

MORE NOTES ON NEWARK

As the ruins are not open to the public, and I am no longer able to lead my guided heritage walks to the site, I hope the following will give you some idea of the layout of the surviving buildings, and go some way to helping you explore the site from the comfort of your own computer.

The details that follow on the layout of the buildings come from a report of an archaeological excavation carried out in 1928 by Captain C.M.H. Pearce for the Surrey Archaeological Society. The plans show the layout of buildings outlined, with the foundations (discovered in 1928) being hatched and the extant stonework cross hatched.



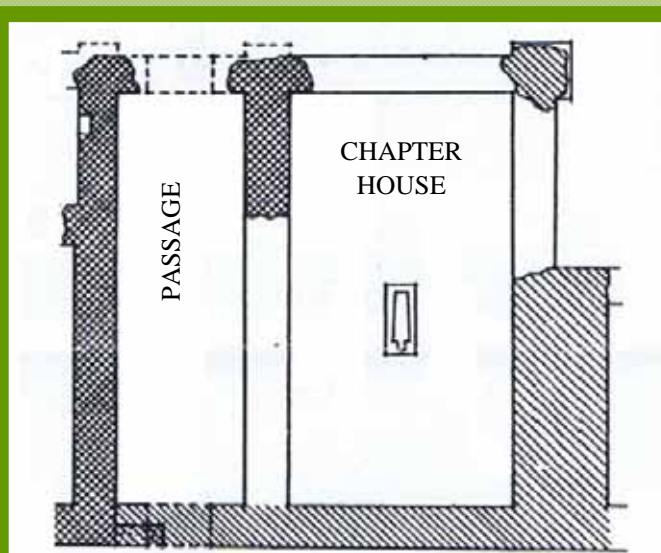
If you were able to walk across the fields from the gate the first 'room' you would come to now would be the Chapter House - a small lump of masonry surviving from its north-east corner. However from this we discover that it must have had a high vaulted ceiling and the excavation showed the room to be 40½ ft long by 22 ft wide.

It is not unusual to discover burials in the Chapter House. In early days it was often regarded as sufficiently sacred to be a burial place. One was discovered here at Newark, almost exactly in the middle of the room.

The North East Corner of the Chapter House wall (right), with the wall between the Passage and the South Transept (left)

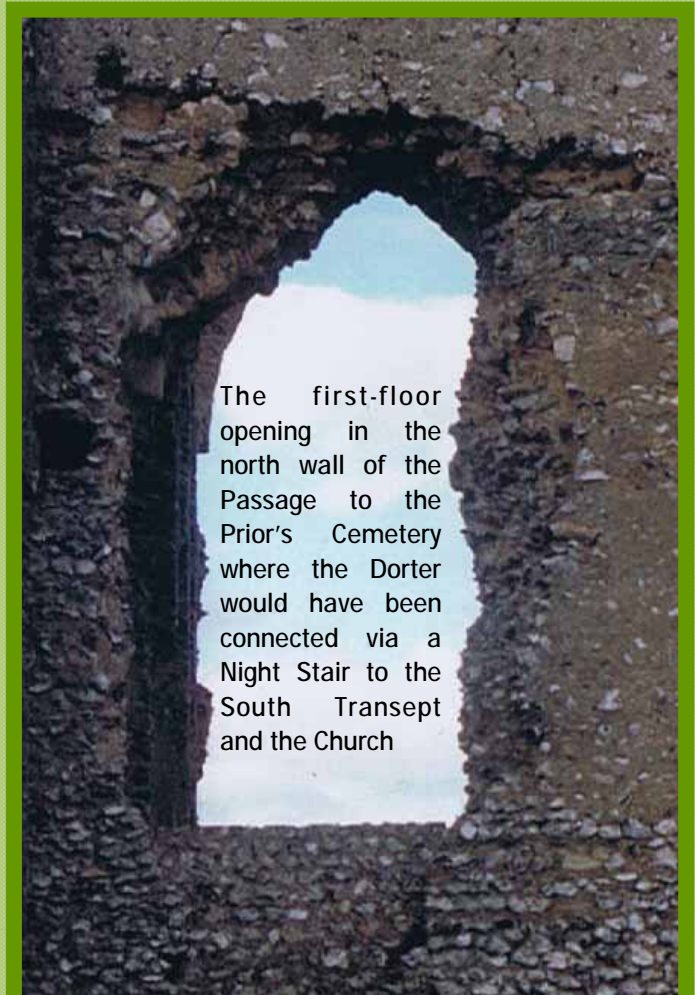


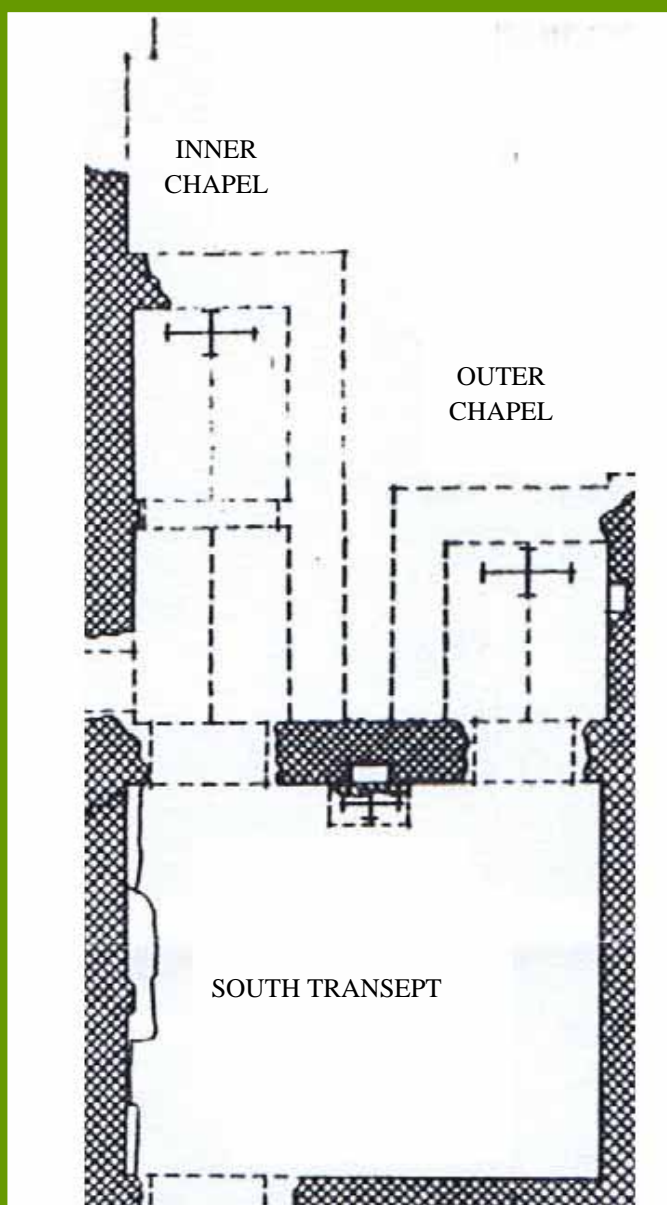
There was also another passage (at right-angles to the one below), which connected the Dorter (or monk's dormitory) via the Night Stair to the South Transept and so to the church.



The Chapter House was the most important of the eastern range of buildings - second in importance to the church itself. It was here that the monks would have assembled after the early morning Mass for a sort of 'business meeting' - a bible reading (a chapter), followed by lists of the daily and weekly holy dates.

To the north of the Chapter House was a passage, 12½ ft wide, which probably lead to the Priors Cemetery. Above both the passage and the Chapter House was a room with a vaulted ceiling. This was possibly the Treasury or Sacristy.

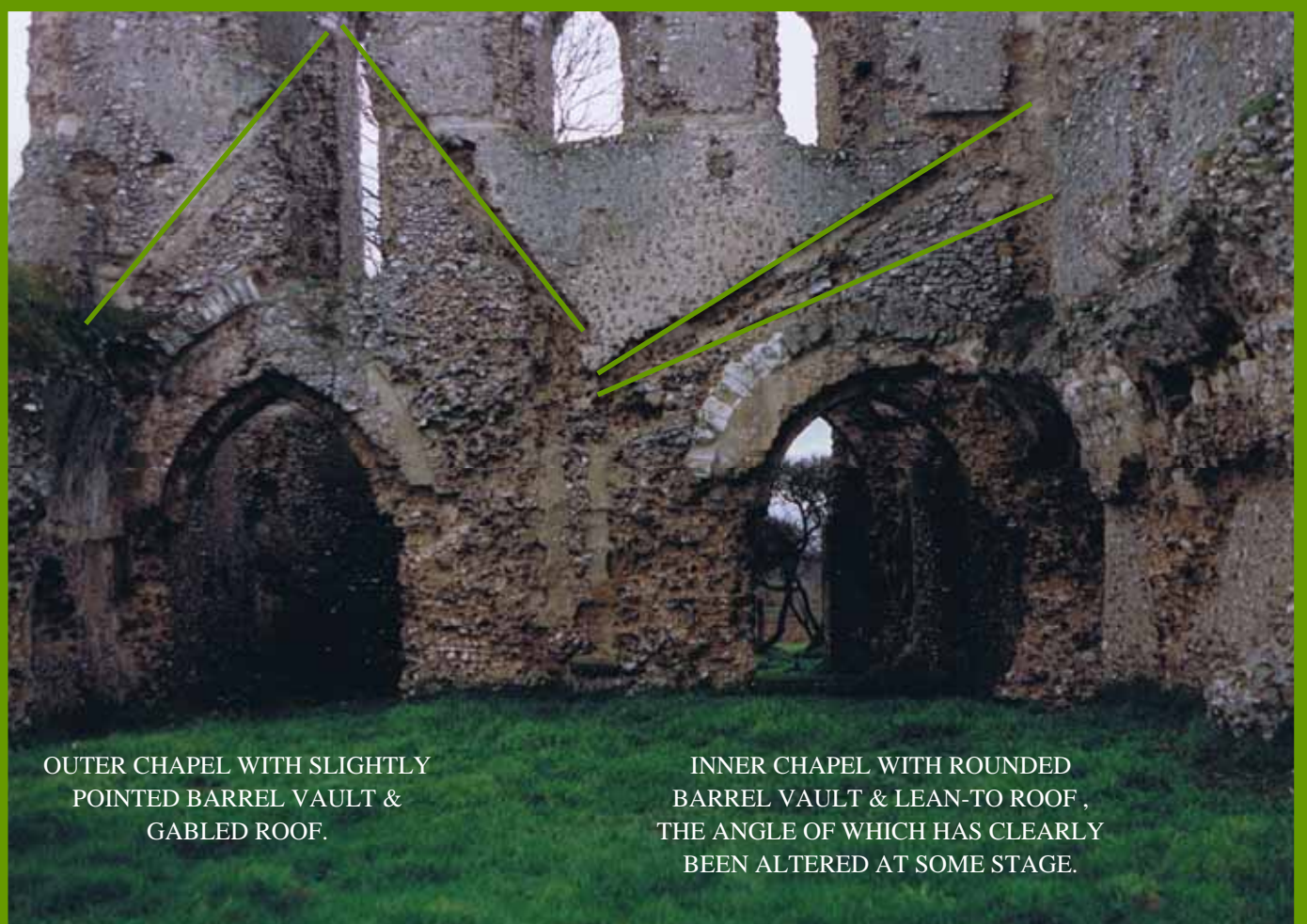
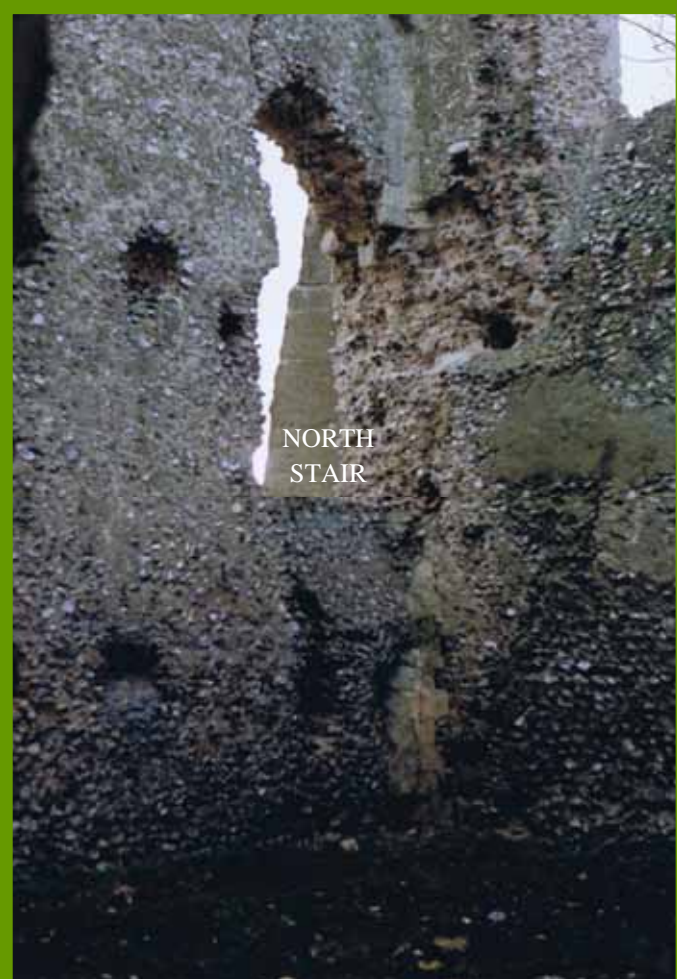




The South Transept is the only building left with all four walls surviving. It measures 30 ft by 25½ ft, with three doorways, one to the north west into the South Aisle, and two in the east wall to two chapels.

The Western end of the south wall contains (on the first floor), a large hole where the passage to the Night Stair was. The Night Stair was apparently accessed by means of a wooden stair - of which nothing now remains.

In the angles of the southern wall are two of the eight corbels that supported its wooden roof. There were also apparently three lancet windows in the east and west walls, with the loft above the first floor lit by a further lancet window.



OUTER CHAPEL WITH SLIGHTLY POINTED BARREL VAULT & GABLED ROOF.

INNER CHAPEL WITH ROUNDED BARREL VAULT & LEAN-TO ROOF, THE ANGLE OF WHICH HAS CLEARLY BEEN ALTERED AT SOME STAGE.



OUTER CHAPEL

Off the South Transept were two chapels, the outer one of which had a slightly pointed barrel-vaulted roof. Above this was a gabled roof that cut across the lower part of the lancet window of the South Transept.

The outer chapel was the smaller of the two chapels (just 12 ft by 11 ft), whilst the inner chapel was 27 ft by 10 ft. This has an almost semi-circular barrel-vault, which was covered by a lean-to roof. The pitch of this was clearly altered at some time (as can be seen on the outside of the Transept wall).

Pevsner, in his 'Buildings of England' concluded that there was 'something highly irregular about these chapels'. They were 'not of equal length and were separated by a very narrow passage'. He goes on to suggest that 'perhaps the outer chapels were slightly later additions'.

The two chapels on the south were almost exactly mirrored by two chapels attached to the North Transept. Here the outer chapel was 11 ft by 10 ft, whilst the larger inner chapel measured 26½ ft by 10 ft. Very little remains of these chapels, with the only evidence of the inner chapel appearing in the outside wall of the Presbytery. Just a few crumbled stones survive of the outer chapel.

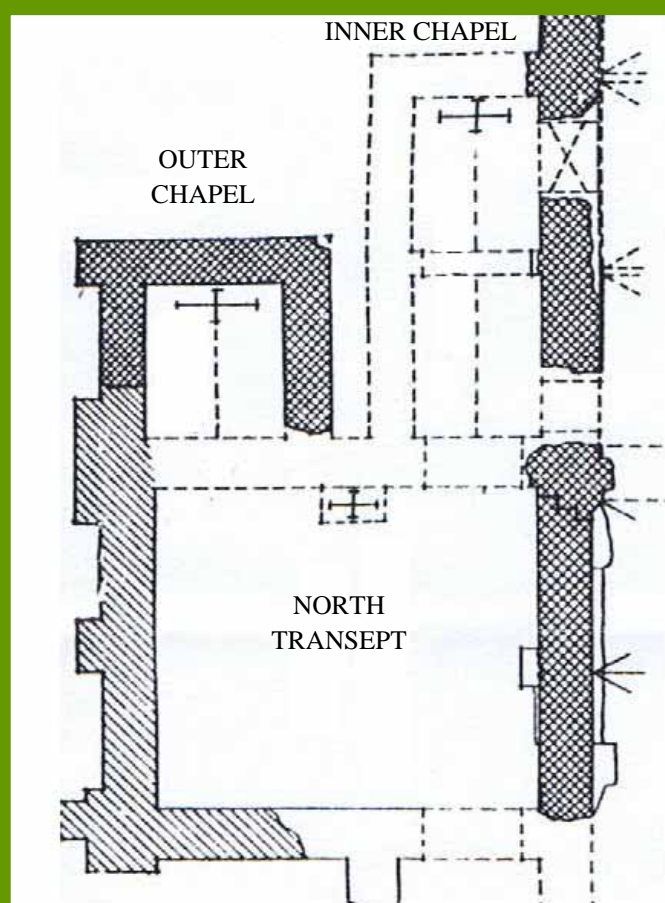


INNER CHAPEL



All that remains of the chapel attached to the North Transept

Evidence of the North Transept is likewise restricted, although the foundations of its north and west wall were discovered in the excavations. Evidence was also found of a wall running from the north-west corner for some 20 feet towards the river (possible part of the enclosure for the Canons cemetery).



It should be mentioned that the two inner chapels, as well as having access to the Transepts, also had a door each into the Presbytery. These were at the western end of the chapels and entered the Presbytery near where it joined the Choir. The second hole into the northern chapel from the Presbytery is not another door. It is thought that it was possibly the site of a tomb that has been robbed - leaving the ragged hole.

The Presbytery, which measures 42 ft by 25 ft, consisted of three bays, each with a single lancet window. Unfortunately the eastern end of the Presbytery has all but disappeared, so we may never know if the window in Ockham Church is really from Newark (as claimed) or not.

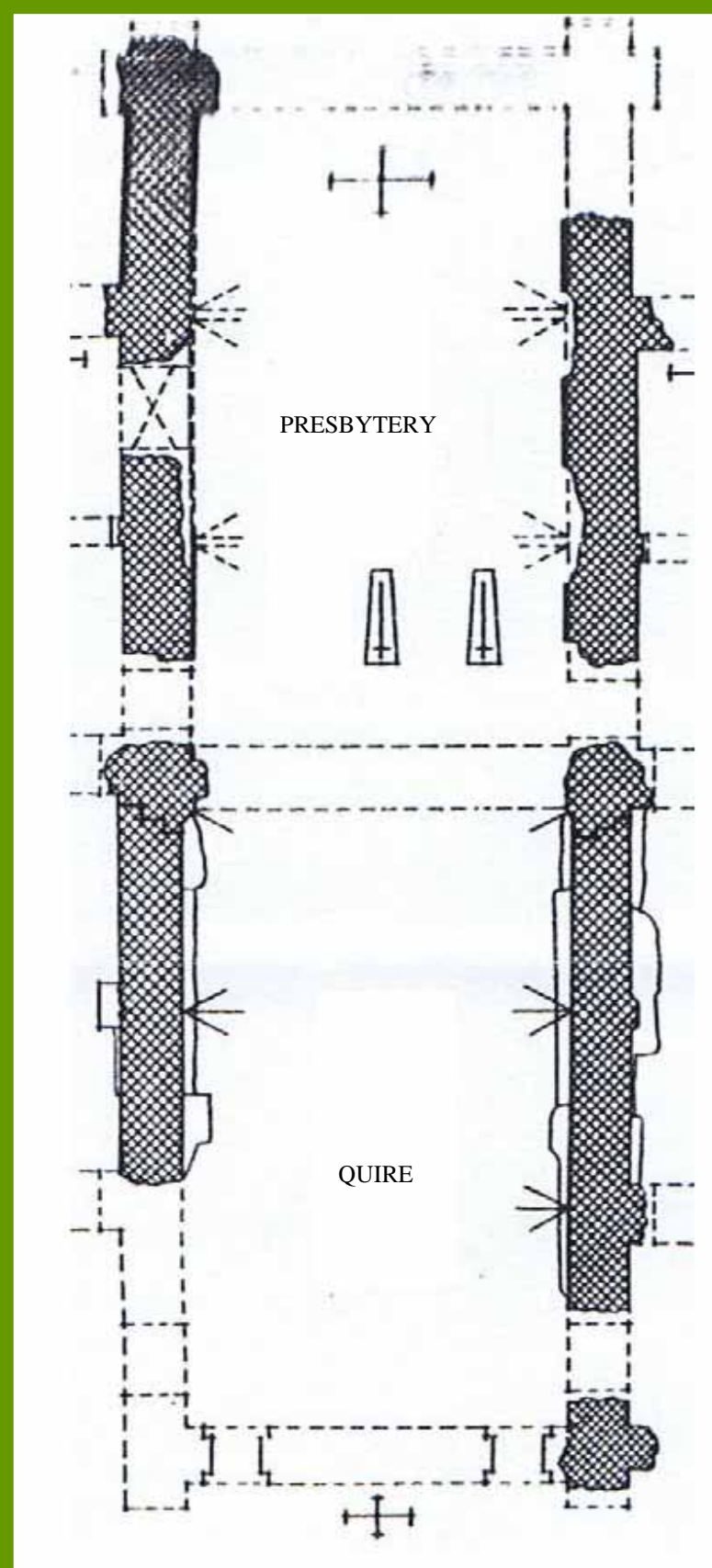
What we do know is that the Presbytery had a high vaulted ceiling, the caps of which can still be seen high up in the northern side of the east bay.

Two burials were discovered when the Presbytery was excavated, both near the western end not far from the door to the southern inner chapel.

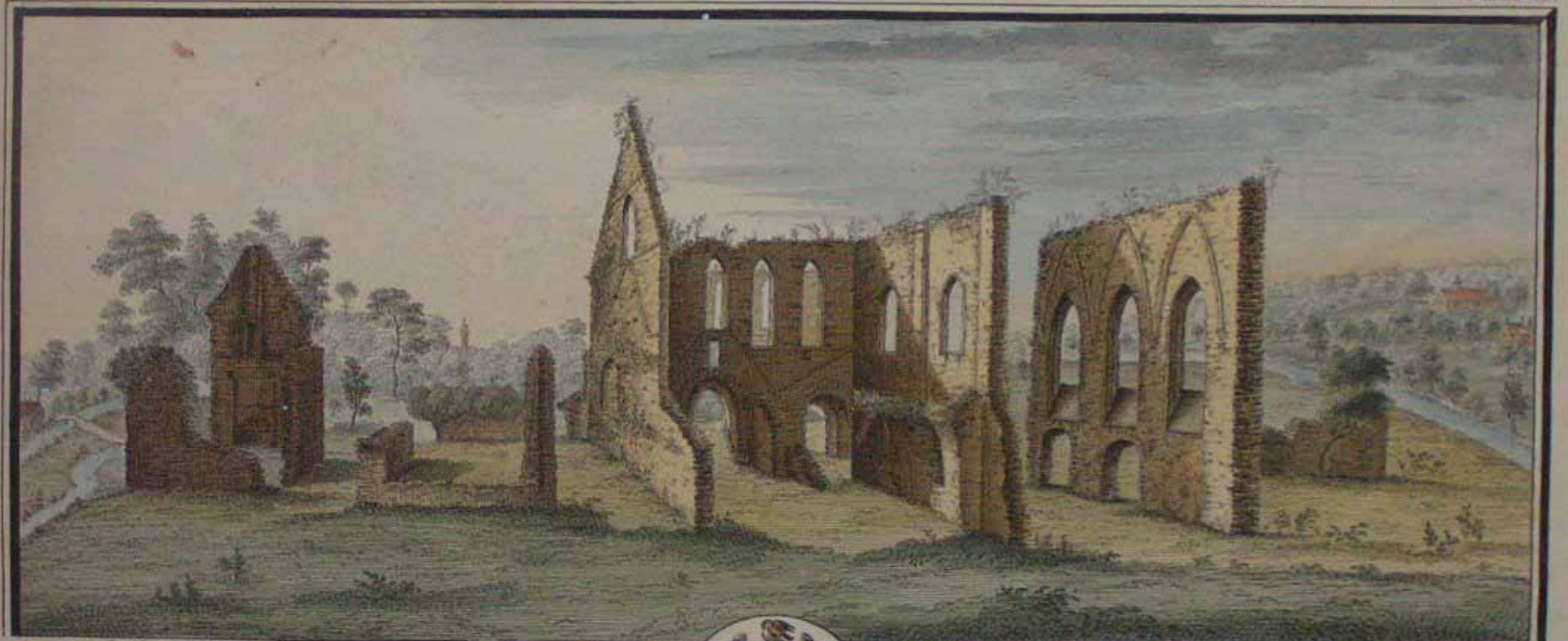
To the west of the Presbytery was the Choir. This too had a vaulted ceiling, with the corbels supporting it still in evidence above what would have been the stalls. Again, it consisted of three bays, but the two eastern bays were probably screened off from the western one to form a 'retro-choir'. A Pulpitum would have screened the Choir from the Nave, with in this case two doorways into the Nave.

Probably the most interesting aspect of the Choir is that the walls are not parallel. At its eastern end they are 25½ ft apart, whilst where it joins the Nave they measure 26 ft!

The Victoria County History suggests that the difference in alignment resulted from the Nave and Choir being the original early 12th century church. The rest of the buildings, dating from the early 13th century, were then built on a new access. However, the architectural and archaeological evidence suggests that all buildings are of the same date. The new alignment was probably caused by an alteration in the plans soon after construction began. Indeed, joints in both the south and north wall of the



THE SOUTH-EAST VIEW OF NEWARK-PRIORY, IN THE COUNTY OF SURRY.

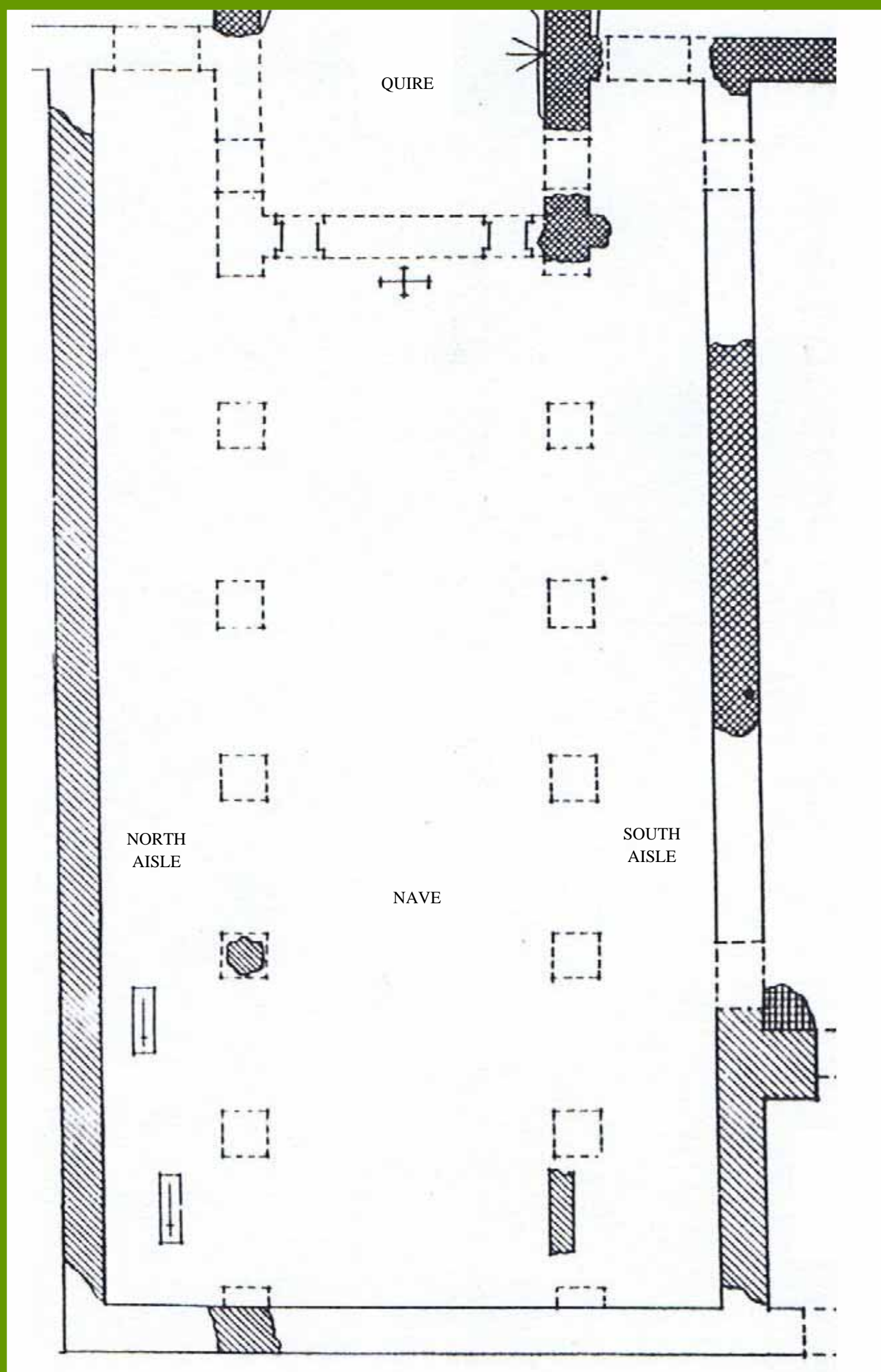


To the R^{ts} Hon^{ble} THOMAS, Lord Onslow
Lord Lieutenant of the County of Surry, &c.
This Prospect is humbly Inscribed by
his Lordships most Obedient Serv^t
Jas^s Math^s Beck.



THIS Priory is called on of Monasticon Recordet. It is situated on a hill, surrounded by a River
Wey a few Miles below Guildford. It was founded for Clauis in Canons by Arnold de Calver &
Beatrice his Wife with the Consent of H^{on} Mathew their Peer. It was dedicated to the Virgin
Mary & St. John of Canterbury. Their Reliquies were confirmed by R^{on} Hen^{ry} II & R^{on} Edward I. Much
Expence of last Prior brought it to Ruine. It had allowed him out of the Revenues for P^{er}
annuities for life. He was living in 1533 as were several others of this House who were per-
mitted for by Henry the 8th. It is now Part of a Estate of R^{on} Hen^{ry} 8th Duke of Gloucestre.

Late 18th century 'prospect' of the ruins, showing from left to right, the walls of the vault below the Dormer and the back of the gabled wall of the Frater; the Chapter House, with the still remaining wall between it and the passage to the monk's graveyard; followed by the walls of the South Transept (with the three lancet windows) and the remains of the Outer and Inner Chapels attached; the two windows on the south wall of the Presbytery and three windows on the north wall of the Presbytery can then be seen (with two openings on the ground floor); going into the fragmentary remains of the chapels off the North Transept.



Choir suggest that an arch was originally intended to open from the choir into the transepts. This plan was 'abandoned' by the time the wall had reached a height equal to the top of the screen.

The foundations of this 'arch' suggest that it was intended to carry a tower 26 feet square, but that this plan was changed when it was clear that the ground could not properly support it.

A separate 'tower' was later built to the west of the church shown on the excavation plan as the 'steeple'. This small, square, building (31 ft on the outside, 22 ft on the inside), had heavy buttressing indicating that it was probably a tall building housing heavy objects - undoubtedly the bells of the tower.

A quantity of stained glass was also found on

the south side of this 'tower' when the site was excavated in the 1920s.

Moving back to the church itself, there is little that now remains of the Nave. Part of the southern wall separating it from the Cloisters still survives, but none of the north or west wall can now be traced. However, a small fragment of masonry discovered in the excavation in what might be the west wall, suggests that it was probably 96 ft long and consisted of six bays each 12 ft wide. All the pillars of the Nave were removed except the foundations of one (as indicated on the plan).

Two burials were found in the Nave. One was a lead coffin containing the body of an elderly woman (Beatrice?), the other grave, consisting of Sussex Marble, contained three bodies - two facing west the other east - one on top of the



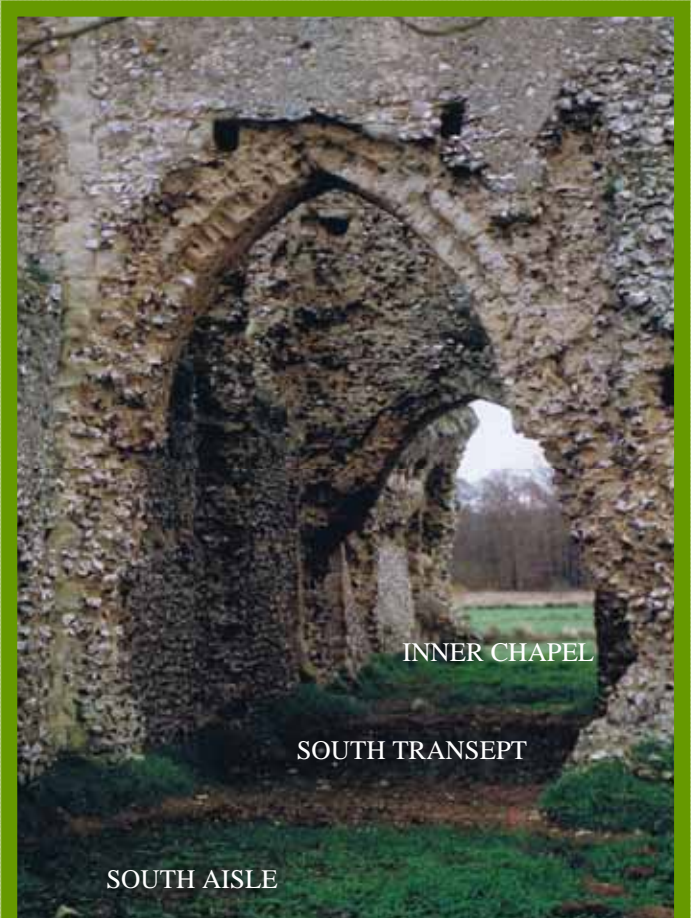
The lean-to roof of the South Aisle which can be clearly seen on these two photographs taken in the early 20th century, was presumably matched by a similar style roof over the North Aisle. In the foreground of both views can be seen the fragmentary remains of the north wall of part of the Cloister Walk.

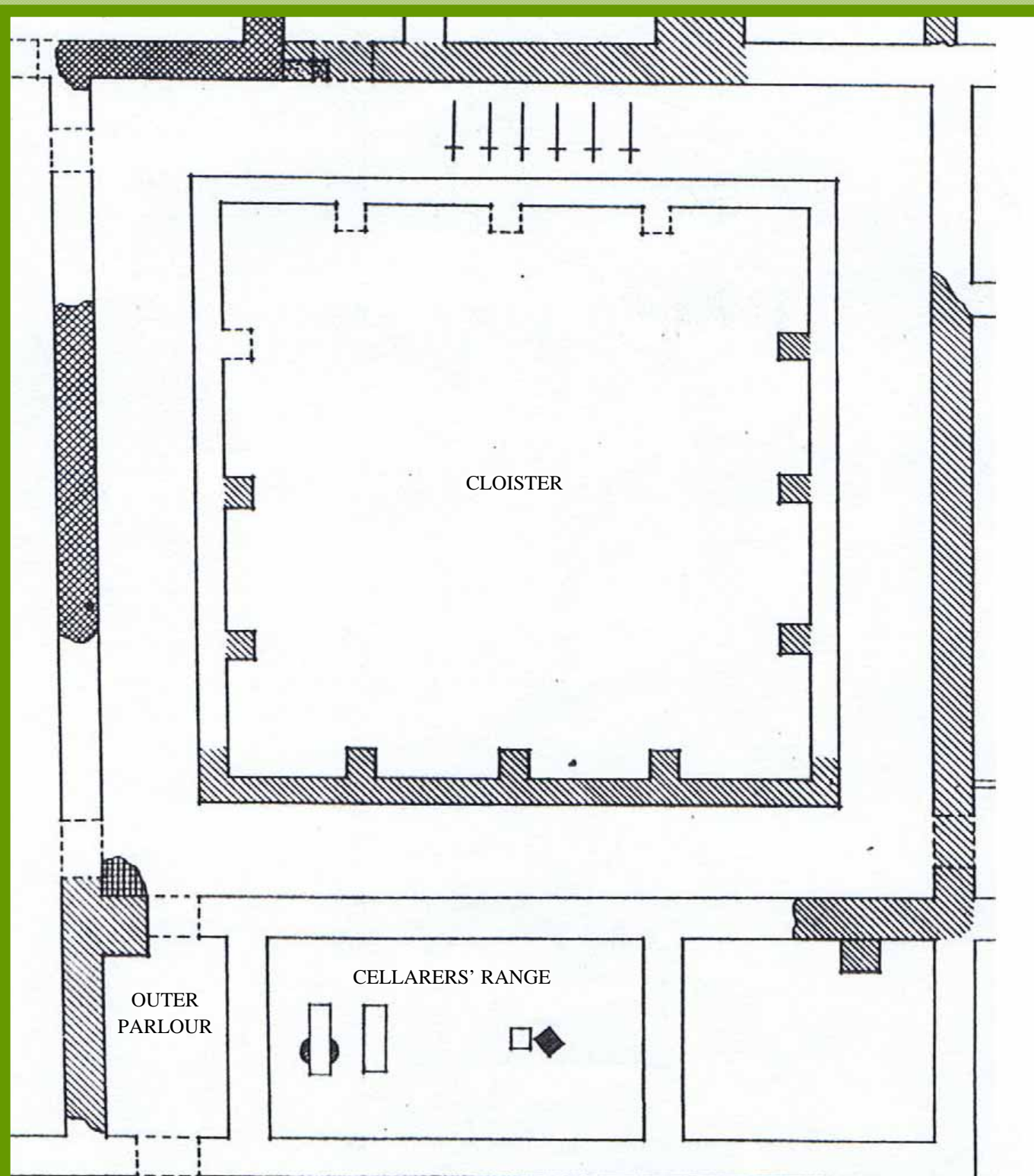
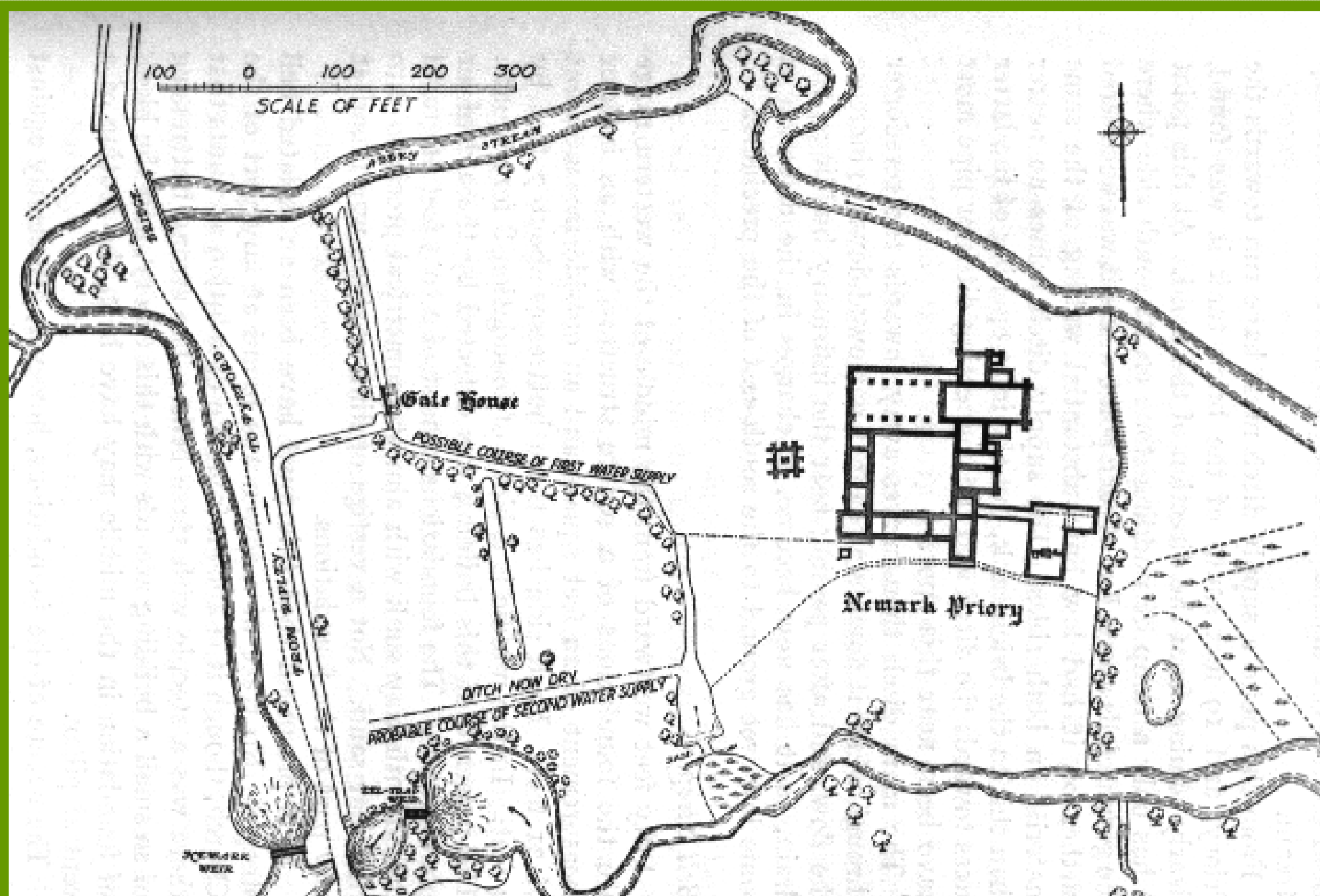
Below is the view looking through the door from the South Aisle into the South Transept and beyond into the Inner Chapel



other. Two seals were also found within these graves.

These were both in the northern aisle, which judging by the one remaining pillar and the wall of the Choir and Cloisters was 10 ft wide. The outside wall of the South Transept shows signs of the South Aisle being covered by a lean-to roof.





The Cloisters, like the Nave, have been extensively robbed, but from the excavation we know that the Cloisters could not have been exactly square (in compensation for the misaligned Choir and Nave). They were however roughly 86 ft by 86ft and contained a walk-way 10 ft wide. This was probably vaulted, although nothing remains to confirm this. We do know, however, that because of the lie of the land, the cloisters were cut into the slight hill on the north in order to create a level walk.

Six graves were found in the eastern walk-way of the Cloisters (next to the Chapter House), but none of these were within coffins.

All that remains of the cloisters today are a few stones in its north west corner, part of the north wall (next to the Nave), and the wall separating it from the South Transept.

As far as the 'above ground' remains are concerned that is all that survives of the site apart from part of the Gate-house. This can be found to the west of the Priory, near to the Pyrford-Ripley road. Here a wall of Flint and Reigate Stone chequer-work can be seen which the archaeologists concluded to be of 15th century design, measuring 36 ft by 16 ft. Almost directly opposite the gate (across the present road) was a ford that apparently linked Newark to the track to Woking Palace and Old Woking.

I should perhaps mention some of the other buildings found during the excavations of 1928. To the east of the Cloisters was the Cellarer's Range - the Priory's storeroom, with an outer parlor to the north.

The Frater (or Refractory) Range was to the south of the cloisters, where the monks would eat. At the western end of this there was probably a screen and beyond that the Kitchen.

In the north-west corner of the Kitchen there appeared to be an oven or the base of a cauldron with a similar area to the south west and stone paving between.

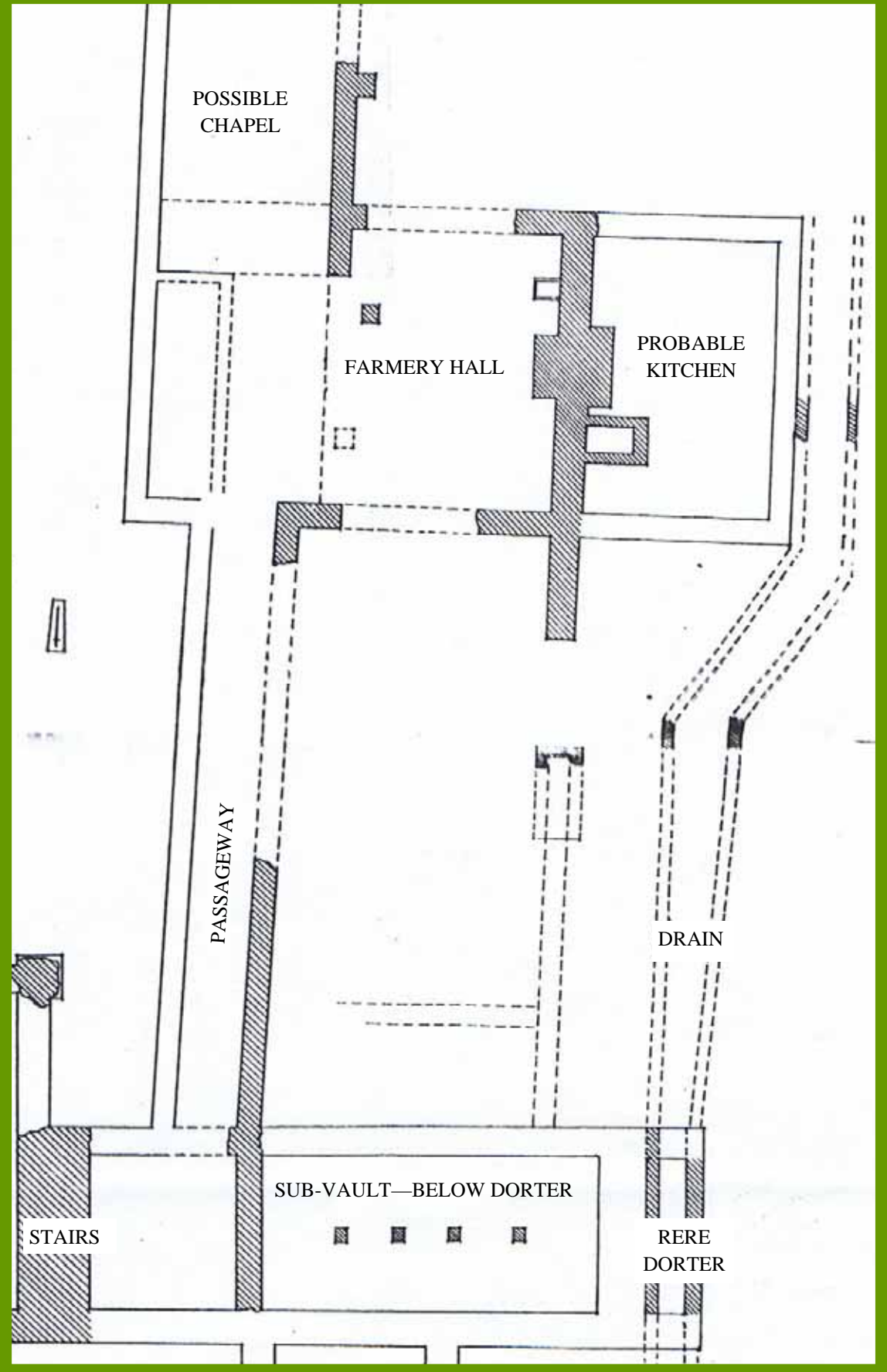
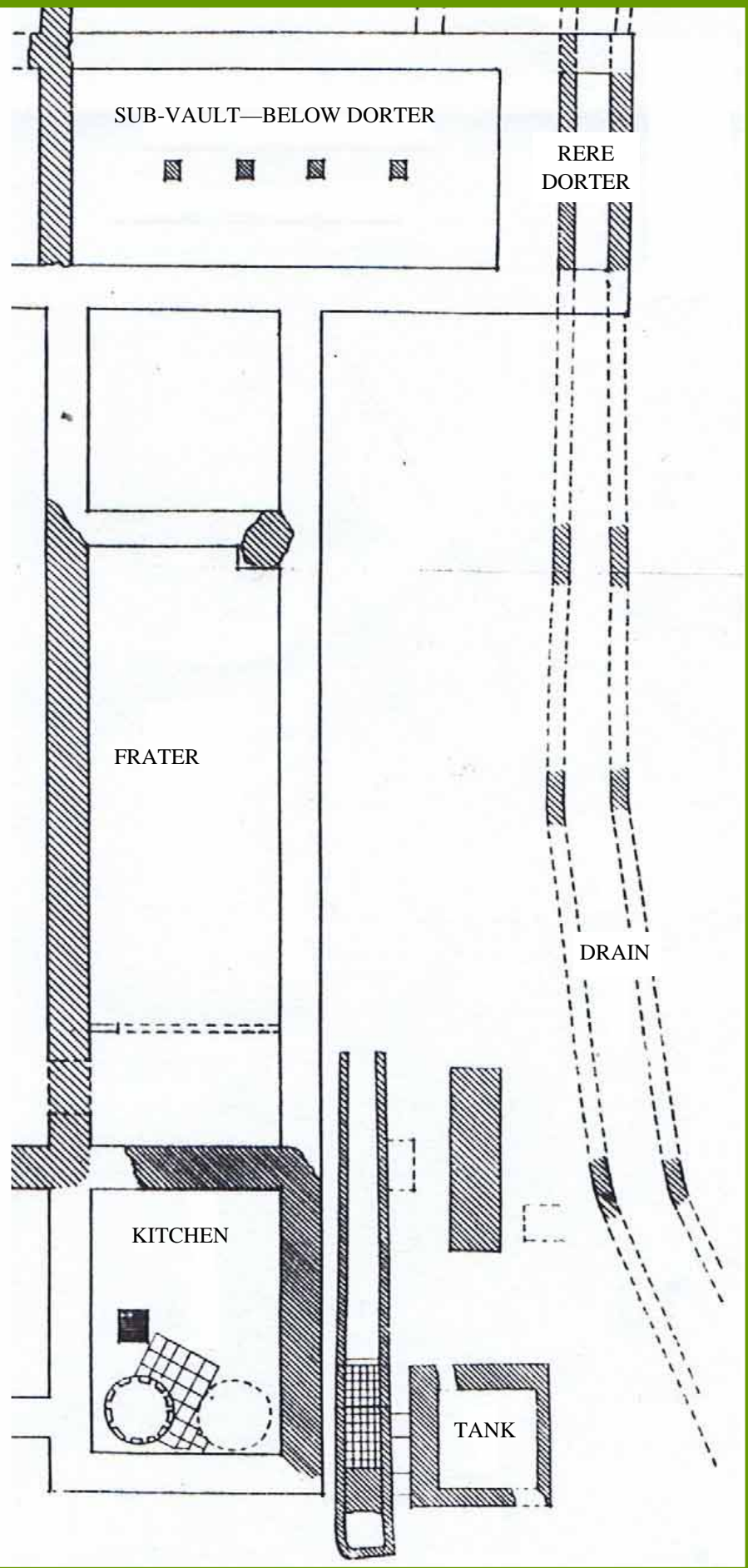
To the south of the Kitchen was a drain running from west to east across the site so that the water from the kitchen 'flushed' the Rere Dorter (latrine block) to the east. The ditch then continued eastward to serve the Kitchen of the Farmery!

The Rere Dorter was to the south of the Dorter (the Monks Dormitory) which evidently was supported above a sub-vault by four pillars.

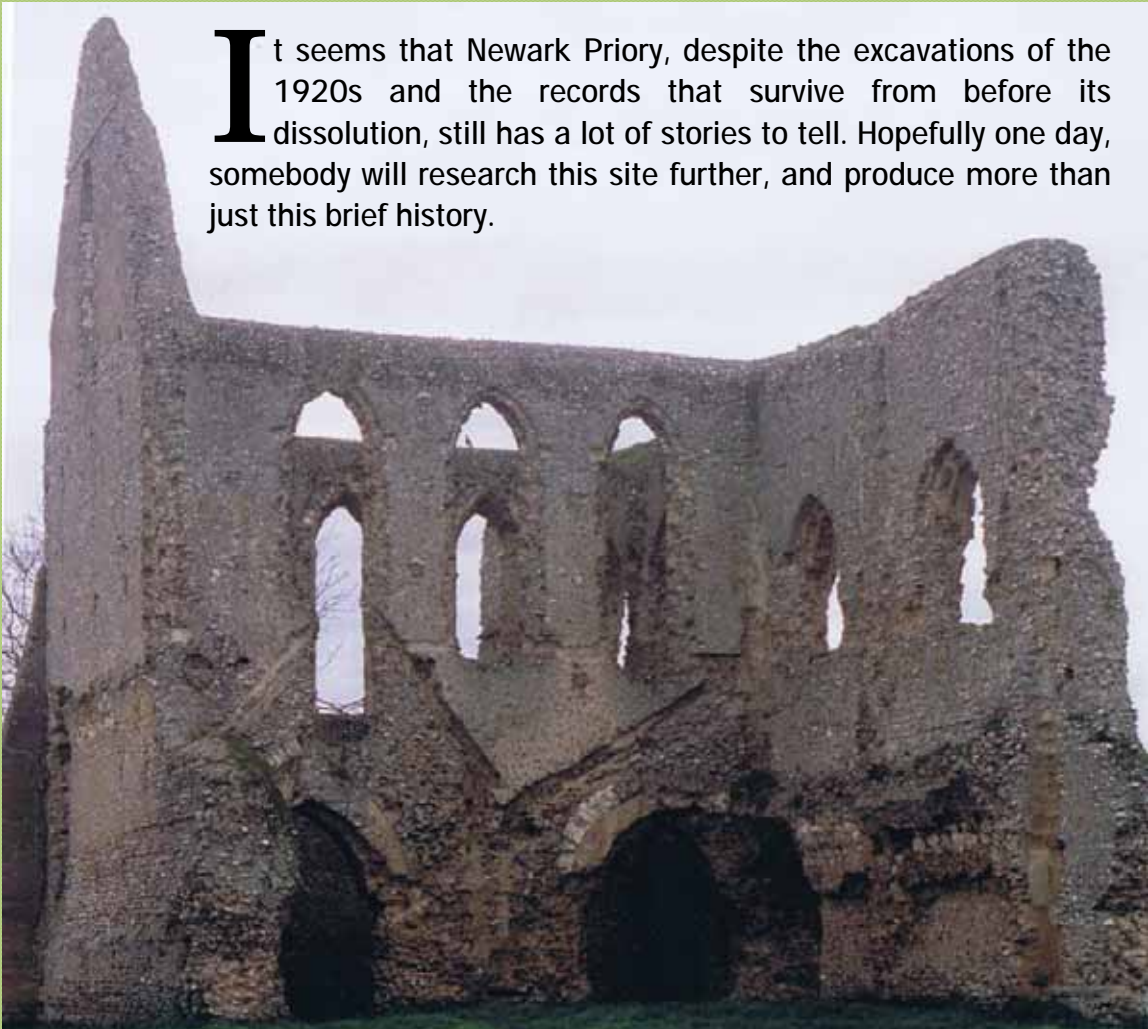
Far away to the east was the Farmery (or Infirmary Range) where the old or sick were looked after. The Farmery had its own Chapel and Kitchen - the kitchen being placed to the south of the Farmery Hall.

Of the finds from the excavation there were few (most probably having been destroyed, or robbed by earlier 'excavations').

Apart from the graves mentioned above, all that was found were a few metal objects - broken keys, book clasps, knives and spoons, as well as spurs, an adze head and part of a reaping



hood. Other metal objects included small amounts of lead piping and window lead, but the most abundant finds were the decorated tiles. Even these, however, were few and far between!



It seems that Newark Priory, despite the excavations of the 1920s and the records that survive from before its dissolution, still has a lot of stories to tell. Hopefully one day, somebody will research this site further, and produce more than just this brief history.