



concentrated on the use of traditional materials and techniques, although in some cases modern technology has made it possible to carry out repairs more sensitively than traditional methods would allow. In addition, non-destructive methods of investigation have been used to assess concealed archaeological evidence. All the repairs are based on the results of detailed archaeological analysis and have been recorded.

The church

The priory follows a quadrangular plan around a courtyard (the cloister), much like that of a medieval monastery. The church is on the north side.

As is typical of friaries the church had a large aisled nave for preaching, and a chancel set aside as the friars' private chapel. There is now no 'walking place'

connecting the street to the cloister; this may have been destroyed during the fourteenth-century remodelling.

In its present form the church is greatly contracted, both at the ends and the sides. This reduction in size was carried out by Thomas Bell when he remodelled the church to create Bell's Place.

The north and south walls of the choir are thirteenth-century and bear traces of fine Early English arcading, which once continued round the demolished east end. At the east end of the south wall is the thirteenth-century door to the night stair (1 on the plan). This connected with the dormitory on the first floor of the east range, and gave the friars direct access to the church for services during the night.

The nave underwent substantial remodelling in the later fourteenth century. To appreciate something of its original (thirteenth-century) appearance, look at the two piers (stone supports) embedded in the later wall. These are very much in keeping with the order's rules on simplicity: plain drums with painted capitals (heads) rising to support barely decorated arches. The piers

and arches would have extended eastwards and westwards, giving an aisled nave that was probably six bays long, and may have measured some 90 by 55ft (27 by 17m).

In the fourteenth century the north and south transepts were rebuilt with much larger windows, and a chapel created in the south aisle. A pulpitum (screen) was now probably added; it would have contained altars where popular masses could be celebrated, and prayers said for the souls of the priory's benefactors. Projecting from the screen was a lectern, the rectangular stone base of which can still be seen (2). The great lectern now displayed in the north transept may once have stood here. This spectacular rebuilding of the central part of the church shows that by the fourteenth century scant attention was being paid to the original

Dominican directives on austerity in building.

The original thirteenth-century roof of the church has survived astonishingly well despite the extensive remodelling that took place below.

Other buildings (partly open to the public)

The east range would have contained a number of rooms on the ground floor, including the chapter house (3), where the friars would have assembled to hear readings and discuss the management of the priory. In the late fifteenth century the northern room appears to have been fitted out as a prior's lodging (4) with new floor tiles (now in store) and an oriel (bay) window. This has traces of a wall painting showing flowers and foliage on a red background, in a simulation of brocade. In the mid-sixteenth century this part of the range became the kitchens for Bell's Place, and a fireplace and ovens were cut into the former night stair. On the floor above is the northern end of the friars' dormitory, which retains its original roof timbers (heavily restored).

The ground floor of the south range may have been used for storage or as school rooms. The first floor must have contained the scriptorium or library; this would have been used by the friars for private study. It is a large room open to the roof and divided up into study cubicles. The thirteenth-century roof has recently been repaired. The rafters were mostly in an excellent state of preservation; they have been covered with stone slates, which are hung on split oak laths by wooden pegs. The laths have been 'torched' (plastered) on the undersides.

Most of the southern end of the west range was occupied by the refectory. The west wall was arcaded and the south wall still contains a magnificent triple lancet window. Three terraced houses were built into this range in the early nineteenth century and are now being repaired separately as houses.

Kitchens and other service buildings seem to have been outside the main quadrangle; there is evidence for a covered passageway connecting with the south range (5).

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