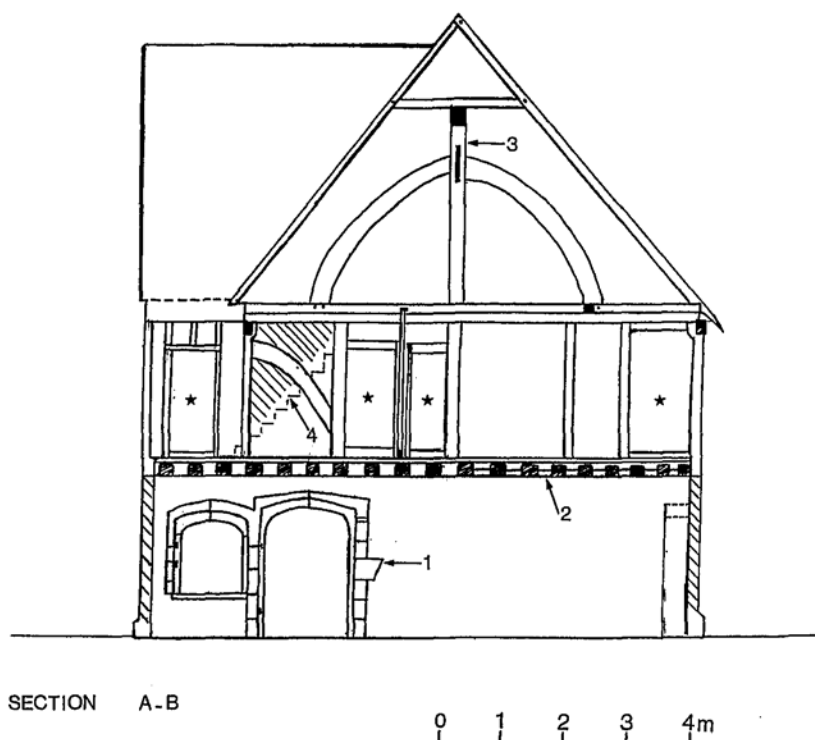


Fig. 3. Ground Floor Plan of the house.



NRA

Fig. 4. Vertical Section (A—B), through the earliest part of the house.

Key to Fig. 4

1. Stone door/hatch arrangement, late medieval?
 2. Ceiling of high quality, with almost half of the boards between the joists *in situ*.
 3. Crown-post roof, late fifteenth-century.
 4. Position of attic stairs, and traces of 'chequerboard' wall painting.
- The stars indicate the positions of existing doorways, (the right-hand one is blocked).

northern end the construction of the ground floor of the house is of brick with a plinth of ragstone with hollow mouldings. The brickwork is of mid-sixteenth century date and consists of narrow clamp-fired bricks laid mainly in 'English Bond'. At the north-west corner of this part of the house are stone quoins of Paludina limestone, most probably quarried locally where the stone is known as Bethersden marble. In this end of the house are also four stone windows, set within the Tudor period brickwork.

There is a double light window on both the eastern and the western

sides of the building and a pair of single light windows are similarly located on either side. Each of these windows has four centred heads and hollow spandrels. Adjacent to the double light window on the western side of the house is an external stone doorway with a three-centred head and hood mould with mouldings of possibly the mid-fifteenth century. All of these architectural features are of sandstone from the Lower Greensand Beds. The room within the northern end of the house is at present used as the kitchen and measures 6.70 m. \times 4.26 m. However, close inspection of the north wall has revealed that the brickwork of the chimney-stack is of a more recent build than the rest of this part of the house and there remains also an earlier and somewhat larger chimney 'fossilised' within the nineteenth-century brick 'lean-to' abutting the northern end of the building. Furthermore, the jowls of the first floor exterior timber corner-posts display empty mortice holes, providing further evidence that the house formerly extended at least one bay farther to the north.

The beams that form the ceiling of the room within are set close together and have hollow chamfers. They are also provided with grooves along their edges for the fitting of ceiling boards, (an early form of sound proofing, occasionally combined with a layer of hazelnut shells laid within the void between upper floor and ground floor ceiling to provide additional insulation).¹⁶

Almost half of these boards survive *in situ*, largely in the western part of the ceiling. There is a further, internal, stone arched door, combined with a serving hatch arrangement, in the wall of narrow brick that separates the kitchen from the adjoining ante-chamber. The heads of the arches are four-centred and have hollow spandrels, the building stone used is Greensand. The stone shelf of the hatchway shows signs of considerable wear. The east jamb of the hatch still retains the iron hinges for the original wooden shutter, which would have opened inwards, i.e. towards the north. The south face of the door and hatchway have mouldings of similar type to those of the windows and could possibly be late fifteenth-century. They may represent part of the work of Richard of Lancing, who was 'minister' of Motyden Priory in the latter half of that century. The fireplace in this room dates from the mid-nineteenth century. It can be dated by the curved iron arch that is situated in the brickwork above the central opening; this would have originally been occupied by a typical farmhouse kitchen range. Inspection of the wall behind this fireplace seems to confirm that it and

¹⁶ I am indebted to Kenneth Gravett for this information, together with much other assistance in attempting to unravel the complicated architectural history of the house.

the chimney are a Victorian insertion. It would, therefore, seem probable that this room only became a kitchen around 1850, a period that saw a number of alterations to the house. It may have been around this period that the northward continuation of the house was demolished, possibly due to a fire. The roof space above this part of the house contains a single plain crown-post. This arrangement probably pre-dates the brickwork of the rooms on the ground floor, but possibly not the stone hatchway, a feature which clearly belongs to the monastic period. The crown-post probably dates from between 1480–1500. There is confirmatory evidence from the reversal of certain rafters in the roof in this portion of the building that adds weight to the theory that the house indeed extended farther to the north. The post-Dissolution ground floor chamber and adjoining 'ante-chamber' must represent part of a larger structure that was presumably partly taken down to make way for an early seventeenth-century gabled, timber-framed house. The 'crown-post' house certainly extended further towards the north, and may also have continued further southwards, though, at present, further evidence is lacking. It would, therefore, appear that the surviving pair of ground floor rooms possibly represents a high quality 'parlour' together with a smaller room of unknown purpose. The fine ceiling is evidence of wealth on the part of the builder, most probably Sir Anthony Aucher of Otterden Place. The construction date would seem to have been around 1545, shortly after he had purchased the site of the priory.¹⁷ On the plaster infill along the south side of the partition wall under the crown-post, and adjacent to the stairs to the attic, are the surviving fragments of a 'chequered' pattern wall-painting; this most probably dates from 1550–1600. Sometime shortly after 1600 the earlier timber-framed house seems to have been at least partly rebuilt and widened by some 2.50 m. to the east. This created a 'quasi-aisle', still discernible in the first floor rooms along the eastern side of the house. At the head of the small servants staircase can be seen the cut-off eaves plate of the earlier crown-post house. At this same period three gables were added to the eastern side of the house. These probably had 'frieze windows' and barge boards which were typical features to be found in houses of this period.

The traces of one window are still partly visible in the small first floor room at the north-eastern corner of the house. Because the eastern aspect of the house was regarded as the front of the building, the main entrance was probably moved to this side around 1600 from another

¹⁷ *VCH, op. cit.*, 208.

location, possibly the present entry into the kitchen. The 'new entrance' is termed a lobby entry and is situated on the east side of the central fireplace. The site of the priory was leased to Sir Anthony Aucher, of Otterden Place, (some 9 miles, or 14 km. north-east of Moatenden), in 1540. This occurred after the demise of Thomas Cromwell to whom the property was originally granted by Henry VIII. The lease was to run for twenty-one years at a rent of some £25 per annum. However, in June 1544, the site and the greater part of the possessions of the house, valued at £39 5s. 0½d. a year, were purchased by him for £806 12s. 3½d.¹⁸

The documentary evidence corresponds with the suggested date and high quality of the brickwork at the north end of the house. Sir Anthony would certainly have been wealthy enough to have erected a house on the priory site, either for the use of a member of his family or one of his tenant farmers.

The stone windows might well be contemporary with the brickwork, but it would appear equally possible that they are re-used materials from the priory itself.

In view of the dating evidence suggested by the mouldings on the stone doors and windows, i.e. late fifteenth century, together with the confirmed date of the brickwork, it would be reasonable to assume that the stone features are more likely to have come from demolished priory buildings. The 'serving-hatch' and stone door are still somewhat enigmatic and might well be the *in situ* remains of a part of the 'guest-house' or 'western-range' of the Trinitarian establishment incorporated into later brickwork. Certainly, their position and possible usage in the post-Dissolution house cannot easily be explained. The excavations, which successfully located the site of the priory church, have also shown that its south wall was aligned with the 'serving-hatch' wall. Only further excavation in the area of the garden between the church and the house will finally resolve this particular puzzle. As stated earlier, the house was partly rebuilt and enlarged c. 1600 with three gables being added to the 'new east-front'. The remainder of the roof construction, apart from the 'crown-post', is of contemporary late sixteenth-century date. This consists of 'queen-struts' and through side purlins, the principal rafters reducing to the same size as the common rafters.

The central chimney with double 'ingle-nook' is part of this same build. The fireplace was situated in the principal ground floor room, which evidently would have formed the living room cum kitchen from the early seventeenth century until c. 1850. On the lintel beam above the fireplace

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 208.

is a number of mortice holes indicating the former position of a spit machine. The marks to the right-hand side show the site of the machine itself, while on the left a weight would have been suspended beneath a pulley wheel enabling a spit apparatus to have been turned below. The room at the south end of the house would have been the parlour; within this is situated a smaller fireplace backing onto the inglenook.

There is a pair of staircases in the house; the larger one is positioned to the right of the inglenook in the principal central room. The other is within the Tudor period brick house in the north end building. This stair has obviously been inserted through an earlier timber ceiling. Several of the beams have been cut and joins constructed by the placing of large iron bolts around the space created for the narrow curving staircase. It seems likely that this arrangement would have been required for the use of the household servants during the nineteenth century. Quite possibly some of them would have been accommodated in attic rooms. It is unlikely that they would have shared the main staircase with the family. The attic stairs, as previously mentioned, partially obscure an earlier painted wall decoration.

There are indications, in the form of several mortice holes adjacent to the main staircase, which suggest that an earlier stair was sited immediately to the east of its present position, abutting the fireplace where there is now a small cupboard. It is worth noting that the timber-framed barn in the nearby farmyard is of the period 1790–1830. This, taken together with other alterations being made in the house, suggests a period of prosperity for the owners of the property around that date. The windows in the seventeenth-century part of the house are dated *c.* 1850, which is also the suggested date for the re-arrangement of the kitchen.

Two of the three gables on the east front project further forward than the remaining one which is situated above the earliest part of the house. A passage-way leads from the top of the main stairs to the north end of the house. This has been inserted through what were originally large rooms spanning the entire width of the building. In the partition walls along the west side can be seen the blocked-up doors, probably dating from the seventeenth century, that formerly provided access.

The centre and south end of the house were clad in brick around the latter half of the nineteenth century. The bricks used were local red 'Wealden Stocks', with the headers of overfired 'blues'.

The front porch could probably be dated *c.* 1890. The sash windows, without horns, must be somewhat earlier, perhaps *c.* 1840, as would be the bedroom fireplaces.¹⁹

¹⁹ Personal communication from Kenneth Gravett.

GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY AND EXCAVATIONS

A programme of geophysical investigation was carried out over selected locations within the moated enclosure.

The principal area under investigation was located 25 m. to the east of the house in part of what had been, until the storm of October 1987, an orchard. A survey using a resistivity meter revealed a number of anomalies that suggested the existence of buried foundations of uncertain date. There are, extending eastwards across the garden lawn, three prominent ridges. At least one of these appeared to continue into the area chosen for the survey. One suggested explanation for these features is that they could possibly be buried wall foundations, although only the southernmost ridge had indicated high resistance during the geophysical survey.

A trial trench (Trench A), excavated within the orchard, extended across the southernmost ridge. This almost immediately revealed the traces of a probable late nineteenth-century garden path lying directly beneath the recent topsoil. This feature appeared to extend from the house across the garden and on towards the eastern arm of the moat (the existence of this path was later confirmed by examination of an early twentieth-century photograph depicting the house and garden).

A layer of loamy clay containing largely post-Dissolution material extended for a depth of some 35–40 cm. (Deposit A10). Below this was a deposit of dark soil (Deposit A8), with a ceramic assemblage of sherds representing mainly late thirteenth- to early fourteenth-century wares. This material is made up of largely light grey sandy fabrics with occasional inclusions of oyster-shell temper. Deposit A9 is a pre-priory period clay loam containing a number of abraded sherds of Romano-British pottery of late first–mid second century date; these, together with a bronze *sestertius* of Sabina (A.D. 117–138), found 4 m. to the south-east of Trench A, suggest the presence of a Roman occupation site close by. The pottery is comparable with some of the material from a number of other Romano-British sites located recently in the Low Weald.²⁰ A subsoil of sticky yellow clay was located at a depth of 70 cm.

Extension of the trench farther to the north revealed the lowest courses of a wall of ragstone ashlar some 60 cm. in width, together with an adjoining buttress of similar build sited on its southern side

²⁰ Reports in preparation, relating to three Romano-British sites located whilst field-walking farmland in the Low Weald. All these sites appear to date from the late first to the early third century A.D. and have some connection with the iron industry.

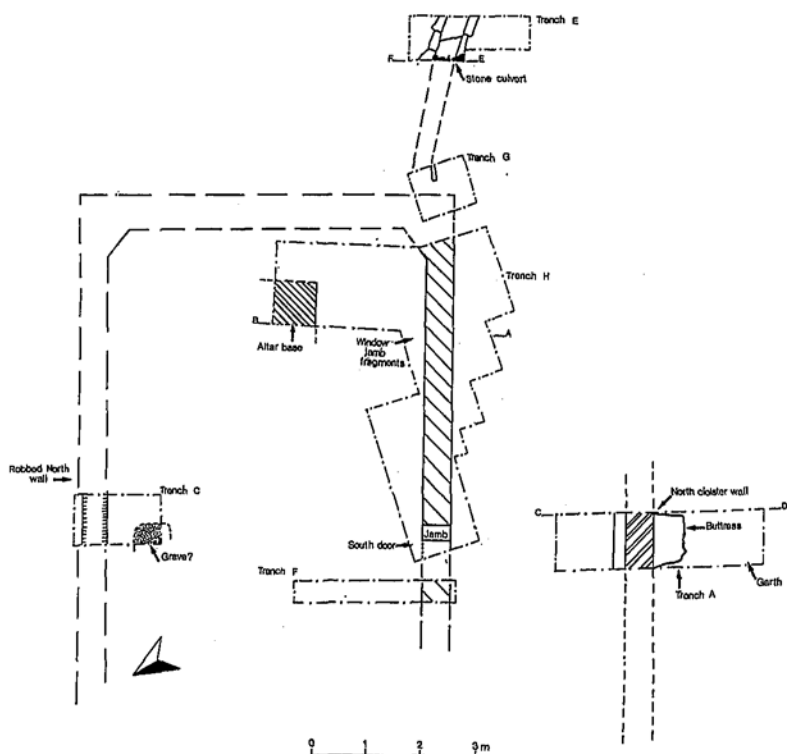


Fig. 5. Plan of the excavations at Moatenden Priory.

some 70 cm. wide. On the north side of this wall was a 50 cm. thick deposit of Dissolution period demolition debris consisting of mainly broken, roof-tile fragments, together with iron nails, lime mortar and small stones.

A thicker deposit of roof-tiles was lying on a 'floor' layer, which appeared to be contemporary with the stone wall. This 'floor' lay some 1.10 m. below the present topsoil, and 60 cm. below the top of the wall foundation.

The wall represents the south side of the north cloister alley and the buttress which projected southwards into the cloister garth (Section C-D). Deposits 8 and 9 are the medieval soil layers of the area enclosed by the cloister alleys or walks. The positions of the other sides of the cloister were indicated by the geophysical survey, but were not excavated. Further evidence for identifying this part of the site as the cloister is the stratified sherds of early medieval pottery from the garth

soil deposits and a lead papal bull seal found 4.50 m. south of the cloister wall as a surface find. It is possible that the cloister garth was used as a monastic garden and these artefacts had been deposited as part of domestic refuse.

The wall of the north cloister walk must have turned to become the east walk just beyond the excavated section located in Trench A, as sections of a stone window were located in Trench H, lying on the floor in the south-east corner of the chancel of the priory church. If the cloister garth had extended any farther to the east, it would have blocked this window. Some 9.50 m. to the north of Trench A a second trial trench, Trench C, was excavated over the approximate position of the centre of a low reading indicated during the resistivity survey. Below the topsoil was a 40 cm. deposit of destruction debris containing clay roof-tiles, brick fragments, iron nails, together with burnt wood. A compacted clay layer was reached at a depth of 60 cm. Across the north end of this clay layer was a robber trench, the fill of which consisted of lime mortar and fragments of stone. Cut into the clay floor at the south-east corner was the fill of what appeared to be a grave contemporary with this floor. Small finds from the post-Dissolution destruction deposits included sherds of mainly late medieval and Tudor domestic pottery, a fragment of a bronze pin and a portion of a high quality inlaid lead glazed tile of the late thirteenth century. This may be part of the flooring of the first priory church.²¹

Trench C was located across part of the robbed north wall of the church which soon confirmed why low readings had been obtained in this area during the resistivity survey. In order to ascertain the nature and extent of the archaeological deposits and to provide possible dating evidence for any surviving structures, a somewhat larger area excavation was carried out across the south-east corner of the priory church. This location was chosen as the geophysical survey had suggested the possible presence of unrobbed walls in this part of the site.

Excavation subsequently showed that the majority of the main walls of the priory church had been thoroughly robbed, apart from the south wall which survives to a few courses in height. This wall was well constructed and had been built almost entirely of ragstone. It measured an average of 0.60 m. in width, and, in places survived to a height of 0.65 m. The east wall survived only as a robber trench filled with demolition debris. This would perhaps suggest that at least some of the robbing took place during the actual demolition of the monastic buildings in 1538/39.

²¹ See separate report on floor-tiles and Fig. 9, B.

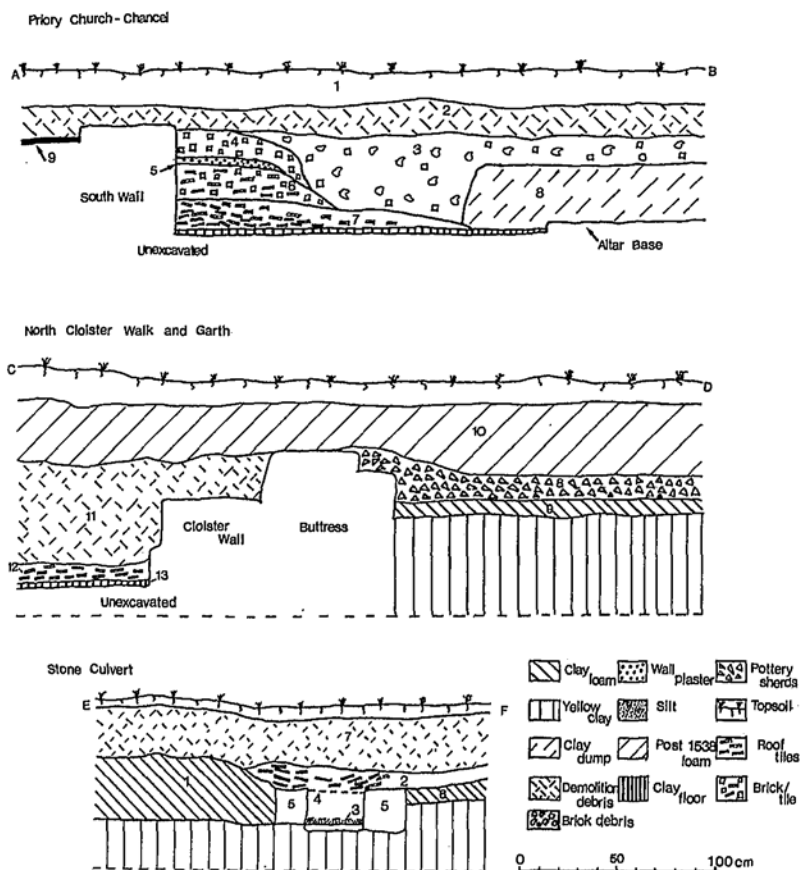


Fig. 6. Archaeological sections, A—B, C—D, and E—F.

A contemporary floor remained within the part of the church that was excavated. It consisted of a layer of compacted clay located at a depth of some 65 cm. below the present topsoil. However, although there was no evidence for floor materials surviving *in situ*, fragments of early medieval floor-tiles were present throughout the destruction debris. Some at least would appear to represent part of the original flooring of perhaps the first church which must have been completed by the second quarter of the thirteenth century. Immediately above the floor was a thick deposit of plain unglazed roof-tiles. In places, particularly near to the south wall, were many fragments of badly decayed medieval window

glass. The only pieces with sufficient decoration remaining to be identified are illustrated in Fig. 8. Two portions of a window jamb were found lying close to the inner side of the base of the south wall, Fig. 7, G and I. Above these were layers of brick flooring material, wall-plaster and roof-tiles (see sections of report relating to the building materials). Abutting the site of the east wall, 1.90 m. north of the south wall was a slightly raised clay platform. This would appear to represent the surviving base of the principal altar. Across the centre of this part of the church was a substantial dump of yellow clay, totally aceramic, the significance of which is open to interpretation. It is certainly contemporary with the destruction period as it is overlain by post-Dissolution levels. It was probably used to fill the body of the church after the demolition in order to level the area. The build up of soils around the church during its lifetime appeared to be significant and the interior of the structure may have needed extra material to fill it. The bricks found within the church bore traces of mortar adhering to their coarser unfinished side and would appear to have been laid on a mortared floor; none, however were found *in situ*. Some of the churches of Romney Marsh still possess such floors constructed of brick.²² Above the deposit of floor bricks was a layer of plain undecorated wall-plaster.

A considerable number of the fragments display traces on one of their sides of the impression of the stone wall on which it was originally spread. Some of these same fragments, as well as others, were evidently also sited around some type of timber framing as the impression of wood grain is preserved upon their surfaces.

A stone culvert was traced running away from the church in a south-easterly direction from the corner of the church towards the eastern arm of the moat. From the destruction debris fill of the culvert came a number of fragments of window glass, which hint at the presence of an east window. The dimensions of the culvert are detailed in Fig. 6, Section E-F.

The total width of the church has been estimated by combining the results of the resistivity survey and the excavation. It was 7.30 m. wide; this compares with the widths of the chancels of the only other Trinitarian churches to have been examined by excavation, namely,

²² Brookland and Ivychurch are examples of Romney Marsh churches which retain their original brick flooring.

²³ *Ibid.*, M. Gray.

Thelsford, Warks, 8.50 m.,²³ and Dunbar, Scotland, 7.50 m..²⁴ It is certain that the church extended for at least 17.70 m. to the west, at which point the wall lies at 60 cm. below the garden soils. There is no archaeological evidence for either aisles or a tower existing at Motynden Priory. This tends to agree with the evidence from the other excavated Trinitarian churches, which were confirmed as being relatively small, rectangular structures. Due to the limited nature of the excavations, any phasing of the structures must be very tentative.

Period 1

A stone church appears to have been constructed shortly after the founding of the priory around 1224. Parts of this building were floored, at least partially, with high quality inlaid lead-glazed tiles, which are contemporary with that period.

Period 2

Evidence for re-building is suggested by the pair of window jambs from the south side of the chancel area of the church. Comparison of the mouldings with a similar architectural detail from an excavated monastic site in Strood,²⁵ would perhaps suggest a date not earlier than the late fourteenth or the early fifteenth century for these. Documentary evidence suggests that the priory suffered a severe depression in the late fourteenth century, during and after the ravages of the Black Death, but recovered its wealth and influence during the century before the Dissolution, due largely to its ambitious prior, Richard of Lancing.²⁶

The examples of early bricks used as a flooring material would date from this latter period in the life of the priory.

The excavation also uncovered part of a well-preserved stone culvert extending from the south-east corner of the church to the moat. The actual point of discharge could not be located but the line was indicated by the resistivity survey. It was not possible to say whether this was an original feature or a later addition to the buildings. Certainly it continued to be used up to the time of the Dissolution, as evidenced by the lack of a build-up of silt within it.

²⁴ Jonathan Wordsworth, 'Friarscroft and the Trinitarians in Dunbar', *PSAS*, cxiii, (1983), 478-89.

²⁵ A.C. Harrison, 'St Mary's Hospital, Strood', *Arch. Cant.*, lxxxiv (1969), 147, 153-4, and Pl. VB.

²⁶ *VCH, op. cit.*, 207.

BUILDING MATERIALS

Dressed Stonework (Fig 7)

Only two pieces of dressed stone were found during the excavation, (Fig. 7, G and I). The material is a hard yellowish sandstone. They were positioned immediately within the south wall of the chancel, some 2 m. from the east wall of the priory church and lying directly on the contemporary clay floor.

Beneath them were quantities of window glass, together with the geometric floor-tile illustrated in Fig. 9, D. They probably formed part of a window jamb. One piece is fitted with two sockets for the iron glazing bars. There is also a recessed slot on this same fragment, (Fig. 7, G 1), for an iron tie-bar. The other fragment (Fig. 7, G 2) has a crucifix graffito or, alternatively, a stone mason's mark, incised into its internal face. Fig. 7, G, 2, is reminiscent of a window jamb from St. Mary's Hospital, Strood,²⁷ which was dated to the late fourteenth century. The example from Moatenden may possibly be of similar date. Fig. 7, H, is one of a pair of door-jambs which were among a number of pieces of worked stone recovered from the north-east corner of the moat bed during a recent dry summer.

These particular pieces are of a type of oolitic limestone the source of which is yet to be located. Fig. 7, A, is from the south-west window, and Fig. 7, B, from the north-east window. These are representative of the four stone windows in the sixteenth-century part of the house, and may represent re-used materials from the monastic buildings.

Fig. 7, C, is a profile of the moulding of the door while Fig. 7, D, is the serving-hatch moulding; both are part of the arrangement in the present kitchen which possibly survives from the priory western range.

Fig. 7, E, is the hood mould of the outer door that leads into the kitchen, while Fig. 7, F, is the jamb.

The hood moulding is similar to that of a wooden door-jamb existing at Luckhurst, East Sutton, and dated c. 1490,²⁸ which lies some 1½ miles (2 km.) north-east from Moatenden.

There is a number of other fragments of worked stone scattered around the site, the majority of which appear to be a type of oolitic limestone suggesting perhaps that this material was employed fairly extensively around the priory.

Two carved fragments of angel's wings were discovered some years

²⁷ *Arch. Cant.*, lxxxiv (1969), 147.

²⁸ Pearson, *op. cit.*, 159, Fig. 155, H.

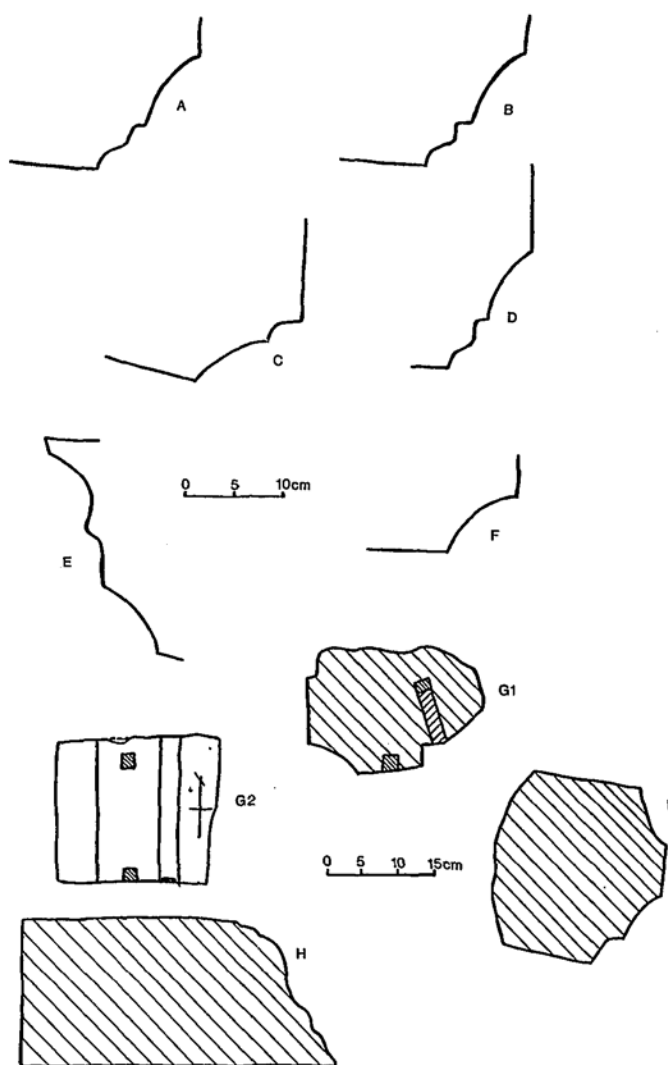


Fig. 7. Architectural details, mouldings and tooled stonework.

ago in the garden immediately south of the house. This possibly adds credence to the story that some time during the nineteenth century a sculptured frieze depicting angels was discovered but later broken up.²⁹

Wall-Plaster

A concentration of wall-plaster was found some 4 m. from the east end of the priory church. The plaster was stratified above a deposit of roof-tiles. Some of the plaster bore traces of wood grain impressed into its surface, suggesting perhaps that a timber structure may have been sited in the chancel area, probably a rood screen. There were also indications that the plaster had been applied over the surface of the stone walls of the church quite thickly. Some of the fragments showed signs of being compressed into the gaps between the stones. All the plaster fragments were plain and undecorated.

Painted Window Glass

Although a significant amount of window glass was found during the excavation, it was largely in an advanced state of decay, due mainly to the waterlogged conditions of the site during a large part of the year, combined with the high acidic nature of the soil.

The bulk of the glass was found in the south-east corner of the church in a deposit immediately above the floor, where, presumably, it had fallen during the removal of the windows. Further pieces were found in the demolition debris which constituted the bulk of the fill of the stone culvert at the external south-east corner of the church. Some of this material may have originated from the east window. All of the glass averaged 3 mm. in thickness; any decoration appeared to have been executed in red paint. A concentration of lead window-glazing came was found in the stone culvert. They possessed a typical 'H' profile, and the largest piece measured 9 mm. in length. Only six pieces of the glass were worthy of illustration.

Fig. 8, A. This fragment has a curious design, part of which probably represents an inscription. The uppermost design may be a crude depiction representing a 'Tree of Life' (Trench H, south-east corner of chancel.)

Fig. 8, B, is part of an inscription of Gothic lettering, probably fifteenth-century (Trench C, north side of chancel, demolition deposits.)

²⁹ Robert Furley.

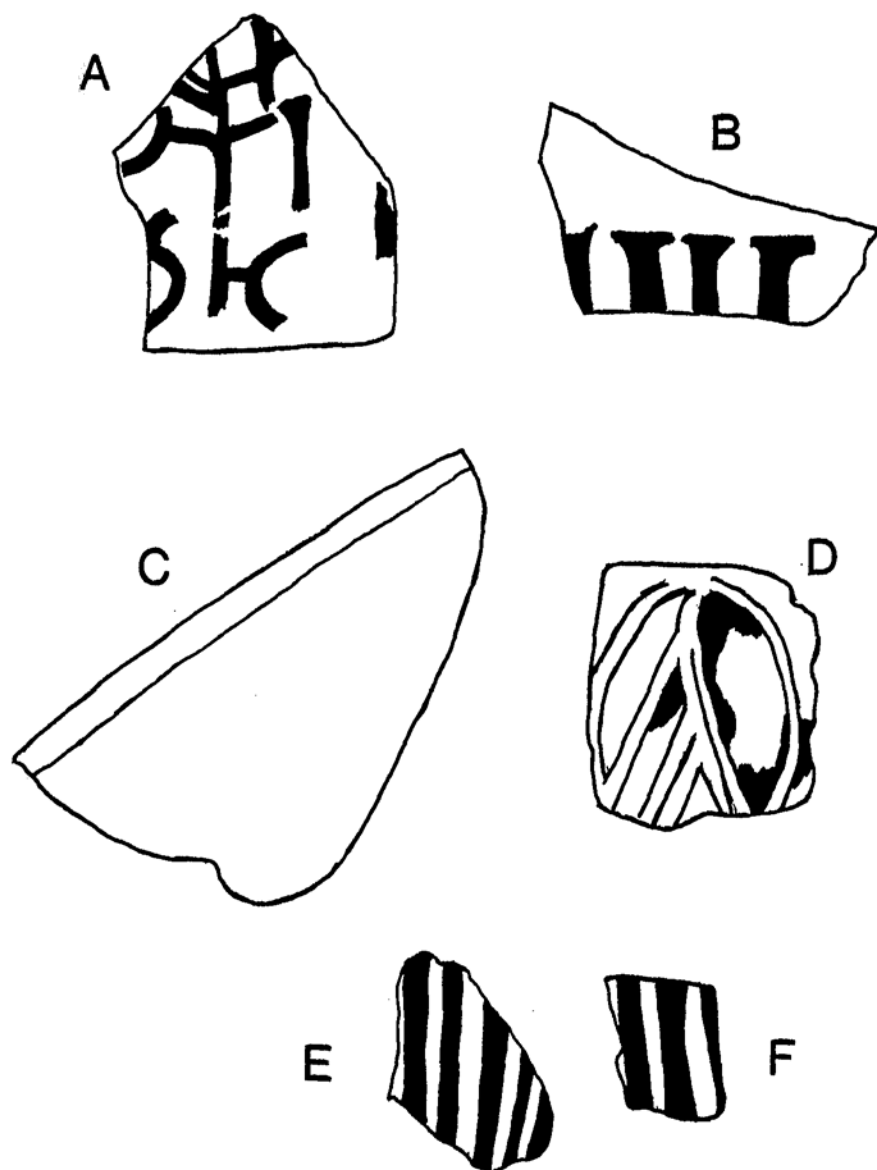


Fig. 8. Decorated window glass. (Scale: 1:1)

Fig. 8, C, is the largest single fragment recovered; it has a curved, somewhat thickened edge which fitted into the lead came (Trench H, south side of chancel.)

Fig. 8, D, is part of a probable oval design which is difficult to interpret as the majority of the decoration has corroded away (Trench H, south side of chancel.)

Figs. 8, E and F, are reminiscent of the folds of drapery and may have been part of a figure (Trench H, south side of chancel.)

Floor-Tiles

The tiles from the Moatenden excavation appear to represent a largely late thirteenth- to early fourteenth-century assemblage. Only one complete example was found; the majority of the tiles recovered during the excavations consisted of relatively small fragments. None of the tiles were found *in situ*, although the piece of triangular geometric tile mosaic (Fig. 9, D,) was found beneath one of the demolished window-jamb, which lay directly upon the floor of the chancel. Apart from this, the remainder of the material derived from the demolition levels.

On the basis of fabric, technique of manufacture, and design, the tiles can be divided into three groups:

Group 1. Fabric: Orange red surfaces, grey core with layered 'honeycomb' appearance. Thickness, 17–25 mm.

Fig. 9, B. Fragment of a high quality lead-glazed floor-tile with inlaid decoration. From Trench C, Dissolution period destruction deposits. The tile would originally have measured 12.5 mm. square and have been part of a four-tile design. The design does not appear in the comprehensive British Museum catalogue of medieval tiles or from any of the other local monastic sites. However, the design has been paralleled with an example found in the excavations of the Eastern Range at Battle Abbey, and this is reproduced in Fig. 9, A.³⁰ The tile shows a seated human figure apparently holding a stylised floral emblem. This can be seen somewhat more clearly in the fragment from Moatenden. The thickness of the tiles is 17 mm. in both of the examples; it has not been possible to compare the fabrics.

Fig. 9, C. A fragment of decorated tile, 25 mm. thick and most probably 12.5 mm. square originally. A white slip design has been applied over the impression. The design appears to depict a disc set

³⁰ J.N. Hare, *Battle Abbey, the eastern range and the excavations of 1978–80*, English Heritage, Archaeological Report no. 2, Gloucester, 1985, Fig. 19, no.2.

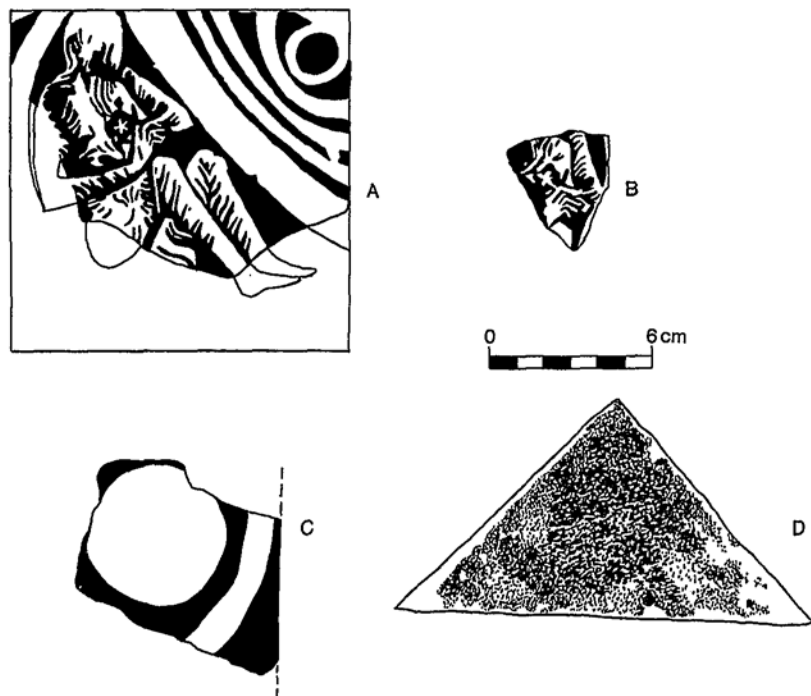


Fig. 9. Floor-tiles.

within an outer circle. The same design has been found locally in the excavations at Leeds Priory.³¹

Fig. 9, D. A complete piece of tile mosaic from the south side of the priory church, probably *in situ*. The tile is 23 mm. thick with bevelled sides. Its fabric is similar to Fig. 9, B and C, red clay with a grey core. The core is only visible on this tile along one edge; this is because these tiles were scored whilst still wet in order that they might be broken into smaller pieces depending on the particular design to be laid. The glaze is dark green. Tile mosaic is only known from four other locations in Kent: Leeds Priory, Boxley Abbey, Rochester Cathedral and Canterbury Cathedral. It has been suggested that Boxley Abbey may have been the source for this type of tile in Kent.³²

³¹ P.J. Tester, 'Leeds Priory', *Arch. Cant.*, xciv (1978), 87-8, Fig. 5, no. 5.

³² P.J. Tester, 'Boxley Abbey', *Arch. Cant.*, lxxxviii (1973), 144-5, Fig. 5, no. 8.

Floor Bricks (Not illustrated)

A large number of fragments of an apparently early brick flooring material were recovered during the excavations in the church. These are of red clay, rather crudely made, and most probably of local manufacture. Only a few complete examples were found. Dimensions average 216 mm. \times 100 mm. \times 48 mm. There are traces of mortar on their 'rough' unfinished sides.

In view of their stratified position in the body of the church they cannot be after 1538. Comparison with the bricks used in the house would suggest that they are most likely late fifteenth-century in date.

There was slight evidence for the possible use of brick to repair the fabric of the church just prior to the Dissolution. This material, also of red clay, was somewhat larger than the floor bricks and bore traces of mortar on both faces; it measured 227 mm. \times 110 mm. \times 53 mm.

Roof-Tiles (Not illustrated)

Large numbers of plain roof-tiles occurred over the whole area of the excavation. Complete examples were scarce, but their main dimensions could be ascertained in several cases. They are of red clay and the peg-holes tend to be square in the majority of cases. However, a small number of apparently earlier tiles were found and these tended to have round peg-holes. The fabric was a darker fired clay with traces of glazing, though this may have occurred owing to vitrification of the clay during the firing process. These tiles came almost entirely from the contemporary exterior ground surface adjacent to the south wall of the church. An almost complete curved ridge tile was found lying beneath a concentration of plain roof-tiles adjacent to the assumed south door. It measured 380 mm. wide \times 360 mm. long.

Iron Nails

The nails recovered from the stratified contexts were encrusted, some heavily, and often in a fragmentary condition. Some thirty-six specimens were identified, and all appeared to be timber nails. The shank length and the shape of the shank in section were noted.

Fig. 10. Timber Nails.

Type A: Flat-headed nail, roughly square head in the specimens that could be identified. The shank was square in section, it varied in length from 30–35 mm. Five examples were found, two each from Trench C and E, and one from Trench H.

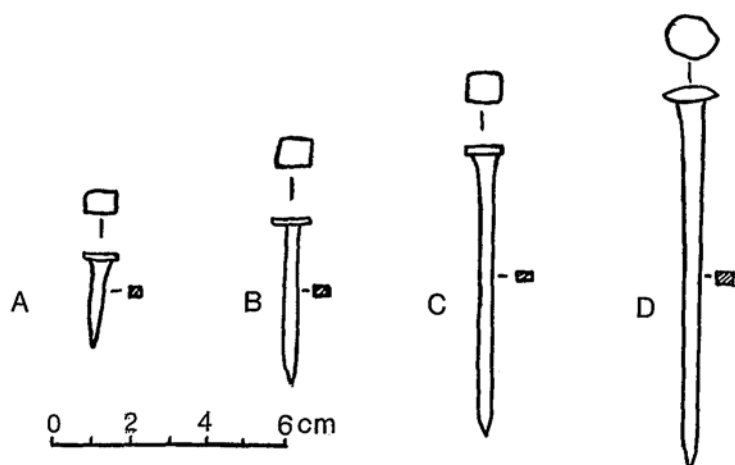


Fig. 10. Iron nails.

Type B: Flat-headed nail, roughly square head, shank square or rectangular in section, and from 37–50 mm., 18 mm. in length. The most common type found with eighteen examples. Trench A, four; Trench C, seven; Trench E, one; and Trench H, six.

Type C: Flat-headed nail, square head, shank rectangular in section, varying from 46–80 mm. in length. The second most common type with eleven examples. Trench A, two; Trench C, one; Trench E, one; Trench G, three; Trench H, four.

Type D: Dome-headed nail, square or rectangular shank section, varying from 70–90 mm. Two examples both from Trench A, cloister garth.

Coins and Lead Seals

Roman Coin.

A *sestertius* of Sabina from the topsoil of the orchard 4 m. south-east of Trench A.

Lead Seals (Fig. 11)

A: A lead cloth seal, incuse letters ATO. Diameter 23 mm. Surface find in garden soil northern side of moated enclosure. A seal used in a system of quality control in the textile industry from the late medieval period onwards. The letters most probably indicated the weaver who

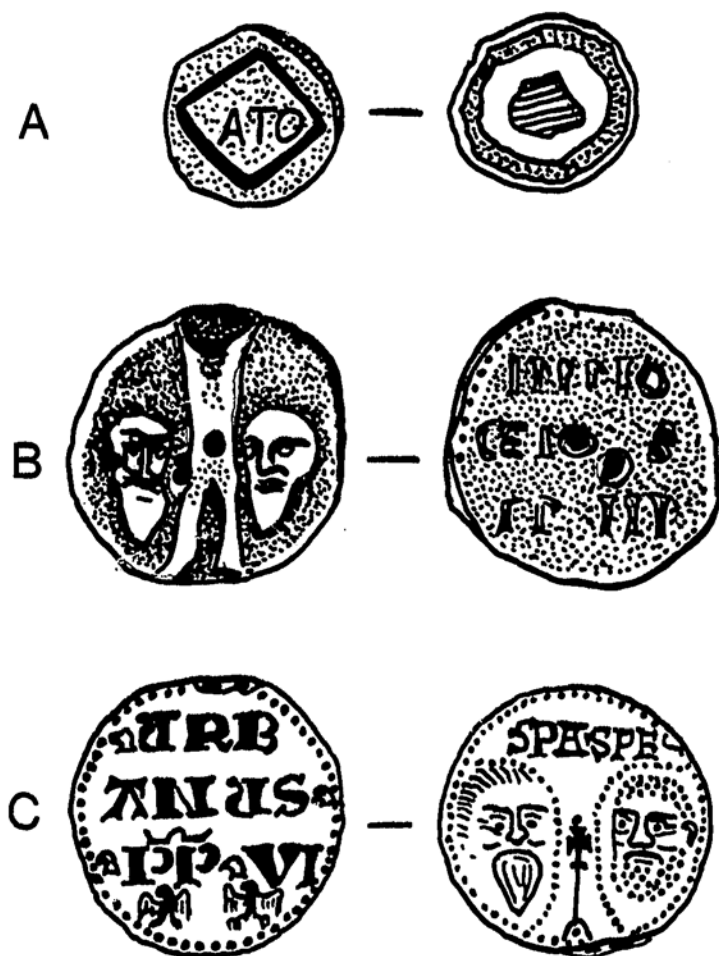


Fig. 11. Lead seals. (Scale: 1:1)

had manufactured the textile. A similar example comes from the excavations at St. George's Street, Canterbury.³³

B: A lead papal 'bull' of Pope Innocent IV, 1243–54. Found at west side of house.

³³ Excavations at 'St. George's Street, Canterbury', *Arch. Cant.* cv (1988), 133–4, Fig. 25, no. 87.

C: A lead papal 'bull' of Pope Urbanus VI, 1308–89. Surface find in area of monastic cloister garth.

Objects of Copper Alloy (Fig. 12)

A: A 'heart'-shaped button or costume fitting of copper alloy. The object is 20 mm. in length and has a suspension loop on the reverse. Thirteenth or fourteenth century, from the demolition fill of the robbed east wall of the priory church.

B: The end of a small rod of ebony?, with a ferrule of copper alloy. Medieval?, from the demolition fill of the robbed east wall of the priory church.

C: A lace end of copper alloy, 27 mm. in length. An exact parallel has come from the excavations at the Maison Dieu at Ospringe.³⁴

D: An irregular plate of copper alloy, pierced by four rivets. Possibly a window, door or roof fitting? From the cloister garth soil levels. Medieval?

E: A ferrule of copper alloy, on an ebony? shaft. 17 mm. in diameter. Purpose unknown. From the chancel area.

F: A wire pin? of copper alloy, from the demolition levels, Trench C. Medieval?

POTTERY

Romano-British

A number of mainly abraded sherds of Romano British grog-tempered wares were recovered from beneath the cloister garth soils of the medieval priory. These are very similar to other pottery of late first- to mid second-century date from the Low Weald (reports in preparation).

Medieval (Fig. 14)

A. Jug (A/10/91), part of the rim and neck of a late thirteenth-century to early fourteenth-century vessel. It is representative of the material found in the area of the cloister garth. The fabric is a light grey, sandy and unglazed. South end of Trench A.

³⁴ G.H. Smith, 'The excavation of the Hospital of St. Mary of Ospringe, commonly called Maison Dieu', *Arch. Cant.*, xcvi (1979), 139–41, Fig. 26, no. 150.

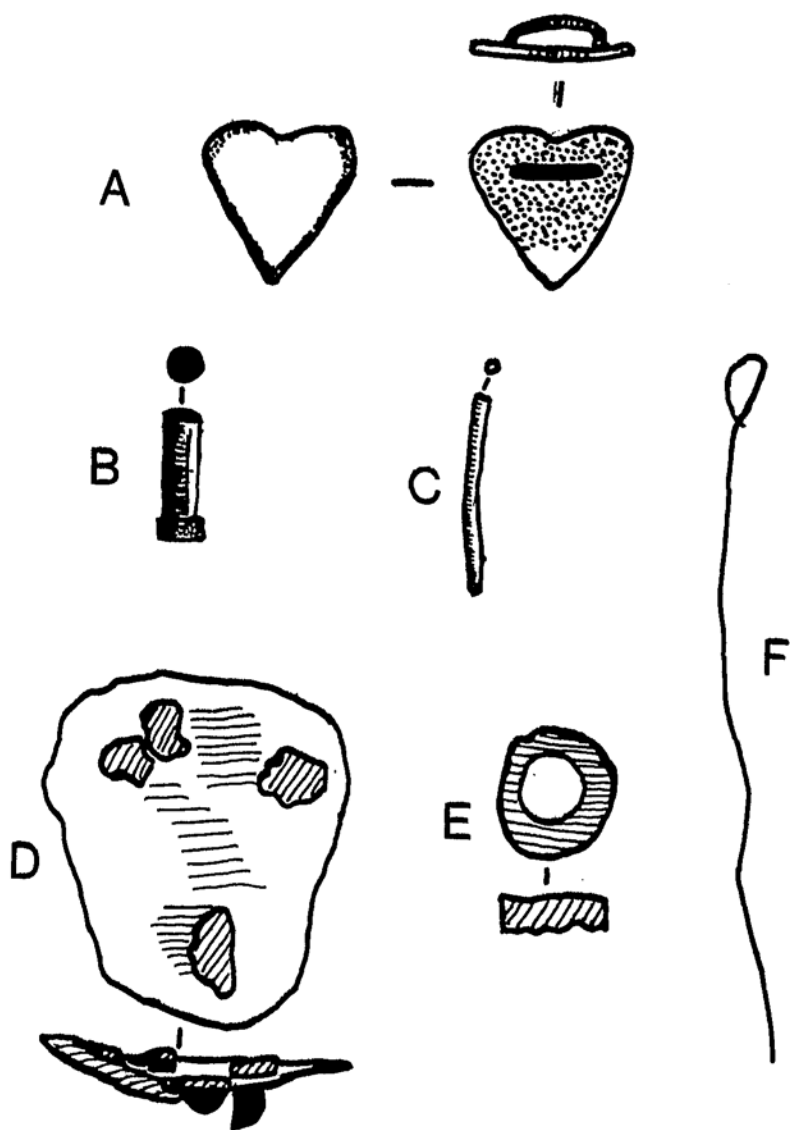


Fig. 12. Objects of copper alloy. (Scale: 1:1)

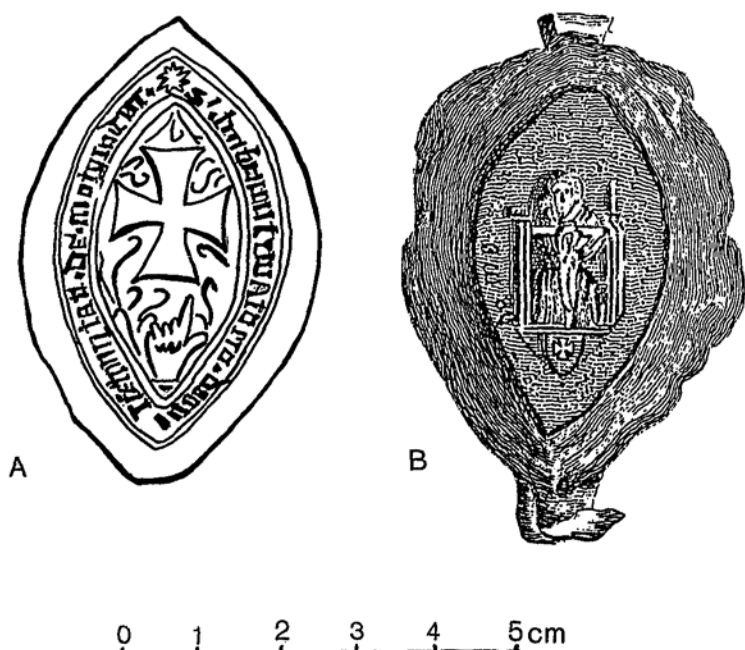


Fig. 13. Seals of the priory.

Seals of the Trinitarian Priory of Motynden.

A. Fifteenth-century seal of Motynden Priory.

Impression of the seal of the sub-prior of Motynden Priory. Original in Maidstone Museum.

B. Seal of the priory, as depicted in the first edition of the Hasted, *op. cit.*, 1786. The original seal is possibly late-medieval.

B. Base of a jug (E/5/92), with thumb-pressed decoration; the fabric is grey outside, orange red inside with a dark grey core. The sherd has been positively matched with examples from the excavated Tudor kiln at Hareplain, Biddenden.³⁵ The archive of ceramic thin sections, compiled by Dr A. Streeten, provided identical material. The kiln has been dated by archaeomagnetic techniques to a period c. 1500–1520. A similar vessel is illustrated in the published excavation.³⁶

³⁵ D.B. Kelly, 'An early Tudor kiln at Hareplain, Biddenden', *Arch. Cant.*, lxxxvii (1972), 159–76.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 164, Fig. 3, no. 23.

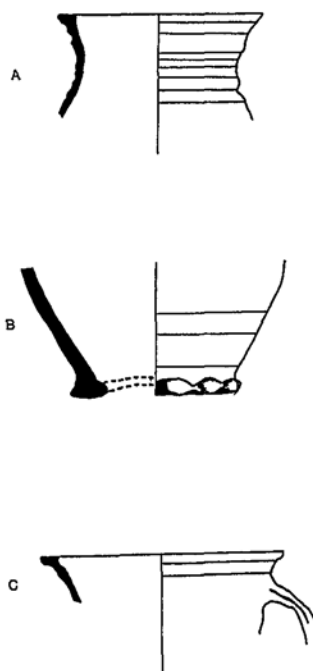


Fig. 14. Pottery. (Scale: $\frac{1}{4}$)

C. Jug (A/1/92), part of the neck and handle of a late thirteenth- to early fourteenth-century vessel. The material is similar to Fig. 14, A, and consists of a grey sandy fabric. From the early Medieval deposits of the cloister garth in Trench A.

The assemblage of later pottery did not provide sufficient material for illustrative purposes. However, some of the fabrics were very similar to Tyler Hill wares.

HUMAN SKELETAL MATERIAL

It was not necessary to excavate any intact burials, but, the area around and within the priory church produced a number of fragments of skeletal material. Among these were part of a lower mandible with a number of badly worn teeth remaining *in situ*. This was located in post-Dissolution demolition deposits in the area immediately west of the altar platform and must represent part of a disturbed burial.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am indebted to the late Mrs. J. Barclay-Deane who gave active encouragement to my investigations both within and around her home and garden, which stands upon the site of the priory buildings.

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