

## C O N T E N T S

### THE DOMINICAN FRIARY OF DUNSTABLE 1965 EXCAVATIONS.

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SITE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

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EXCAVATIONS ON THE SITE OF THE DOMINICAN FRIARY,  
DUNSTABLE 1965 - Grid Ref: Bods. TL 019217

The excavation was carried out by the Society as a result of past field work. During the digging of a storm drain trench through the friary field, members had observed a tiled oven and a substantial length of Totternhoe stone walling. In the spring of 1965 the owner of the field, Mr. J.B. Stevens, readily gave permission for the excavation and kindly afforded us every facility, including storage accommodation for our tools and a shed for recording purposes.

Our thanks are also due to Mr. P. Flory who allowed us access to the site through his property.

The excavations were made to the west of a dig carried out in 1924 by Mr. T.W. Bagshawe whose report came to light when research into the history of the Dominican Order was being undertaken by members of the Society. A comprehensive history of the Dunstable Order, written by Mr. A.R. Martin, was included in the Bagshawe report, and permission has been given to reproduce this history (see addendum page 24.)

The Excavation

The building area excavated (see plan) proved to be the kitchens and probably guest rooms of the original Friary.

During its history many structural alterations took place and we have been able to identify three building periods. Walls that are continuations of the building suggest that other periods of buildings exist.

A 75 foot long section was taken through a mound in the field to the north of the kitchen area. This proved to be formed by rubbish probably deposited after the Dissolution of the Monasteries. No structural remains of the Friary were found in this excavation, but a levelled area in the virgin chalk may have been the foundations of part of the building (see section).

### Kitchen Area - Period I

The original building had been timber framed and was probably erected when the Friars were building their church from local Totternhoe stone (clunch stone). It was upwards of 40 feet long and 16 feet wide.

The ground is slightly undulating chalk and this had been levelled leaving a 3 feet high chalk bank on the northern side. Slots had been cut into the chalk platform to carry sleeper beams for the structure and the base of a flint wall on the top of the chalk bank may have connected this building with the remainder of the Friary. This area will be excavated further during 1966.

This long, timber framed building apparently had earth floors and the finding of a clay oven or fireplace suggests that it was the kitchen area on the original building plan.

The oven was constructed by making a shallow saucer-shaped depression into the natural chalk in the centre of the room. This was lined with clay approximately 3 inches thick. It may have been domed with clay but no evidence of this survived later modifications which covered the floor with red tiles set in a light spread of cement. When found this oven still contained wood ash.

Dating evidence for the construction of this timber framed building was completely destroyed by Period II, but a few fragments of green/yellow glazed pottery in the foundation of the walls of the second building suggest a 13th century date, making it contemporary with the foundation of the Friary in 1259 A.D.

### Period II

This building was constructed with Totternhoe stone and flint and was much larger than the Period I house being upwards of 47 feet long and 35 feet wide, divided by stone walls into four main rooms.

The exterior eastern wall was made from well dressed blocks of Totternhoe stone, the western wall of Totternhoe stone with the exterior faced with knapped flints. All of the walls had a rubble core, much of it made up from discarded carved Totternhoe stone. Some of this stone bore masons' scribe marks showing how the stone was to be shaped. When the carving had split wrongly or was broken during the work, it was cast aside and used for this secondary purpose. This indicates that the building and decoration of the church took place before the enlargement of the kitchen areas.

The entrance was on the north side via a hall paved with red tiles which extended over the outer wall of Room 1. No steps survived, but a short length of support wall suggests a stairwell. These stairs may have also given access to an upper storey which would probably have been timber framed.

The eastern exterior wall was built nearly 3 feet thick apparently to support the building over earlier pits which included a Roman ditch nearly 7 feet deep.

The floors of Rooms 1 and 2 were covered with a spread of lime mortar and in Room 2 a few red tiles survived in position. Rooms 3 and 4 apparently had earth floors. In the centre of Room 3 there was a well defined area of burning suggesting an open brazier. Room 4 was almost entirely devoted to a stone tank and large oven. The walls of the tank were made with Totternhoe stone with wide base blocks carrying neatly chamfered edges. The floor of the tank was tiled, one red tile remaining in position. The tank was 2 feet wide and 5 feet long and was probably used for mixing dough for bread making.

Adjacent to the tank was a large oven. This oven had walls of Totternhoe stone with the base blocks chamfered in the same way as those in the tank. The floor was constructed with tiles set on edge. These were very much worn by burning.

The tiles in the centre of the oven were almost burned away as were two other areas leading to the centre of the oven. This seems to suggest that the oven had two entrances, but neither of them were actually found. One apparently lies beneath an oven of Period III and the other was destroyed by the modern storm water trench that cuts through the building on this side.

Two other ovens were found that belong to this period and both were built outside of the walls of the kitchen building and both were built underground.

Oven 1 (see section drawing) was on the south side of the building and had been built in a pit excavated 4 feet 6 inches deep into the natural chalk. The floor of the oven was red tile set on edge and the sides and top were an arch of tiles on edge reinforced by a double arch of Totternhoe stone. The oven was arched over a length of 2 feet 6 inches and was nearly 2 feet 6 inches wide. Beyond the arch the oven widened to 5 feet and was 4 feet in total depth.

The pit containing the oven was lined with large blocks of Totternhoe stone that carried rooms above ground. These walls were

narrower than those of the main building which suggests that this was an adjunct to the main structure.

The steps leading down to the oven lie beneath the private gardens that border the field and therefore are not available for excavation.

Oven 2 was of similar construction and sited on the western side of the building also as an adjunct or offshoot. The steps to this oven were excavated (see section) and although they had been robbed by subsequent builders sufficient remained to show that the construction was of Totternhoe stone and red tile. The floor of this oven pit was covered by a thick layer of ash.

The sides of the pit had been lined with dressed Totternhoe stone backed by flint and stone rubble. The stone had been completely robbed but the mortar marks survived on the chalk floor. The oven structure lies beneath a spoil heap and has not yet been excavated.

Another oven or hearth constructed with tile on edge was excavated on the southern side of the building backing on to the wall of underground Oven 1. This undoubtedly belongs to Period II and the area awaits excavation in 1966.

### Period III

This was a building alteration that took place during the period that the monastic buildings were in use. An exact date cannot be given as dateable potsherds were not found, but it probably took place during the fifteenth century when chimneys were introduced.

Practically all of the eastern wall was removed to provide a fireplace and chimney breast to Room 3. The break in the walls was very distinct and the well dressed masonry of Period II was replaced by very inferior workmanship. The wall at this period was thickened to carry the heavy chimney and also to partially incorporate a new oven built into it in Room 4.

The fireplace of Room 3 was paved with Totternhoe stone slabs some 4 inches thick. These became very badly burnt by subsequent fires. The back of the fireplace was made with tiles set on edge to the fire to withstand the heat. This room was also paved with flagstones of Totternhoe stone, one of which remained in position surviving the final destruction of the building.

Room 4 was also completely re-built during these modifications. The large oven constructed during Period II was in serious

decay, the tile flooring being almost burnt away. This and the tank were levelled and covered by approximately 1 foot of rubble covered by a layer of lime mortar.

On to this now levelled floor were built two beehive shaped ovens constructed with brick and tile. The oven entrances were built of Totternhoe stone with the leading edges neatly chamfered off. One of the ovens was built into the east wall and the threshold to Room 3 was also partially let into this outer wall.

The two ovens were in use for a considerable period of time and at least three times in their life the area of floor at the entrances which became blackened by the charcoal rake-out had been replaced by a new flooring made by spreading a layer of mortar over the old surface (see section).

Period IV represents the final destruction of the building which was pulled down and levelled to the height of the bank on the northern side. This left walls still standing in places up to three feet high. In the mortar and building rubble fill of the rooms the latest pottery was stone glazed Rhenish ware dateable to about 1600 A.D.

## CONCLUSIONS

The Dominicans established their monastery in Dunstable in 1259 A.D. and apparently initially built themselves timber framed living quarters and then concentrated on building the church with the local stone that was mined at Totternhoe.

When the church and ecclesiastical buildings were finished in stone then more substantial living quarters and guest rooms were constructed. This is Period II in our chronology of the site. The construction of the beehive ovens of Period III and the fireplace probably took place during the fifteenth century. These later ovens were in use for a considerable time judging by the make-up of the floor in Room 4. Other periods exist and it will be seen on the plan that on the south side there are two walls running parallel with one another, and this area will be excavated during 1966.

## Other Excavations on the Site

A 75 feet long section was taken through a mound in the field which proved to be domestic refuse and building rubble. Within this cut was found a small double ditch which has not been dated and

a levelled area of chalk which may have had some connection with the original Friary building. Further excavation will take place in these areas in 1966. The cut produced a roman ditch almost 7 feet deep and this was traced in three other areas of the field and its line appears to be across the site from north to south. In the rubble of the mound were found many iron and bone objects, together with abbey tokens and a gold swan brooch. Various cuts were taken on the north of the kitchen entrance, and the basis of walls have been found together with masses of early stained glass (see drawing). This area also produced the only coin which is a small silver coin of Henry VI.

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### The Finds

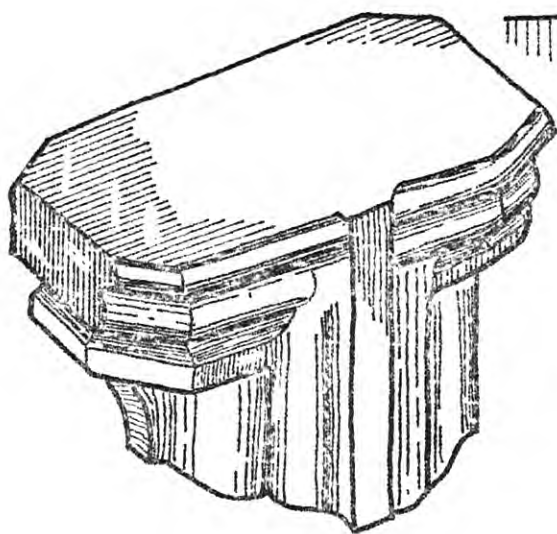
#### (1) MASONRY by J. Bailey

Several samples of carved stone were found built into walls as rubble fill, having been presumably taken from the previous earlier period building. Other was scattered around where it is assumed it fell during the destruction of the later building, the material generally used in walling being local Totternhoe stone supplemented with rubble and flint fill. Representative items and mouldings have been illustrated on page 9  $\frac{1}{4}$  full size. All of these are undamaged by weather, the toothed chisel tooling marks still remaining clearly defined on the finished surfaces. The masons' setting out scribe marks are easily recognisable where they have etched deeply into the soft stone. Identification marks in the form of an x are visible on items 1 and 5.

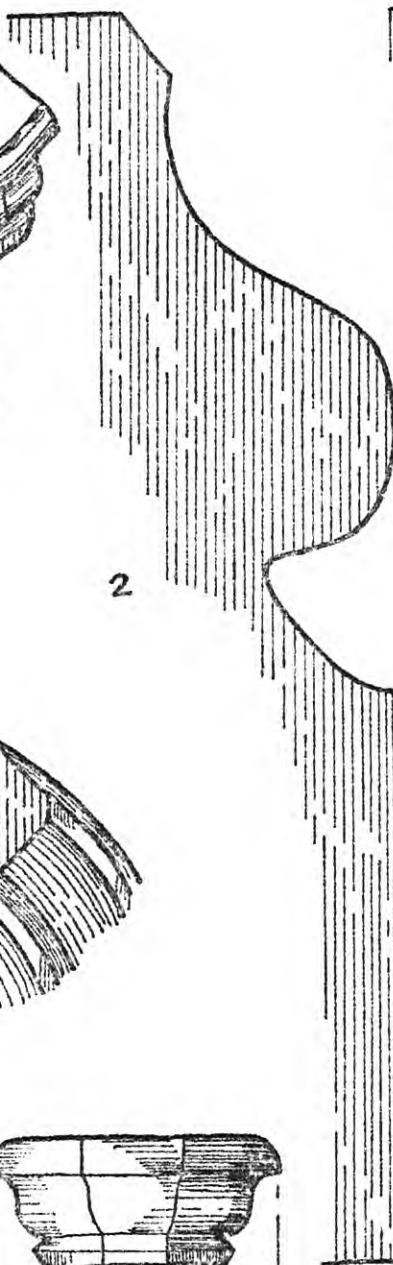
Capitals 1 and 6 are of common design. The moulding carved on each is illustrated full size in (3). This takes the form of a scroll moulded upper edge over an ogee roll. A deep shadow effect is created by a chamfered fillet under the roll. In both cases the masonry has been broken just above the astragal which seems to have been in the form of a scroll.

Capital 1 is unfinished at the rear and it is possible that it was to have been positioned against a wall as a support for arch springing. Capital 6 has been broken away at the back and it is not possible to see how it was associated with the structure.

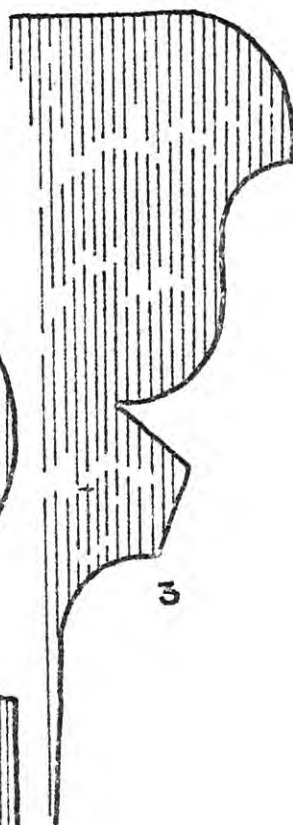
The shaft of capital 1 is shown in plan (7). This takes the form of four pear shaped lobes. Several portions of plain shaft of this section were found, and it would appear that these were complementary with the capital. In addition to this the shaft of capital 6 is identical in section to the smaller lobe of this main shaft form (see (6) on plan). Mr. T.W. Bagshawe found similar



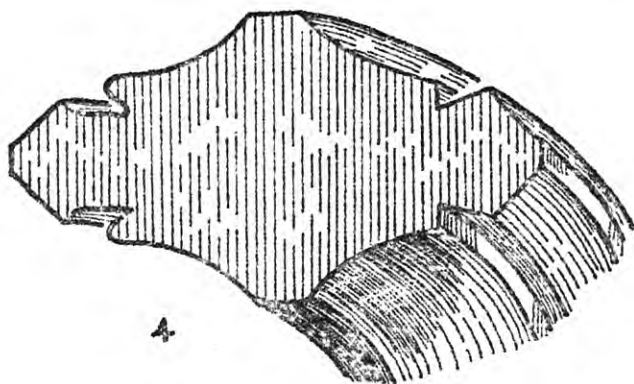
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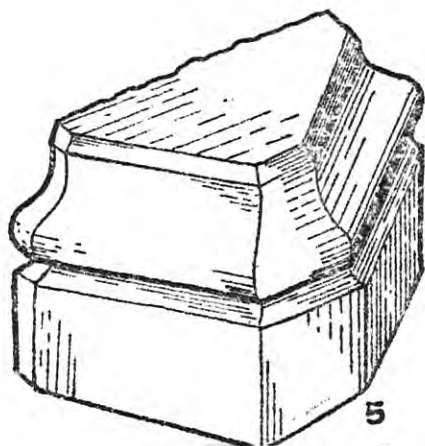


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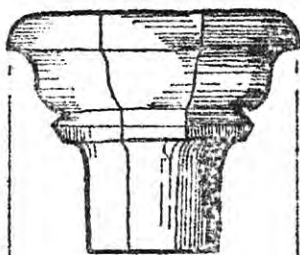


4

DUNSTABLE  
FRIARY 1965.



5



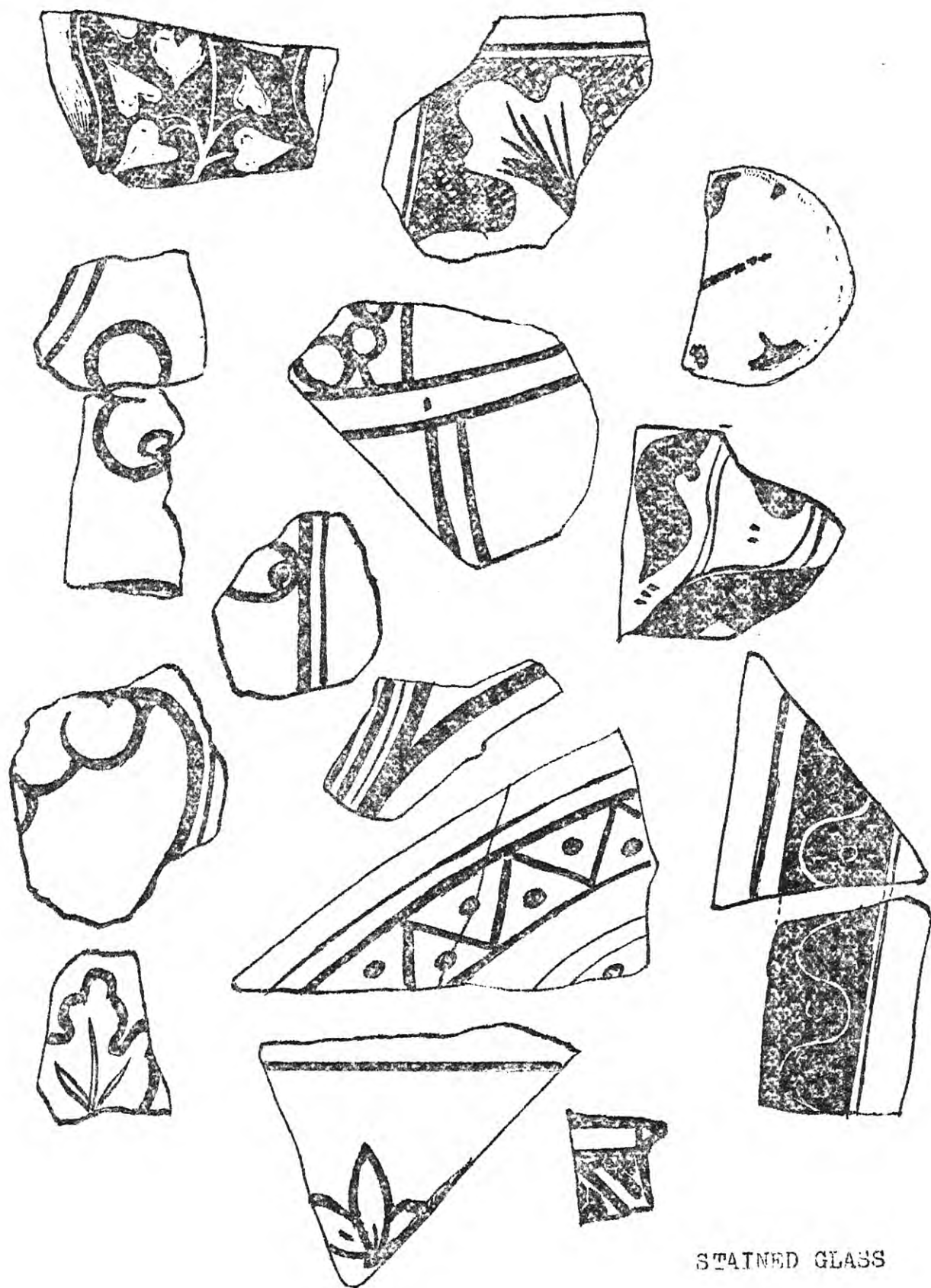
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7

JMB.





STAINED GLASS

portions of lobed shaft during his excavations of another area of the site.

The portion of arch (4) is probably from an interior screen or cloister arcade. Flakes of white paint are visible on the intrados. Glazing grooves are absent and so it seems that it could not be a portion of window tracery.

Item 5 could be part of a four or five member base and would probably have been surmounted by an octagonal plinth. The moulding is fifteenth or late fourteenth century in character and was possibly supporting a circular shaft. This moulding has a chamfered edge over an ogee roll which is undercut (illustrated full size (2)).

Pieces of Purbeck marble shaft of approximately  $2\frac{1}{2}$ " diameter were found. These would be from a tomb, wall niche or screen. The use of marble for pier shafts declined after c. 1300 because it was found that its polish did not last, its surface being liable to frost damage. Marble, however, continued to be used for small tomb shafts.

## (2) THE GLASS by Richard K. Hagen

### Part (i) A Brief History of Medieval Glass Manufacture in England

In 1226, Lawrence Vitrearius (Lawrence the window-glass maker), settled at Dyers Cross, near Chiddingfold, a small village to the south of Guildford, Surrey. He came from Lorraine where the glass industry was already well established, and is thought to have introduced the art of stained glass window manufacture to England.

There was probably a glass industry already at Chiddingfold as it is so far off the beaten track that there must have been a reason for the Lorrainers to have been drawn to the spot. Raw materials were abundant (sand from the Weald, potash from burnt timber, etc.) and the glass industry flourished.

Lawrence made the stained windows for Westminster Abbey and so successful was he and his followers that in 1300 a royal charter was granted to the glassmakers of Chiddingfold, then led by William, the son of Lawrence Vitrearius.

Secondary to the manufacture of window glass was the manufacture of small vessels such as phials, urinals, medical and distilling vessels. These are, however, seldom found in an identifiable condition - never complete, the glass having suffered much from decay.

Chiddingfold became the focal point for the settlement of continental glassmakers during the next two centuries - glassmaking was a highly specialised industry and worked best from one centre.

Transportation of glass vessels was difficult as they had to be carried by packhorse to London and thence to the consumer. Strangely, glasshouses were not moved to London until the Carré family appear on the scene in the sixteenth century. At this time the production of glass vessels in the Weald reached its peak.

In 1575 a Dutch immigrant of Venetian birth, Verzelini, introduced the manufacture of clear soda glass or "Venice Glass". He was granted a charter by Elizabeth I to be the sole manufacturer of this glass in England for 21 years.

The glass made at Chiddingfold was all "soda-lime" glass; lead crystal was not made until the seventeenth century in England, the manufacturing technique being lost after Roman times.

One point worthy of note is that the Wealden glass contained a high proportion of iron salts derived from the ferruginous sand which was used in its manufacture.

#### Part (ii) The Glass from the Friary Site

The glass was all soda-lime glass made from sand (silica) with potash and soda, plus lime for a flux. Glass from the site contains a quantity of ferrous and ferric salts which impart a blue or green tone to the glass - a fact which points to the possibility of it being of Wealden origin.

Colours were introduced as stains in the metal of the glass by the addition of metallic oxides to the molten glass. Those found on the site were as follows:-

Dark Greens & Reds	Made by adding copper salts
Pale Greens & Browns	" " " iron salts
Blues	" " " iron or cobalt salts

The colours occurred in the following proportions:-

	%
Clear & Blue Glass	78
Green Glass	15
Red Glass	$3\frac{1}{2}$
Brown Glass	$3\frac{1}{2}$
	<hr/> 100

This is, of course, only approximate, and odd fragments of other colours may have been overlooked.

Decoration takes the form of parallel lines and circles - geometric designs were used as well as pictorial designs, although only geometric decoration has been identified in the glass from the Friary. Decoration was carried out by enamelling - powdered glass and a pigment were mixed in gum-arabic and applied to the glass as a paint. This was then fired at a fairly low temperature (say, 700° - 750°F.) to fuse the paint to the glass sheet, producing dark outlines.

The total number of fragments of window glass was 1,245 and of these 320 bore clear traces of decoration.

The glass would appear to be of fourteenth or fifteenth century date.

#### Vessel Glass

A fairly large quantity of vessel glass was found, mostly in the upper layers of the excavation. This is all of comparatively modern date, except ten pieces described here which were found lower down in the excavations.

- a) Two fragments of glass of the same age as the window glass. One of these was probably from a small bottle or drinking vessel and the other is the base of a phial or conical lamp. The metal is identical with that of the window glass.
- b) Two fragments, later than the above, probably sixteenth or seventeenth century. Clear glass with engraved decoration, possibly Venice Glass. Both fragments appear to be from the same vessel.
- c) Three fragments of pale green glass including a shoulder and a base fragment probably from the same vessel. The metal is coarser than that of the above and has decayed more. It may be of the same date or perhaps a century or so earlier (fifteenth century.)
- d) One small base, one and a half inches in diameter. From a small vessel, probably a drinking vessel. Greenish metal. From the context in which it was found it may be of fifteenth or sixteenth century date.

- e) One fragment, roughly cylindrical in shape; solid brown glass. Purpose unknown, but found in an early context.
- f) One fragment of glass of greenish hue from the side of a tumbler-shaped vessel. It is engraved with parallel lines and a ground line running round the vessel. Of indeterminate date.

### THE TILES

Many fragments of glazed and patterned tiles were found in the rubble filling of the building and in the waste mound of Cut 1. None of the tiles were found in their original position and they had probably been moved when the ecclesiastical buildings had been destroyed.

All of the tiles showed considerable wear and all were of the 'inlaid' variety. Early tiles tended to have the decoration impressed into the clay by a wooden stamp. The impression was then filled with pipe clay and the tile glazed. On later examples the pattern was made by smearing the wooden stamp with clay and impressing and filling in one operation. This method gave a printed effect. All of the patterned tiles found on the site had the deep impression of the early type.

Two sizes of tiles were found, one 4.2 inches square and the other 4.4 inches square. They were also of two thicknesses, 0.8 inches and 0.7 inches. Many different patterns were used, some of which are illustrated, viz.,

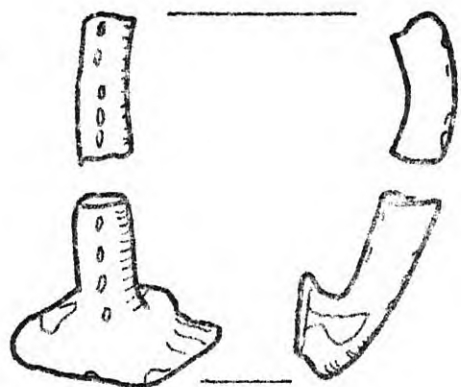
Pattern No.	
----------------	--

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 | This carried an inscription and is patterned in red, pink and green |
| 2 | White inlay on red tile   |
| 3 | Yellow pattern on brown tile  |
| 4 | Pink on red tile  |
| 5 | Yellow and brown  |
| 6 | Yellow on brown   |

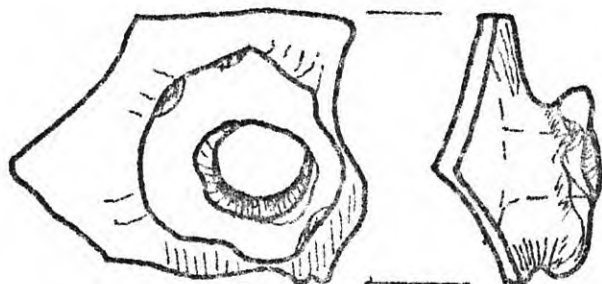
### THE POTTERY

#### a) Medieval

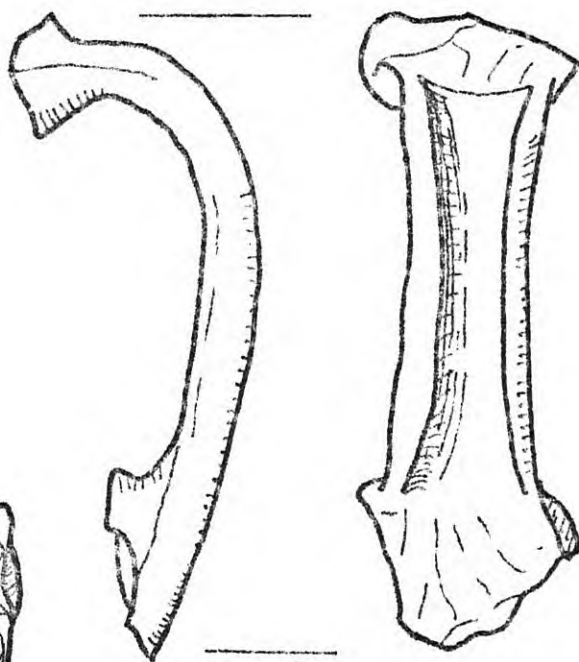
A large quantity of small pot sherds were found, the majority



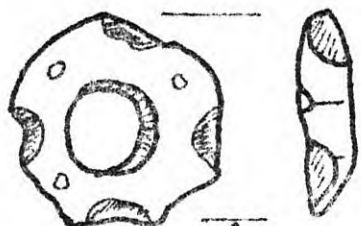
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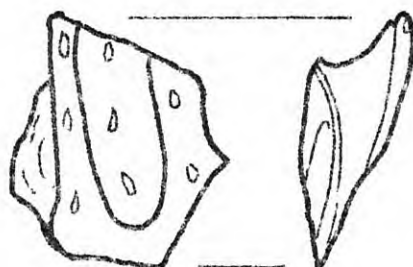
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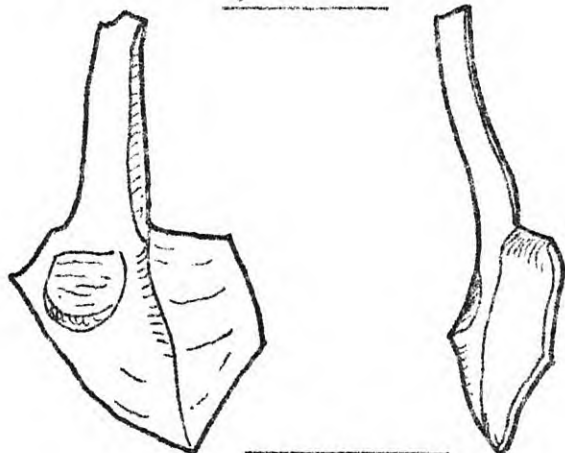
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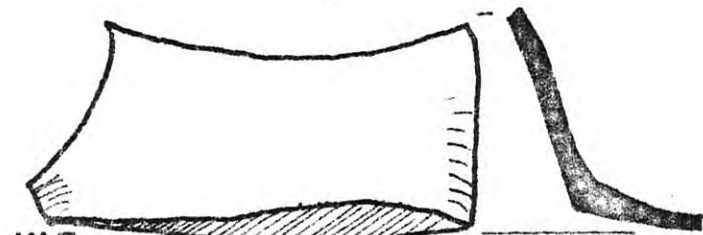
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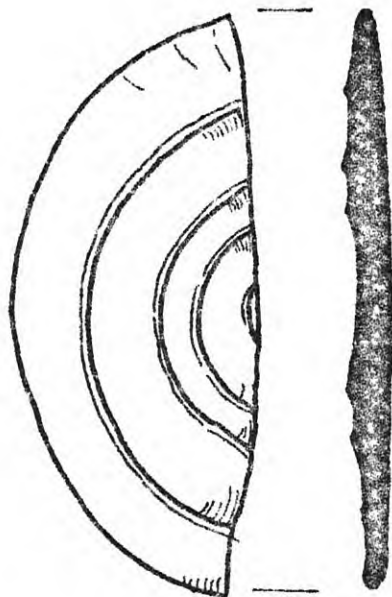


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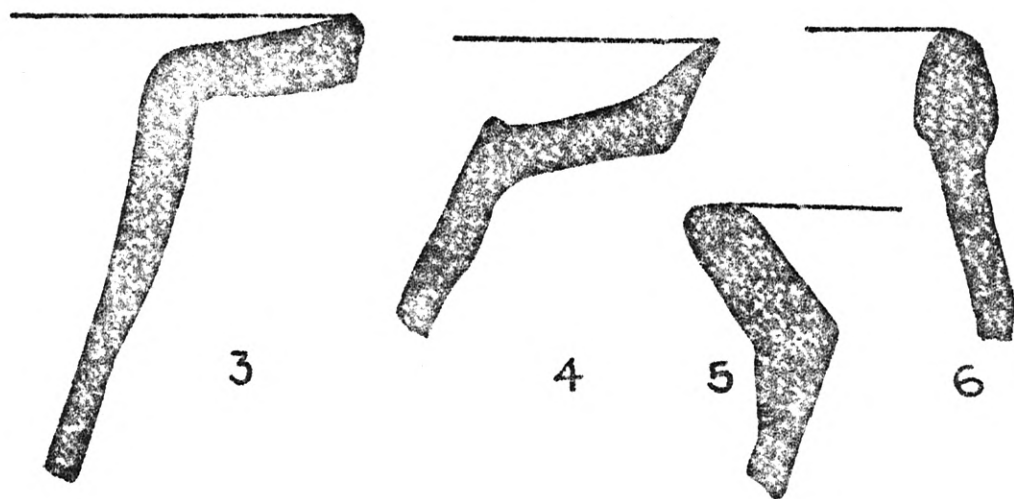
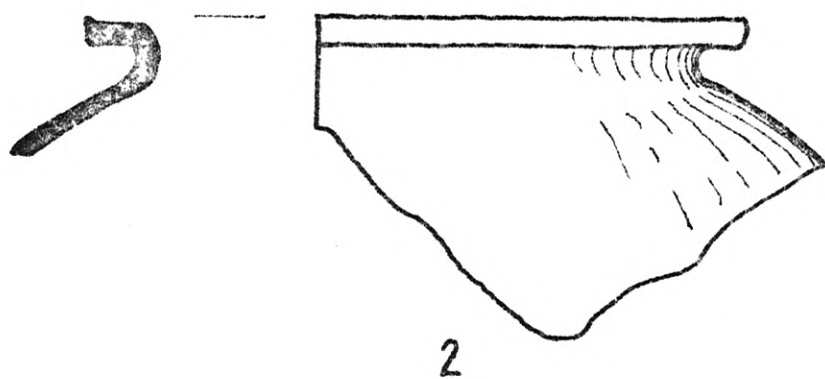


JMB.

7



8



from the rubbish mound of Cut 1 which contained nothing later than the sixteenth century.

The filling of the kitchen area produced some fragments of stone glazed wares which could probably date into the early seventeenth century. The only fragments of stratified pottery from this part of the site are illustrated Fig. Nos. 6 and 7 which is a base fragment and handle from a pitcher of thin, hard, grey ware.

The majority of the wares from the site were from coarse, grey pots but wares carrying a thin yellow glaze were common.

No pots identifiable with the Brill kilns were discovered although these types of pot have been found in medieval Dunstable.

#### Pottery from the Kitchen Area

A total of 86 rim types from cooking jars and pots were found within the building and 32 fragments of handles from jugs and pitchers. Some of these are illustrated:-

Fig.

No. 1 A total of 22 rim fragments of this type of pot were found. They are from small cooking pots with narrow rims everted and with internal bevel on the inner slope. One vessel only of this type carried a green/yellow glaze.

Nos. 2, 3 and 4 are coarse pots made from a sandy paste and fired brown.

Nos. 5 and 6 are from dark grey wares.

#### Jugs and Pitchers

Fragments of 21 strap handles were found and 8 of these were from glazed jugs. Six of the handles were decorated with slash marks. Fig. No. 5 is an example. No. 3 is from an unglazed jug in grey ware.

Eleven round handles were found, 5 of them glazed and decorated with stab marks. No. 1 has a thin yellow glaze; No. 6 is from a thin walled unglazed vessel and is decorated with a thumb impression at the base.

Nos. 2 and 4 are illustrations of pottery bungs. Both are decorated with thumb impression frilling, and the latter also has stab impressions. Both are from unglazed, coarse, grey wares.



No. 8 is a lid or platter with green/yellow glaze and was found in Cut 1.

b) Roman Pottery from the Kitchen Area and Ditch

Sherds from the Roman ditch produced first to second century local white wares, but the ditch can be dated to the fourth century by the finding of imitation Samian ware at a depth of 80 inches.

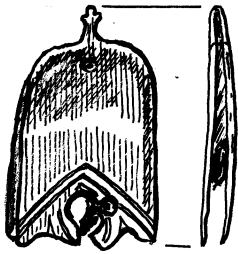
Small sherds of Romano/British pottery were found from all over the site, particularly alongside wall foundations, indicating a spread of Roman material on the site at the time of the foundation of the Priary.

Details of Romano/British Sherds

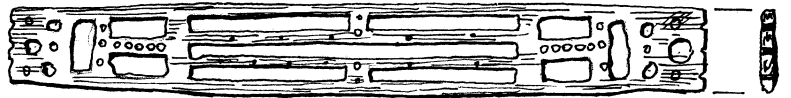
- |    |   |                       |   |
|----|---|-----------------------|---|
| 1) | Rim of shell grit olla                                      | (Sq. J10/18"          | ) |
| 2) | Fragments of good quality, plain Samian ware in Roman ditch | (Sq. K10 - 72" & 78") |   |
|    | also in fill alongside wall by ovens                        | (Sq. H10/24"          | ) |
| 3) | <u>Imitation Samian</u>                                     |                       |   |
|    | Alongside oven wall   | (Sq. G11/24"          | ) |
|    | In Roman ditch  | (Sq. M10/20" - 30"    | ) |
|    | " " "   | (Sq. M10/78" - 80"    | ) |
| 4) | <u>Castor Ware</u>  |                       |   |
|    | Alongside wall footings by oven                             | (Sq. H10/14"          | ) |
| 5) | <u>Mortarium</u>  |                       |   |
|    | White ware in Roman ditch                                   | (Sq. M10/20" - 30"    | ) |
|    | " " outside kitchen area                                    | (Sq. E10/18"          | ) |
|    | " " in Roman ditch  | (Sq. K10/48"          | ) |
| 6) | Pinched ware flagon inside Room 3                           | (Sq. J11              | ) |
| 7) | Plain white wares in Room 4 fill                            | (Sq. H11/14"          | ) |
|    | " " " in Roman ditch  | (Sq. M13 & Q6         | ) |

BRONZE, IRON AND BONE

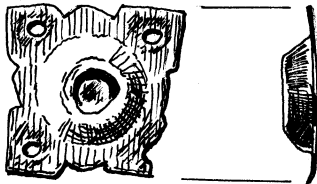
The rubbish mound of Cut 1 produced many small objects too numerous to illustrate fully. Page 19 shows a few of the finds from the site.



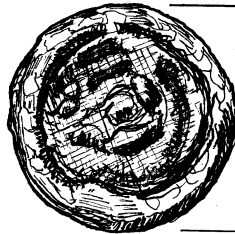
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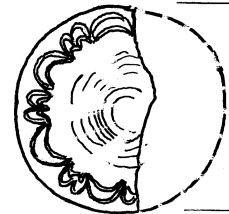
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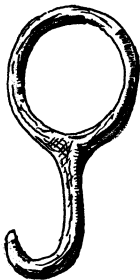
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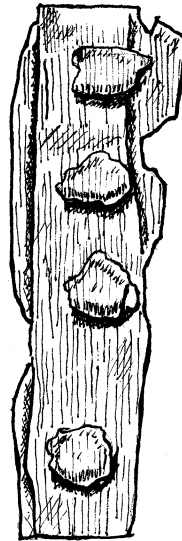
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7



8



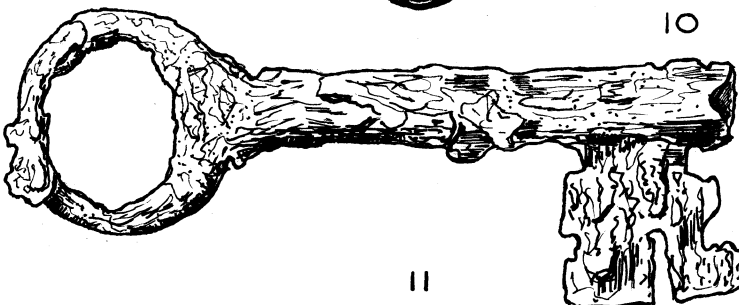
9



DUNSTABLE  
FRIARY 1965



10



11



JMB.

- 1) Bronze strap end (Sq. G14/16" )
- 2) Bronze shuttle (?) (Sq. Q4/24 )  
This was probably used for weaving, having three small holes at each end and three small notches. It is decorated with a pattern of dots and small circle and dot decoration at each end. The decoration is on one side only. Originally it appeared to have had thin iron springs on each side. This object may be of Roman date.
- 3) Decorative bronze stud (Cut 1 )
- 4) Lead Weight (Sq. L13/10" )
- 5) Bronze Stud (Sq. P9 )
- 6) Bronze Hook (Sq. P4 )
- 7) Bone Pin (Sq. Q4 )  
(a second bone pin was found in J12)
- 8) Bronze strip with bronze rivets (Sq. G11 )
- 9) Bronze manicure article (Roman) (Sq. K12 )
- 10) Iron Key (Roman) (Sq. P4/20" )
- 11) Iron Key from Cut 1.  
Four keys were found in this cut, also a chest lock, hasps and hinges.

#### COINS

Three coins were found on the site:-

GRATIAN 367 - 383 A.D. GLORIA ROMANORUM  
Lyons Mint c.370  
Found beneath the tiled entrance  
(Sq. K12)

HENRY VI 1430 - 1434 Silver halfpenny of London Mint  
Found outside entrance  
(Sq. N13)

CHARLES II 1660 - 1685 Very worn copper farthing  
Found just below turf at a depth  
of 9 inches (Sq. K14)

### Reckoning Counters or Abbey Tokens

Three tokens of the fifteenth century were found in Cut 1. A Nuremberg counter by Wolfgang Lauffer c. 1618 - 1660 was found in the rubble fill next to the entrance just below the turf in Square L.12. All of the above were kindly identified by Dr. J. Kent of the British Museum who tells us:-

"Before the general introduction of the so-called Arabic (really Hindu) numerals in the fifteenth century, arithmetical calculations were made in Europe by means of cumbersome Roman numerals. To facilitate the reckoning of accounts metal discs were used in conjunction with a counting-board, or cloth, divided into squares like a chequer-board, the procedure being similar to that used with the abacus. The discs were made of copper or brass and imitated coins in appearance, and often in types. They usually bore legends (frequently blundered): at first pious - e.g. Ave Maria Gracia Plena, etc., but later often the maker's name, perhaps with some homely maxim. These reckoning counters (called in French, jetons; in German, Rechenpfennige) began to be made in the thirteenth century; at first mostly in France, then increasingly, and finally exclusively, in Germany - Nuremberg being for many years from the 14th century onwards a principal source of supply. Nuremberg counters frequently bear the names of their makers e.g. Hans Schultes (16th century), Hans Krauwinkel (end of 16th century) and many others. Foreign reckoning counters were imported into England in large numbers and are frequently found today on medieval sites and in old ecclesiastical buildings, to which fact they owe the name "Abbey Tokens", by which they are sometimes called."

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## THE SWAN BROOCH

This was found in Cut One lying in mortar rubble at a depth of 23 inches.

It was made of gold and the Society reported the find to the coroner. At an inquest it was declared not treasure trove and the brooch was given to Mr. J. B. Stevens, the owner of the land.

It was subsequently sold at public auction for £4,800.

The auction catalogue described the brooch as a medieval gold and enamel jewel in the form of a swan with boldly modelled white enamelled plumage, gorged with a crown with a chain attached, its eyes, slightly open beak and webbed feet with traces of black enamel, the back with the original pin and catch,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches high, probably English, 15th Century.

The report goes on to describe the find "The place of finding suggests an English origin and that it was worn by a member of one of the English families using this device. The swan badge was borne in the 15th Century by Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester (died 1447), by Humphrey Stafford, Duke of Northampton in 1460 and also by members of the Luttrell (Co. Somerset) and Courtenay (Co. Devon) families. The last two named derived the badge from the de Bohun family, one of the most powerful in England, which in turn claimed descent from the fabulous Knight of the Swan. The legend of the Knight of the Swan was very popular in medieval Europe and in 1443 an Order of the Swan was established in Germany.

This badge may have been a prize in an English tournament or it may have been won by an English Knight abroad: it is recorded that at a joust held by Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy at Lille on 17th February, 1453, the Knight of the Swan challenged all comers to the joust and the Knight who put up the best performance against him was rewarded with a rich swan of gold, chained with a golden chain and at the end of the chain a ruby; see Anthony Wagner, "The Swan Badge and the Swan Knight", Archaeology, Vol. 97, p.127, where a seal of the Luttrell family of very similar design to this jewel is illustrated.

This appears to be the only medieval English jewel enamelled en ronde bosse in existence.

THE  
GOLD SWAN BADGE FOUND  
IN THE DUNSTABLE DOMINICAN  
FRIARY EXCAVATIONS 1965



## THE HISTORY - by A. R. Martin.

The Dominican Priory of Dunstable was founded in the year 1259, and is the only house of the order in Bedfordshire. The Blackfriars had first arrived in England in 1221 under the leadership of Gilbert de Fresnoy following the decision taken at the General Chapter held at Bologna in that year at which St. Dominic himself presided. They passed through Canterbury without at first making a permanent settlement there, and arrived in London on 10th August. They then proceeded to Oxford where they founded their first house on English soil in the autumn of 1221 just three years before the arrival of the Franciscans. The order grew rapidly, and by the time of the Dissolution, the number of their English houses had increased to 54. Although they never, perhaps, attained the popularity of the Franciscans among the lower classes, their influence with the King was considerable, and it was to Henry III. and his immediate successors that they owed the foundation of many of their houses.

Henry's Queen Eleanor of Provence was largely responsible for the introduction of the Dominicans into Dunstable. She was an ardent supporter of the order and subsequently founded a house at Guildford, in Surrey. Henry himself was continually finding money and materials for various houses of the order, occasionally, it would appear, to the embarrassment of his Exchequer.

There was already in Dunstable an important priory of Augustinian Canons, and the first step which became necessary, was to secure the support and co-operation of the Canons. This was no easy task, for the older orders generally tended to regard the friars with considerable suspicion which rapidly developed into active hostility. They appear to have feared a diversion of local bequests from their own houses to those of the newcomers, while the whole teaching of the Mendicants was directly opposed to the earlier Monastic ideals. The attitude of the older orders is nowhere more clearly shown than at Dunstable. On April 9th, 1259, the friars had apparently already acquired a site in the town, for the King, who had taken up their cause, wrote to the Prior and Canons confirming the grant of the site and requesting the Canons to treat the friars kindly. He refers to his recent request that they should permit the friars to acquire a site to which the Canons had replied that they would do so if they received the King's formal ratification.

Although in somewhat ambiguous terms the request came with all the force of a command, and the Canons seem to have thought it unwise, for the moment, to take any active steps against the friars. On 27th October, Henry wrote again tactfully thanking them for having "kindly received the friars preachers to whom the King is specially devoted to dwell in the town of Dunstable," and begging them "to continue their kindness by giving the friars their counsel and aid in all their affairs and necessities which he would regard as done to himself," and then, evidently fully aware of the real state of affairs, he undertakes "for the security of their mutual peace," to be personally responsible if the friars should exceed the terms of the agreement with the Canons.

In spite of this letter, the real attitude of the Canons may be judged from an entry in the contemporary Annals of the Priory, which is a curious sidelight on the documents just quoted. Under the year 1259 the Annalist records that "the friars preachers by the greatest industry and scheming came into this town of Dunstable much against our will and gained from us permission to stay here through the king and queen and other great people."

Some further light is thrown on the arrival of the friars in Dunstable by the account given by Matthew Paris in his History. The author was a monk in the neighbouring Abbey of St. Albans, and as one would therefore expect, his account is obviously prejudiced against the friars, whom he seldom missed an opportunity of holding up to scorn. When viewed in the light of other contemporary documents, it is, nevertheless, of considerable interest. In 1259 he records that "a house with the domain thereto adjoining in Dunstable, having been given out of charity to the Preacher brethren, some of that order eagerly, though privately, forced their way into the same to the great injury of the prior and convent of Dunstable. They were encouraged in this by the example of the Minor brethren, who obtained a place of abode at St. Edmund's much against the will, and to the no small injury of that house, and had built such costly domiciles there that all who beheld them were struck with amazement at the sudden expenditure of so much money by those poor brethren, persons who professed voluntary poverty. The aforesaid brethren having gained their entry into the place, suddenly and by force, erected an altar and without waiting for leave of anyone, performed divine services there. They were, in fact, emboldened by the facility with which they obtained



whatever privileges they wished and by the protection afforded them by Cardinal Hugh, a brother of their order, which was of great weight. Day after day they erected their buildings, and endeavoured to increase their possessions to the great detriment of the house of Dunstable by raising contributions amongst the neighbouring places from which the prior and convent ought to receive revenues. The more the preacher brethren increased their buildings and enlarged their possessions, so much the more were the possessions and rights of the prior and convent diminished, because the revenues which they had received from the messuages now given to the preacher brethren were now lost to them, and these newly-come brethren, by their urgent preachings, entirely usurped the offerings which had been usually given to them".

Though some of these accusations were doubtless justified, the account, as a whole, obviously allows of some softening. The suggestion that the introduction of the friars had been brought about secretly and by force, is not born out by contemporary documents which, on the contrary, show that the Canons were repeatedly consulted. It is, moreover, unlikely that the revenues of the monastery were seriously affected, though the fact that the priory was about this time in considerable financial embarrassment, probably made the Canons all the more jealous of any encroachment on their rights. The charge of excessive extravagance in building is chiefly confined to the Franciscans at Bury St. Edmunds, and there is no direct evidence of this at Dunstable.

In comparison with the attitude of the Canons, it is interesting to find Agnes Gobion, prioress of the small Benedictine Nunnery at Markyate, near Luton, helping the friars of Dunstable, on their arrival, with the daily gift of loaves "out of pure charity," because they were engaged in building their church. The action was, however, ill repaid, for the friars subsequently insisted on a continuance of the gift in spite of the slender resources of the nunnery, and appealed to Rome to have it confirmed to them in perpetuity.

In the only known list of convents in the visitations of the English Dominican Province, Dunstable appears as the seventh house in the visitation of Cambridge, the others being Cambridge, Norwich, Stamford, Langley Regis, Lynn and Sudbury. The division of the province into four Visitations

or groups of houses subject to the personal visitation of a single visitor appointed by the Provincial Chapter took place at an early date. The system bore a certain resemblance to that of the Franciscan custodies, though the grouping was at first less definite, and the visitations were not separately represented at the Provincial chapter. After 1275, however, the groups of houses in the visitation became more or less constant. The list of Dominican convents referred to dates from the 15th century and is incomplete, some of the houses in each visitation being missing. Of the houses not mentioned, probably those at Chelmsford, Ipswich, Thetford, Yarmouth and Dunwich completed the Cambridge visitation.

Throughout the remainder of the 13th century references to the Dunstable house are few and consist chiefly of records of royal gifts and an occasional mention in the Annals of the priory. Very soon after their arrival the friars seem to have begun the erection of their church, which was probably nearing completion in 1264, when the king gave twenty oaks fit for timber from the forest of Pokesl'. This was followed on 24th November by a further gift of fifteen oaks from the forest of Bernewood.

In course of time the original bitterness between the friars and the Canons somewhat subsided, and in 1277 it is recorded that the prior, William le Breton, ate with the friars for the first time, while in 1282 it was possible for the body of a woman of the parish of St. Giles, who had died, to be first carried to the priory church for the celebration of Mass before being buried at the friary. Four years later, however, relations were again strained, and we find the Canons purchasing property in the town for the express purpose of preventing the friars enlarging their precinct. In 1286 the writer of the Annals records that "in order to prevent the schemes and evil practices of the Friars Preachers in Dunstable, we caused Thomas, our porter, to buy a house in Dunstable, formerly belonging to Robert Franceys, next to the precinct of the said friars, and we took a feoffment of the said messuage from the said Thomas lest the said friars should extend their boundaries against our will. And the deed between the said Thomas and the seller of the house is in the Kings Court." Apparently this action brought its own reward for the annalist adds that the contract subsequently involved the priory in a heavy annual corrody and other burdens.

Gifts to the Dunstable friars were for the most part

of small amount. Walter Gifford, Archbishop of York, gave an alms of two shillings on 8th September, 1270. On 1st March, 1276-7 Edward I. was in Dunstable when he gave the friars seventeen shillings for one day's food, and on 29th November following when at Bassingbourn, he sent them twelve shillings for food for two days. Eleanor of Castile was an ardent supporter of the Dominicans and had herself been admitted into the order, and after her death in 1290 the friars preachers of Leicester and Dunstable received ten pounds from her executors. In this year also we learn of the sudden death of two of the Dunstable friars while celebrating Christmas with William de Valence at Hertford Castle. Though going to bed in good health and merry on St. Stephens Day they were found dead in their beds by a sudden death (*morte repentina*) as is believed and were buried at Dunstable.

In 1298 there was a further outbreak of hostility between the friars and the Canons, this time on account of the privilege enjoyed by the friars of hearing confessions. This question frequently gave rise to disputes and was the cause of much of the ill feeling against the friars, both on the part of the older monastic orders and of the secular clergy. At Dunstable the bishop of the Diocese interposed and ordered the archdeacon of Bedfordshire to see that the Canons desisted from forbidding and impeding the friars from hearing the confessions of the people of Dunstable. The practice, however, increased and in 1311 it was found that the number of friars in the Diocese presenting themselves to be licenced as confessors was becoming too numerous. No less than ten applicants came from the Dunstable house alone.

During the 14th century royal gifts continued to be made to the Dunstable friars on the occasion of the King's visits to the neighbourhood. In 1300 Edward I. was again at Dunstable, and on 17th April he gave one of the friars, Nigel de Haukeston, 20s. for food for the house at Dunstable on that and the previous day. On 12th August, 1311, Edward II. sent 10s.8d. from St. Albans for a day's food when the friars met him in the royal procession into Dunstable. Again in January, 1328-9 Edward III. was at Dunstable and presented the friars with 7s. for a day's food through friar Thomas de Whitchurche.

Once only is there a record of a provincial chapter being held at the Dunstable friary. This met on the feast of the Assumption, 1332 (15th August), and the friars

received a special gift from Edward III. towards the expenses for food on the three days during which the chapter lasted. The money was paid in advance, for on 20th June Friar Robert Moigne was authorised to receive on behalf of the convent 10 pounds from the sheriff of Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire, and on 8th July a further five pounds from the sheriff of Essex and Hertfordshire. The Provincial for this year was Simon de Bolaston who appears to have been in prison about this time for his implication in the conspiracy of the Earl of Kent, so that the conventual prior of the Dunstable house may have acted as vicar on this occasion and presided over the Chapter.

In 1341 the friars received a gift of 20s. from Maude of Lancaster, the widow of William de Burgh, Earl of Ulster, who was the lady of the neighbouring manor of Leighton Buzzard. In 1357 Isabel, the widow of Edward II. left them a "diaspinett cloth of gold" worth 26s.8d. for a vestment.

There are but few records of burials in the Dunstable house in comparison with many of the houses of the order. According to Chauncy, Hawise, wife of Sir Richard Hoo and daughter of Fulk Lord Fitzwarren who died 2nd September 1344, was buried in the friars church.

The 15th century is a period of almost total blank in the history of friars of Dunstable. Once the house is mentioned under somewhat discreditable circumstances, when there was a fresh outbreak of hostilities between the friars and the Canons, the cause of which is not stated. On 14th May, 1444, John Brogton and others were ordered to enquire into the affair, and the terms of their commission state that "John Roxton prior of the Augustinian Priory of St. Peter, Dunstable, John Godfray, his fellow Canon, William Sampson of Dunstable 'Yoman,' and William Style of Dunstable 'Yoman,' with many others, broke the close and houses of Thomas, prior of the house of friars preachers of Dunstable, at Dunstable, and assaulted and wounded Peter Hobard, John Wesenham and Richard Albou, fellow friars of Thomas, and threw Peter into a pool of water and imprisoned the said John and Richard contrary to the law, whereby divine service in the said house of friars preachers has been diminished long time, and dug soil of the said Thomas whereby he has lost the profit thereof long time." The result of the enquiry and the sequel do not appear, but it is interesting and perhaps significant to note that on this occasion the townsfolk

apparently sided with the Canons. In all probability both the number and popularity of the friars were already on the decline.

After this episode little further is heard of the house until the eve of the suppression. On 5th May 1534, John Coton, prior of the friars preachers of Dunstable, subscribed to the formal declaration of the Royal supremacy in conjunction with the representatives of the Dominicans of King's Langley, the Franciscans of Aylesbury, Bedford and Ware, and the Carmelites of Hitchin. In the following year the annual income of the house was estimated at £4.18s.8d., besides 4s. which had formerly been paid to the Prior and Canons of St. Peter for the rent of three tenements.

The general dissolution of the friaries took place in the summer and autumn of 1538, when the Bishop of Dover wrote to Cromwell that he had received to the King's use the Blackfriars of Dunstable, among other houses since he was last with him. The deed of surrender has not survived, so that practically nothing is known of the inmates of the house at this date. Their number was probably small and they seem to have been in some way involved in the scandal which at this time surrounded Robert Miles, the provincial of the order, who was prior of the house at King's Landley, though their implication rests on a somewhat ambiguous letter of Bishop Longland.

The friary buildings were of little value and some of the property had been let out to tenants before the surrender of the house. The Bishop of Dover had reported that the substance of most of the houses whose surrender he had received had been stolen or pledged before his coming.

In 1544, we learn that Roger Lee, gentleman, held a chamber and a house in the friary between Pyghtells on the east and "le frater" on the north (except the convent garden and two gardens one of which lay eastward, and the other westward of the buildings), and a great chamber and two smaller ones in the great court and a stable adjacent, within the priory under a lease from the friars to William Marshall for 50 years at a rent of 40s. On the latter's death, this property had passed through his daughter to Lee.

No immediate purchaser was found for the property, and it was accordingly leased for 21 years to Thomas Bentley Yeoman of the King's Guard, at a rent of 44s.8d. The lease is dated 8th May, 1539 and included the rest of the

site of the house (the property in the occupation of Roger Lee being expressly reserved) together with 4 acres formerly belonging to the friars in Kensworth field and the three tenements which they had formerly rented from the Canons. Eight years later the reversion on Bentley's lease was sold to Sir William Herbert, but the property leased by the friars, which was in the occupation of Roger Lee, was again expressly reserved. In the official "particulars" sent to the Court of Augmentations, the property is described as "the site of the late house of friars preachers in the town of Dunstable with all houses, lands, orchards, gardens and soil within the site and precinct of the same house and 4 acres of arable land lying in Kennysworthefield in Dunstable and all those 3 tenements and 3 gardens of the same tenements adjacent with their appurtenances in the separate tenure of John Calverley, widow . . . Peynter and Robert Godfraye, situate near the site of the said house, except only all those houses, edifices and gardens within the site of the said house which Roger Lee holds in right of his wife. . . ." The grant was made by letters patent on 10th July, 1547, but the purchase appears to have been purely a matter of speculation for the next month (5th August, 1547), Edward VI. granted Sir William Herbert licence to alienate and property. Its subsequent history is obscure, but in 1676 part of the buildings were occupied by widow Rose at a rent of 5s.

No trace of the buildings now remains above ground, and until recently their very site was a matter of some uncertainty. Leland mentions the house but adds nothing as to its site. Subsequent writers are somewhat confusing in their statements, though as late as 1783 there is a reference to some walls recently standing near the Baptist meeting house which were identified with the remains of the friary. The site was then known as St. Mary Over and adjoined the street called The Butts. Lysons states that "the site is supposed to be in a field of Mrs. Fosseys near her house which is situate west of the pond in South Street, Dunstable." This house is now known as "The Friars", and marks the traditional site of the friary. Brayley and most subsequent writers merely repeat in substance these statements, though Charles Lamborn in his history of Dunstable mentions that the priory was in a field near Sattle Square in the south street of Dunstable, which was then the property of G. Fossey, Esq. Certain foundations were discovered here in 1835 which, in conjunction with the recent discoveries leave little doubt that this was the actual site.

A few references in early grants, moreover, help to establish this identification and to prove beyond doubt that the house was situate in the southern quarter of the town between West Street and South Street. On Michaelmas day, 1317, William, son of Ralph Freemond, of Dunstable, granted to Freemund Inge certain land in "les Southinlondes," of Dunstable, extending eastward to the walls of the Friars preachers. In medieval times the town which never appears to have been walled, was encircled by a ditch, the open space between this and the inhabited area in the centre being known as the Inlands or Innings. The area within the ditch was roughly divided into four parts by Watling Street and the Ickniel way. The simplicity of the plan which still survives was responsible for the street names. Watling Street became North and South Street according to its position in relation to the point of intersection with the Ickniel way, where one of the Eleanor Crosses stood, while the Ickniel way similarly became East and West Street. In the same way the Inlands became known as the North South East and West Inlands.

In 1334 Freemund Inge and his wife Christiana and their daughter Isabel acquired a further two acres of land in the field "del South" of Dunstable, abutting on the walls of the friars preachers from his son John Inge, rector of Linley. In the 15th century the family of Watford owned land adjoining the friars part of which had formerly belonged to Freemund Inge. In 1431, Giles Watford, of Totternhoe, sold a piece of land in Dunstable abutting on the walls of the friars preachers to Laurence Pekott and others, and in the following year William Watford, of Totternhoe, leased to Bartholomew Felpot of Dunstable, a curtilage in "le Hallewyk" in Dunstable, and land below "le Frerewall," for ten years. Five years later Isabella, the widow of Giles Watford, released all her interest in the land adjoining the Mansion of the friars preachers to her son William.

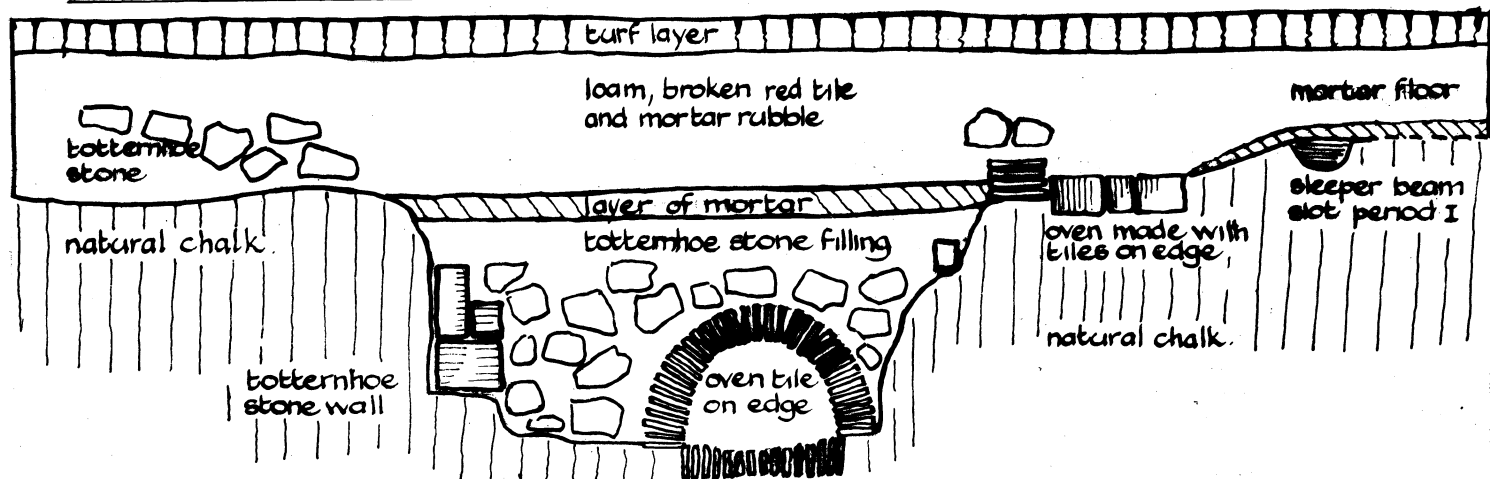
On 1st March, 1441, there is a reference to a grant by William Watford to Laurence Pycot and others of a toft in Dunstable, late of Freemund Inge lying between Watling Street and Ikenyldstret, so long as they should have quiet possession of a toft and croft in Dunstable between the said streets and "le Hallewyklane," and of two acres of arable in "les South Inlondes," of Dunstable by the walls of the friars preachers. This lane, which is called Hallwycke, in the 13th century, and Holliwick, in the 17th century, is frequently mentioned in early deeds. It ran parallel to and slightly south of West Street, and

serves as a further indication of the approximate site of the friary.

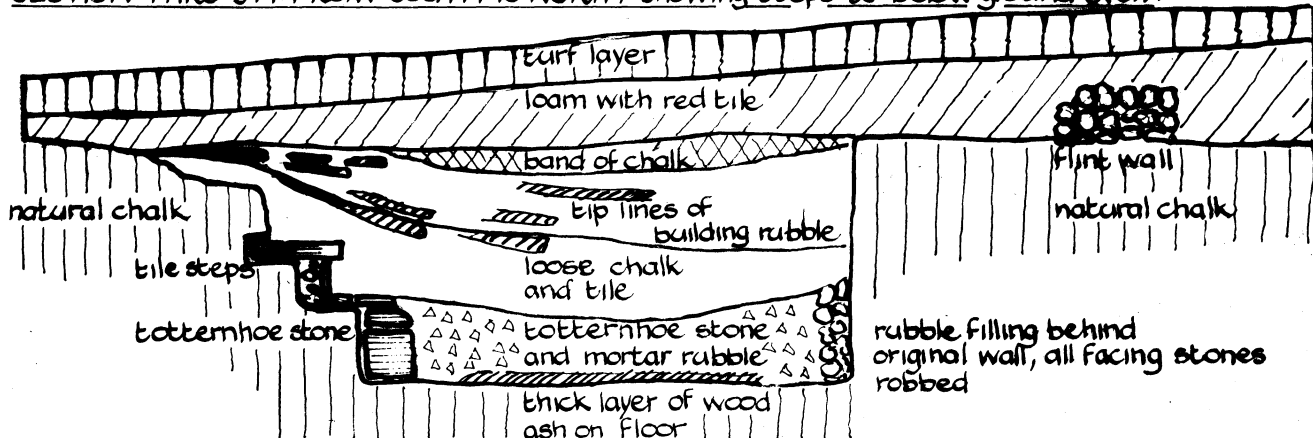
In addition to the actual site of their buildings, the friars possessed four acres of land in Kensworth Field. This was probably one of the common fields of the township and was situate in the south Inlands extending towards the village of Kensworth, which lies to the south-east of Dunstable. It is mentioned in 1372 when Idonia Goseblod, of Dunstable, granted to her daughter Joan, wife of Robert Evesham, a piece of land in the field of Kenesworth, late of John Hank, together with land in South Street. When the friars acquired this land is not known, but it appears to have been of little value for in the lease to Thomas Bentley, only 4s., was apportioned to this holding out of the whole rent.



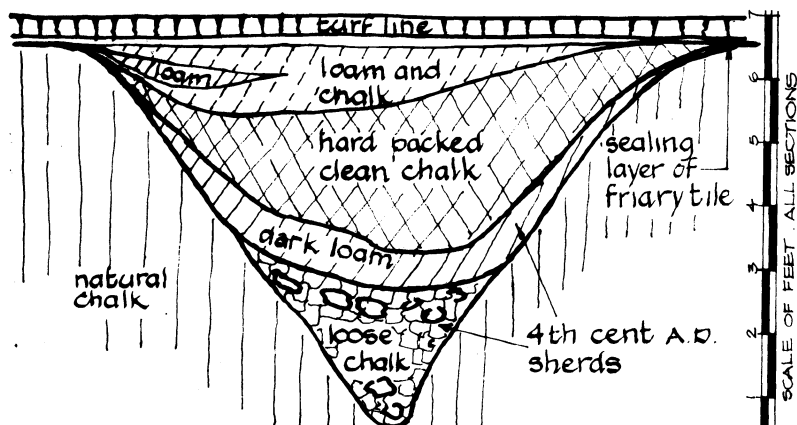
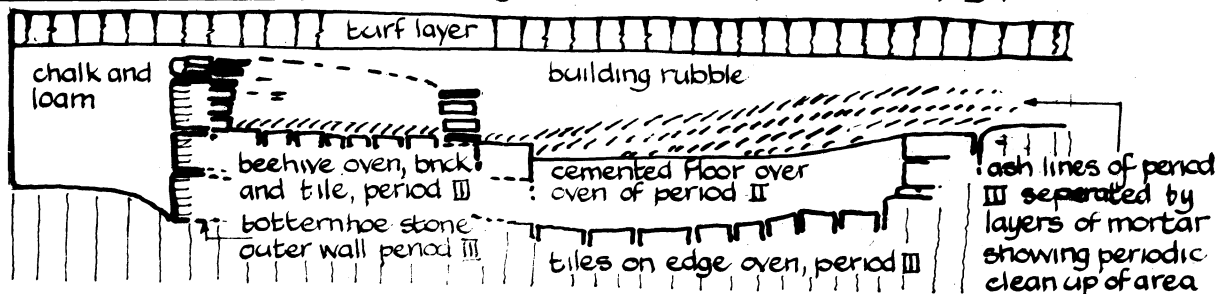
SECTION THRO' F13 FROM WEST TO EAST showing below ground oven.



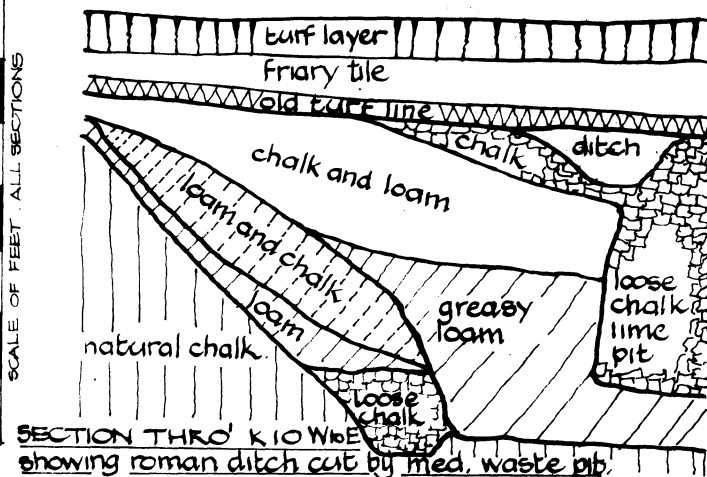
SECTION THRO' J14 FROM SOUTH TO NORTH showing steps to below ground oven.



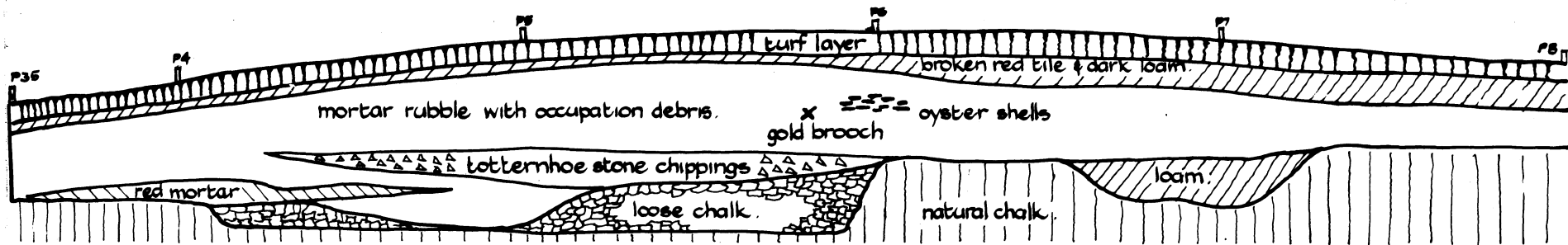
SECTION THRO' G11 FROM EAST TO WEST showing beehive oven of period III overlying period II oven.



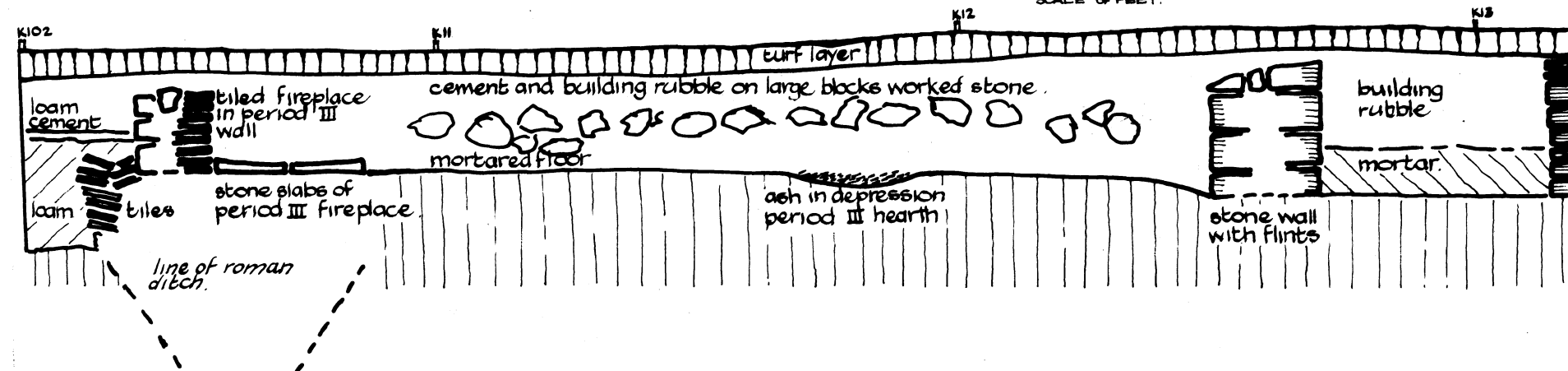
SECTION OF ROMAN DITCH THRO' Q10 FROM WEST TO EAST



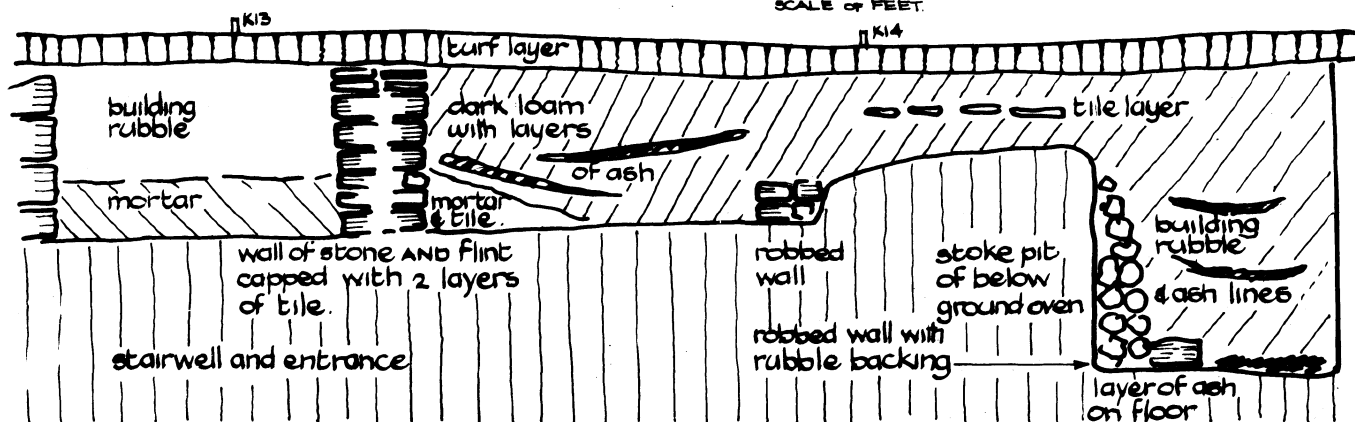
SECTION THRO' K10 FROM WEST TO EAST showing roman ditch cut by med. waste pit.

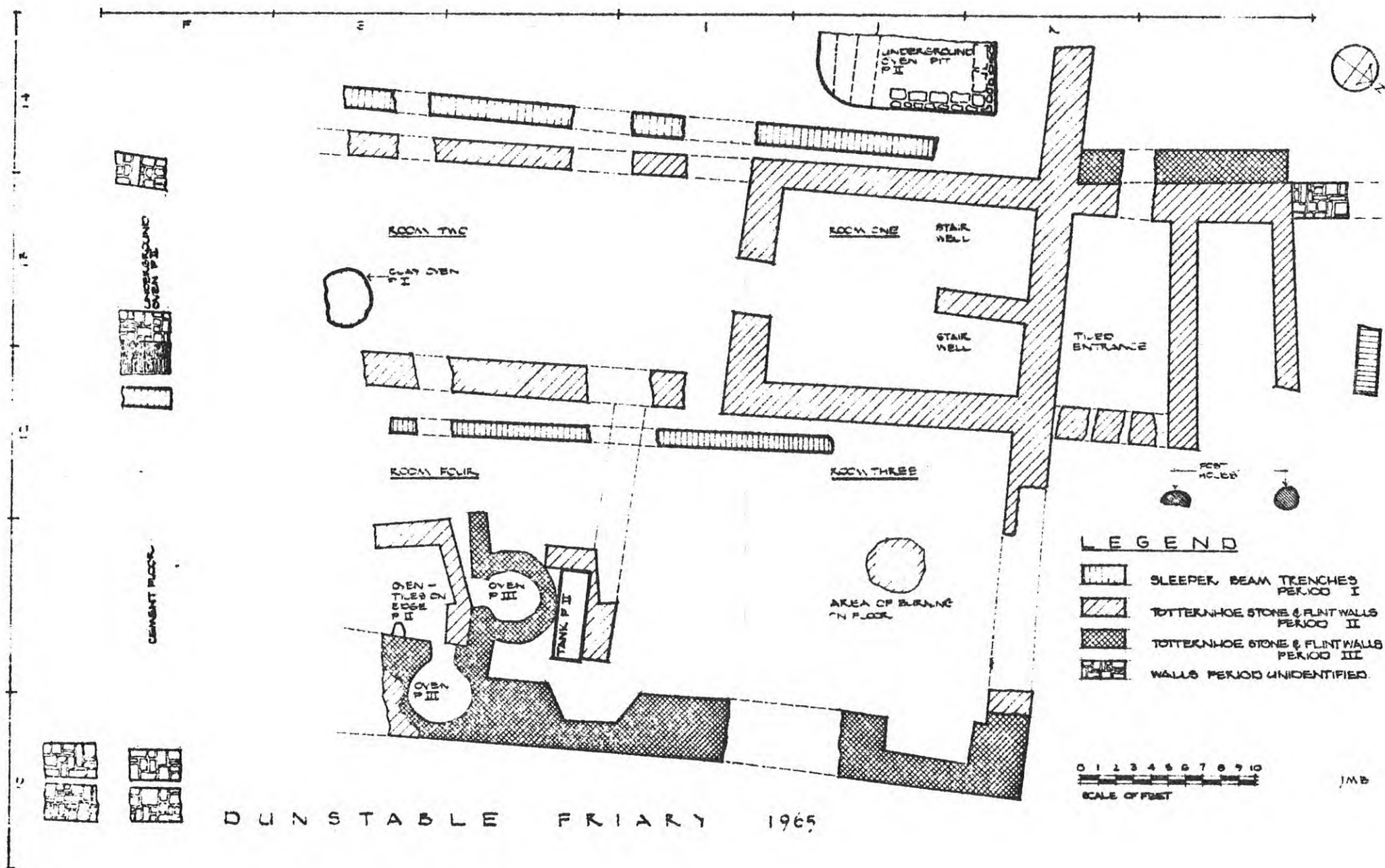


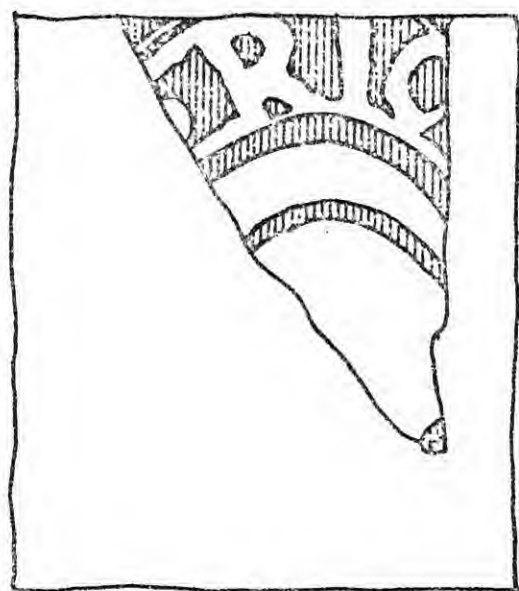
CUT THROUGH ROOM 3 AND STAIR WELL



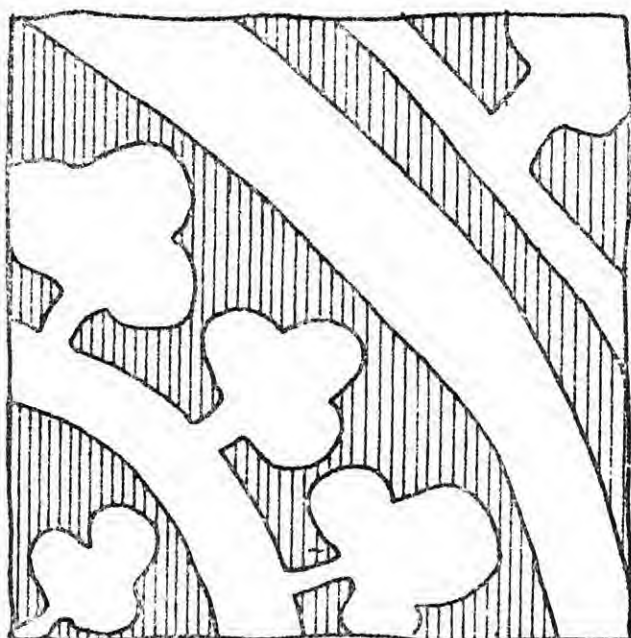
CUT THROUGH STAIR WELL AND UNDERGROUND OVEN.



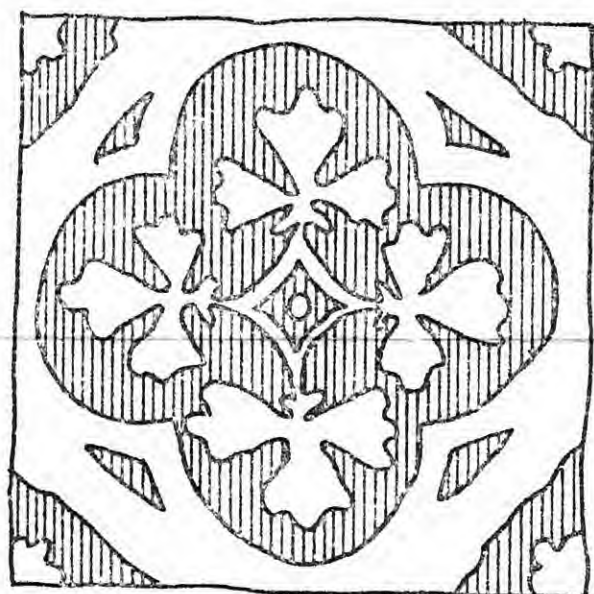




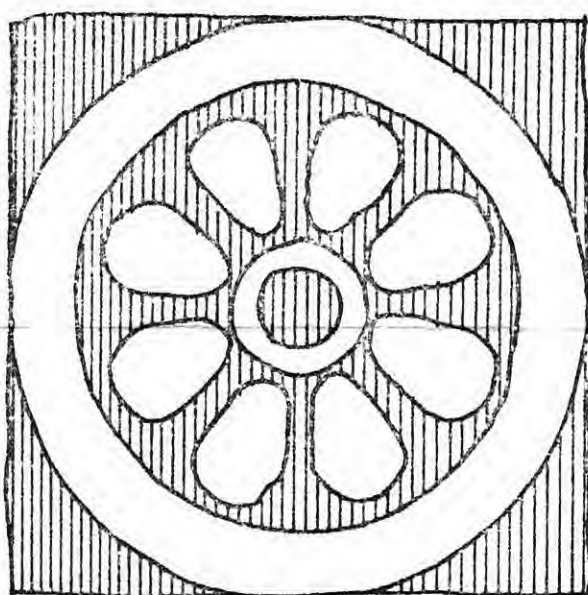
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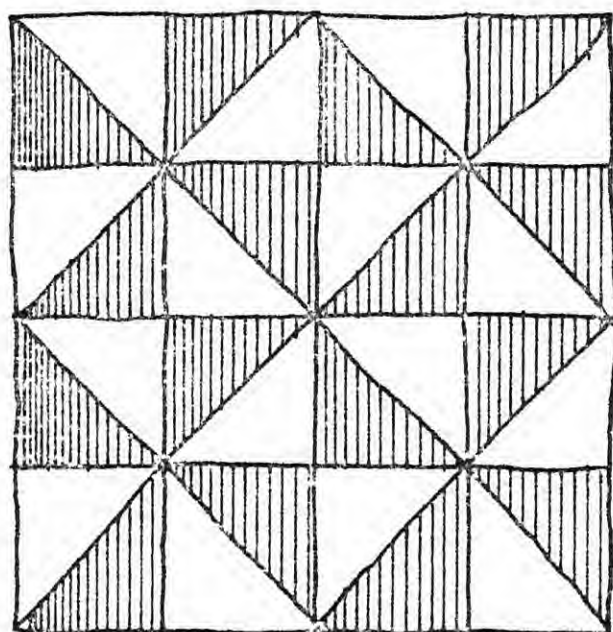
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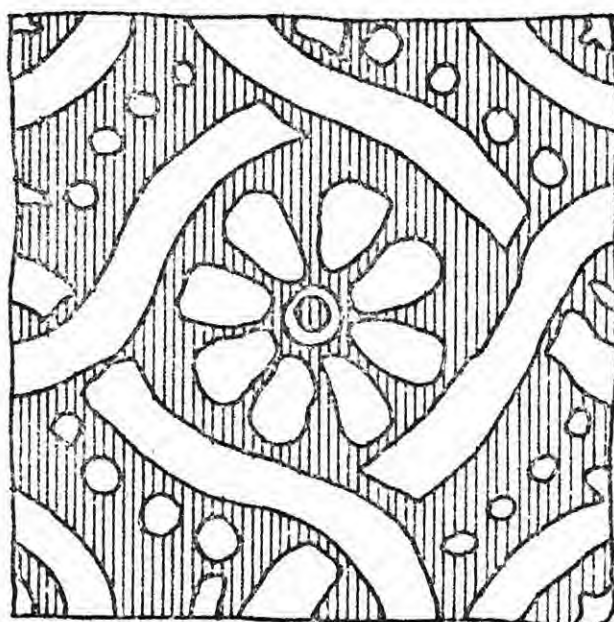
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