

FURTHER EXCAVATIONS AT HINTON PRIORY SOMERSET

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Since I wrote the article in *Proceedings*, Vol. XCVI, (1951) pp. 160-165¹, all the cells surrounding the Great Cloister and most of the garden walls have been definitely located, so that what was previously a rather vague skeleton outline now affords a reasonably clear picture of the general layout.

Since 1951, great progress has been made, as can be seen by a comparison of the new plan (Plate IV) with the former plan (*Plate X). There is no indication of the alphabetical order of the cells, as in the London Charterhouse, and we have found no more lettered doorjambs (*p. 163); so for convenience the cells have been numbered 1-14 clockwise, starting at the N.E. corner. Here I must express my thanks to Mr. Geoffrey Smith, A.R.I.B.A., who, since the death of Mr. R. S. Cockrill, has been of the greatest assistance to me in preparing the new plan.

In two cases at least our former theories have proved incorrect in the light of further discoveries:

(1) *Cell F (No. 4), whose present curious shape we imagined to be the standard pattern, and possibly an imitation of Witham, must have been originally rectangular, like all the others we have found (*p. 163).

(2) The assumed south garden wall of *Cell A (No. 12), (*p. 161 last para.) which originally appeared so obvious that even the experts took it for granted, proved to be almost certainly part of a Post-Dissolution farm building, when in 1955 the original garden wall between Cells 11 and 12 was discovered about 10 feet further north. This made the width of the gardens of Cells 11, 12 and 13 approximately equal and also explains the puzzling position of the door described on *p. 162 para. 2. This must be an interior doorway leading from the large room of Cell 11 into the northern portion of the Cell (see plan). The stone paving and surface water drain (*plate XI No. 1) probably formed part of a later farmyard. This view is supported by definite indications that in some cases the cells had been converted into sheep pens, or cattle sheds, by blocking up the doorways on the Cloister Alley and removing the opposite ends of

¹ References to this article are denoted by an asterisk.

the cells. In Cell 10 monastic window splay would seem to have been incorporated into the N.E. corner after the Dissolution.

To the books recommended for reference on *p. 160 should be added "Monastic Sites from the Air", by Professor Knowles and Dr. St. Joseph. This gives an excellent idea of the whole Monastic Site (pp. 240 and 241), including the Outer Court, and the Guesthouse and Gatehouse, incorporated in the 16th century Manor House.

The main results of excavation up to May, 1959, are as follows:

(a) Fourteen cells have now been definitely located round the Great Cloister, one more than the number required for the Prior and the twelve monks of the original foundation. The extra cell would seem to have been inserted at the S.W. corner of the Cloister, as this is the only instance of a "semi-detached" pair. The cells are uniformly 31 feet 6 inches wide and rather less in depth. They consist of one large room, 20 feet square, the rest of the cell usually forming a peculiar "dog leg", which measures internally 8 feet at the side and 6 feet at the end. It seems probable that this was a pentice, but how it was divided up remains a mystery, as this part of the cell has usually been badly knocked about, and so far we have failed to find two cells with exactly the same internal arrangement. Only in Cells 3, 4, 7 and 11 is there any definite indication of an internal doorway *in situ*. On the other hand, the large room invariably has the hearth, where it still exists, in the same relative position on the side internal wall (Cells Nos. 1, 3, 4, 7, 13, 14).

The cell entrances have all been found, except on the south side, where the northern ends of Cells 6, 7, 8, have vanished, presumably owing to the erection of the present kitchen garden wall about a century ago. In most cases these entrances are in good condition, but when occasionally a gap in exactly the right position occurs in the Cloister Alley wall, from which clearly the dressed stones have been removed, we have felt justified in marking it as an entrance on the plan.

The same applies to the doorways leading from the cells into the garden pentices, which run along the cloister wall, but only in one case so far (Cell 11) has the entrance from this pentice into the actual garden been discovered.

There is still no evidence that the cells had either an interior passage or an upper storey. There is no sign of a latrine and the general layout differs considerably from the normal type of Carthusian cell, such as exists for instance at Mt. Grace. The position of

the windows is conjectural, but at any rate they must have overlooked the monks' private gardens.

(b) At the N.E. corner of the Cloister was found a passage, which was probably used by the Lay Brothers, when they went to and from their quarters in Friary Wood, down by the river (*p. 160 para. 2).

(c) The precinct, or outer wall (not shown on plan) has now been found in places on all four sides, about 2 feet 6 inches thick and 50 to 60 feet from the back of the garden walls. The best preserved portion is on the west side. This has enabled the Ministry of Works to schedule the whole Monastic Site (with the exception of the house) as a National Monument.

(d) A building 60 feet long \times 26 feet wide (not shown on plan) was found projecting into the lawn to the north of the present stable block. This may have been the Brewhouse, which is mentioned in estate accounts at the beginning of the 19th century and appears, though un-named, on a map of 1785.

(e) In the Little Cloister the tiled pentice walk, 8 feet wide, was found in excellent condition at two points (see plan). The whole of the West Wall (*p. 164) has now been excavated, but nothing can be seen of any buttress, or doorway, to suggest the existence of a building, lying between it and the southward extension of the west wall of the Church.

(f) In 1957 excavations made between the Little Cloister and the Refectory revealed a passage running from the South-West corner of the Church into the Cloister Alley, with a doorway at either end and some good stone paving.

(g) In the same year what appears to have been the Refectory Kitchen, with its hearth 10 feet 9 inches wide, was also discovered (see plan). This disposes of the tradition that the Western Chamber of the Refectory was its kitchen. It may have formed part of the cell of the Prior, or some other Officer of the Monastery, and the Refectory proper may have been upstairs.

(h) About 20 feet of the Cloister Alley was uncovered on the South side of the Refectory, together with a well-preserved piece of the pentice wall, 15 inches wide and from 3 to 6 inches high (Plate IIa). Three small octagonal columns, about 20 inches high and 5 inches wide (not shown in photo.) were lying on the

PLATE II



(a) CLOISTER ALLEY AND PENTICE WALL ON SOUTH SIDE OF REFECTORY. TAKEN FROM EAST



(b) N.W. CORNER OF CLOISTER ALLEY AND ENTRANCE TO CELL 14. TAKEN FROM EAST

PLATE III



(a) DOORWAY ON WEST SIDE OF REFECTORY. TAKEN FROM WEST



(b) WATER CONDUIT UNDER N.W. CORNER OF CELL 14. TAKEN FROM S.W.

tiling. No others have been found elsewhere, and their use is at present a mystery. The usual arrangement of wide stone slabs, with tiles laid in the centre between them (Plate IIb), suddenly changes for at least 12 feet at the South East corner of the Refectory to complete tiling, with no stone paving. There is no trace of any doorway immediately to the east of the South wall of the Refectory, but the foundations of the original Cloister Alley wall still exist. The present wall, with its high gateway, must be a later addition. The whole of the north walk of the Cloister is 5 feet 6 inches wide, as we rightly conjectured (*p. 165 footnote). The tiles are, as usual, 6 inches wide and thirteen are laid diagonally in a row.

(i) A passage, 4 feet 6 inches wide, was found, running in a northerly direction from the North West corner of the Great Cloister. A well preserved doorway (Plate IIIa) leads from it into a kind of little court, with another doorway serving the dual purpose of an entrance to this court and to the Refectory (see plan).

(j) Heavy stone paving with a small water channel underneath was found at the West End of Cell 14. This must be post-Monastic, as the slabs, which bear a suspicious resemblance to the bases of doorways found elsewhere during excavation, overlap the original wall of the cell. It may have been used as a tannery after the Dissolution. A portion of the Monastic water conduit runs under the North West corner of the cell. (Plate IIIb).

(k) A path runs east and west across the gardens of cells 11 and 13.

(l) The Monastic water supply has been found in several places at the North West corner of the Cloister (see plan). It consists of a stone channel, 15 inches square, from 3 to 5 feet below the present ground surface, beautifully cut and mortared and roofed with very large flat stones, on which in some cases walls were carried across. The water was obviously obtained from the rising ground on the west side and drained away down the slope on the east, as is shown by the drains in Cell 1. Shallow drains have also been found in Cells 7 and 13 and also a beautifully cut stone channel in the south wall of Cell 5. These all seem to indicate that water was led round the outside of all the cells, but the actual method of distribution is still obscure, as there is no trace of pipes or a water tower, as was the case in the London Charterhouse.

(*m*) In 1958 in the course of further excavation north of Cell 14, a later cell (No. 15), with two hearths and a wide window recess was discovered. There were no signs of any entrances into the main cell or into any of the three annexes, A, B or C, and at present the whole lay-out of this area of the monastery, north-west of the Great Cloister, is very obscure.



Further branches of the water conduit were found both on the west and on the north sides of the Refectory in a remarkable state of preservation². In one case drain rods were pushed through for a length of 60 feet. It is hoped later to find out more definitely how water was distributed throughout the monastery.

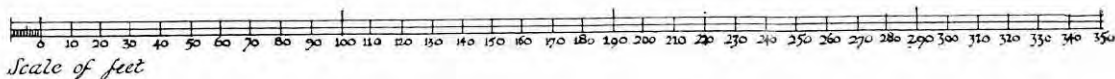
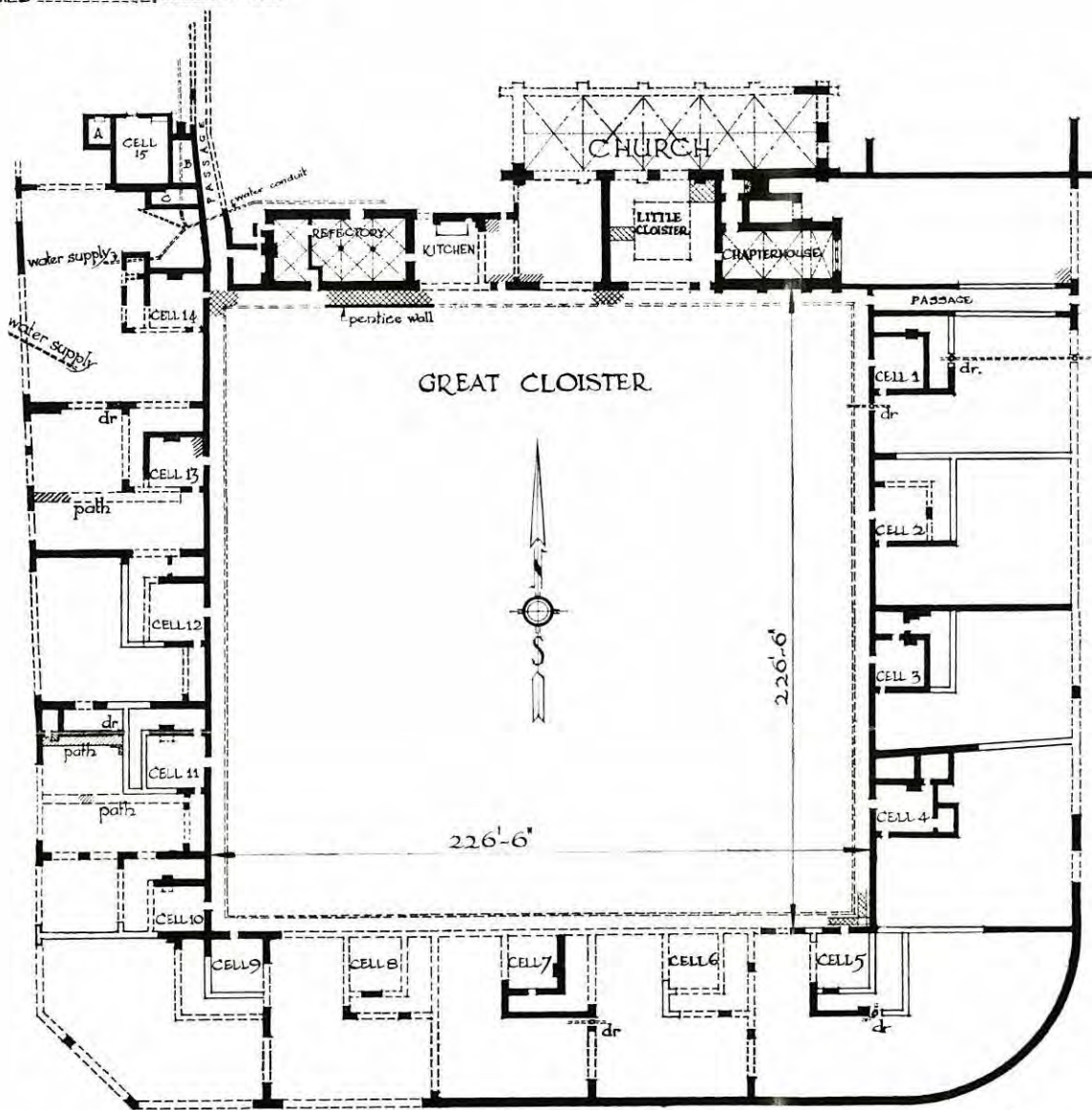
There is still no trace of any previous excavation (*p. 160, para. 3).

² Since going to press, sluices have been discovered at the junction of the two branches of the water conduit west of the back-garden wall of Cell 14.

PLATE IV

FOUND
 DRAIN FOUND
 LOOKED FOR BUT NOT FOUND
 ASSUMED

TILED FLOORS FOUND 
 STONE PATHS OR PAVING FOUND 



HINTON PRIORY ~ SOMERSET.

A CARTHUSIAN MONASTERY ~ FOUNDED 1232.

AS REVEALED BY EXCAVATION UP TO MAY 1959.