

Pill Priory, 1996–1999: Recent Work at a Tironian House in Pembrokeshire

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RECORDING, geophysical survey and a watching brief undertaken between 1996 and 1999 at Pill Priory, a Tironian house founded near Milford Haven in the late 12th century, have together considerably increased our knowledge of what was hitherto a little-understood site. With its mother-house, St Dogmaels Abbey, and sister house on Caldey Island, Pill belongs to the best-preserved group of the order's British houses. It appears to have been of moderate size and to have exhibited a fully developed conventual plan based around a cruciform church, of which only the chancel arch and part of the south transept now survive. The north wall of the north transept was revealed during sewage-pipe excavation in 1996–7, and the nave and chancel wall-lines were observed as geophysical anomalies in July 1999 as was a detached building, possibly an infirmary. The east and south ranges of the conventual buildings were selectively adapted as domestic accommodation during the 16th–19th centuries but elements of the medieval fabric still survive. A sewage pipe trench cut through the former monastic cemetery, revealing 31 inhumations. All of these apparently relate to the priory, but their identities are unknown — the community itself rarely numbered above five members. Well-preserved skeletal remains in varying degrees of completeness were present, but all had undergone later disturbance; only one exhibited any evidence for a coffin. The high incidence of grave superimposition suggests that space within the cemetery was at a premium, while their arrangement may indicate the approximate extent of the formal monastic precinct.

The neglected site of Pill Priory, at Lower Priory near Milford Haven, Pembrokeshire, has recently been the subject of two separate archaeological projects, both undertaken by Cambria Archaeology (Dyfed Archaeological Trust). The projects comprised building recording and survey, funded by Cadw, during February 1999,¹ and a watching brief funded by Pembrokeshire County Council in 1996–7.²

The site lies at NGR SM 9023 0727 on the upper reaches of Hubberston Pill, an inlet of the Milford Haven waterway (Fig. 1). It lies at 6.10 m OD on a flat area of land at the confluence of two streams which form the head of the inlet, some 1.7

¹ The record, and the reports on the geophysical and topographical survey, are contained within the archive (as PRN 37115) which will be deposited with the National Monuments Record.

² R. Ramsey, 'Pill Priory, Milford Haven: Archaeological Recording and Watching Brief' (unpubl. Cambria Archaeology client rep., 1998; copy held with the Sites and Monuments Record for Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire).

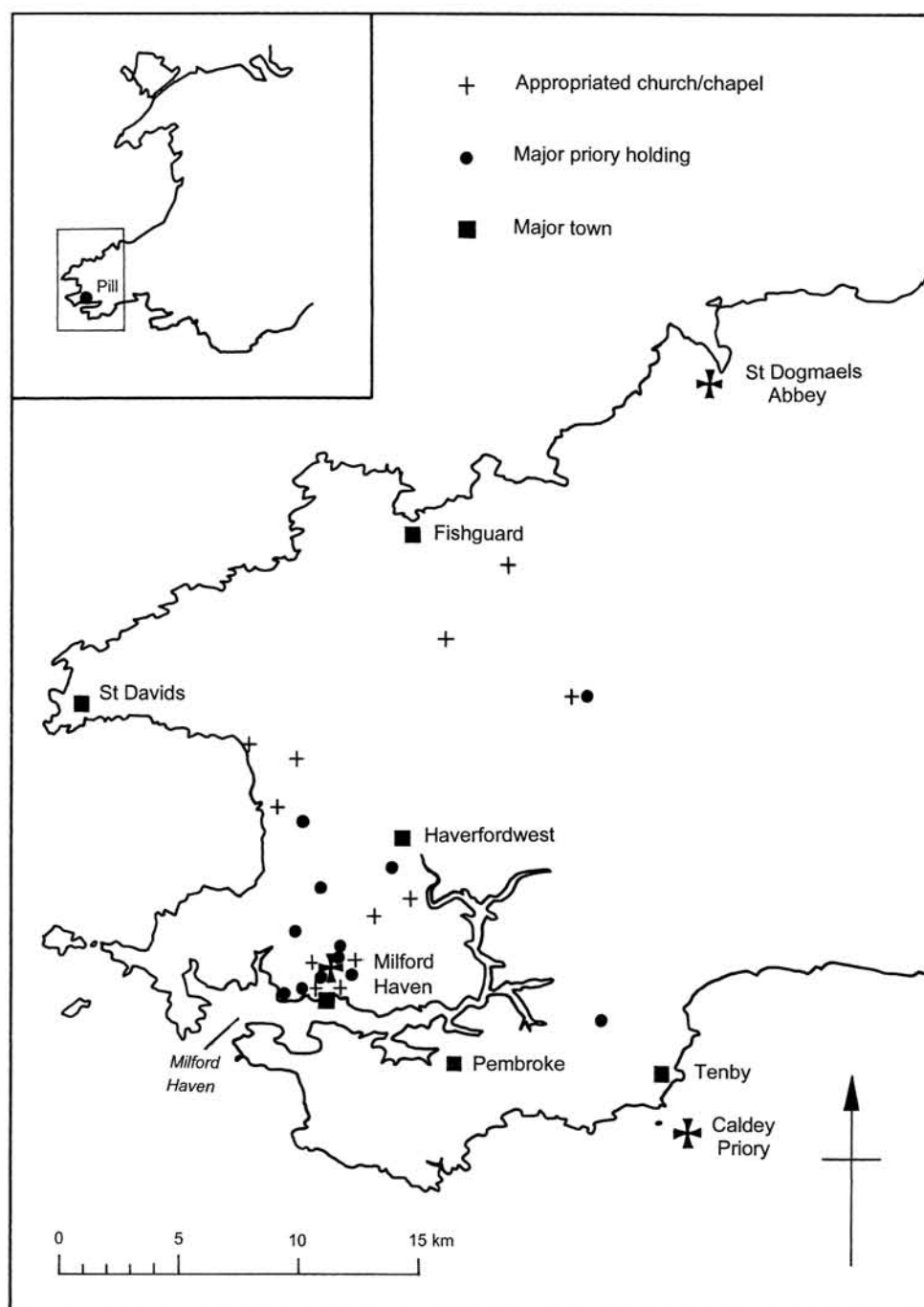


FIG. 1

Pill: location map and priory possessions.

km north of the Haven. The western of the two streams flows from west to east to this point, while the eastern stream flows from north-west to south-east through the priory site; neither branch may represent the original, natural course. The medieval priory buildings occupied level ground between the two streams, overlooked from the west and east by steep, wooded valley sides, that now forms the centre of the small community of Lower Priory, a suburb of the town of Milford Haven (Fig. 2).

The area is underlain by red Devonian siltstones and fine sandstones collectively known as Old Red Sandstone (ORS) Marls.³ The overlying soils are either glacially derived from the bedrock, comprising fine clay loams of a characteristic dark reddish brown colour, or undifferentiated valley soils.⁴ The surrounding region is distinguished by ORS and Carboniferous Limestone outcrops of building quality, and both quarries and limekilns operated at Pill until the later 19th century. All the priory building stone appears to have been quarried from these local sources.

The surviving priory remains now lie entirely within the parish of Milford Haven and the former ecclesiastical parish of Steynton, the eastern stream representing the parish boundary. But these have both, for various reasons, occasionally been included within Hubberston parish.⁵

SITE HISTORY

Pill Priory was founded as a daughter house of St Dogmaels, near Cardigan, itself a priory of the Tironian order of reformed Benedictine monks, which was founded in c. 1105 by St Bernard d'Abbeville and was always small.⁶ In 1113 St Bernard was visited by Robert Fitzmartin, the Norman lord of the newly conquered territory of Cemaes (in modern northern Pembrokeshire), who brought back thirteen monks and a prior to form the basis of a new community which was installed at St Dogmaels as a priory to Tiron, raised to abbey status in 1120 and thus avoiding suppression as an alien house in the later Middle Ages. St Dogmaels appears to have been a pre-existing monastery following a 'Celtic' rule.⁷

By the end of 12th century there were sixteen Tironian houses in the British Isles — eight in Scotland where they are disproportionately represented due to the direct patronage of King David I, four in England, three in Wales and one in Ireland. The latter four were St Dogmaels itself and its daughter houses, the first of which was founded on Caldey Island by Fitzmartin's mother in 1115,⁸ probably on the site of a pre-existing community. The other daughter houses were Pill, Pembrokeshire, and Glascarrig, Co. Wexford in Ireland.

³ British Geological Survey 1:250,000 map, *The Rocks of Wales: Geological Map of Wales* (London, 1994).

⁴ C. C. Rudeforth, *Soil Survey Record No. 24: Soils in Dyfed II Sheets SM 90/91, Pembroke & Haverfordwest* (London, 1974), 98–9.

⁵ See, *inter alia*, S. Lewis, *A Topographical Dictionary of Wales* (London, 1833).

⁶ D. Knowles and R. N. Hadcock, *Medieval Religious Houses in England and Wales* (London, 1971), 106.

⁷ The use, in the foundation charter, of the terms 'the old church' and *Llandodog* (Llandudoch) imply the presence of a pre-existing community or *clas*. See George Owen of Henllys, *The Description of Pembrokeshire*, Part II, ed. H. Owen (London, 1897), 362–4; *Cal. Charter Rolls, Vol. IV, 1–14 Edward III–Edward I, 1327–1341* (London, 1912), 214.

⁸ N. D. Ludlow, forthcoming, *A Structural Analysis of Caldey Priory*.

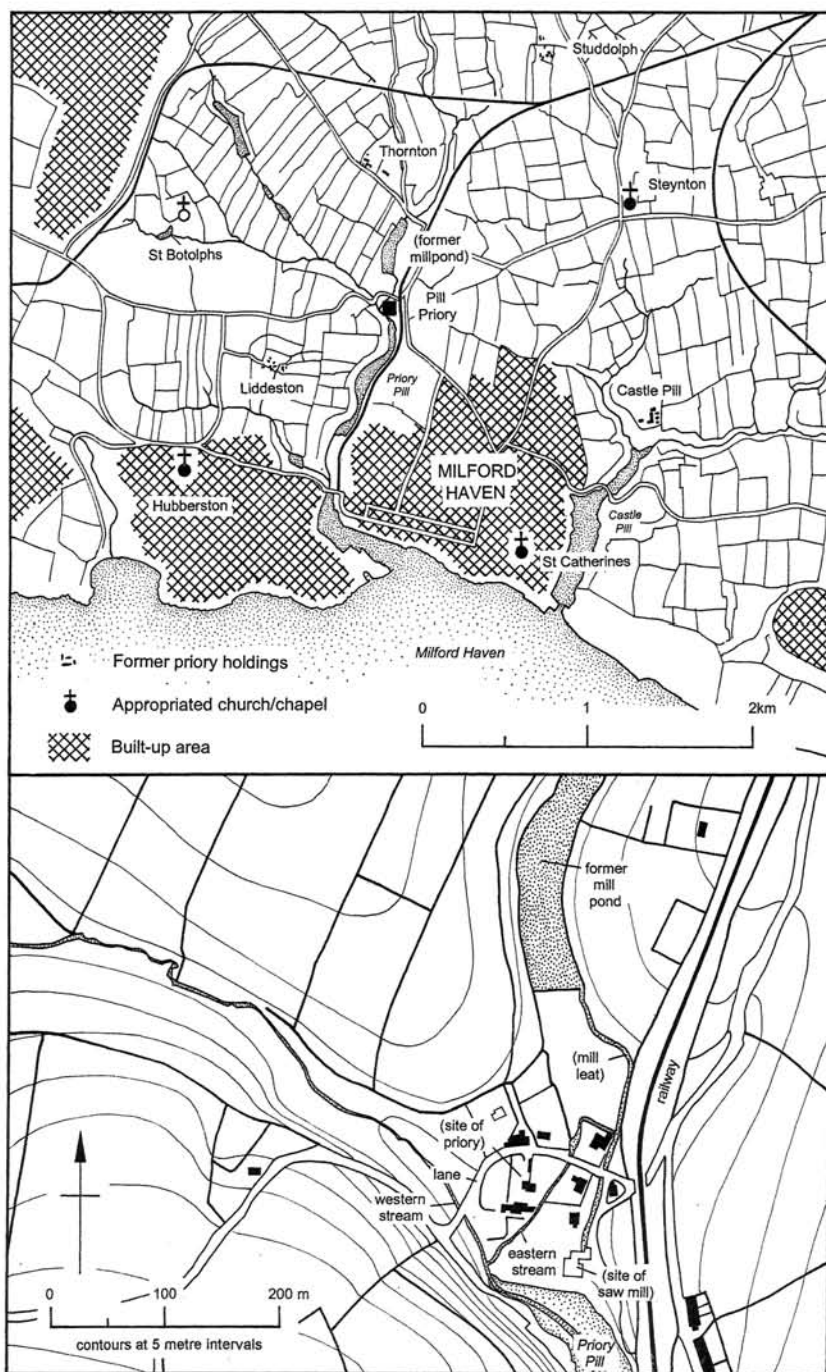


FIG. 2

Pill Priory: site plan.

Pill Priory was established, like Glascarrig, by the Roche family of the Barony and castle of Roch, Pembrokeshire, but only one of Pill's charters is dated and the chronology of the rest can only be inferred by relating them to the history of the Roche family, for whom no genealogy nor reliable chronology has yet been established.⁹ The priory site lay within the manor of Pill, part of the larger 'manor of Pill and Roch' which formed the core of the Barony of Roch, a holding which had been created, and acquired by the Roches, at some period between 1100 and 1130. All modern sources agree that the founder of the Roche dynasty was one 'Godebert the Fleming' who is recorded in 1130.¹⁰ There is no direct evidence for any kinship between the Roches and the Fitzmartin Lords of Cemaes, patrons of the mother house at St Dogmaels, but it may be inferred that the two were close associates during this period and the Roches were later, at least, tenants of the Fitzmartins for some of their lands.

The manor of Pill was a large and important holding, extending east to take in the area of the modern town of Milford Haven. The secular manorial centre lay at Castle Pill, 1.8 km to the east of the priory, which had received its name, from an earthwork at its head (of unknown nature, possibly a motte-and-bailey), as early as the 14th century (Fig. 2).

THE MIDDLE AGES

The priory's exact foundation date is unknown and has been the source of much discussion. The original charter, along with the subsequent charters discussed below, is known only from an *inspeximus* and confirmation by Edward I in 1294–5.¹¹ Most secondary sources follow Dugdale's *Monasticon* which gives the foundation date as c. 1200,¹² while others have suggested that the priory was founded 'within a few years' of St Dogmaels.¹³ However the founder was Adam de la Roche, who would of necessity be a descendant of Godebert — he was thought by the author Emily Pritchard to be his grandson¹⁴ — and an earlier 12th-century date is probably rather too early.¹⁵ Pritchard thought 1180–90,¹⁶ while the Pembrokeshire antiquarian Richard Fenton considered the earlier date of 1160–70 to be possible.¹⁷ Pritchard's dating is preferred here.

⁹ However, the late Major Francis Jones apparently made 'copious notes' on Roch Castle and its owners. His literary estate is currently being catalogued by his family. See F. Jones, *Historic Houses of Pembrokeshire and their Families* (Newport, 1996), 188.

¹⁰ *The Pipe Roll of 31 Henry I*, ed. J. Hunter (London, 1829), 89.

¹¹ *Cal. Charter Rolls, Vol. II, Henry III–Edward I, 1257–1300* (London, 1906), 468–9.

¹² Knowles and Hadcock, op. cit. in note 6, 107.

¹³ E.g. RCAHM(W) *Inventory: Pembrokeshire* (London, 1925), 228.

¹⁴ E. M. Pritchard, *The History of St Dogmael's Abbey* (London, 1907) in which much of the primary source material for the priory is assembled and introduced (esp. pp. 124–38).

¹⁵ Neither Pill nor Caldey feature in a list of Tironian houses from 1147, possibly because both were daughter houses of St Dogmaels, which was listed. See J. H. Round (ed.), *Calendar of Documents Preserved in France, Vol. I AD. 918–1206* (London, 1899), 527. A mid-12th-century charter to Tiron was witnessed by one Adam de Ros (*ibid.*, 357).

¹⁶ Pritchard, op. cit. in note 14, 124.

¹⁷ R. Fenton, *A Historical Tour through Pembrokeshire* (London, 1811), 180.

The community may always have been small; it was recorded as five monks in 1504 and four in 1536.¹⁸ They may, at least initially, have predominantly been Welsh, having been colonised from St Dogmaels which has been regarded as one of the first Norman abbeys to recruit Welshmen;¹⁹ in the later medieval period the brethren appear to have been largely drawn from the immediate locality.²⁰

The priory was jointly dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary and to St Budoc, a Breton saint whose British dedications are mainly in Devon and Cornwall.²¹ The only other Pembrokeshire dedication was the former chapel of St Budoc (now 'St Botolph') which lay 1.3 km north-east of Pill Priory (Fig. 2), of which it was a dependency (see below). The joint 'Celtic' dedication may have been both a concession to the native population, and to the Welsh brethren of St Dogmaels; there is no clear evidence that Pill was, like St Dogmaels and Caldey, a pre-existing religious establishment, and the reasons for the choice of St Budoc are not known.

The grants in Adam de Roche's foundation charter were all in Pembrokeshire. They included unidentifiable grants of 48.5 ha at *Roger's land* (in Nolton parish?) and 24 ha called *Waffren land*, with 8.2 ha near the priory, a grist mill, a fishery, possessions at New Moat and the tithes of all Adam's mills. The grist mill was recorded as 'totally ruined' in 1384 but was rebuilt;²² it was worth 20 shillings in 1547.²³

Two (possibly four) confirmation charters of the 13th century included additional Pembrokeshire gifts.²⁴ The first was issued between 1204 and 1219 by William Marshal I, Earl of Pembroke and Lord of Haverford. He may have been acting in the position of Lord of the manor of Pill and Roche in the confusion of the late 12th and early 13th centuries; in 1220, in fact, Llywelyn ap Iorwerth, Prince of Gwynedd, launched forays into southern Pembrokeshire from 'Pill'.²⁵ Marshal's charter may therefore be from 1219; it was merely a confirmation and contained no additional gifts.

Thomas de la Roche's charter, of c. 1274–84 included further grants in Pembrokeshire including 145.6 ha at 'Sewant', 97 ha at Johnston, 38.5 ha at Studdolph, 24 ha at Dredgman's Hill near Haverfordwest, a weir near the priory,

¹⁸ Pritchard, *op. cit.* in note 16, 139. It appears, moreover, that the sister house at Caldey was, periodically at least, occupied by but a single monk (Ludlow, *op. cit.* in note 8; Haverfordwest Reference Library, Francis Green Collection, Vol. 12, 538, *State Papers*).

¹⁹ J. Hilling, *Gilgerran Castle: St Dogmaels Abbey* (Cardiff, 1992), 31.

²⁰ The surnames Sheppard, Wade and Jordan, which are recorded in the Episcopal Registers of 1405, are still common to the local area. See R. A. Roberts (ed.), *The Episcopal Registers of the Bishops of St Davids 1397–1518*, Vol. I (London, 1917), 361–71.

²¹ S. Baring-Gould and J. Fisher, *The Lives of the British Saints*, Vol. I (London, 1907), 330. Budoc's cult centre was apparently at Châtelaudrun on the Leff and the *Life of St Winwaloe* claims his school to have lain within the Isles of Bréhat. His feast day was 8 or 9 December.

²² H. Owen (ed.), *A Calendar of Pembrokeshire Records*, Vol. I (London, 1911), 75; Pritchard, *op. cit.* in note 14, 129–31.

²³ Anon., 'The Commandery of Slebech and Priories of Pill and Haverfordwest: particulars for grants, Henry VIII', *Archaeol. Cambrensis*, 4th Ser., xi (1880), 164–71, p. 168.

²⁴ The second and third were charters apparently issued separately by Adam's grandson John de la Roche and his wife Matilda, referred to in the charter of their son and heir Thomas de la Roche but otherwise unknown and undated. Matilda granted 97 ha at South Hook, Herbrandston, while John granted lands and wreck at Newgale including the chapel of St Cradoc. See Pritchard, *op. cit.* in note 14, 126–9.

²⁵ Rendered as *Deinde apud pil in ros pernactavit* in *Annales Cambriae* MS B, ed. J. B. ab Ithel (London, 1860). There appears to be no basis for Lloyd's suggestion that Llywelyn used the priory as his base: J. E. Lloyd, *The History of Wales* (London, 1927), 658n.

and land at Pill, Redberth, Castle Hill, Thornton, Ratford Bridge, Hubberston, Liddleston, Robeston West and St Budoc's, all in Pembrokeshire.²⁶ The priory holdings eventually comprised over 525 ha, largely north of the haven (Figs. 1 and 2) but it cannot be determined how much was held in demesne, rented or otherwise alienated.²⁷ The Tironians, unlike the Cistercians, were never to be renowned for their pastoralism; the Pill holdings mainly comprised arable land and about half the area is still characterised by a pattern of fossilised strip fields. The holdings were not formal granges and no chapels are recorded, the land presumably having been tenanted like much Cistercian land in Wales.²⁸

The priory came to possess nine Pembrokeshire parish churches, a relatively large number for a small house. The churches of New Moat, Steynton, Roch and Little Newcastle were part of Adam's original grant, to which Thomas (1274–c. 1302) added Johnston, Hubberston and Nolton (Figs. 1 and 2). The patronage of Freystrop and Pontfaen churches, Pembrokeshire, had been granted to the priory by 1400;²⁹ however, in the absence of episcopal deeds it is impossible to determine how soon the house acquired the rectorial tithes of its churches.³⁰

Two chapelries were situated within the manor of Pill but their relationship with the priory is unclear. St Catherine's, 1.5 km south-east of the priory (Fig. 2), appears to have been appropriated by the priory by 1330 when William de la Roche founded a chantry chapel there.³¹ St Budoc's Chapel, mentioned above, has virtually no recorded history,³² but would appear to have been a chapelry of Steynton parish and therefore under the patronage of the priory, but possibly with burial rights. Neither chapelry was listed at the Dissolution suggesting that both had already become disused, but the site of St Budoc's had, by 1656, become the private dwelling now called St Botolphs (Fig. 2).³³ Other priory possessions included, by the 15th century, at least one ship.³⁴

The ties between Pill Priory and its patrons appear to have normally been close, many of the Roche charters having been granted here,³⁵ but there are few references to bequests. John de Roche was buried at the priory in 1314, in return providing for three chaplains to celebrate divine mass, in addition to legacies left to the Dominicans at Haverfordwest;³⁶ the Roche lineage was, however, regarded

²⁶ He had succeeded to the Barony of Roch by 1274, possibly having succeeded a Geoffrey de la Roche who was witness to a document of 1260 and may have been an older brother: E. Laws, 'Notes on the alien priory of SS Nicholas and John the Evangelist in Monkton, Pembroke', *Archaeol. Cambrensis*, 6th Ser., ix (1909), 165–202, p. 173. His confirmation charter must date from before 1284 when one of the witnesses, Nicholas Fitzmartin, died (Pritchard, *op. cit.* in note 14, 124).

²⁷ F. G. Cowley, *The Monastic Order in South Wales 1066–1349* (Cardiff, 1977), 63–4.

²⁸ D. H. Williams, *Atlas of Cistercian Lands in Wales* (Cardiff, 1990). The single reference to lay brothers, from 1404, may be a mistake for lay servants. The Tironians, like the Benedictines, did not employ lay brethren in the formal sense. The reference occurs in a circular letter from the Bishop of St Davids and may be a *pro forma*. See Roberts (ed.), *op. cit.* in note 20, 327.

²⁹ Roberts (ed.), *op. cit.* in note 20, 343 and 391.

³⁰ Cowley, *op. cit.* in note 27, 63–4.

³¹ J. Hunter, 'Copies of the original charters of the family of de la Roche', *Archaeol. Cambrensis*, New Ser., ix (1852), 258–71, pp. 267–8. The chapel, a single vaulted chamber, has been restored.

³² Being confined to a passing reference in a deed of 1392. See B. G. Charles, *The Place-Names of Pembrokeshire*, Vol. II (Cardiff, 1992), 655–6.

³³ Jones, *op. cit.* in note 9, 190.

³⁴ Roberts (ed.), *op. cit.* in note 20, 361–71.

³⁵ See Hunter, *op. cit.* in note 31.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 266–7.

as extinct when Thomas de Roche died in c. 1383,³⁷ and the manor of Pill and Roch reverted to the crown. There is no documentary evidence for other benefactors, or for any of the priory's other functions within the wider community such as a shrine or a guesthouse. Pill did not cater to a lay congregation, unlike St Dogmaels Abbey which was also a parish church and continued as such after the Dissolution,³⁸ when the church at Pill appears to have been allowed to fall into decay.

St Dogmaels' abbey status saved Pill and Caldey from dissolution as alien priories in 1391, unlike the four English houses which were priories of Tiron itself.³⁹ However, it seems that St Dogmaels continued to be regarded as a dependency by Tiron, appearing in its cartulary until the early 16th century, while the brethren were referred to as 'monks of Tiron' in letters patent of the 15th century.⁴⁰ As a result, possibly, of this ambiguity, St Dogmaels and its daughters were placed under episcopal jurisdiction and in April 1405 Pill Priory, under prior Walter Robjoy, was subject to its first episcopal visitation.⁴¹ The economic ties between Pill and St Dogmaels were always ill-defined in that the priory possessed its own lands and churches, issued its own charters and granted its own leases, and the fiscal bond was limited to the payment of a small annual pension to St Dogmaels which, at the Dissolution, stood at £9 6s 8d.⁴² During the later Middle Ages, however, the connection between the mother and daughter houses appears to have become more obscure.⁴³

There were episcopal visitations under both the Deanery of Cemaes and the Deanery of Roose in 1504, the first of which discovered that the priory chancel, apparently in ruins, had recently been rebuilt/restored.⁴⁴ It was recorded that the second visitation was held in the priory chapter house and prior David Luce submitted that he had five monks, that regular services were held according to the Benedictine rule, and that the priory was free from debt and financially viable.⁴⁵ However, Pill was exempt from the clerical subsidies of 1513 and 1517,⁴⁶ and it is

³⁷ E.g. Fenton, op. cit. in note 17, 241.

³⁸ Hilling, op. cit. in note 19, 35. Many other houses fulfilled the same dual role and have thus survived, some nearby, such as the Benedictine priory of Monkton, Pembroke.

³⁹ The English priories — Andwell, Hamble and St Cross in Hampshire, and Titley in Herefordshire — were acquired by Winchester College which had been founded in 1387. The five Scottish houses which had become abbeys also avoided suppression. The alien priories of all other orders were seized in 1415.

⁴⁰ Round, op. cit. in note 15, 527; *Cal. Patent Rolls, Henry V, Vol. II, AD 1416-1422* (London, 1911), 2.

⁴¹ Roberts (ed.), op. cit. in note 20, 229. For a full account of the visitation see R. A. Roberts (ed.), *The Episcopal Registers of the Diocese of St Davids, 1397-1518*, Vol. III (London, 1920), 76-9. The visitation ended in sensation. Prior Robjoy was accused of plundering the house, alienating its goods and possessions — including a ship — and keeping a married woman as a mistress; the brethren, moreover, were accused of molesting the priests of the priory's dependent churches. The findings should perhaps be seen in context — a wave of alien suppressions had occurred under Henry IV in the previous year. Internal jurisdiction, moreover, was placed in the hands of the cellarer, Walter Jordan, who had, significantly, appeared as the tenant-in-chief of the secular manor of Pill in 1404 (Haverfordwest Reference Library, Francis Green Collection, Vol. 12, 369).

⁴² RCAHM(W), op. cit. in note 15, 229; Pritchard, op. cit. in note 14, 134.

⁴³ The Benedictines apparently also claimed jurisdiction over Pill, without success, in the 15th century: Cowley, op. cit. in note 27, 64 n. 49. Tiron, however, continued to regard St Dogmaels Abbey as a dependency, and it appears in Tiron's cartulary until the early 16th century (Round, op. cit. in note 15, 527) while the brethren were referred to as 'monks of Tiron' in letters patent of the 15th century: see *Cal. Patent Rolls, Henry V, Vol. II, AD 1416-1422* (London, 1911), 2.

⁴⁴ Pritchard, op. cit. in note 14, 91. Interestingly, the chancel at St Dogmaels was also recorded as 'ruined' (ibid.).

⁴⁵ Pritchard, op. cit. in note 14, 139.

⁴⁶ As were many houses in SW. Wales: Roberts (ed.), op. cit. in note 20, 126-7.

apparent that it had suffered during the 15th century — from the after-effects of the Glyndŵr rising,⁴⁷ from internal circumstances, and from the general decline that characterised most Welsh monastic houses.

THE DISSOLUTION AND LATER

In 1536 St Dogmaels Abbey and its daughters at Pill and Caldey were dissolved in the suppression of those monastic houses with values of less than £200, and fell to the crown.⁴⁸ The *Valor Ecclesiasticus* recorded that Pill Priory was worth annually £67 15s. 3d. gross, £52 2s. 5d. net after charges.⁴⁹ The figure can be compared to that of St Dogmaels, with an annual value of £87,⁵⁰ and the much poorer Caldey Priory which contributed £2 3s. 4d. annually to the mother house, its annual income being £5 10s. 11d. plus tithes of £1 1s. 11d.⁵¹ The Benedictine priory at Monkton, Pembroke was comparable with an annual value of £57 9s. 3d.⁵² Some financial recovery had possibly taken place at Pill.

St Dogmaels and Caldey were acquired by the Bradshaws, a Lancashire family.⁵³ Pill Priory was treated as a separate, secular property, of the manor of Pill and Roch, and with its core possessions which remained together, was leased by the crown to a variety of tenants during the period 1535–46. The priory site and its environs, including five orchards, a wood and a meadow at Pill, the priory mill and several other possessions including St Budoc's and Steynton Church were demised by the crown to John Doune who, in 1544, confirmed the grant of his interest to John Wogan who in turn had been the lessee of the 'priory' in 1536–7.⁵⁴ The *bloc* had, by 1546, been demised to John Vaughan, Gent., and was worth annually £3 16s. before tithes.⁵⁵ In fact Pill was a typical Welsh house in that much of its property had already been leased in time to put it beyond royal reach; five out of eight leases from the 1530s are dated 1535.⁵⁶ There is evidence that the priory may have possessed 'concealments', i.e. lands and houses which were monastic property but which had not, at the Dissolution, been duly surrendered to the crown.⁵⁷

The manor of Pill, including the priory site and associated holdings, was sold in June 1546 to the aspiring local landowners Roger Barlow of Slebech and his

⁴⁷ In 1404 'on account of the rebellion of the Welsh' the manor 'did not exceed the value of £100' (Haverfordwest Reference Library, Francis Green Collection, Vol. 12, 369).

⁴⁸ The prior, William Watt, had been a monk at Pill in 1502: R. A. Roberts (ed.), *Episcopal Registers of the Bishops of St Davids 1397–1518*, Vol. II (London, 1917), 73. He was granted a pension of £10 (Haverfordwest Reference Library, Francis Green Collection, Vol. 12, 538, *State Papers*).

⁴⁹ Knowles and Hadcock, op. cit. in note 6, 106.

⁵⁰ Hilling, op. cit. in note 19, 28. The community at Pill had recently numbered five, as compared with only six at St Dogmaels.

⁵¹ Ludlow, op. cit. in note 8.

⁵² Knowles and Hadcock, op. cit. in note 6.

⁵³ Hilling, op. cit. in note 19, 28.

⁵⁴ E. A. Lewis and J. C. Davies (eds.), *Records of the Court of Augmentations Relating to Wales and Monmouthshire* (Cardiff, 1954), 166–7; Haverfordwest Reference Library, Francis Green Collection, Vol. 12, 576, *State Papers*.

⁵⁵ Compared with £4 4s. for Haverfordwest Priory and £1 5s. for Haverfordwest Friary. See Anon., op. cit. in note 23, 168–70.

⁵⁶ A. Jones, 'The estates of the Welsh abbeys at the Dissolution', *Archaeol. Cambrensis*, xcii (1937), 269–86, p. 272. Many of the leases are reproduced in Augmentation Ministers Accounts of 1536–42, published in Pritchard, op. cit. in note 14, 147–56.

⁵⁷ A concealment at Burton Hill, investigated by the Commission in c. 1578, may have been a Pill holding. See B. G. Charles (ed.), *A Calendar of the Records of the Borough of Haverfordwest, 1559–1660* (London, 1967), 37–8.

brother Thomas. The Pill estates formed part of an extensive lot, assembled from a number of separate holdings and purchased from the crown for £705 6s. 3d.⁵⁸ Central to the sale were the lordships (and manors) of Slebech and Minwear which comprised much of the upper end of the Eastern Cleddau estuary including the site of the former Knights Hospitaller commandery of Slebech, and which formed the nucleus of what became vast Barlow family estates in Pembrokeshire, with the former Augustinian priory of Haverfordwest, and the former Dominican friary at Haverfordwest. The lot also comprised '*parcel of the possessions of the late Priory of Pill . . . with all manner houses, buildings and demesne lands to the same belonging, and a watermill there*'.

Structural evidence suggests that the priory church was abandoned, but that the conventual buildings were altered for domestic use. Similarly, the Barlows rebuilt Slebech Commandery as a mansion house, John Bradshaw established a smaller house from the conventual buildings at St Dogmaels while Caldey Priory was converted by one of the Bradshaw's tenant families.⁵⁹ However, the documentary record is scant and there is no evidence that the Barlows themselves resided at Pill and no tenants have been identified. Six households were recorded at 'Great Pill' in 1566,⁶⁰ which may represent the former priory buildings, but the occupiers were not named, while Pill was not recorded as the location of a residence in 1588–1613 in the visitations of the genealogist Lewis Dwnn.⁶¹ The hearth tax returns of 1670, moreover, do not suggest that a house of any quality occupied the priory site.⁶²

An account of Pill Priory by the Pembrokeshire antiquarian Richard Fenton, writing c. 1811, describes the priory ruins much as they survive today.⁶³ Burials had been recently exposed in 'a garden adjoining the ruins of the priory church' including a stone coffin lid with a medieval inscription in relief 'in flowery characters', but the precise location is not given.

Pill remained in Barlow hands until 1758 when Catherine Barlow married Sir William Hamilton.⁶⁴ The main occupation in the district during this period was boat-building, with some lime-burning.⁶⁵ The priory grist mill was still operational in 1793.⁶⁶ Scattered development around the ruins is shown as an informal

⁵⁸ B. G. Charles, 'The records of Slebech', *Nat. Lib. Wales J.*, v (1948), 179–98, pp. 183–4; F. Green, 'The Barlows of Slebech', *W. Wales Hist. Recs.*, III (1913), 117–40, pp. 122–3. See Anon., op. cit. in note 23, for a transcript of the sale document. The purchase also included the rectories of Boulston, Martletwy, Minwear and Slebech, but not those benefices which had been in the gift of Pill Priory, which were retained by the crown.

⁵⁹ Hilling, op. cit. in note 19, 28; Ludlow, op. cit. in note 8. However, neither of the Haverfordwest houses were adapted as dwellings.

⁶⁰ E. A. Lewis (ed.), *The Welsh Port Books, 1550–1603* (Cardiff, 1927), 311.

⁶¹ S. R. Meyrick (ed.), *The Heraldic Visitation of Lewis Dwnn* (London, 1846).

⁶² F. Green (ed.), 'Pembrokeshire hearths in 1670, Part I', *W. Wales Hist. Recs.*, x (1924), 177–216, p. 182. The surnames of none of the lessees mentioned in 1535–46 are present.

⁶³ Fenton, op. cit. in note 17, 179–81.

⁶⁴ Hamilton and his nephew Charles Greville were responsible for the establishment of Milford Haven as an entirely new harbour town in the 1790s.

⁶⁵ Lewis, op. cit. in note 5.

⁶⁶ Charles, op. cit. in note 32, 618.

grouping on maps of 1818 and 1842.⁶⁷ The area was termed 'cottages, gardens, ruin etc.', and 'waste', in the schedule of a sale plan of 1861,⁶⁸ when the site was occupied by a number of tenants. It remained primarily agricultural until c. 1864 when a pumping station and a sawmill were established nearby (Fig. 2).⁶⁹ The two post-medieval conversions of monastic, conventual buildings, 'The Steps' and the 'Priory Inn', are both in private hands.

THE PRESENT SITE

The free-standing remains of the priory church are now the most striking element of the site and are a garden feature of 'The Steps', a present dwelling which, along with the Priory Inn public house to the south, contains elements from the conventual buildings which were arranged around a more-or-less formalised cloister (Figs. 2 and 3). The remains of all are constructed from Old Red Sandstone and Carboniferous Limestone, both from local sources.

The remains of a large, regular, roughly rectangular millpond, measuring at least by 300 m from north to south and 40 m from east to west, with an E.-W. dam, lie 150 m north of the site (Fig. 2). It was formerly the source of both the eastern stream, and a leat which supplied the 19th-century sawmill and is now culverted beneath the eastern edge of the site.

The priory site is crossed from north-east to south-west by a metalled lane, which overlies part of the church and appears to have been formally established between the mapping of 1842 and 1861 (Figs. 2 and 3); however a trackway follows a similar line on a number of early prints, including Henri Gastineau's view of c. 1834 (Fig. 13)⁷⁰ which also shows a low stone bridge on the site of the present structure over the eastern stream. The bridge over the western stream is a simple, semicircular arched structure which could be from any date during the post-medieval period, but the course of both streams may have been established by the Middle Ages. Existing boundaries north and west of the church site are all radial to the lane and there is now no physical evidence in this area for any earlier features. On the north side of the lane is a terrace of three houses built between 1861 and 1864, flanked by two modern dwellings, while the houses 'Pink Cottage' and 'Priory Stream' lie immediately east of the eastern stream (Fig. 3). The lane is bounded on its south and east sides by a low, but thick masonry wall which is not shown on early prints and may be from the mid-19th century, and a further wall runs from north to south between it and the Priory Inn.

THE PRIORY CHURCH

The church was cruciform and is now represented by the standing remains of the chancel arch and the truncated east wall of the square, central tower, the

⁶⁷ Ordnance Survey 1-inch Old Series, Sheet 38; National Library of Wales, Stainton parish, Tithe Map and Apportionment, 1842. This map shows neither the millpond nor the leat; it can be inferred, however, that they were present. The tithe map is very vague and it is impossible to relate individual buildings to their later equivalents, while the schedule does not list the owners or tenants of the priory site.

⁶⁸ Pembrokeshire Record Office, D/RTM/1/501/11.

⁶⁹ Ordnance Survey, 1:2,500 First Edition, Pems. Sheet XXXIII.4 (1864).

⁷⁰ National Library of Wales, Top. A12/1, A157, P8885, *Pille Priory*, by H. Gastineau (c. 1834).

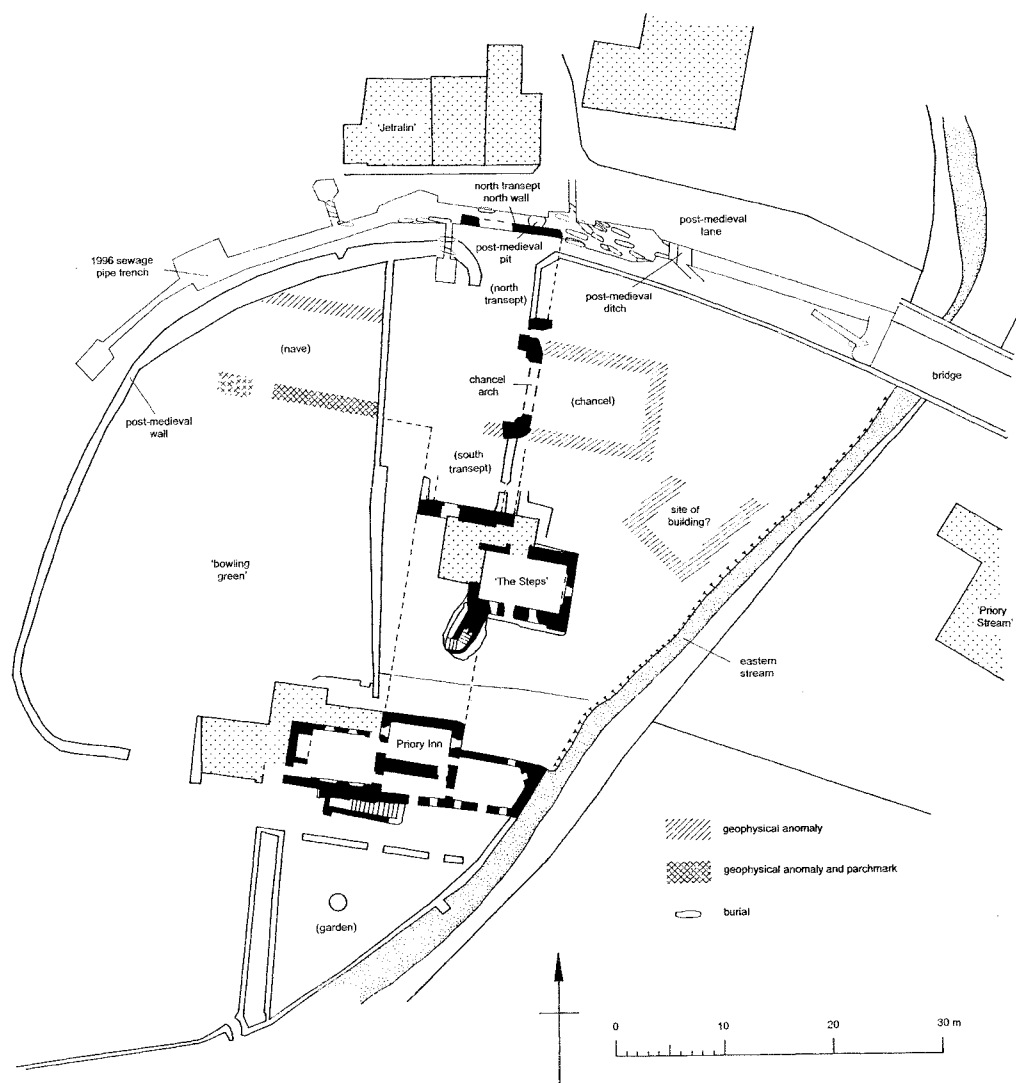


FIG. 3

Composite plan of priory features.

transept arch responds and the south transept south wall (Figs. 3 and 5). These were subject to detailed recording in 1999. In addition, the probable footings of the north wall of the north transept were revealed during the 1996–7 watching brief, and the nave and chancel wall lines were recorded as geophysical anomalies in 1999.

The building stone is entirely the local Old Red Sandstone rubble, with lime mortar bonding. Neither the chancel arch, nor the springers for the two similar transept arches which survive at either end exhibit any dressings; some plaster survives and the church must originally have been plastered both inside and out,

including the arches. Doorways and lights appear to have been similarly plain. The remains are covered in soft vegetation which obscures underlying architectural features, while the arches are actively weathering.

The south transept was occupied by a dwelling from the mid-19th century until recently, 'Priory Cottage', which was still standing in 1982 when a ground plan of the internal arrangements was drawn.⁷¹ It was a small, single-storeyed structure that incorporated the medieval south wall. A further 19th-century building, apparently constructed from stone recovered from the priory ruins, occupied part of the nave but was demolished in the 1970s.⁷²

The chancel and tower (Figs. 4 and 5)

The plain chancel arch survives more-or-less complete and is two-centred, and rather low, measuring 5 m in width and 5.5 m in height (Figs. 4 and 5). Masonry continues above the arch to a height of 9.8 m above present ground level, forming the truncated east wall of the square tower which formerly lay over the crossing, its north-east corner housing a spiral stair. The corework of the chancel north wall survives to a height of 5.2 m and, with the slight scar of the south wall, demonstrates that the chancel was 6.5 m wide internally; the external dimension can be reconstructed as 9.25 m on the basis of a north wall thickness of 1.37 m. The creasing for its steeply pitched, gabled roof survives on the east face of the tower above the chancel arch, the apex lying 9.5 m above ground level and the overhanging eaves 4 m above ground level. Below the roof apex is doorway with a two-centred head from which the chancel roof-space was entered from the tower, and an offset on the east face at the sill-level of the door suggests that the chancel was ceiled rather than vaulted.

The north and south walls of the chancel appeared as a pair of linear high resistance anomalies in the geophysical survey of February 1999 (Fig. 3).⁷³ The anomalies extended east of the chancel arch where they terminated as a pair of possible returns marking the east wall and giving an approximate external length of 11.5 m for the chancel (approximately 10 m internally). The anomalies were rather weak, possibly due to later landscaping and levelling.

The crossing is 6.60 m wide which gives the internal dimension of the tower from north to south. Two square-headed slit lights occupy the east wall at first-floor level, opening either side of the chancel roof apex and the door described above. The southern slit lit the interior of the first floor of the tower, which lay above a light vault; the vault springers survive either side of the west face of the chancel arch, but to the north they lie beneath plaster while the sockets for three heavy joists are also present giving a floor level 6.8 m above ground level and a further joist-socket can be seen above the north transept arch. The northern slit-light lit the head of the spiral stair and was matched by a second light in the north face of the stair turret; the latter lies in the angle between the chancel and north

⁷¹ A. J. Parkinson of RCAHM(W). The drawings are deposited with the National Monuments Record, Aberystwyth.

⁷² Pers. comm. R. Richardson, occupier of 'The Steps'.

⁷³ Archaeophysica, 'Geophysical Survey at Pill Priory, Pembrokeshire' (unpubl. rep. for Cambria Archaeology, 1999; copy deposited in the National Monuments Record, Aberystwyth).

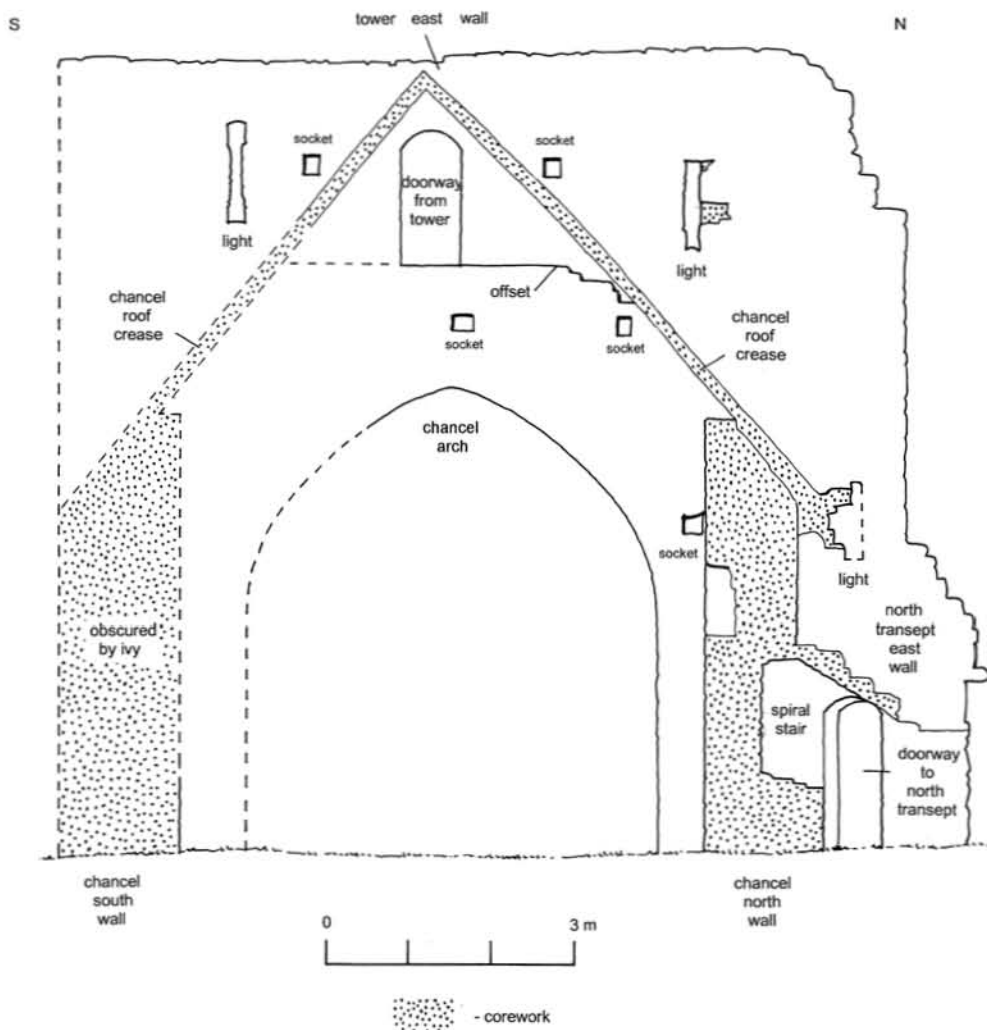


FIG. 4A

The E. face of the chancel arch.

transept and now appears semicircular, but 18th- and 19th-century drawings prove it to have been square, originally projecting 2.5m from the chancel and transept walls.⁷⁴ The stair is entered from the tower first floor via a semicircular-headed doorway whose sill corresponds with the floor level. A pair of internal corbels higher up in the first floor, of unknown function, flank the central light. Corbels at a higher level, corresponding with the internal heads of the openings 9 m above ground level, may have supported timbers for the tower second floor; this level was lit by two lancets, now gone but depicted on the early drawings (Figs. 12 and 13).

⁷⁴ E.g. National Library of Wales, *op. cit.* in note 70.

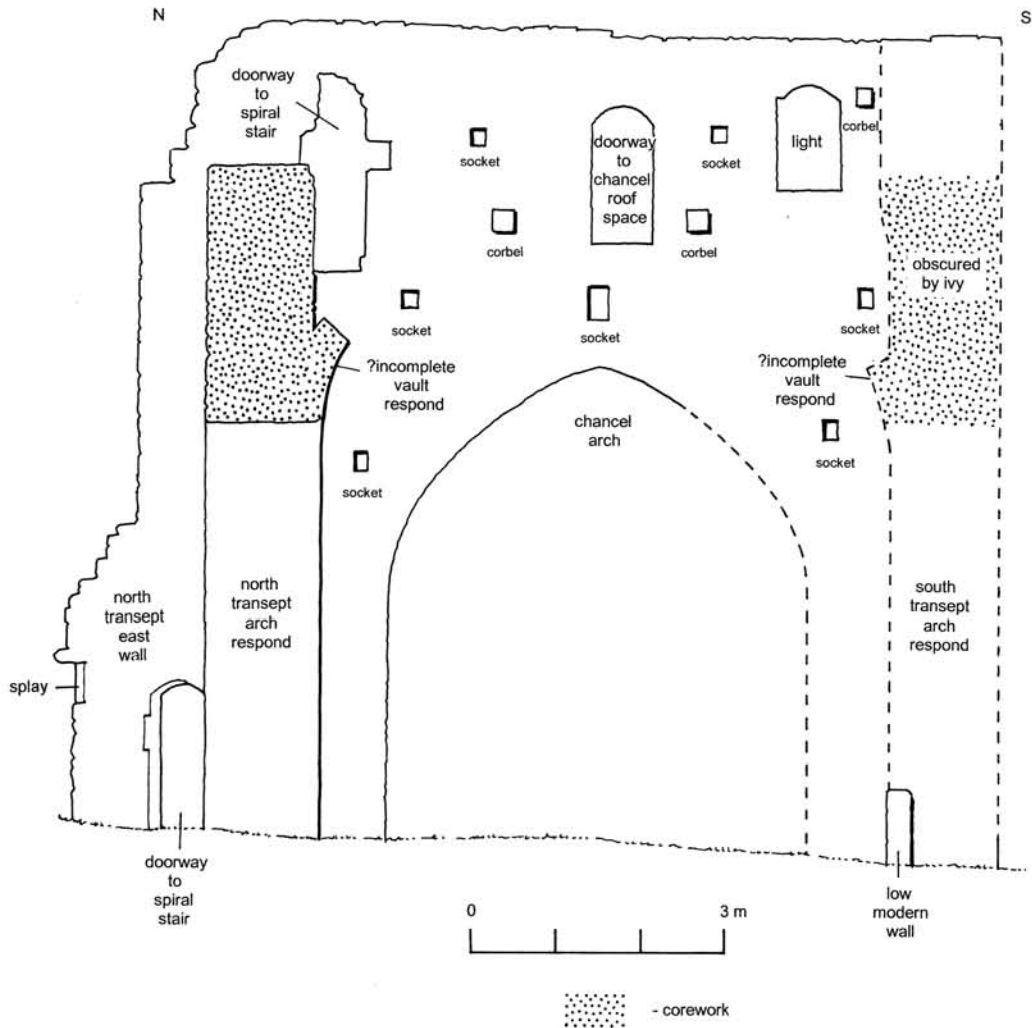


FIG. 4B

The W. face of the chancel arch.

The north transept (Figs. 6 and 15)

Enough survives from the arch responds of the north transept to calculate that it was probably slightly lower than the chancel arch but of similar width and equally plain. The eastern splays of a light to the tower first floor survive in the stub of the tower north wall, above and to the east of the scar from the gabled transept roof, which occupies the same level as the chancel roof and is equally steeply pitched.

The north transept is also represented by a very short stretch of the lower half of its east wall including a narrow doorway with a weathered, plain ?semicircular head, hard against the north side of the transept arch respond at ground level,



FIG. 5

The chancel arch from W., with nave S. wall parchmark, photographed July 1999.

which led on to the tower spiral stair; the breach in the east face of the stair turret is recent. There is evidence for an internal reveal to the north of the door between 1.5 m and 2 m above ground level, which may be the remains of a recess shown in a drawing from 1775 (Fig. 12).⁷⁵ The exposed corework here has been consolidated and capped in recent years.

Two sections of truncated masonry wall were observed during the 1996–7 watching brief, running from east to west beneath the lane through the site (Fig. 15). Together they represent a length of lime-mortar bonded, Old Red Sandstone rubble wall which was exposed to a height of 0.40 m but was, due to incomplete excavation, of unknown thickness and depth. Finished stops were exposed at both east and west ends giving a length of 9.6 m. The wall respects the alignment of the church remains and appears to represent the north wall of a north transept, with external measurements of 9.6 m from east to west and 10 m from north to south.

The south transept (Figs. 7 and 8)

Rather more remains of the south transept. The arch from the crossing is now obscured by thick ivy growth and at present can only be assumed to be similar to the north transept arch but the eastern splay of a light to the tower first floor is

⁷⁵ National Library of Wales, Top. A12, P8335, A63, *Hubberstone Priory, Pembrokeshire, by S. Hooper (1775)*.

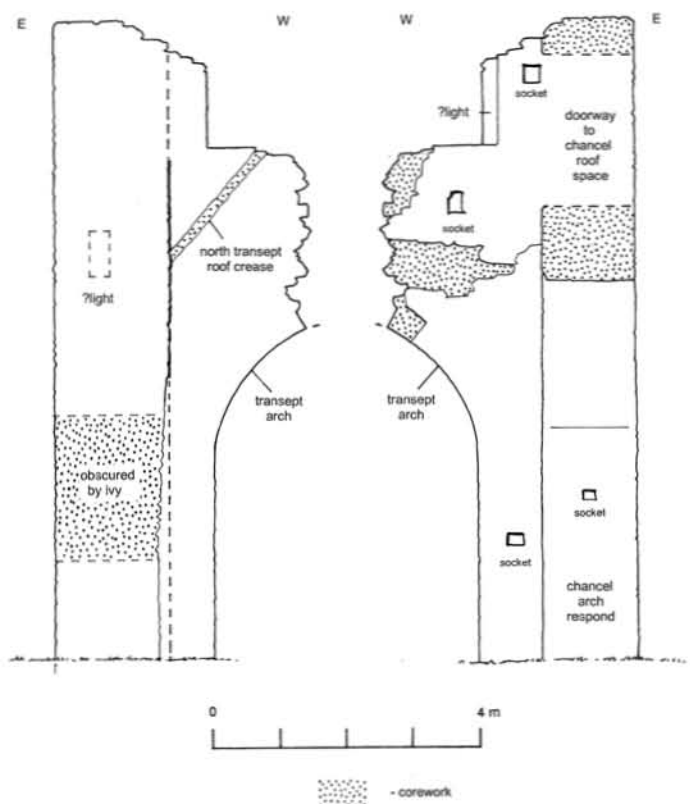


FIG. 6

The N. and S. faces of the north transept arch.

probably also present; the base of the arch retains traces of plaster and limewash. While some of this may be original, a cottage occupied the area of the south transept during the 19th and 20th centuries and the finish may date from this period. A parchmark was visible within the eastern half of the arch opening during the summer of 1999, possibly representing a screen or tomb.

The south wall of the transept forms the north wall of 'The Steps' (Figs. 8–9), and has survived more or less complete, but much of its south face is inaccessible. The wall survives to a height of 9 m and includes the base of the gable; an offset visible at a height of 7.5 m demonstrates that the transept, like the chancel, was ceiled. Thirteen sockets/putlog holes are present in the wall, most of which appear to run through its thickness. Externally, evidence for the east range is visible as the scar of a pitched roof running downwards to the south, and the corework of a return at the south-eastern angle. A doorway leads from the east range into the transept, with a segmental rear-arch to the south; the surround now has a two-centred arch but has been altered several times. In 1982 the opening contained one of the two chimney flues which were cut into the wall during its later use in 'Priory Cottage';⁷⁶ the fireplace has been since removed while the eastern flue still runs up

⁷⁶ Drawings and notes by A. J. Parkinson, RCAHM(W), 1982, deposited with the National Monuments Record, Aberystwyth.

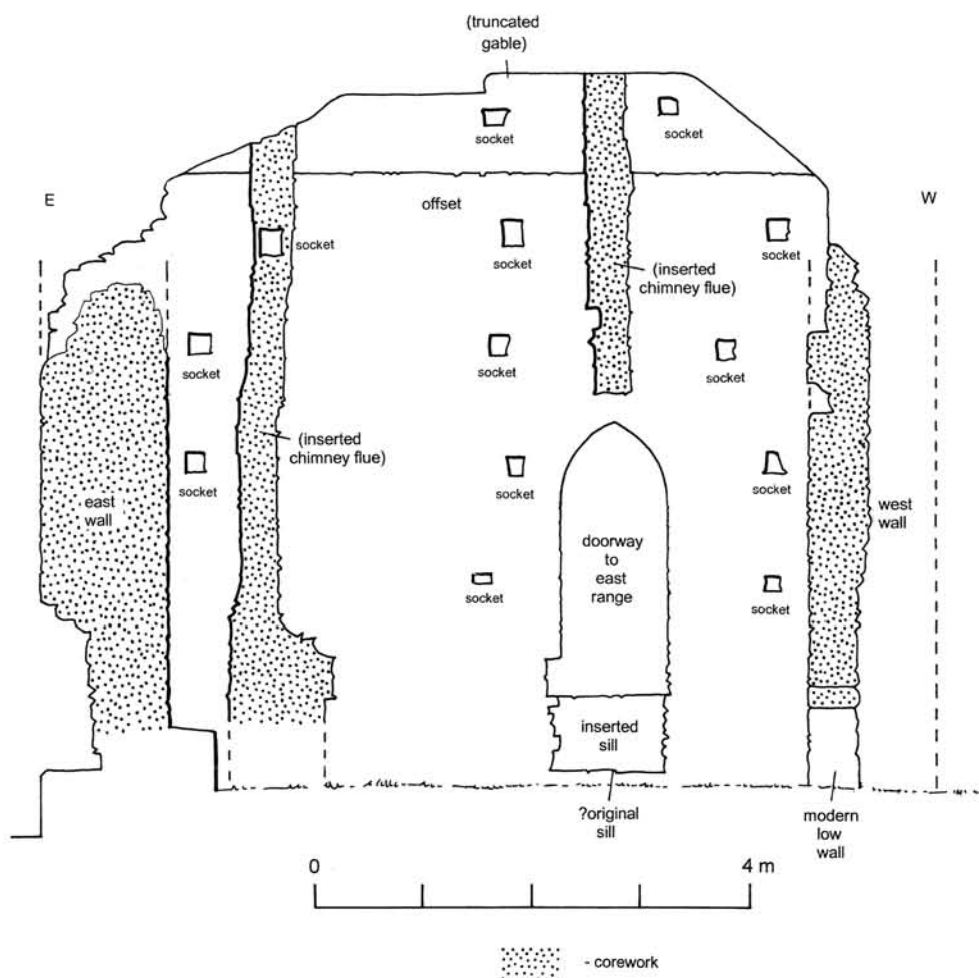


FIG. 7A

The N. face of the south transept S. wall.

from the ground floor. The scars of the return of the east and west transept walls are evident to an average height of 5 m and the external dimensions of the transept can be calculated as 9 m from east to west (6 m internally) and 8.5 m from north to south (7 m internally).

The nave (Figs. 3 and 5)

Nothing remains of the nave above ground. However, the geophysical survey revealed a pair of linear high resistance anomalies, 6.60–9 m apart, extending west of the crossing (Fig. 3). Both appeared to run beneath the lane, the northern anomaly being recorded as an 18 m length and the southern recorded for 21 m overall. Successive landscaping activities on the site, including the establishment of a bowling green over material deposited within this area during the later 20th

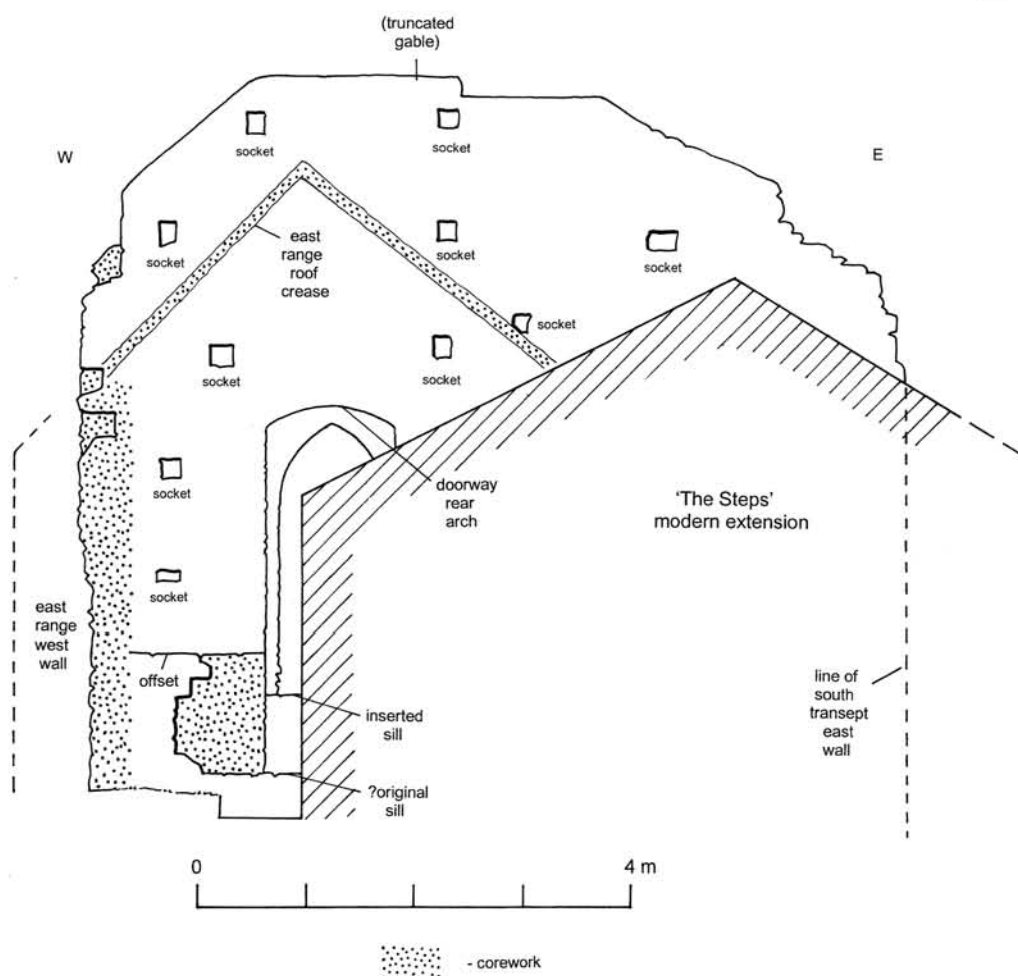


FIG. 7B

The S. face of the south transept S. wall.

century⁷⁷ may have partly suppressed the geophysical evidence and neither anomaly appeared east of the narrower modern wall leading north from the Priory Inn. They can none the less be confidently interpreted as the north and south walls of the nave, and occupy the same alignment as the transept arches. The south wall can also be observed as a well-defined, regular parchmark, 15 m long and 1.5 m wide, during dry summers (Figs. 3 and 5). A regular, 2 m-wide gap towards its west end may represent the site of the doorway from the nave into the cloister.

DISCUSSION OF THE CHURCH

It is clear that the church was a cruciform building with a three-storey central tower, and steeply pitched gabled roofs with overhanging eaves. Its overall

⁷⁷ Pers. comm. by the Lower Priory occupiers.



FIG. 8

'The Steps' from N. showing south transept S. wall.

horizontal dimensions can be reconstructed as at least 40 m from east to west, of which the chancel occupied approximately 11.5 m and the nave and crossing represented at least 30 m, but it now lies partly beneath the 19th-century lane. The church measured approximately 27 m from north to south across the transepts. There is no evidence in any form for either a north or south aisle.

The documentary sources have been seen to make little reference to the buildings of the priory, either during the medieval period or later. The remains of the church, and all elements that have been lost but are depicted in antique prints, appear to be of a single architectural style, and therefore a single build, and there is neither physical nor pictorial evidence for subsequent alteration. The style is Transitional — while the crossing arches were plain, two-centred arches, all other openings were single lights, some with two-centred heads but the majority with semicircular heads. This accords with a construction phase immediately after the foundation, between 1180 and 1200. However a 'rebuild' of the chancel, now gone, was documented in 1504 as the sole reference to a building campaign.⁷⁸ Since the remains have served as an ornamental garden feature for some time, moreover, some consolidation to exposed corework, or even aesthetic alterations, may have been undertaken. While the crossing may have had a light vault, the springers lie beneath plaster suggesting that the vault may either not have been

⁷⁸ Pritchard, *op. cit.* in note 14, 139.

completed or was later removed, and sockets for heavy joists are also present. The entire structure may therefore have been unvaulted, which in Pembrokeshire would also suggest an earlier rather than later date. No dressed stone is present and none appears ever to have been recovered from the site or its environs.

Early illustrations of the ruins, from 1775–c. 1830 (Figs. 12 and 13),⁷⁹ show the church in much the same condition as today. However, at least 3 m of masonry have been subsequently lost from the tower east wall above the chancel arch including two single lancets, both with two-centred heads, which lit the third stage. The spiral stair turret can also be seen to have been double-chamfered back into the north-east angle of this stage.

It has been suggested that the north transept was never completed,⁸⁰ but the masonry recorded during the watching brief, probably from its north wall, and the physical evidence for its roof crease, spiral stair door and niche prove otherwise. A view from the west, of 1775 (Fig. 12),⁸¹ clearly shows the remains of the north transept east wall, including the recess, which appears to have been a blind niche. A stretch of wall to the south of the crossing appears to represent the east wall of the south transept and is pierced by a single semicircular-headed light similar to those that survive elsewhere. Both the north transept and the later building against it had entirely gone in Gastineau's slightly later engraving (Fig. 13),⁸² and the south transept was represented only by its south wall as today, which is pierced by a doorway leading from the former east range. The north transept was slightly longer than the south transept, to include the spiral stair doorway. The evidence suggests that it was also somewhat wider, by approximately 0.6 m, but dimensions are projected and may not be reliable. The transepts appear to have been simple, consistent with a late 12th-century date, with no development of apsidal transept chapel(s) as seen in the earlier 12th-century work at St Dogmaels.

The overall form and dimensions are similar to those of the church at the mother house, St Dogmaels, which measures 53 m from east to west by 30 m from north to south and was also cruciform (see Fig. 20) but, as initially laid out in the earlier 12th century, was aisled.⁸³ It was rebuilt in the early 13th century as an unaisled structure which is, along with the churches at Pill and Haverfordwest Priory (at which the tower, which lies over the nave east bay, was a late insertion), one of only three fully cruciform churches in the Pembrokeshire area. The right-angled passages between the chancel and the transepts at St Dogmaels — perhaps a variation of the 'skew-passages' seen at many Pembrokeshire churches — are unusual and absent from Pill. The 13th-century chancel was typically square-ended with dimensions of 15 m by 9, compared with 11.5 m by 9.25 at Pill. St Dogmaels is, however, a much more ornate and complex building with a wealth of

⁷⁹ E.g. National Library of Wales, Top. A12, P902, A62, *Hubberstone Priory, Pembrokeshire*, by Paul Sandby (1778).

⁸⁰ Drawings and notes by A. J. Parkinson, RCAHM(W), 1982, deposited with the National Monuments Record, Aberystwyth.

⁸¹ National Library of Wales, op. cit. in note 75. A low, thatched post-medieval barn lies against the E. face; the spiral stair door is blocked.

⁸² National Library of Wales, op. cit. in note 70. Low farm buildings appear to lie within the north transept, precursors of 'Priory Cottage'.

⁸³ Hilling, op. cit. in note 19, 22–43.

dressed stone, mainly from the early 13th-century rebuild and in the Early English style (also seen at Haverfordwest) rather than the Transitional of Pill.

The dimensions at Pill also accord with those of the former Benedictine church at Llanbadarn Fawr, Ceredigion, which is moreover similar to Pill in being very plain and Transitional in style, and measures exactly 48 m from east to west and 28 m from north to south. Its nave and chancel, however, are much wider — externally 12 m in the nave, as opposed to approximately 9 m at Pill — possibly for the display of relics, while most of its openings have two-centred heads with plain, chamfered dressings.

With the exception of the chancel, whose restoration was recorded in 1504,⁸⁴ the church appears not to have been subject to extensive later work, and indeed the 15th century appears to have been, as for other Welsh houses, a period of decline.

THE CONVENTUAL BUILDINGS

The dwelling called 'The Steps' and the Priory Inn public house — which was formerly a farmhouse — lie south of the church and are post-medieval conversions of some of the monastic, conventual buildings. Both buildings are of locally quarried stone, predominantly in Carboniferous Limestone but featuring some Old Red Sandstone, and comprise two storeys. Both are now in private hands, and inhabited.

'The Steps' (Figs. 8 and 9)

'The Steps' is a two-storeyed building built against the south transept. The main ground-floor chamber has an irregular, semicircular barrel-vault (Fig. 9). A narrower, single-storeyed chamber, with a parallel two-centred barrel vault, lies next to the transept. It is open at both east and west ends, where it has possibly been truncated, and is divided into a narrower western half and a wider eastern half by a dog-leg in the northern wall face. An extension was built at the west end of 'The Steps', and over the narrower vaulted area, in the 20th century.

The main ground-floor chamber is now entered via an inserted entry through the north wall, and a doorway through the west wall. The latter wall is a late insertion into what was formerly a low, full-width opening, and has a rounded, depressed two-centred arch at a slightly lower level than the vault. The east wall is also inserted but the responds of the earlier wall are visible either side of the infill; a two-centred relieving arch visible above the level of the infill may be medieval and probably relates to a large window opening. The openings in the south wall are post-medieval, but the windows may occupy the site of earlier openings; the north wall may originally have been blind. The western half of the south wall features an internal fillet at ground level; this may be a finish over exposed footings as appears to be the case within the narrow vaulted area to the north.

The first floor is entered via a plain, square-headed inserted doorway in the south wall reached by an external masonry stair lying skew to the N.-S. axis of the

⁸⁴ Pritchard, *op. cit.* in note 14, 91.

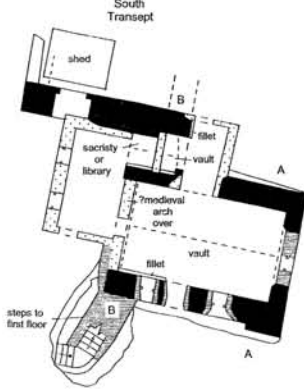
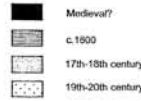
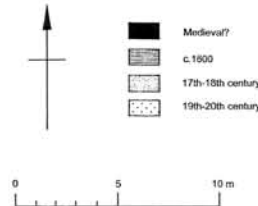
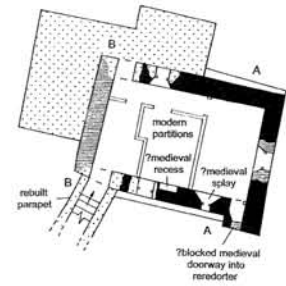
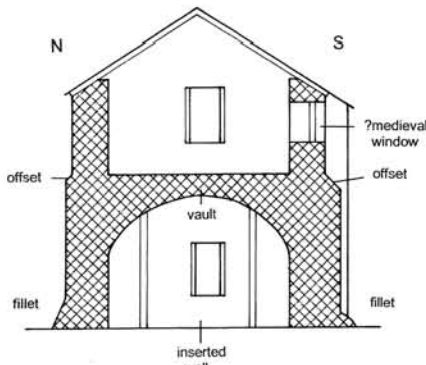
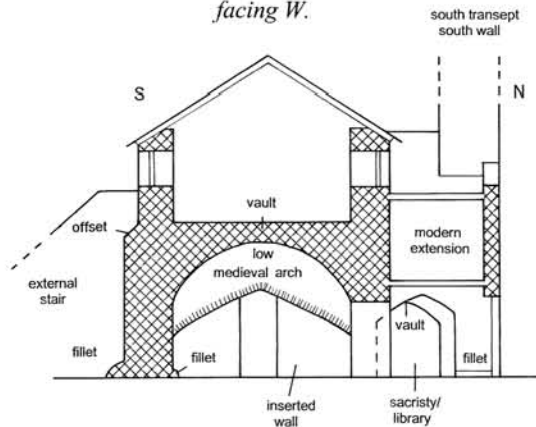
a. Ground floor*b. First floor**c. Section A-A, facing E.**d. Section B-B, facing W.*

FIG. 9

'The Steps' — plans at ground- and first-floor level, and sections.

priory and of post-medieval date; the stair parapets have been subsequently rebuilt. There is also a modern entry, from a modern stair, in the north wall. The west wall lies over the inserted ground-floor wall. A buttress at the east end of the south wall appears to incorporate a medieval first-floor doorway which seems to have led into a building formerly attached to the south-east corner of 'The Steps' (Fig. 13). Immediately to the west is a small, square-headed window, with wide splays, that appears to be entirely (late) medieval. The remainder of the windows are later insertions/alterations, but a segmental-headed internal recess in the south wall may be medieval.



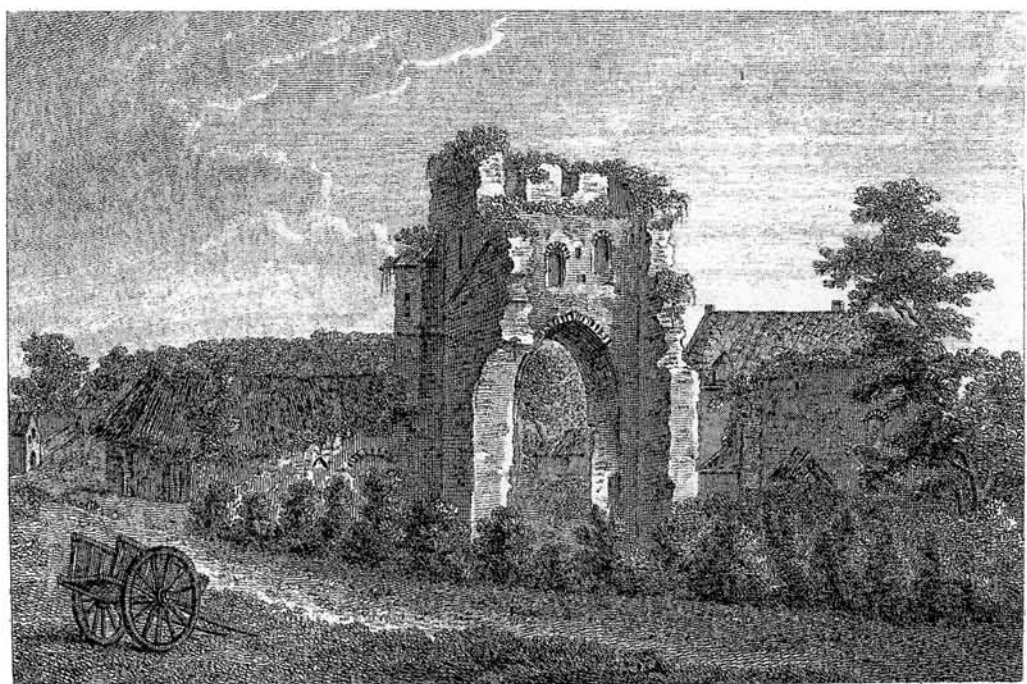
FIG. 11

The Priory Inn from NE.

exterior of the north wall, moreover, exhibits a horizontal 'chase' which represents the soffit, and ultimately the respond, of a parallel vault, of the same dimensions, that lay to the north; the truncated east and west side walls of this former building can also be discerned (Fig. 11). The 'chase' is interrupted by a secondary corbelled chimney inserted after this parallel vault had been demolished, probably c. 1600. The northern cell, though aligned E.-W., has a N.-S. gabled roof over the first floor, which rises above the roof-line of the southern component and now exhibits a window with an uncusped, double-rebated semicircular-headed window from c. 1600. Two doorways at first-floor level may be contemporary. One has a simple four-centred surround, the other a segmental surround which appears to have been rebuilt or re-used. All other openings lack dateable detail or have been rebuilt, but the ground floor features two small, square internal recesses in the north wall, and one in the south wall, which may be of medieval date, while at the east end of the south wall is an altered doorway which may also be medieval.

The interior of the southern component of the east-of-central cell was not fully seen. It butts against the west-of-central cell, but is butted in turn by the easternmost cell. Its openings are all later insertions/alterations of the 18th century, but there is a corbelled first-floor chimney on the south wall, alongside a blocked window with evidence of a square surround of possible early 17th-century date. It is therefore suggested that this southern component was constructed c. 1600 during the alterations to the northern component.

The earlier, west-of-central cell is unvaulted, and is entered at ground-floor level through three doorways, all of which appear to be inserted. In addition, the north wall appears to have been rebuilt. The west wall is very thick and features a large, deep fireplace which occupies almost the entire width of the cell (Fig. 10D).



20 Jan 1775

S. Hooper. Es.

Picot. Sculp.

FIG. 12

The priory from NW., by S. Hooper, 1775.

This has a depressed semicircular arch, with corbelled imposts, of pronounced late medieval appearance. There are two blocked windows with wide splays in the south wall. This cell is now entered through a much-altered doorway in the south wall, at first-floor level, reached by an external staircase which lies against both this and the east-of-central cell, and is probably originally from c. 1600. The possible blocked slit-light at the west end of the south wall may be earlier.

Other buildings (Fig. 3)

An arrangement of resistance anomalies immediately south-east of the chancel (Fig. 3) appear to define the southern part of a rectangular structure aligned NE.–SW., lying alongside the eastern stream that runs through the site. An external width of 8.5 m is suggested (5 m internally) while the long, NW.–SE. axis was recorded for 12 m.

DISCUSSION OF THE BUILDINGS (Fig. 14)

The evidence suggests that both 'The Steps' and the Priory Inn are post-medieval conversions of vaulted, conventual buildings, which during the medieval period related to a more or less formalised cloister with an east range and a



FIG. 13

The priory from NE., by Henri Gastineau, c. 1834.

southern component possibly forming part of a proper south range. However, there are few direct documentary references to the buildings from either the medieval or post-medieval periods, and the inferred medieval work cannot be closely dated.

The two buildings appear to represent part of a two-storeyed east range (Fig. 14) with dimensions similar to those at St Dogmaels (see Fig. 20), comprising a N.-S. row of vaulted undercrofts which is represented at its southern end by the east-of-central component of the Priory Inn and the adjoining vault-springer to the north. The creasing for the roof line is still visible on the south wall of the south transept showing it to have been gabled, with overhanging eaves, and probably continuous. The ground floor of 'The Steps' appears to be a medieval vaulted chamber, projecting from the assumed east wall of the range. A further vaulted area lying alongside to the north appears to have been divided, on the line of the main east wall, into two areas possibly representing a sacristy and library. The main ground-floor chamber of 'The Steps' was entered through its west wall via a large opening which occupied almost the entire wall space and may have divided a larger chamber into two. Alternatively, the present chamber may represent a secondary addition or extension. The inserted wall in the open, west end of the ground floor may be very late, possibly 19th- or 20th-century, but the earlier post-medieval arrangements here are unknown.

'The Steps' first floor appears similarly to be medieval, but its west wall is a later insertion, possibly from c. 1600. One window and a doorway also survive from the medieval period. The external stair lies over, and conceals, the projected

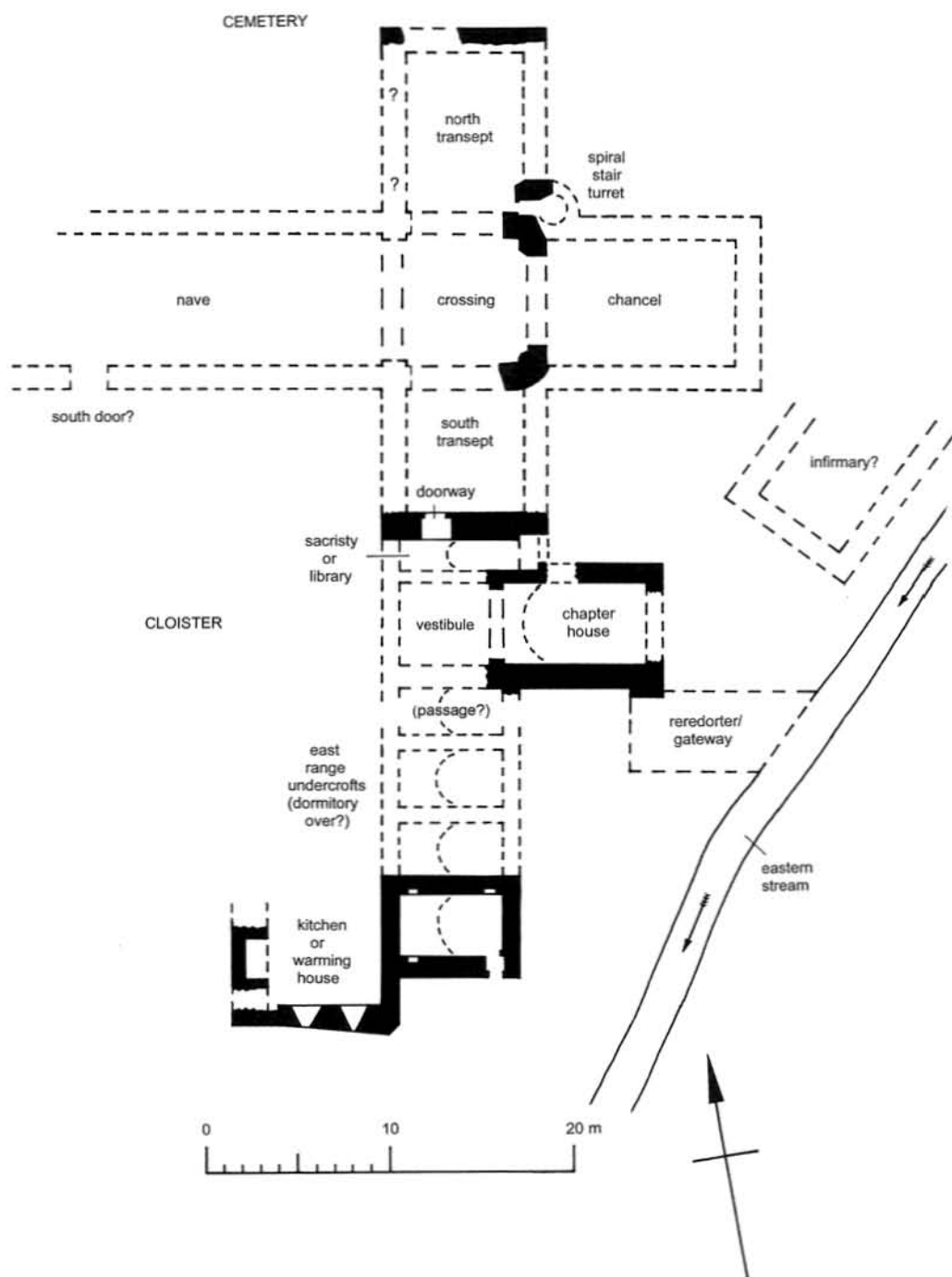


FIG. 14

Interpretative plan of the priory buildings.

junction of 'The Steps' and projected east range, perhaps furnishing further evidence for the existence of the latter.

There is room for three vaults of similar widths in between 'The Steps' and the Priory Inn, with which they may have formed an undercroft range beneath a dormitory; the doorway in the south wall of the south transept is associated with corework which may be derived from the base of a night stair. 'The Steps' ground-floor chamber may have been lit by a large window in its east wall, and may represent the Chapter House, mentioned in 1504.⁸⁵ The chapter house at St Dogmaels is a detached building from the late 13th or early 14th century, entered from a vestibule in the east range (see Fig. 20). The arch in the west wall of 'The Steps' ground-floor chamber may represent the entry from a similar, but attached vestibule.

Priory Inn's west-of-central cell is offset to the south of its eastern neighbour. Its west wall, which contains a deep fireplace, may represent a conventual warming-house, as, for instance, at St Dogmaels, or a kitchen as at the Cistercian abbey of Tintern, Monmouthshire; in both houses, the refectory lay to the west. However, the absence of a vault must be remarked upon, particularly in a room where the fire would have been the centrepiece. A first floor would also be unusual but its south wall does appear to feature a blocked first-floor slit-light which is probably earlier than c. 1600. The south wall is thicker towards its east end which may suggest infill around a buttress, or possibly a 'turret' — the original stairway arrangements are not known.

'The Steps' is shown in much the same form as at present on engravings of 1778 and 1834 (Figs. 12 and 13), but against its south-eastern corner was a further rectangular, E.-W. gabled building of two storeys, the western bay of which was occupied by a large, segmental-headed through-passage. It was thus rather like a gateway in form. However, an opening low down in its east wall appears to have discharged into the eastern stream, and it may then have been a monastic reredorter approached, over a pre-existing trackway, from the doorway in the first floor of 'The Steps'.

The possible detached building revealed by geophysics south-east of the chancel is not recorded on any early pictures or maps. It does however occupy a site which was often chosen for the infirmary in smaller monastic houses,⁸⁶ and which at Pill would take advantage of the running water in the eastern stream (prior to its use in the reredorter?). However, measuring just over 12 m by 8.5 it is substantially smaller than the infirmary at St Dogmaels which measures 23 m by 18 (see Fig. 20).

There is no geophysical evidence for a west range. However, an extensive west range at St Dogmaels contained the abbot's hall and chamber above cellarage (see Fig. 20),⁸⁷ and the prior of Pill is likely to have been provided with similar private accommodation somewhere within the precinct. Moreover, the west side of the cloister was the normal location for monastic cellarage, and a 'cellarer' is

⁸⁵ Pritchard, *op. cit.* in note 14, 139.

⁸⁶ Cf. *inter alia*, St Dogmaels Abbey, and Dudley Priory, W. Midlands.

⁸⁷ Hilling, *op. cit.* in note 19, 41.

mentioned in the priory accounts.⁸⁸ There is also no evidence for cloister alleys but their presence may be inferred.

Accurate dating of the buildings is impossible in the absence of surviving detail. Vaulting, in Pembrokeshire, can be from any period. The later adaptations into private dwellings are more closely dateable. The first floor of the proposed east range oversails Priory Inn's south component of the east-of-central cell, but features a window from c. 1600, when it is suggested that the south component was added. This date is consistent with the character of most of the surviving detail, suggesting that the east range was, by this time, not only ruinous but largely demolished — the surviving, southern bay was finished with a new north wall, with a corbelled chimney, that truncates the (ruined?) vault to the north. In addition, 'The Steps' was given a first-floor entry, with a staircase crossing the projected line of the east wall of the range.

The Barlows rebuilt Slebech Commandery as a mansion house,⁸⁹ and John Bradshaw's mansion at St Dogmaels re-used part of the monastic west range,⁹⁰ while a Bradshaw tenant remodelled Caldey Priory into a house of some quality demonstrating that tenants could acquire sufficient resources to undertake substantial building works of their own.⁹¹ The conversion of Pill Priory is comparable and similarly was probably the work of a Barlow tenant. It appears to have been confined to the conventual buildings; all evidence suggests that the priory church was abandoned, as at Caldey but unlike St Dogmaels which was partly converted for parochial use.

THE CEMETERY

The sewage pipe excavations, observed during the 1996–7 watching brief, revealed 31 human inhumations in an area north of the priory church. They occupied a 55-m section of the pipe trench, which was machine-excavated, averaging 1.60 m in width and 3 m in depth, and ran along the lane towards the bridge over the eastern stream.

The normal planning procedure had been bypassed and the watching brief was undertaken as an emergency measure; most of the burials were cleaned for recording and left *in situ*. The circumstances did not allow for detailed analysis of the little human bone that was lifted, which was in any case fragmentary and generally unstratified.

The burials

The main concentration of burials lay within an area immediately to the east of the north transept (Fig. 15). Bone preservation was good, due both to soil conditions and the presence of lime mortar from the priory walls, and in most cases the remains were intact and articulated. In all at least 31 individuals were

⁸⁸ Roberts (ed.), *op. cit.* in note 20, 361–71. Monastic cellarge was normally located on the western side of the cloister.

⁸⁹ Neither of the Haverfordwest houses was adapted as a dwelling, however.

⁹⁰ Hilling, *op. cit.* in note 19, 28.

⁹¹ Ludlow, *op. cit.* in note 8.

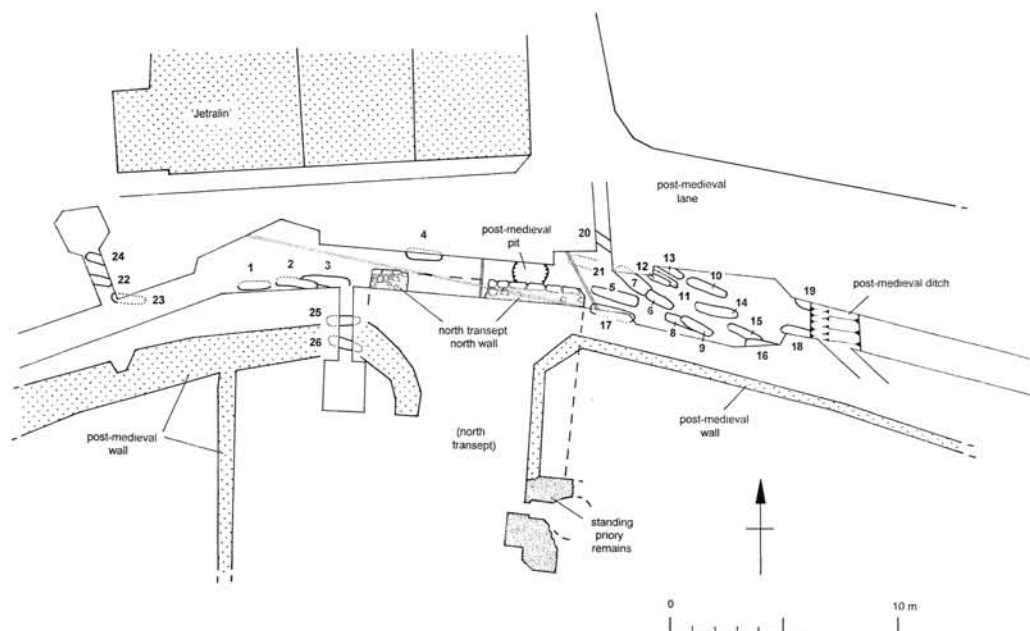


FIG. 15

Plan of the sewage pipe trench showing the burials and other features.

represented, but of these only 26 were *in situ* from undisturbed inhumations. Generally, all the inhumations were normally oriented, but there was a definite pattern of aberrant orientation east of the north transept, whilst those to the west reverted to a true E.-W. orientation. All the burials were extended and supine and of those that were wholly revealed (burials 2-7 and burial 19) had their lower arms flexed across either their waist or pelvis, whilst the (female) burial 18 had the arms folded across the chest with the hands resting on the shoulders.

It was possible to discern the gender of seven of the burials. Burials 2-5 and 19 were male whilst burials 7 and 18 were female. Burial 6 was a juvenile retaining milk teeth, while the few bones excavated from burial 25 were of small size indicating the presence of a second juvenile, of unknown gender. All the remaining burials were adult, but it was not possible to determine their gender due either to incomplete excavation or sewage pipe disturbance.

The inhumations lay within 0.2-0.7 m of the present lane surface, suggesting that medieval levels have been truncated (Fig. 16); the construction of the lane has disturbed much of the original stratification, and it was not possible to estimate the original depth of the grave cuts, or the nature of the original levels.

Due to the relatively high incidence of grave superimposition, direct stratigraphical relationships existed between a number of the burials. Burial 3 was, for example, cut by burial 2 and their fills were markedly different. A layer of discretely scattered blue slate fragments lay at the bottom of burial 2 and a similar horizontal layer was present some 0.2 m above the body. Within the group comprising burials 5, 6 and 7, it was only possible to demonstrate that 6 cut 7.

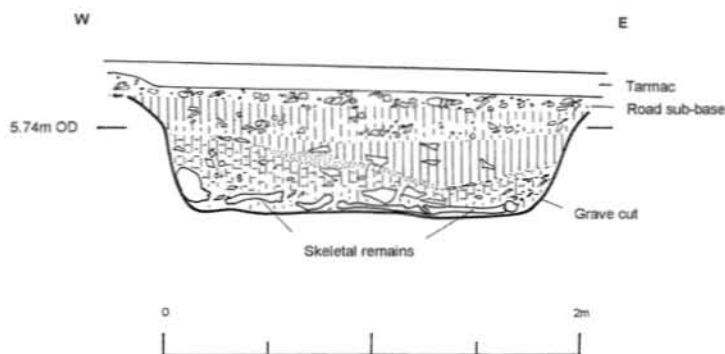


FIG. 16
Northern section of burial 4.

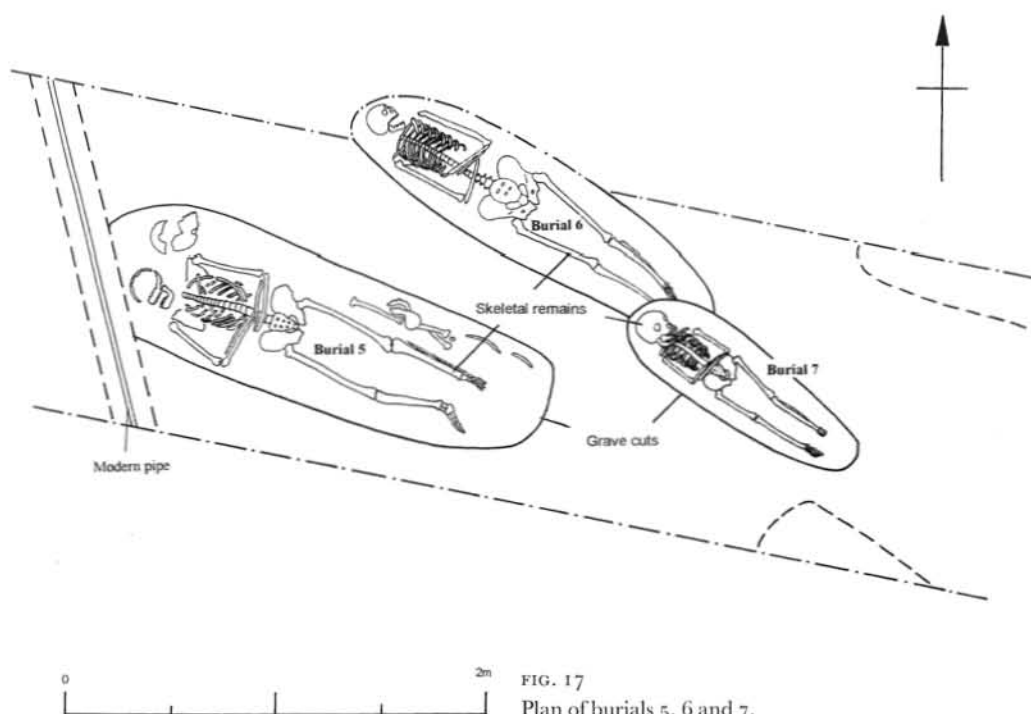


FIG. 17
Plan of burials 5, 6 and 7.

Grave 5 was superimposed on an earlier burial and its fill contained the remains of at least two individuals (Figs. 17 and 18).

Burials 18 and 19 at the east end of the area had similar fills including the layers of discretely scattered slate fragments, but were truncated by a 2.2 m wide ditch. The central burials 8 to 16, and burials 20–2 and 24–6 at the west end of the area were only partly excavated. Disarticulated broken bones from at least two individuals lay within a disturbed area immediately north of the north transept, while skeletal remains were found near the bridge indicating the presence of at least one burial.



FIG. 18

Superimposed burial 5 from SW.
showing pipeline trench excavation.

The finds

There were few finds within the grave fills. An incomplete iron buckle, probably representing a shroud fastening (Fig. 19), had oxidised on to the right femur of burial 3. There were small traces of verdigris in the fill of burial 2 which may represent coffin nails, but no further evidence for a coffin was present. No further fittings were found within the fills of any of the other burials.

Other finds were of a fragmentary nature and mainly unstratified, but a few small ceramic sherds occupied the fill of burial 5. Traces of glazing suggested that they may have been derived from ridge-tile, as well as unglazed coarseware, but they were insufficiently preserved to be securely identified or dated. Most grave fills contained oyster shell and the occasional limpet shell.

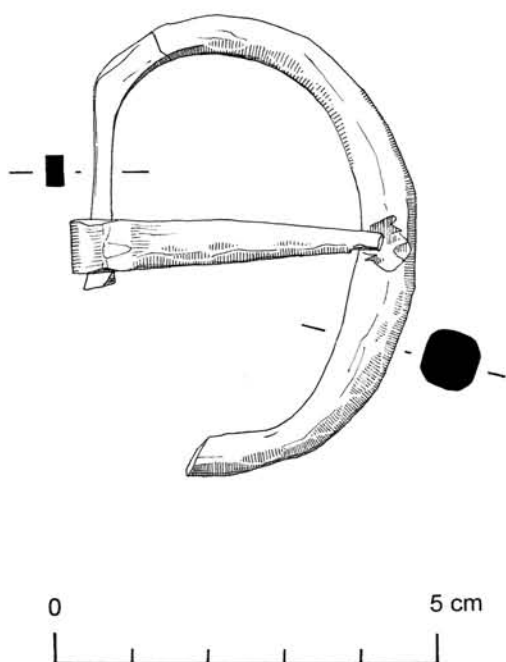


FIG. 19

The iron buckle from burial 3. Scale 1:1.

DISCUSSION OF THE CEMETERY

The cemetery is undoubtedly associated with the medieval priory and the scant dating evidence indicated a broadly medieval date, which, in the absence of any evidence to the contrary, is suggested for all the burials. All the burials were extended and supine. However, the folded arms of female burial 18 may be significant, possibly suggesting a religious connection. There was no further indication of the status of any individuals, secular or ecclesiastical.

Only one burial contained any evidence for a coffin. The slate layers in burial 2 appear to have been a deliberate part of the burial ritual, and were also present in burials 5, 6, 7, 18 and 19. Slate layers have also been observed at the medieval cemetery at Carmarthen Greyfriars,⁹² with interments from c. 1300 onwards. It may represent a cultural derivation from the regional cist-burial tradition. Fittings were confined to the iron buckle from burial 3 (Fig. 19) which has been suggested to feature incised chevron decoration (but this is difficult to determine and is not shown in Figure 19), and to have been tinned or silvered. It is broadly medieval, but cannot be closely dated.⁹³

The fill of the superimposed burial 5 contained mortar, and ceramic fragments possibly derived from ridge tile, which may indicate some building works during the lifetime of the cemetery. The tile fragments could not be closely dated, but the

⁹² This observation was made during salvage recording by Cambria Archaeology in 1997 and thus post-dates the report published by T. James, 'Excavations at Carmarthen Greyfriars, 1983-1990', *Medieval Archaeol.*, 41 (1997), 100-94.

⁹³ Pers. comm. P. Parkes, Conservator, School of History and Archaeology, University of Wales College of Cardiff.

form was prevalent post-1300 and represents the earliest date attributable to the burial which, however, lacked any stratigraphical relationship with other features. It is apparent that medieval surface levels were considerably higher, but the construction of the lane through the site in the 19th century was probably at least partially responsible for their truncation. Demolition debris — probably attributable to the immediate post-Dissolution period — was observed elsewhere in the sewage trench; early post-Dissolution features included a possible ditch and a circular pit, both of unknown function.

It is not easy to account for the relatively high number of individuals present. It has been seen that the community itself was always small, and a considerable percentage must represent laymen including members of the Roch family and other patrons. Pill was not recorded as having possessed any relics or a shrine, and no guest-house can be inferred from either the documentary sources or the archaeological evidence. However, the possible infirmary discussed above would have catered for laymen, while other individuals may have been pilgrims bound for St Davids.

THE REMAINDER OF THE PRECINCT

In 1544–6 Pill Priory and its environs were described as: *The house, site . . . and precinct . . . of the priory, all manner of houses etc., five small orchards, one little grove of wood and a meadow in Pill, together with the water grist mill in Pill, with mill, dam and water.*⁹⁴ It is typical of rural monastic houses in that any standing evidence for the former precinct boundary has been lost, and its original extent is unknown. However, while the burials observed in 1996–7 occupied a large area, the high incidence of superimposition may indicate that space was at a premium and the aberrant orientation of some of the burials — most noticeable towards the periphery — suggests that they may follow the line of the former northern precinct boundary. Hubberston Pill may have formed the southern limit of this precinct, from which the western stream may represent a boundary which joined the northern boundary somewhere north of the lane. The eastern boundary is probably represented by the foot of an uphill slope, the line of which is followed by the 19th-century sawmill leat now culverted along the edge of the site.

The precinct limits as described enclose an area of approximately 1.5 ha. Of the few surviving rural precincts, part of the boundary at the Tironian Titley Priory, Herefordshire, can still be discerned, but is of uncertain area. The precinct at Monkton Priory, Pembroke, which is in other respects a similar site to Pill, occupied approximately 1.75 ha. The precinct at Talley Abbey, Carmarthenshire, also a similar site, has gone, but may have enclosed 2.5 ha. The precinct of the larger St Dogmaels has also gone and cannot be reconstructed, but was probably at least 4 ha in extent. In contrast, the surviving inner enclosure around the large, Cistercian abbey at Tintern, Monmouthshire, occupies 1.95 ha within a precinct measuring 11 ha, while an enclosure of 4.5 ha is presumed at Whitland Abbey,

⁹⁴ Anon., op. cit. in note 23, 168–70; Lewis and Davies, op. cit. in note 54, 166–7.

Carmarthenshire.⁹⁵ The absence of physical evidence of boundaries, and the presence of watercourses around three sides, suggests that a structural precinct boundary may never have been present. There is similarly no physical evidence for any outer enclosures, formal or otherwise.

The saw-mill leat undoubtedly perpetuates the line of the medieval corn-mill stream. All evidence suggests that the eastern stream, which is supplied by the leat, has run through the site since at least the medieval period, flushing a possible reredorter. The millpond probably also functioned as a fishpond.

CONCLUSION

Pill Priory appears to have been a *de novo* foundation established as a daughter house of St Dogmaels Abbey between 1180 and 1200, with a fully developed conventual plan which may have been a primary feature. It is unusually complex for a British Tironian priory, which appear mainly to have been small and compact like Pill's sister house on Caldey Island, and occupies an intermediate position between these houses and the Tironian abbeys, of which St Dogmaels and five houses in Scotland are the only British examples.

The church appears to have been unaisled, cruciform around a three-storey central tower, and of moderate size. The surviving fragments appear to be of a single build, which is stylistically Transitional and contemporary with the foundation date-range. The present assemblage of two-storey buildings south of the church appear to incorporate the remains of vaulted, conventual buildings including an east range of vaulted chambers and a southern chamber, possibly a kitchen or warming house, that may not have formed part of a proper south range. They cannot be closely dated, having been extensively rebuilt for 'lower-gentry' domestic use after the Dissolution, when the church appears to have been abandoned. Evidence for a west range is so far absent but a possible infirmary is suggested by geophysics. A broadly medieval date is suggested for the associated cemetery, in which 31 burials were densely distributed in the small area observed, space apparently being at a premium. The modest size of the community suggests that some of these represent lay burials, and so there may have been additional endowments to the one recorded bequest. There is no standing evidence for the extent of the precinct but a hard physical boundary may never have been present.

Of the other Tironian houses, the first phase of the mother church at St Dogmaels, from the earlier 12th century, was aisled, with apses at the east end and in the transeptal chapels (Fig. 20). This plan-form characterised the earliest phases of even the great Benedictine churches, such as at Canterbury Cathedral and Westminster Abbey, and relates to the elevation of the house to abbey status. It is the only Tironian foundation in the rest of Britain that approaches the scale of those in Scotland, where the order was under the direct patronage of King David I. Five out of the eight Scottish houses became abbeys early in the 12th century and are subsequently large and complex, being aisled and cruciform, while some show the direct influence of Tironian liturgical practice in having double transepts,

⁹⁵ The surviving precinct at Ewenny, Vale of Glamorgan, is fortified and rather different in concept.

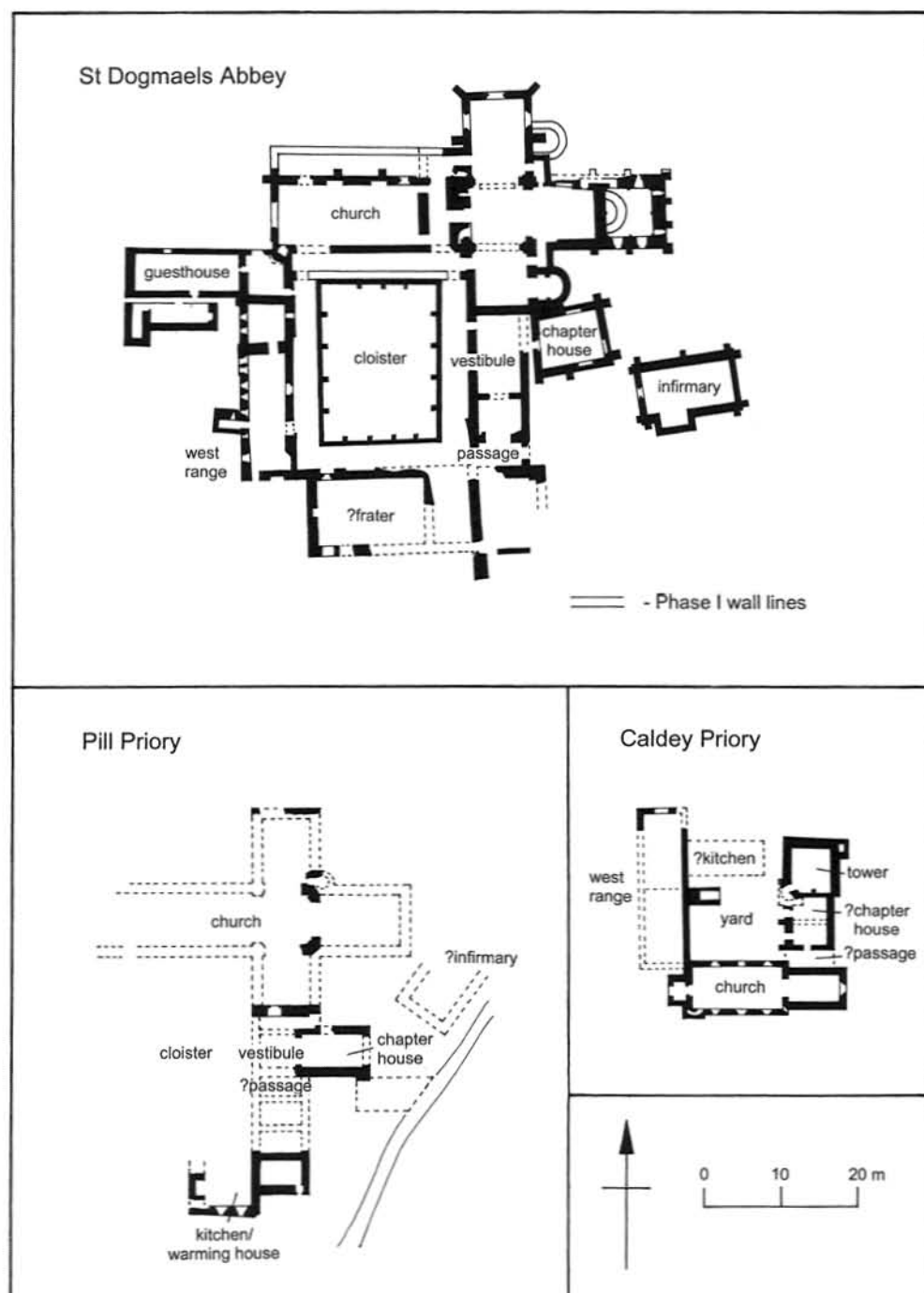


FIG. 20

Comparative plans of the medieval phases of the three Welsh Tironian houses.

as at Kelso.⁹⁶ St Dogmaels was later remodelled, in the earlier 13th century, as a more simple, unaisled structure not unlike the pre-existing church at Pill, but with a crypt in the chancel that is unique among Welsh monastic houses. Although similar in size to Pill, the church was also more ornate, and the many late-medieval alterations include 16th-century fan-vaulting in the north transept,⁹⁷ and the austerity of Pill is more akin to that of the well-known Premonstratensian church at Talley, Carmarthenshire — an indication of the relative poverty of the two houses. The detached chapter house and vestibule at St Dogmaels are not unlike the arrangements suggested at Pill; the extensive buttressing that characterises the 13th-/14th-century work at the mother abbey is however unusual within SW. Wales and not suggested at Pill, but does appear to have been a feature of the original east range at Caldey Priory. Only the fragmentary remains of one wall survive from the sister-house at Glascarrig — the only Tironian foundation in Ireland — and its arrangements cannot be ascertained.⁹⁸

A recent programme of detailed investigation undertaken at Caldey (Fig. 20) suggests that much of the present masonry belongs to the post-medieval period, and that the medieval priory was very small and of a fundamentally different nature to Pill.⁹⁹ The church was of simple two-celled plan, with a west tower like many local small parish churches, and the small enclosure, which lies north of the church — as at Tiron itself — and features a small 'pele' tower, may never have been a formal cloister. Nevertheless, the east range appears also to have originally comprised a series of chambers, at least one of which was vaulted. There may have been no north range, but a building possibly representing a kitchen may have occupied this location, and indeed the evidence for a proper south range at Pill is similarly equivocal. The south range at St Dogmaels, too, appears to have comprised one main chamber (the *frater?*),¹⁰⁰ and in this the three houses are together unusual. The medieval west range at Caldey, however, may have been a simple barn — quite unlike the cellarer's range seen at St Dogmaels where the arrangements are typical of the more complex Benedictine houses (Fig. 20).

The four English foundations — all priories directly dependent upon Tiron — are fragmentary, at best, but appear to have compared most closely with Caldey.¹⁰¹ Of the three Hampshire houses Andwell, which was surveyed in 1911 but is now largely destroyed, was almost identical in scale, and perhaps in layout, to the original work at Caldey (Fig. 21).¹⁰² The church appears to have been a similar, double-cell structure while there may also have been no proper cloister. The

⁹⁶ N. Cameron, 'The church in Scotland in the later 11th and 12th centuries', 42–6 in J. Blair and C. Pyrah (eds.), *Church Archaeology: Research Directions for the Future* (CBA Res. Rep. 104, York, 1996), at pp. 44–5. The house at Tiron itself (Eure-et-Loire), was twice rebuilt in the Middle Ages, and largely rebuilt again in the post-medieval period including the convent which is now an assemblage of Renaissance buildings: Pritchard, op. cit. in note 14, 30–1 and 35–6. However, the west front of the church survives from the 12th–13th century.

⁹⁷ Hilling, op. cit. in note 19, 22–43.

⁹⁸ W. H. Grattan Flood, 'Glascarrig Priory, County Wexford', *J. Royal Soc. Antiq. Ireland*, 35 (1905), 164–70, p. 164. The site has not been archaeologically investigated.

⁹⁹ Ludlow, op. cit. in note 8.

¹⁰⁰ Hilling, op. cit. in note 19, 22–43.

¹⁰¹ Three other houses — Humberston, Lincs., Merchingley, Northumberland and Muckleford, Dorset — are of uncertain status, possibly representing Benedictine foundations, Tironian cells or even granges: Knowles and Hadcock, op. cit. in note 6, 106.

¹⁰² *VCH Hants.*, 4 (London, 1911), 176–8.

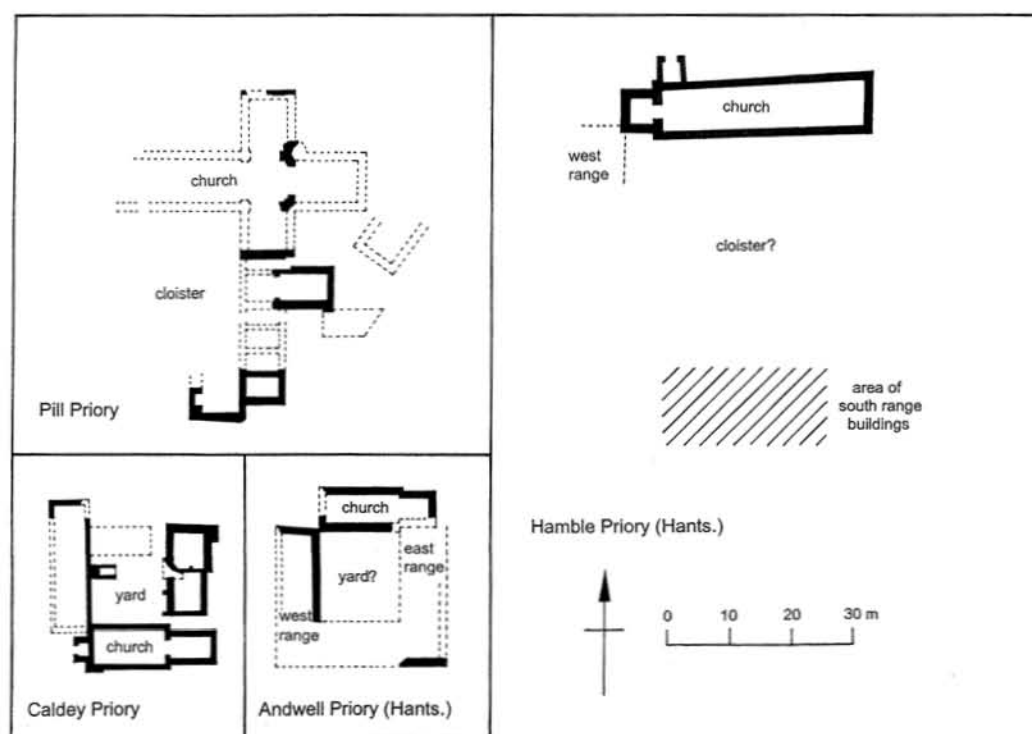


FIG. 21

Comparative plans of the medieval phases of selected Tironian houses.

church at Hamble was, in contrast, parochial and has survived, and similarly comprises a nave and chancel, with a 12th-century west tower, but is larger and more elaborate, approaching a 'conventual rather than parochial' style,¹⁰³ with evidence for the former presence of transepts which however appear to have been removed at an early period. Excavations in 1977 revealed the indications of a west range butting the tower, and evidence for a possible south range was apparently confirmed by a watching brief in 1990 when 'vestigial traces of three walls' were observed during machine excavation south of the nave (Fig. 21).¹⁰⁴ The church is not 'formally' monastic in plan but the size of the conventual area approaches that at Pill, allowing for a proper cloister and conventual buildings. The site of St Cross, at Newport on the Isle of Wight, was infilled in the 19th century and is little known. However, it was subject to an evaluation in 1996 in which 'substantial stone footings' were revealed, possibly belonging to the priory.¹⁰⁵ The site of Titley, in

¹⁰³ T. F. Kirby, 'The alien priory of St Andrews, Hamble, and its transfer to Winchester College in 1391', *Archaeologia*, 50 (1886), 251–62 at pp. 251–2.

¹⁰⁴ T. A. Hughes and P. A. Stamper, 'The alien priory of St Andrew, Hamble, Hampshire', *Proc. Hants. Field Club Archaeol. Soc.*, 37 (1981), 23–39; 'Medieval Britain and Ireland in 1990', *Medieval Archaeol.*, 35 (1991), 161.

¹⁰⁵ 'Archaeological excavation in the former Corralls Coalyard, Newport' (unpubl. Southern Archaeological Services client rep., 1996; copy held with the Isle of Wight Sites and Monuments Record, Carisbrooke).

Herefordshire, is also little known,¹⁰⁶ but the priory seems to have been on a similar scale to Andwell and Caldey. It is thought that a 17th-century cottage immediately north-west of the church — which was entirely rebuilt in 1868 — may occupy the site of one of the conventual buildings.¹⁰⁷

It is hoped that future work on these less-understood Tironian houses can be informed by the results of the investigations at Pill Priory, and also Caldey. A recent summary of current knowledge of the order declared that 'scope exists for research into the eight Scottish houses in relation to houses of this order elsewhere in Europe'.¹⁰⁸ This may be broadened to take in the whole of Britain.

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¹⁰⁶ Herefordshire Council Sites and Monuments Record, Leominster.

¹⁰⁷ RCAHM, *Inventory: Herefordshire* (London, 1934), 190.

¹⁰⁸ Cameron, op. cit. in note 96, 45.