COGESHALL ABBEY AND ITS EARLY BRICKWORK

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Coggeshall Abbey, which lies in the heart of the Essex countryside, on the banks of the Blackwater River, is one of the lesser known monastic houses, but it is deserving of more attention than it has previously received.

It is true that the buildings which have survived are not extensive, by comparison with those to be seen in Yorkshire and elsewhere, but such as there are are full of interest and it is known that the foundations of the others may be found, often only a few inches below the surface, in ground that has been virtually undisturbed since the dissolution.

The particular importance of Coggeshall Abbey lies in the fact that brick was used as a primary building material at all periods of its history. Whether or not it will prove possible to establish (as has been suggested recently) that brick was known in Saxon times, there is ample evidence at Coggeshall to show that bricks of excellent quality were being made in England by the middle of the twelfth century, and that considerable knowledge had already been acquired at that early date as to the way in which this material should be employed.

History

Although no cartulary, as such, has survived, a fairly complete story can be pieced together from the writings of Ralph,¹ who was abbot from 1207 to 1218 and, for the later periods, from charters, wills and manorial documents. A very adequate account has been written by R. C. Fowler² and it will not be necessary to reproduce this in extenso; but mention may be made of some of the more important events and, in particular, of those which help to confirm the age of the various buildings and to identify the uses to which they were put.

Coggeshall Abbey was founded in 1140 by King Stephen³ as the thirteenth and last of the Savignac houses in England. His queen Mathilda provided the site and granted to the abbot and convent, by way of endowment, the manor of Coggeshall which she had inherited from her father, Count Eustace of Boulogne.

The abbey had only been in existence for seven years when the Savignac order collapsed and in 1148, by Papal Bull, the houses which it controlled were transferred to Citeaux.⁴ In spite of the confusion which must have resulted from the change, rapid progress was made in the erection of the permanent buildings and it is known that by 1167 the church was ready for use, for it was in that year that the high altar was dedicated by Gilbert Foliot, bishop of London,⁵ in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of

¹ Radulphi de Coggeshall, Chron. Angl. (Rolls Series), 1875.
³ Radulphi, op. cit., p. 11.
⁵ Radulphi, op. cit., p. 16.
St. John the Baptist. There are some grounds for the belief that the other essential buildings were completed at about the same time for it is recorded by Ralph that in 1168 Simon de Toni, the second abbot, ‘returned to his own Abbey of Melrose’. The date of Simon’s appointment is not known, but it seems reasonable to suppose that he was sent to Coggleshall at the time of the transfer, to see that the newly acquired abbey was established on orthodox Cistercian lines and that he departed in the knowledge that his work was done.

Of the period when the next abbot Odo held office, little is known, but from among many stories told of Peter his successor (1176–94) there is one of considerable importance, owing to the references which are made in it to buildings in existence at the time. It recalls the visit of some ‘Ghostly Templars’ who were found one day in the guest house by Robert the assistant hosteller. Judging that they were men of importance he went at once to arrange that they should dine with the abbot in his private quarters, but on his return they had vanished and, to use the words of the chronicle, ‘who these men were how they came or whither they departed, remains unknown even to this day’.

Peter was succeeded by Thomas who died in 1207, and the convent elected in his place Ralph, a distinguished member of their company who had become a monk only after an eventful career in the Holy Land. He had been present at the fall of Jerusalem, and he suffered much in his later years from a head wound received during the siege. It is perhaps unfortunate, from the Coggleshall aspect, that his interest in the Crusades and in the affairs of the outside world caused him to devote so large a part of his chronicle to these matters, but we must still be grateful to him for most of our knowledge of the early history of the abbey.

Ralph resigned in 1218 but lived on in retirement in Coggleshall until his death ten years later. He was succeeded by Benedict who, for nineteen years, had been abbot of Stratford Langthorne, and it was in the time of this abbot that there occurred an event of far-reaching importance.

It will be remembered that at the Lateran Council of 1215 instruction was given to the bishops that they were to regain control of the parish churches which, in many instances, had been assumed by the monasteries in the course of the previous century. Coggleshall was one of the parishes where this had occurred, and the situation had been complicated by the existence of a third claimant, the Cluniac priory of Rumilly, to whom the tithes had been granted in 1105 by Eustace of Boulogne.

With the approval of all three claimants, John de Fontibus, bishop of Ely, was called upon to adjudicate. As a result of his award, which was made in 1223, the abbot of Coggleshall retained the rectory and the great tithes, paying out of them a yearly pension of 10 marks to the monks of Rumilly: whereas the right to appoint a vicar was vested in the bishop of London (then Eustace de Fauconberg) and the small tithes were reserved for his support.

1 In accordance with Cistercian custom, the dedication should have been to the Blessed Virgin alone. It is significant that the second name does not appear in any subsequent document.
2 Radulphi, op. cit., p. 16.
3 Ibid., p. 134.
4 Ibid., p. 162. 5 Ibid., p. 187. 6 Ibid.
7 See letters from John of Salisbury to Pope Adrian IV, Bibl. Vatican Patrum (ed. La Migne), xxiii. 412. 8 St. Paul’s Library, MS. 1219 and Hist. MSS. Com., Report, ix. 39.
It was at about this time that the gatehouse chapel of St. Nicholas was built on the town side of the precinct and very significantly a font was installed in it. Within a few years distinction came to be made between the parishes of Great and Little Coggeshall: such terms had not previously been applied and it is not unreasonable to suggest that this chapel was intended to serve both as a *capella extra portas* and also as a rival church to that over which the abbot had lost control.

Although no documentary proof has yet been found, it is probable that the early years of the thirteenth century saw the making of the new and present main course of the Blackwater River, which was to provide a reliable head of water for the abbey mill. The artificial course is spanned by a bridge, the western half of which rests today upon the original three brick arches that were built by the monks.

With the usual increase in the worldly possessions of the abbey during the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, there came a corresponding improvement in the prosperity of the townspeople. Many towns in East Anglia and in Essex were concerned in the wool trade in that period and its development in Coggeshall was furthered by the proximity of the abbey and by the devotion of the Cistercian order to sheep farming.

As early as 1250 the abbot, in his capacity as Lord of the manor, obtained a charter for an annual fair lasting eight days, and this was followed in 1256 by a weekly market. By the end of the century (1282) Coggeshall wool was being sold in the Low Countries and by 1315 it had reached Florence. So were the foundations laid for the fortunes of the Coggeshall clothiers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and of these mention must be made of the Paycockes whose house, now in the care of the National Trust, may still be seen.

The next date of importance is 1518, when a certain Sir John Sharpe provided in his will for the disposal of the unexpired term of the lease of what he describes as 'my mansion and lodgings at Coggeshall Abbey'. Although Sir John’s lease has not survived, that granted in 1528 to his successor Clement Harleston is known and in this the house is described as ‘the mansion which Sir John Sharpe late held within the monastery’. From this document it is learned that the mansion was ‘next the firmary of the monks’ and that the property included ‘one little garden next the colliquitory on the west and the mansion on the east’; information which has proved of considerable assistance in the identification of these buildings. It should also be mentioned that Harleston was granted the exclusive use of St. Katherine’s chapel, known from the will of John Newman (1464) to have been that which lay to the north of the nave. The granting to a layman of a lease which allowed him to live within the abbey and to have exclusive use of a part of the church are interesting indications of the extent to which the abbey’s fortunes had deteriorated, but it is undoubtedly due to the presence of Clement Harleston, who does not appear to have been disturbed at the dissolution, that so many monastic buildings have survived.

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2 V.C.H. Suffolk, i. 225.
4 P.C.C., 13 Ayloff.
5 D. of L. Rentals and Surveys 2/11.
6 P.C.C., 6 Godyn.
Coggleshall Abbey was inspected by Cromwell’s commissioner, Dr. Thomas Legh, in 1535 and again early in 1536. As a result of the accusations which were made against him, the Abbot William Love was dismissed and was replaced by one Henry More, who was also abbot of Tower Hill and a Cromwell ‘quisling’. He dutifully surrendered the abbey and all its estates on February 5th, 1538.

In accordance with arrangements which had already been made, the property passed into the hands of Sir Thomas Seymour, who exchanged it with the Crown for other lands in 1541. This exchange necessitated a survey from which is known that within the three years the church was already ‘clene prostrate’.

The demolition of the cloister and other buildings followed and in 1581, when the Crown lease was held by the Paycocke family, Anne Paycocke and her husband, Richard Benyan, built the greater part of the house which stands today.

The original mansion of Sir John Sharpe, or some part of it, was still in existence in 1639 when a very accurate estate map was made, but it must have been demolished soon afterwards, when the present east wing was built around the skeleton of the infirmary hall. All that now remains of the mansion is a fireplace in an outside wall.

THE BUILDING PLAN

It should be clearly understood that no complete excavation of Coggleshall Abbey has yet been made, and that the present investigation has been confined to the buildings that are standing and to the evidence gained from a few test holes, made with a view to confirming foundation lines. The plan (Pl. V) is therefore based on somewhat limited knowledge.

The buildings outlined in black are those which are still standing and which are, for the most part, intact. Walls shown in full outline are those of which the foundations are known, either from excavation or from discoloration of grass in dry summers. Double dotted lines represent assumed continuations of known walls, and single dotted lines indicate the probable positions of other buildings on the assumption that a normal Cistercian plan was followed. The shaded area represents the sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century dwelling house, and the chain line, garden walls and hedges, and part of the modern road which covers most of the buildings to the south of the cloister.

The church, as will be seen, lay to the north of the cloister, but of this nothing remains. The position of the Chapter House has been proved by excavation and the dorter range now represented by the southern and by part of the eastern wall, has not survived north of the sixteenth-century porch.

1 L. & P. Hen. VIII, x. 164.  
2 Ibid. x. 774.  
3 Ibid. xi. 385 (37).  
5 An aide mémoire of Cromwell. L. & P. Hen. VIII, xii (2), 1191: ‘to speak with the abbot of Tower Hill for Coggleshall for Thomas Seymour’.  
6 D. of L. Rentals & Surveys 7/34.  
7 Until recently there was, over the porch, a stone with the initials and date RA  
8 Essex Record Office, D/Dop.
The information given in Harleston’s lease makes it evident that the mansion lay east of the north wing of the house, in an outside wall of which the fireplace may still be seen (Pl. XII, 2). The line of pillars running east and west through the house must therefore have been part of the infirmary and, if the ‘little garden’ lay where the north wing of the house now stands, the position of the ‘colliquitory’ or parlour is also indicated.

A two-storied corridor joins the infirmary with the building to the south of the dorter range, which was clearly the abbot’s lodging. Its position is certainly farther to the west than was usual, but this would have been unavoidable in view of the proximity of the floodland that was later turned into the new river bed. A close parallel can, in any case, be found at Kirkstall for the relative positions of infirmary and lodging, and even for the angle of the corridor by which they are joined.1 The detached building to the south of the eastern range was undoubtedly an early guest house.

Of the southern range of buildings nothing is yet known and on the west only a limited amount of work has been done, to determine the position of the cellarium and of the cloister wall.

One hundred and nine yards to the west of the church is the well-preserved gatehouse chapel, and there is reason therefore to believe that the gatehouse itself lay between it and the church. The southern boundary of the precinct almost certainly followed the line of an existing and curiously indirect road, and traces of the walls can be found in farm buildings.

On the north side the boundary is thought to have followed a line of palings which are shown on the 1639 map, and which are mentioned in post-dissolution leases. The palings have long since disappeared but the line may still be seen by aerial photography,2 and this suggests that here again there was once a more permanent wall. The aerial photographs show an additional inclosure to the north of this line, and there is ample evidence that here was the monks’ cemetery.

**Detailed Consideration of Buildings**

**Church**

The position of the church has long been known and the plan has already been published.3 It is of unusual shape, having an internal length of 210 ft. which includes a 73-ft. presbytery and a nave of 112 ft. The transepts were 25 ft. wide and measured 80 ft. internally from north to south. The foundations of all main walls were 5 ft. thick.

The foundation lines to the west of the garden hedge appear with amazing clarity in dry summers and they have been confirmed on many occasions by observation and by excavation.4 There is no evidence that any rebuilding ever took place. Except for the usual extensions of the presbytery which would have been made in the thirteenth or fourteenth century, and the additions, perhaps at an earlier date, of the small transept

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3 *R.C.H.M., Essex*, iii (1922), 166.
4 It has not been possible to confirm the foundations of the eastern extension which now lie under a private garden. If the church reached to the river bank it is difficult to see how Clement Harleston had access to the St. Katherine chapel.
chapels and the building of the larger St. Katherine chapel on the north side of the nave, it may be assumed that the church completed in 1167 served the brethren until the dissolution.

The church seems to have been built, for the most part, of flint rubble, with brick quoins, but segmental bricks which would have been used in columns 4 ft. in diameter have been found, and it is assumed that these columns supported the arches of the nave.¹

THE CLOISTER AND CHAPTER HOUSE

There is reason to think that the cloister was contemporary with the church, from the evidence of typical mid-twelfth-century stone capitals and bases, and a slender 9-in. shaft decorated with a spiral groove and nail-head projections, which were found in test holes on the eastern side (Pl. VI, 2). The cloister walk was 10 ft. wide and the garth 60 ft. square—rather smaller than would be expected in view of the size of the surrounding buildings.

Knowledge of the Chapter House is limited to that which was gained from a small-scale excavation near the wall of the south transept (Pl. VI, 1). The wall between the Chapter House and the cloister walk was of flint rubble, and 2 ft. thick. On the inside of the wall were two tiers of seats for the monks, the lower one being paved with rectangular, unglazed tiles 1 ft. 1 in. long, 6¼ in. wide, and 1½ in. thick. On the upper tier the tiles had been removed but their outlines could be clearly seen. The floor of the Chapter House was paved with similar tiles but these were 9 in. square. These paving tiles ran under the wall and so may be presumed to have been part of the original paving although, as they showed little evidence of wear considering their age, it is not unlikely that they were covered with decorated tiles in the thirteenth or fourteenth century. If so the later tiles were removed by the demolishers for no evidence of their existence was found.

The cloister walk seems also to have been paved with plain rectangular tiles, of which only the outlines remain. A line of roughly laid tiles at a higher level was also found, but this was thought to be a track laid for wheelbarrows at the time of the demolition.

An interesting discovery during this excavation was a cloister burial at the Chapter House door. The body lay in a brick-lined grave 6 ft. 2 in. in internal length. It tapered from 22 in. wide and 18 in. deep at the west end to 13 in. wide and 14 in. deep at the east end, and was made with bricks measuring 7 in. × 3 in. × 2 in. There was a head rest 6 in. high with a 4-in. deep central depression.

Although the grave, when found, was not covered in any way, the skeleton was undisturbed (Pl. VI, 3). It was that of a man over 6 ft. in height, who had received and recovered from a serious head wound. At his feet were the cockleshells usually associated with a pilgrimage to the shrine of St. James at Compostella.

A cloister burial at the Chapter House door could be the grave of an abbot, and the evidence of the head wound and the cockleshells, and the existence near by of a heap of tiles of a type not found elsewhere (Pl. VI, 4)

¹ Limited investigation suggests that a small portion of the crossing is devoid of brickwork. This may indicate that bricks were a Cistercian introduction,
and bearing a design which might well be associated with the Crusades, makes it not impossible that the grave was that of the abbot Ralph.

INFIRMARY

The position of the infirmary has been established from a line of pillars running east and west, of which only two are fully visible. One is a round column 2 ft. in diameter, made from segmental bricks similar to, but smaller than, those found on the site of the church, which support a stone cushion capital (Pl. VIII, 3), and 10 ft. to the west of this is a brick pillar of square form. Ten feet to the west again are what appear to be the remains of a stone capital in the wall of an open fireplace, and 20 ft. or two stages away is the outline of a further column in a wall of the house.

The infirmary would appear, therefore, to be contemporary with the church, and to have been a part of the pre-1168 group of buildings. Its design may well have been similar to that of the infirmary at Waverley where a central row of pillars, alternately round and octagonal, divided the building into nave and aisle.

DORTER RANGE (SOUTHERN END)

As the extension of the dorter range, which begins south of the porch, is on a somewhat different alignment from that of the northern section it is thought that the first group of buildings reached only as far as the infirmary, and that the extension was made at a later date. Although, if strict chronological order were to be maintained, this building should be considered at this point, certain rather confusing alterations were made to it and, in order to avoid repetition, it will be more convenient to describe the details of its construction at a later stage.

GUEST HOUSE

The detached building south of the dorter range is perhaps the most interesting of the group.

It is rectangular in shape, having internal measurements 25 ft. by 16 ft., and it is unusually high for its size (Pl. VII, 1). The south wall has been removed to allow access for farm carts, and filled with weather boarding. The foundations show that it was identical with the intact north wall except that it may have had, probably as a later addition, a small external porch, the outlines of which appeared for the first time in the grass during the dry summer of 1955.

Both north and south walls had doorways at the western end, and these doorways were therefore in line. The walls of the building are of flint rubble, but quoins, buttresses, doorways, window openings, and a series of recesses in the walls (which can only have been seats) are of brick.

The quoins are for the most part made of bricks 13 in. × 6 in. × 2 in., or rather less in thickness, a size frequently employed in all the early buildings at Coggeshall. Other bricks were, in the main, moulded to special shape to suit the purpose for which they were used.

1 As an alternative it has been suggested that the design may be a formalized representation of the Cross with the sun and the moon which were so often associated with the Crucifixion in fourteenth-century illustrations.

The doorway remaining in the north wall is round-headed, 4 ft. 5 in. wide and consists of two arches (Pl. VII, 4). The outer arch has a height of 7 ft. 7 in. from the original floor-level and the inner, a height of 8 ft. 9 in. The corners of the bricks are rounded and, as the black core is not exposed, it may be presumed that they were moulded to shape, although the possibility of wear cannot entirely be ignored. Between the arches is a course of projecting bricks to provide a fitting for the door: these are of the 13 in. × 6 in. × 1½–2 in. size.

There are four windows in the east and in the west walls and these call for attention (Pl. VII, 2). The openings themselves are of narrow lancet form: they have an inner splay to an arch with an almost round head. The angle of the splay is obtained by the use of bricks moulded to the shape of a flattened diamond, 10 in. along one side and 8 in. along the other. On the outside, instead of a splay, there is a square reveal.

Between the windows, and below them, are brick-lined recesses in the walls with two centred heads (Pl. VII, 3). These recesses are 3 ft. high, 29 in. wide, and about 12 in. deep; their bases are 20 in. above the original floor-level. Such dimensions indicate seats of which there are five each in the east and west walls, two in the north wall and originally there were two more in the south wall, making fourteen in all.

It is difficult to suggest any use for this building other than as a guest house, and its character, with round doorways and transitional windows, would indicate a date about 1190. It would fit well, therefore, as the building in which Brother Robert found the Templars during the period of office of an abbot who died in 1194.

The floor has been excavated to its original level, 2 ft. 6 in. below the present surface, in the hope of finding confirmatory evidence, but the operation has not proved instructive. No less than five levels were found which show that the building was used at various times as a stable, a kitchen, and a building store.

It is known that an eastern entrance to the abbey existed at all times, and as this faced the Colchester Road and provided easy access to the parish church around which the early township undoubtedly lay, it may well have been originally the main entrance. If that is so, a guest house on this site could have gone out of use when a new gatehouse and chapel were erected on the west side in the thirteenth century.

**The Abbot’s Lodging**

The building to the south of the dorter range was almost certainly the abbot’s lodging. The lower story has been so divided and altered for farm use that it does not furnish much evidence, but attention can be drawn to one original window which is similar to those in the guest house, and in which the diamond-shaped bricks are again employed (Pl. VIII, 1).

The upper story is more rewarding, for this was clearly a chapel. At the east end of the south wall there is a piscina and in the centre of the east wall a lofty recess which could have held a crucifix. On either side of the recess are lancet windows almost identical with those in the guest house: they have external reveals, internal splays, and once again the diamond-shaped bricks may be seen.

The most interesting features of this building are the doorways which
now lead into the vaulted corridor. The drawing (Pl. VIII, 2) shows these doorways as they would be seen from the lodging, if the floor were removed. In the upper story there is a round arch, 4 ft. 5 in. wide, the same width as the guest-house doorway, but it is very much lower. Below it is a doorway with a pointed arch of irregular shape. The present level of the upper floor is dictated by the level of the floor above the corridor—a later structure—but clear evidence remains of the floor-level before the corridor was built. There is also evidence to suggest that the lower doorway was rebuilt when additional height became available: the interruption in the coursing is clearly visible. If it may be assumed that the lower doorway was originally round-headed, and if allowance is made for the rise of 2 ft. 6 in. in ground-level, then both doorways were 7 ft. 7 in. in height and identical in both dimensions, with those in the guest house. It is reasonable to accept, from this evidence, that the lodging was also erected c. 1190, and that it was the building mentioned in the story of the Templars.

If evidence is needed to confirm that the lodging was built before the corridor it may be found in the photograph (Pl. VIII, 1) which shows clearly the original roof line of the lodging immediately above the lancet window.

THE DORTER EXTENSION

Only two walls of the dorter range extension have survived, that on the south which is also part of the abbot's lodging, and the east wall, the northern end of which is incorporated in the house (Pl. IX, 1). It was vaulted, as may be seen from the columns set in the walls, and from the outline of arches, but the walls themselves provide very confusing evidence. The eastern wall seems originally to have been built of rubble with brick quoins and buttresses, and although there are now several other areas of brick, these probably represent later repairs. At intervals along the wall there are brick-lined segmental arches which are not concentric with the vaulting. All but one of these have been filled in, and in them have been set small recesses with pointed arches: apart from the fact that they appear never to have pierced the walls, these recesses are too low either for doorways or windows and must have been used either for seats or as cupboards. The one unfilled segmental arch is at the southern end of the range and this has had set in it a smaller pointed doorway made from moulded bricks of a type and quality not found in the buildings so far described (Pl. IX, 2 and 4).

As this southern extension of the dorter range is on a different alignment to that of the northern portion, and as it is of rather different construction, it must have been erected later than the buildings of the 1168 group. But as there are clear indications of the outlines of three broken-off buttresses on the inside of the north wall of the abbot's lodging, it must also have been earlier than 1190. This order of building appeared to be satisfactory until the base of one of the vaulting columns or pilasters was exposed and found to be of a form which implied a date around 1220 (Pl. IX, 3).

The only satisfactory conclusion that can be drawn from this contradiction is that the dorter extension was erected c. 1180, either as a single-story building or with a wooden floor, and with segmental openings in the
eastern wall. Then, c. 1220, the building was vaulted, all but one of the segmental openings were closed, and seats or cupboards were set in them. The remaining doorway was lined with roll-moulded bricks to conform with the design of the corridor which was added at the same time. Evidence for regarding the dorter vaulting and the corridor as contemporary may be found in a corbel in the south-east corner of the dorter which is identical with those used to support the rib vaulting of the corridor.

THE CORRIDOR

Some reference has already been made to the two-storied corridor, the eastern wall of which may be seen on Pl. VIII, 1. It is 40 ft. long and 10 ft. wide and is divided into three bays with quadripartite vaulting having brick ribs (Pl. X, 1), and one smaller bay with a barrel vault. The whole was plastered and decorated with red lines to give the effect of stone.¹

The walls of the corridor are of brick and rubble and the ceiling (which forms the floor of the upper corridor) is made of large lumps of chalk (presumably to reduce weight) set in coarse mortar. The brick ribs are chamfered and larger bricks of the same form were used to line the new doorway to the lodging which, as has already been indicated, was rebuilt at this time.

It was at this period (c. 1220) that bricks of a roll-moulded series came to be used. They can be seen in the doorway, already mentioned, that leads from the dorter undercroft, where a completely new pointed arch was set inside the older segmental one, and in an identical doorway at the north end of the corridor leading to the infirmary.

The doorway in the south-east corner shows another form of construction in which the arch itself is made from the chamfered bricks, but this arch is carried on small stone impost which rest, in turn, on bricks, having two symmetrical roll mouldings (Pl. X, 2–3).

No certain use can be ascribed to the upper floor, although from its position, leading from the abbot's lodging, and adjoining the monks' dormitory, it may have been the abbot's sleeping quarters. In it may be seen a buttress, which is part of the dorter wall and which proves that the latter was of earlier date (Pl. X, 4). Attention may also be drawn to the round-headed doorway into the abbot's chapel which was lined, on the corridor side, with roll-moulded bricks similar to those used on the lower floor and illustrated on Pl. XIII, 6.

GATEHOUSE CHAPEL

The Gatehouse Chapel of St. Nicholas is the latest of the early buildings which have survived and is certainly the most complete (Pl. XI, 1).

For more than 300 years after the dissolution this chapel was used as a barn. In 1860 it was acquired by the then vicar of Coggeshall, but the funds available were only sufficient to make it safe and to restore part of the southern wall which had been removed to allow access for farm carts.

¹ This practice was even adopted when the buildings were actually of stone, e.g. the gatehouse of Roche Abbey, Yorks.
In the 1890’s a further appeal was made, the work of restoration was completed and the chapel is now once again used for Divine Service.

The building is a simple rectangle 43 ft. long and 20 ft. wide, almost exactly the same dimensions as those of the Cistercian Gatehouse Chapels at Kirkstead in Lincolnshire and at Furness. At the east and west ends are identical, lofty, three light lancet windows. In the north wall are four equally spaced lancet windows, each with openings 6 ft. high and 2 ft. 4 in. wide, while on the south side are two similar windows on either side of the doorway, and two smaller ones are set higher in the wall over the sedilia.

The walls are mainly built of flint rubble, but quoins and all openings (except for the stone outer arch of the doorway, erected in 1860) are of brick. The rectangular quoin bricks are very similar in shape to those already described but some are a full 13½ in. in length.

Moulded bricks with chamfered corners are used for the outside of the single light windows, but the east and west windows are lined with bricks having a hollow moulding. For the mullions of the latter, another brick of the double chamfered series was utilized. On the inside of the building (Pl. XI, 3) all windows are deeply splayed, but now the diamond-shape brick has been discontinued and replaced by a very beautiful brick 10 in. by 4½ in. of the roll-moulded series, similar to those used in the corridor but with one side set at the angle required for the splay. Around the walls, rising and falling to keep in line with the window sills, there runs a string course made from tiles 1 in. thick, with one rounded edge. Most of those to be seen today are 1860 replacements, but it is known from a detailed contemporary account of the restoration, that they were all originally coloured green and glazed.

In the south wall are brick-lined sedilia, in the centre arch of which may be discerned a nimbis (Pl. XI, 2). To the east of these is a double piscina of brick and next to it an opening with a stone trefoiled head which may have been a credence. The doorway is of course modern and, although the roll-moulded bricks have been carefully reproduced, the shape of the shallow segmental arch cannot have been selected with any knowledge of the original form.

Apart from such conclusions as may be drawn from documentary evidence, the character of this building is such as to demand that it be given a date c. 1220 and, in the light of this knowledge, it may be as well to review the sequence of the earlier buildings. The chapel contains roll-moulded and chamfered bricks so similar to those in the corridor that the two buildings must be contemporary. It has been shown that the corridor is later than the lodging, and in view of the progress made in the design and quality of the bricks used, it must, on this evidence alone, be quite a lot later—an interval of thirty years does not seem unreasonable.

Lodging and guest house have been shown to be contemporary. The lodging, on the evidence of the destroyed buttress on the inside of the north wall, is later than the dorter extension. For this a ten-year interval has been allowed, in arriving at the suggested date for that building of 1180. Finally the dorter extension, on a new alignment, was clearly erected at some time after the completion of the original buildings, which included the infirmary, the columns of which contain bricks similar to those found in the church which was dedicated in 1167.
WEST SIDE OF CLOISTER

It has been found that the west side of the cloister was rebuilt at quite a late period, and as no evidence of the rebuilding has been found on the east side, it may be assumed that the work was never completed. Pl. XII, 1 shows a drawing of a length of wall at the north end of the west side. In the corner is a three-sided brick projection, each face of which has a panel of knapped flint. The wall itself is also of brick with a step formed by a course of specially moulded chamfered bricks. On top of the wall are six delicately moulded brick pilasters which no doubt supported a sill from which rose moulded arches filled with brick tracery, the form of which may be determined from the many hundreds of bricks that have been found (Pl. XIV, 4). A quarter of the way along the wall there is a buttress in which the chamfered step is continued, and in the face of this there is again a knapped flint panel. The whole structure was covered with a pink-tinted plaster on the outside and with a yellow-tinted plaster on the inside, in the cloister walk.

It was at first thought that there were three similar buttresses in the length of the wall, but later investigation has shown that in place of the centre one there is a pentagonal lavatorium which has a small buttress at each corner. The floor of this lavatorium was divided into two by a line running east and west. The southern half was evidently a platform on which the monks stood, and in the northern half there is a pit, filled with soft sand, which could have been a soak-away.

No very definite conclusions can be drawn as to the age of this part of the abbey, but a date in the latter half of the fifteenth century is suggested. This is based on the similarity of the brick mullions to stone equivalents in Lincoln Cathedral to which a date c. 1450 has been ascribed to the use of knapped flint panels which are thought not to have made their appearance before the fifteenth century, and also to the unusual position of the lavatorium, which indicates that it was built at a time when lay brothers were no longer using the western range.¹

SOURCE OF SUPPLY OF COGGESHALL ABBEY BRICKS

It is not unusual to find brick in considerable quantity in twelfth-century churches in Essex, and it has always been assumed that this is reused Roman material. In many cases the conclusion is probably a correct one but it cannot be applied to Coggeshall. Most of the reclaimed Roman brick, for example, was broken, it was regarded as rubble and it was used as such, as can be seen in the Augustine Priory of St. Botolph in Colchester. All Coggeshall bricks, on the other hand, were obviously new, and were accurately coursed, and carefully laid. More important perhaps is the fact that the shapes do not permit of Roman origin: the roll-moulded forms must clearly have been contemporary with the buildings of which they are part, and even the infirmary column which might, at first sight, be thought to contain Roman material, consists of narrow segmental

¹ Through the door may be seen the piscina in the abbot's chapel.
³ A brick lavatorium of very similar form but in its normal place in the south walk in the Cistercian abbey of Coxyde, Belgium. Dimier, L'Eglise de l'abbaye des Dunes, Société française d'archéologie, cxii (1954), 245.
bricks and not of bricks of the quadrant form which the Romans would have used.

Alternatively it might be suggested that the bricks were imported, but consideration will show that this also is unlikely; for the very design of the buildings depends upon the special brick shapes employed, and a most improbable degree of co-operation between the architect in England and the maker of the bricks in some other country, would have been required.

It is true that somewhat similar bricks have been found at a Cistercian Abbey at Coxyde in Belgium,¹ but there are essential differences, particularly of colour, and in any case the earliest known bricks at that site were used in a rebuilding of the abbey which was not begun before 1214.

It is not unreasonable to suppose that abbots from districts where no local stone was available would have discussed their difficulties together when they met each year at Citeaux in general chapter, but it seems probable that the actual manufacture of the bricks was carried out at the individual monasteries: in the case of Coggeshall there is positive evidence that this course was followed.

Just as the Romans had no word for brick and used ‘later’ without discrimination, so in England, until the word ‘brick’ was introduced in the fifteenth century, ‘tile’ had to serve for both purposes: and there is a district on the outskirts of Coggeshall which has long been known as Tilkey (or tile-kiln). Here, in 1845, was found a kiln which was unfortunately destroyed and filled in, but not before it has been noted that in and around it were ‘moulded bricks like those of the abbey’.²

As the fifteenth-century forms were unknown before the excavation of 1950, it must be assumed that it was with the twelfth-century and thirteenth-century types that comparison was made and that here, within a mile of the abbey itself, was the kiln in which the early bricks were fired.

**Paving Tiles**

It would be reasonable to expect that an abbey which had such early experience in brick-making would have led the way in the manufacture of decorated paving tiles, but there is no evidence that this was so.

The only tiles now known to be in situ are those already mentioned as being in the Chapter House, and similar 9-in. square unglazed tiles on the floor of the dorter undercroft. A few large unglazed tiles of mosaic form (Pl. XIV, 1–2) are to be seen at the entrance to the gatehouse chapel, and these may or may not be in their original position, but apart from these, all other tiles found have been of fourteenth-century date. An elaborate pavement was discovered in the chapel in 1860 and was destroyed, but a coloured drawing that was made at the time shows that it was of the combined polychrome mosaic and line-incised type, and very similar to the one which was laid in the Prior Crawden Chapel at Ely, c. 1330 (Pl. XIV, 3). Many scattered tiles of this group have been found elsewhere on the site, as well as a large number of printed tiles, some of which retain the mosaic element. The designs are in the main simple (one of them appears to represent a backgammon board); but they are very individualistic and

¹ Ibid., pp. 243–51.
² Cutts, ‘Archaeological Account of Coggeshall Abbey’, Essex Arch. Soc., Trans., O.S., i (1858), 166 et seq.
therefore suggest, as might be expected, that the Coggeshall monks were well able to supply their own needs, and had no reason to call upon the assistance of the travelling tile-maker who is thought to have been responsible for the wide distribution of so many of the more common designs.

The decorated tiles of this abbey are sufficiently unusual to merit special study but it is not possible to deal adequately with them within the scope of this paper.

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Coggeshall Abbey, Essex. Building plan
(1) Chapter House. Wall adjoining cloister walk
Note: tiled wall seats in Chapter House

(2) Cloister. Three bases capital and column
    c. 1160

(3) Cloister walk. Brick lined grave at door of Chapter House

(4) Cloister walk. Paving tile of which many were found near brick lined grave
(1) Guest House from west showing (left) Abbot's Lodging

(2) Guest House: windows in west wall

(3) Guest House: recesses (seats) in west wall

(4) Guest House: details of doorway in north wall
(1) View from the east showing corridor and (left) Abbot's Lodging

(2) View looking north to corridor from Abbot's Lodging

(3) Infirmary: brick column with stone capital
(1) View looking to corner of dorter range and showing east and south walls.
Note: outline of vaulting

(2) Doorway to corridor in south-east corner of dorter. Segmental arch c. 1130. Inner pointed arch, vaulting column and corbel c. 1220

(3) Base of vaulting column of dorter undercroft

(4) Drawing of dorter doorway (above) showing detail of relation of early rectangular and later moulded bricks
(1) Corridor, looking south. Brick vaulting ribs and roof of chalk

(2) Corridor. East door

(3) Detail of east door of corridor showing stone impost dividing roll moulded from chamfered bricks

(4) Corridor: upper floor looking south. Note: on right mutilated buttress in dorter wall and entrance to abbot's chapel with piscina in far wall
(1) St. Nicholas (gatehouse) chapel from south west

(2) Internal elevation. South wall of St. Nicholas Chapel

(3) St. Nicholas Chapel c. 1220. West window.
Note: doorway on left is modern
(1) View looking north-west. Corner of mid 15 c. cloister. Moulded brick with knapped flint panels

(2) View looking south-west showing fireplace of early 16 c. mansion, now in outside wall
Series pre 1167
1. Segmental brick for round columns
2. Roman brick form for equivalent purpose
   (not to same scale)

Series c. 1190
3. Windows. Guest House and Abbot's Lodging
4 and 5. Not found in situ

Series c. 1220
6. West door corridor to dorter range
7. Inner splay. East and west windows St. Nicholas Chapel
8. East door corridor
9. Not found in situ

10. Outside east and west windows St. Nicholas Chapel
11. Arch of Seldila St. Nicholas Chapel
12. North windows St. Nicholas Chapel
13. Rib vaulting—corridor

14. Not found in situ
15. Mullions. East and west windows St. Nicholas Chapel
16. Doorway. South end of corridor
(1) Floor at entrance to St. Nicholas Chapel, c. 1220

(2) Details of St. Nicholas floor

(3) Comparison between paving tiles
(a) St. Nicholas Chapel, Coggeshall
(b) Prior Crawden Chapel, Ely

(4) Mullion bricks
Rebuilt cloister
Mid 15th century