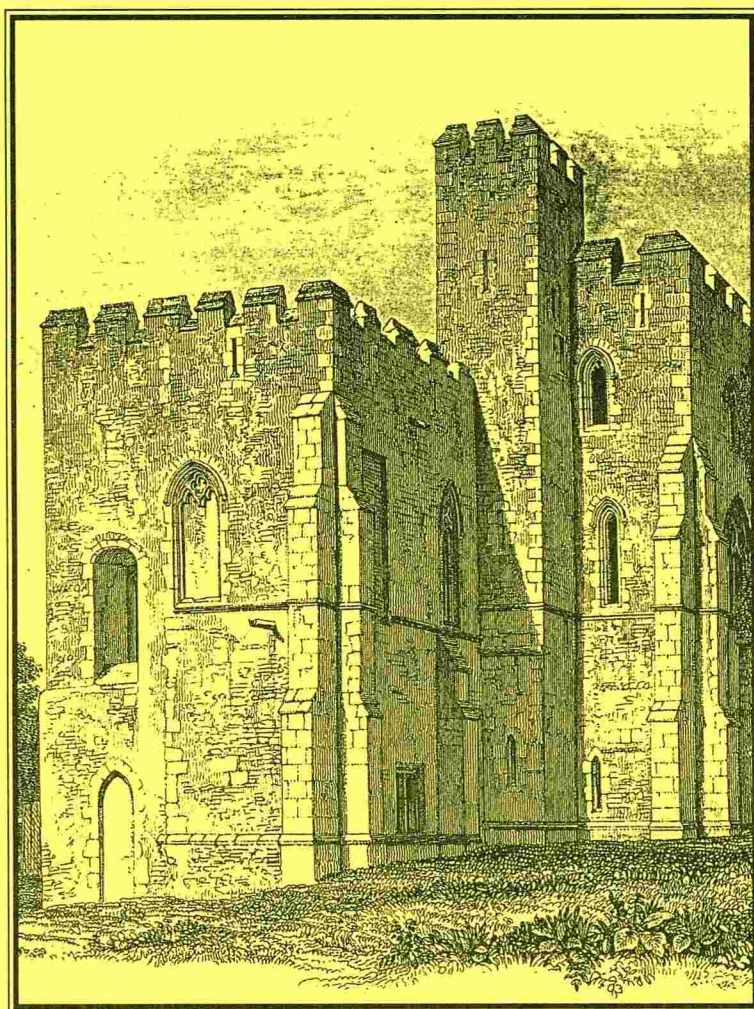


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Little Wenham Hall, probably the earliest English building constructed largely of brick, and perhaps one of the finest surviving examples in England of a semi-detached chamber block (see 'Little Wenham Hall, a Reinterpretation' in this Part). This view from the south, drawn by W. Twopeny and engraved by W.S. Wilkinson, was first published by J.H. Parker, Oxford, in 1847 and reprinted in T. Hudson Turner, *Some Account of Domestic Architecture in England*, 1, in 1851. It shows a distinct vertical line descending from the end of the string-course on the south face, with remains of plaster to the west of it, clearly demonstrating that another structure was once attached at this point. The blocked door clearly visible in the east wall at first-floor level, near the south-east corner, could have been the access to a projecting timber garderobe.

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# THE WEST FAÇADE-COMPLEX AT THE ABBEY CHURCH OF BURY ST EDMUNDS: A DESCRIPTION OF THE EVIDENCE FOR ITS RECONSTRUCTION

by J. PHILIP MCALEER

## PROLOGUE<sup>1</sup>

THE WEST FAÇADE of the ruined abbey church at Bury St Edmunds is more than just a 'façade', with its implication of a simple wall, or even more than a 'façade-structure', as in the case of the many medieval churches with two western towers. Among the many monumental churches built in England during the century following the Conquest or, indeed, even during the same period on the Continent, the structure found at the west end of Bury is the most monumental, the most complex, the most extraordinary, seemingly without close parallels. It is unique, for nothing like it was built during the Romanesque period, or during the later Gothic, although western structures at Ely and Lincoln cathedrals and, perhaps, Peterborough abbey (as it then was) could be considered lesser rivals.<sup>2</sup> But they either treat similar elements in other ways or achieve their great breadth and height by utilizing different formal means. It is for these reasons that it is especially regrettable that the condition in which Bury's western structure has survived into our time makes it difficult to appreciate its unique character and renders many of its aspects obscure, even unknowable.

The structure – or complex, as it is perhaps best to consider it – seems to have consisted of three major elements, two of which were symmetrically repeated. At the core or centre of the complex was a western transept with an axial tower rising over its intersection with the nave (Fig. 24A, *a*). This transept, a nave-like space, and a feature within this period normally found at the east end of the church, as indeed was true of Bury, was (presumably) about as wide and as tall as the nave. However, unlike a normal eastern transept, including the one at Bury, the western transept did not extend beyond the line of the aisle walls. Flanking each end wall of the transept, north and south, were two-storeyed chapel blocks which consisted of a nave and apse (Fig. 24A, *b*<sup>1</sup> and *b*<sup>2</sup>). And then beyond these was found at each end a large octagonal structure, most probably very like a tall chapter house in appearance (Fig. 24A, *c*<sup>1</sup> and *c*<sup>2</sup>).<sup>3</sup>

Of these elements, close parallels in contemporary architecture can be found only for the west transept. Two examples are actually associated with buildings not far from Bury – Ely and Peterborough; two others are located in Scotland, at Kelso and Kilwinning, both houses of the Tironensian order. All four examples differ in many respects from each other as well as from Bury. The west transept at Ely was perhaps the closest, although it extended beyond the line of the aisles and had double-decker apsidal chapels opening off the east side (Fig. 25), almost exactly as might be found at an eastern transept. One arm of the transept is now gone, but the axial tower survives, so that it and the remaining south arm can give us some idea of the effect of the destroyed transept at Bury.<sup>4</sup> At Peterborough, the transept, though as tall as the nave, was rather narrower; it too extended beyond the aisles but lacked any projecting chapels (Fig. 26).<sup>5</sup> It was surmounted by two towers – never fully completed – placed in the line of the aisles. The abbey at Kelso, of which only the west transept remains, had a western arm. Despite the fact that the transept projected beyond the line of the aisles, it also lacked apsidal chapels. As at Ely, there was a lantern tower which, partially surviving, remains as the dramatic climax of the ruins.<sup>6</sup> Finally, at Kilwinning, the transept was rather similar to that at Peterborough, for it was narrower than the nave, lacked chapels and was surmounted by two towers.<sup>7</sup>

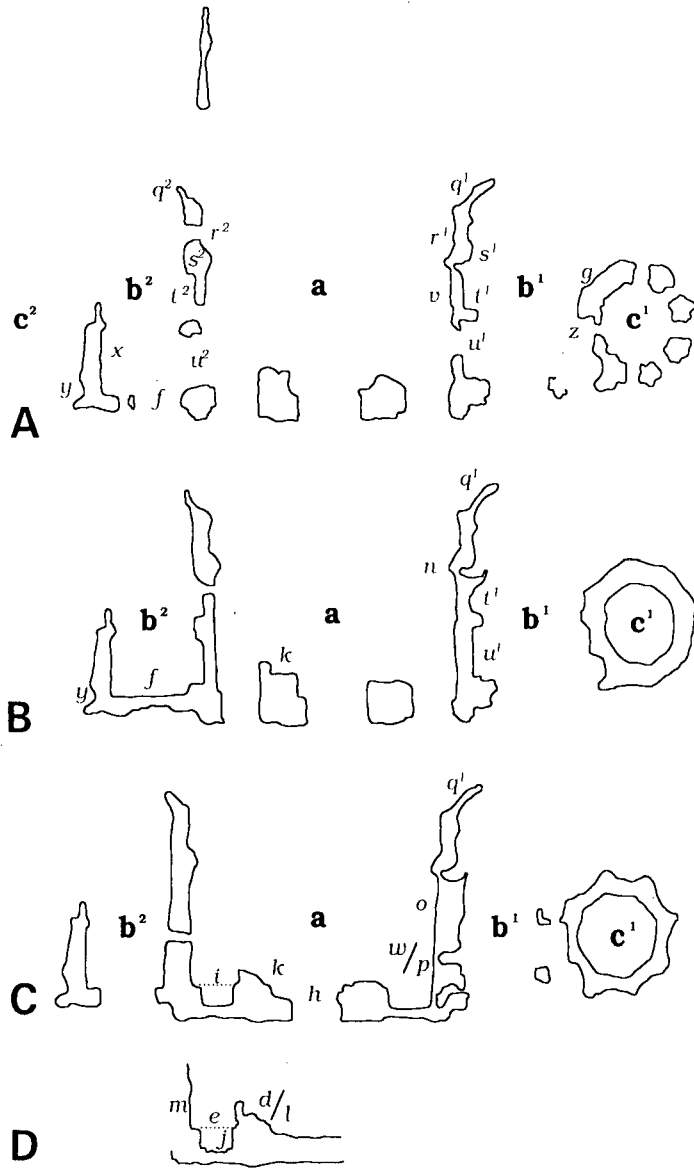


FIG. 24 – Bury St Edmunds, Abbey Church: plans of surviving masonry of western structure (*author, after NBR 86426, RCHME, Crown Copyright, with permission*). (A) at ground level of existing houses; (B) at first floor level of existing houses; (C) at second floor level of existing houses; (D) at attic level of house No. 1. (a) transept; (b) chapel blocks; (c) octagons; (d) stair turret; (e) 15th-century clerestory windows [Fig. 28]; (f) west face of north chapel block; (g) blocked north-east window of south octagon [Fig. 29]; (h) barrel vault of central recess; (i) barrel vault of north recess [Fig. 30]; (j) barrel vault with springers of 15th-century vault below it in attic room of house No.1; (k) north-west respond of west tower [Fig. 31]; (l) fragment of curved walling; (m) 15th-century arch in attic room of house No. 1 [Fig. 32]; (n) springing of gallery arch to transept; (o) blocked arch of south end wall of transept; (p) blocked arch of south end wall of transept; (q) fragment of chapel apse wall; (r) position of window between chapel and transept; (s) blocked newel stair; (t) east arch between chapel and transept; (u) west arch between chapel and transept; (v) 15th-century arch inserted under u [Fig. 36]; (w) west arch between upper south chapel and transept; (x) blocked arch to corridor between north chapel and octagon [Fig. 37]; (y) position of possible newel stair; (z) remains of vaulted corridor between south chapel and octagon.

Flanking the transept at north and south were large chapel blocks (Fig. 24A, *b*<sup>1</sup> & *b*<sup>2</sup>). They were in two storeys, the resulting four chapels each consisting of an eastern apse and a large rectangular area to the west which formed a kind of nave space. These chapel blocks were almost completely independent, miniature churches in their own right, and quite different from the chapels opening off the transept arms at Ely which were little more than elongated apses. It is difficult to find any contemporary parallels for this arrangement, even on the Continent, let alone in Great Britain. A somewhat similar idea partially survives at the late Ottonian church of Sankt Pantaleon, Cologne (966–1000/05), where it would seem that an originally aisleless nave was flanked at the west end by chapel blocks of two storeys. There were important differences, for Sankt Pantaleon lacked any western transept, the apses of the chapels were contained in the thickness of the blocks' east walls and a large tower rose over the area of the nave between the chapels.<sup>8</sup> At a somewhat later date, probably before *c.* 1233, certainly by *c.* 1240, large rectangular chapels were built at Lincoln, opening off the western aisle bays of the nave.<sup>9</sup>

Part of the function of the nave-like spaces before each chapel apse may have been to serve as a vestibule leading to the third major formal component of the façade complex, the octagonal structures (Fig. 24A, *c*<sup>1</sup> & *c*<sup>2</sup>). They are the most singular, and indeed unique aspect of the façade. Referred to as *turris* in a contemporary medieval text,<sup>10</sup> nevertheless they more probably resembled chapter houses – partly because of their octagonal shape – or perhaps the corona at Canterbury.<sup>11</sup> The latter was actually referred to as a *turris* by Gervase in his writings about the rebuilding of the cathedral after the traumatic fire of 1174.<sup>12</sup> It is curious and frustrating that these same texts give no hint as to the function or functions of these large and distinctly shaped spaces.

Due to the fact that the present ground level is about three metres or so higher than the original level and because the ashlar facing blocks have been stripped from the entire western complex, leaving only the flint and rubble core of the walls, it is difficult now for the layman

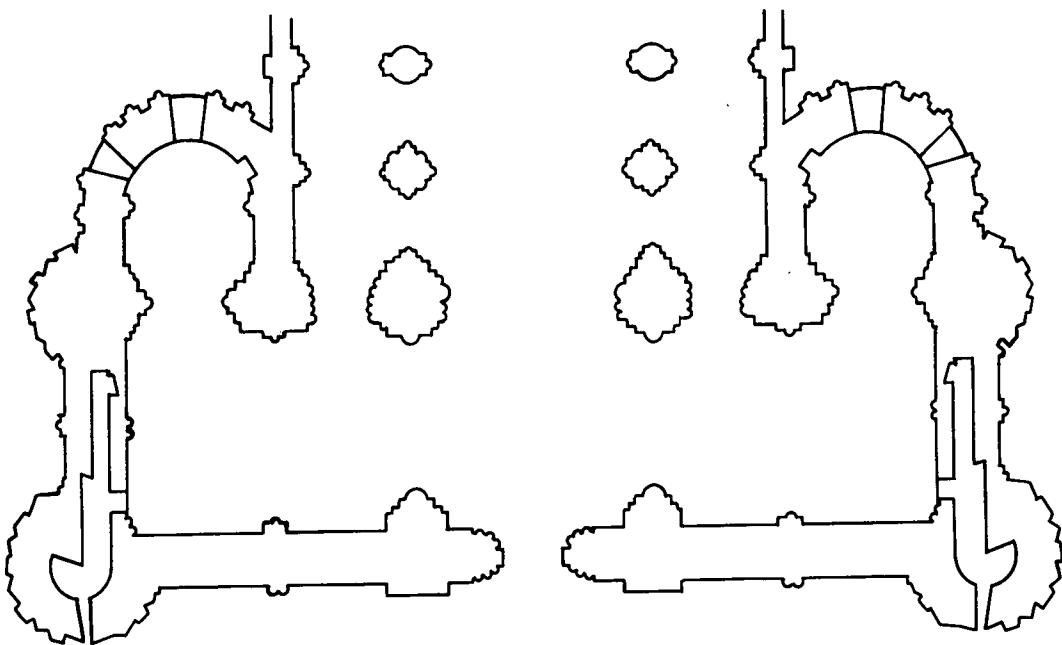


FIG. 25 – Ely Cathedral: author's reconstruction of plan of west transept, after *The Builder*, LXII/2565 (2 April 1892), plan (Roland W. Paul) after 276 (drawing: K.L. Clark).

particularly to appreciate the forms and spaces of the complex as outlined above. However, the greatest impediment to the understanding and appreciation of the west complex is not its ruined condition nor its bony appearance, but, rather, the houses which have been built into its shattered structure, beginning in the late 17th century. Particularly due to these domestic structures, the relationships between the original elements are difficult even for the student or specialist to understand. Unfortunately, the recent ill-advised decision, much to be lamented, to rebuild the dilapidated houses will prevent a clearer picture of the internal arrangements from emerging for many decades.<sup>13</sup>

An additional complicating factor in the attempt to understand and appreciate the complex is the later medieval history of the fabric. It is recorded that the axial western tower partially collapsed in 1430 and 1431, and the remaining standing parts – the north and west sides – had to be pulled down the following year.<sup>14</sup> Although the fall is documented, the extent of the damage to adjacent sections of the nave and transept is not described. Reconstruction of the tower was begun, but seems to have been incomplete by the time a second, even more major, disaster struck the church. Due to the carelessness of workmen, a fire started in the rebuilt west tower which spread to the rest of the church, causing grave damage. Rebuilding started once again after this calamity, but was apparently not quite complete by the early years of the 16th century.<sup>15</sup> The present state of the monument makes it very difficult to sort out the alterations and modifications to the original components – especially the transept – and to allocate them to the appropriate rebuilding phase. Nonetheless, it will become clear that major rebuilding did take place after each of these unfortunate events.

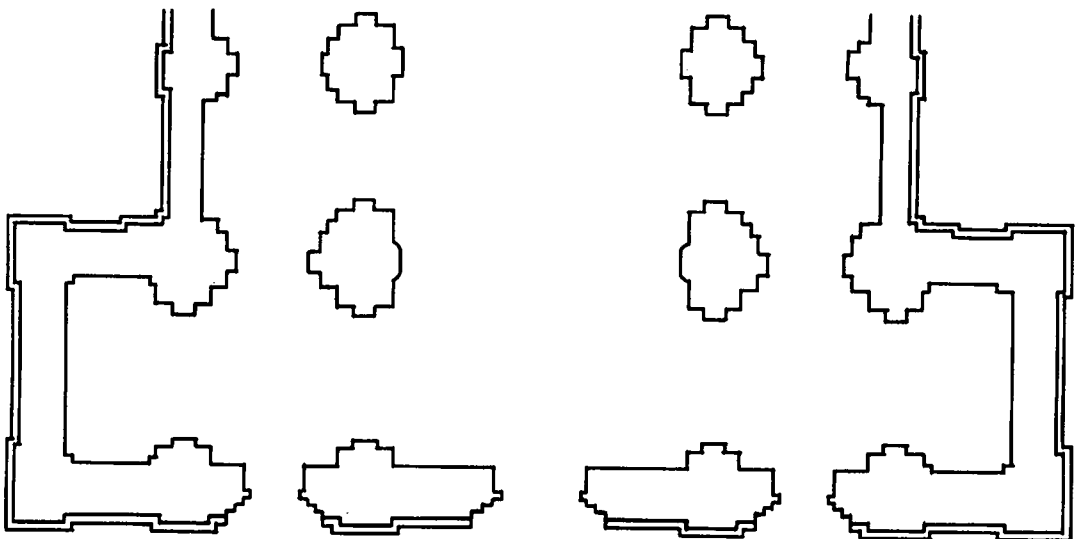


FIG. 26 – Peterborough Cathedral: author's reconstruction of plan of west transept, after *The Builder*, LX/2513 (4 April 1891), plan (Roland W. Paul) after 260 (drawing: K.L. Clark).



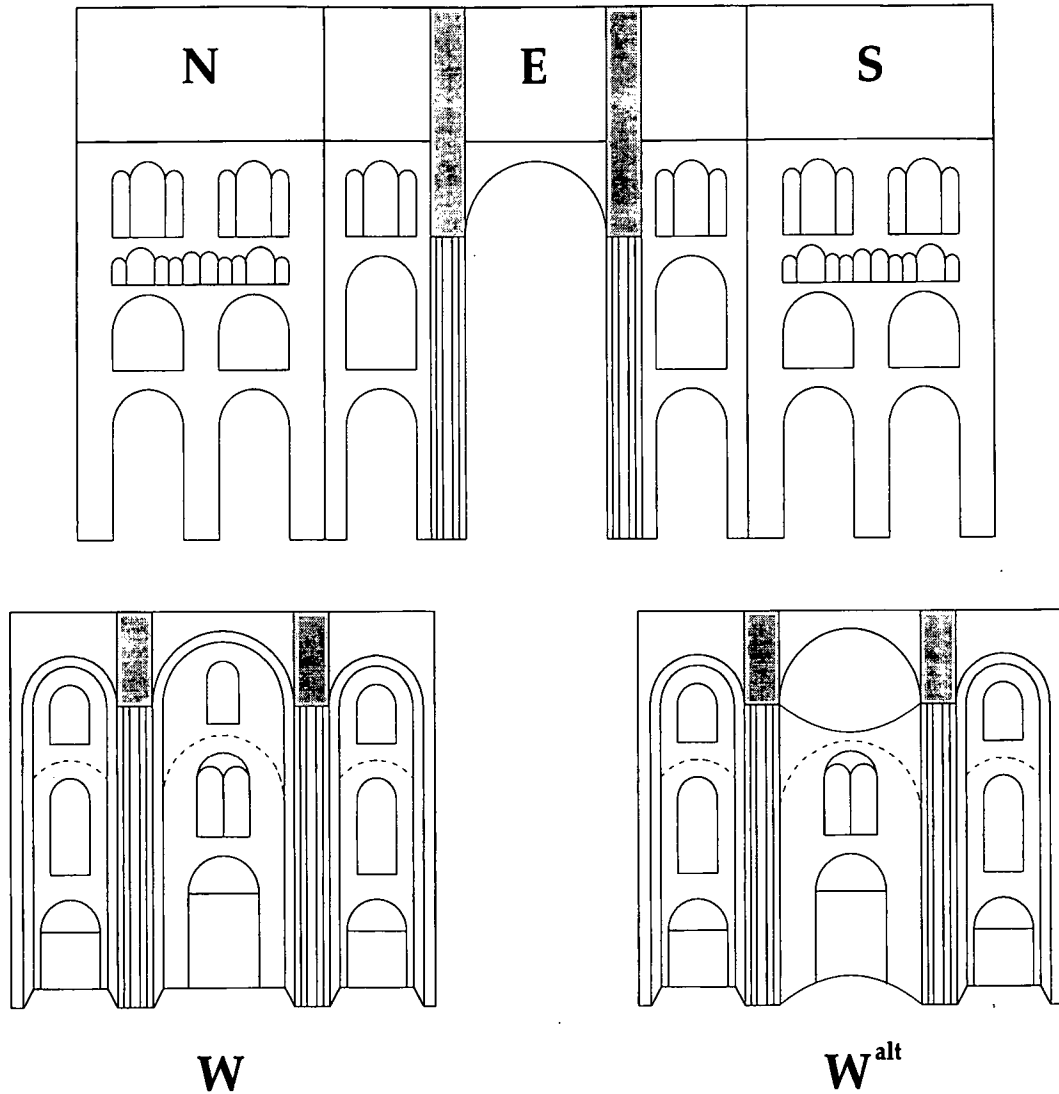


FIG. 27 – Author's diagrammatic reconstruction of internal elevations of west transept  
(computer realization: R. Lewis).

#### DESCRIPTION AND (TENTATIVE) RECONSTRUCTION<sup>16</sup>

An accurate plan of the west front clearly indicating surviving masonry, as distinct from hypothetical restoration, has not been published: all published plans are either incomplete, inaccurate or schematic.<sup>17</sup> The fullest description of the ruins as they appear today – and the only modern one in print – is that by A.B. Whittingham.<sup>18</sup> Without any detailed plans, sketches, drawings, or photographs, Whittingham's account is almost impossible to follow because his points of reference are not defined and his terminology is vague; additional difficulties are created because his description is not systematic, and further confusion arises

from abrupt shifts back and forth between inside and outside at numerous points. With regard to the description which follows, regardless of its merits or shortcomings,<sup>19</sup> it should be continually borne in mind that the original floor level of the west end of the nave was more than three metres below the modern ground level.<sup>20</sup> Hence, the apparent height or proportion of features at 'ground level' is distorted.

#### EXTERIOR

The centre of the façade, corresponding to the width of the transept and the nave (including the aisles),<sup>21</sup> is preserved for its full width and to a considerable height.<sup>22</sup> The west face is dominated by three tall and wide arches which appear about equal in size, and which originally probably were deep barrel-vaulted recesses.<sup>23</sup> Of the original semicircular arches of the recesses, only the southern one, albeit in mimicked form, is preserved; the northern arch was rebuilt to a pointed form at some later date; the central arch, at least externally, has vanished altogether. Due to the infilling walls, which form the façades of the domestic units inserted within the structure, it is not possible to determine either the original depth or the number of orders – if any – of the arched recesses. The remains of the probable rear wall of the central recess suggest a depth of at least 2.10m. The faces of the piers supporting the arches are shapeless rubble surfaces. It can only be observed that the rubble masonry of the main part of the façade is characterized by courses of rough blocks of stone occurring at irregular intervals.

At the level immediately above the arches, in the line of the pier between the northern and central ones, there are the remains of a polygonal stair turret pierced on the north and south

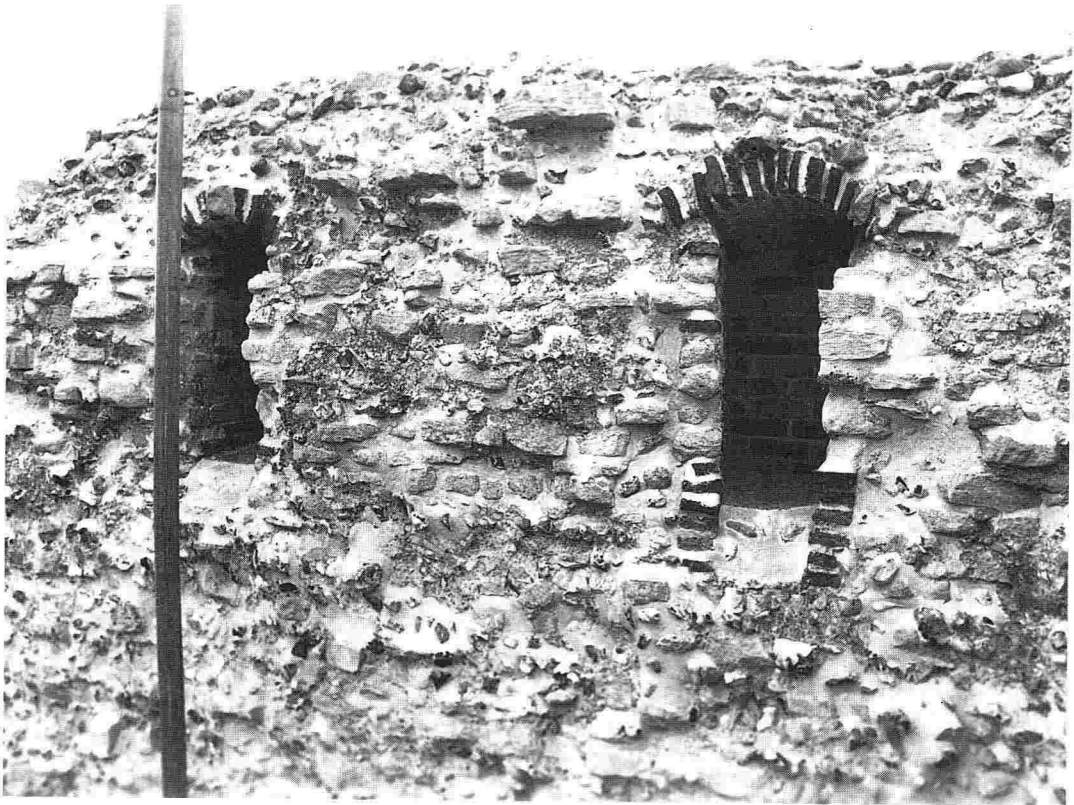


FIG. 28 – Fifteenth-century wall above north façade arch (adjacent to stair turret) with two small clerestory windows [Fig. 24D, e] (photo: author).

by openings later broken through it: the newel stairs have been ripped out and the lower part blocked, so it is not possible to determine the level at which it began (Fig. 24D, *d*).

Adjacent to the stair turret on the north is an area which is now covered by a modern lean-to roof, recently renewed. An undated photograph taken from the gate tower looking down on the west front shows this area covered by a flat 'cement' roof;<sup>24</sup> a deep horizontal line visible at the base of the wall at the east suggests that there was once an earlier lean-to roof over part of this area. The east wall survives to a height equal to the remains of the polygonal turret: two small rectangular openings, with splayed jambs opening towards the east, are its only features (at *e* in Fig. 24D; Fig. 28).

Thus, of the original appearance of the central section of the 'façade', corresponding to the internal space of the transept, all that can be concluded with certainty is that its composition

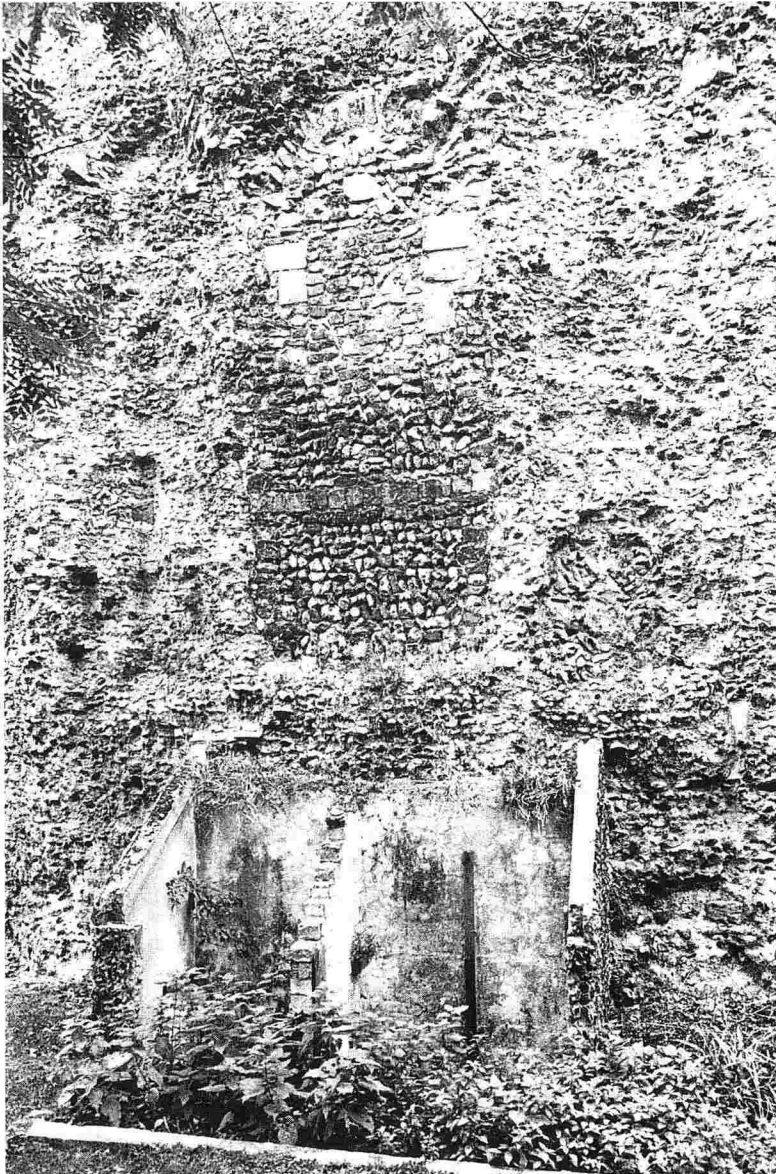


FIG. 29 – South octagon, blocked window on north-east face [Fig. 24A, *g*] (photo: author).

was dominated by three giant arched recesses, and an axial tower. The depth of the recesses, the number of their orders – if any, and the nature of their infilling is open to speculation. Even whether there was one portal or three cannot now be determined from the existing state of affairs, although excavation along the west front might find the footings of the wall and the jambs of portals and arches. Of the tower it can only be said that there was a prominent polygonal stair turret attached to its north-west corner, which could have been balanced by one at the south-west. It may be surmised that the clerestory wall which rises – after a considerable setback – above the north arch, clearly in its present form post-Romanesque in construction, is a replacement for a Romanesque clerestory, in which case a lean-to roof would originally have necessarily bridged the difference in planes, a gap due to the depth of the western recess(es).

Only the west face of the chapel block on the north side remains (Figs 24A and 24B, *f*), that on the south having been completely rebuilt. The wall plane of these two units appears to have been set back from that of the outer arches of the three central giant recesses. Excavations in front of the north chapel in 1958 found the lowest courses of the west wall towards its north end.<sup>25</sup> The original lower part of the wall visible above modern ground level is featureless, except for a jagged archway into what is now a courtyard (to No. 1A). This wall has been rebuilt from the level of the neo-Romanesque window above, certainly including the arch over the window. In the room behind (part of house No. 1A), there are the remains of the springing of a rubble arch north of the window, at a level appropriate for an earlier window.

The west walls of the chapel blocks have frequently been restored as each having had an axial western portal, whereas, in actuality, there is no remaining evidence for the portals and very little for their fenestration pattern. Indeed, from the visible remains on the exterior, it is not even possible to ascertain the original height of the chapel blocks or if their roofs ended in west-facing gables. Once again, as with the central section, excavation along the base of the wall might at least resolve the question of the presence or absence of portals in this position.

Of the two octagonal structures, only that at the south survives (*c*<sup>1</sup> in Figs 24A, 24B and 24C), preserved in its complete circumference for a height greater than any other part of the façade ruins except for the east wall at the north end. The northern octagon has been so thoroughly demolished that not a trace of it remains (Fig. 24A, *c*<sup>2</sup>). Because of its denuded state, the only architectural features remaining are the window openings, of which only the blocked north-east window was never subjected to a neo-Romanesque remodelling (Fig. 24A, *g*; Fig. 29).<sup>26</sup> Judging from this single unaltered one, the windows were semicircularly arched rather than pointed. As there is no hint of an original cornice or eaves, it is impossible to know if the octagon rose significantly higher than its preserved state. Unlike the other parts of the western complex, excavation on the exterior of the octagon would not produce any significant information for solving problems about its form, although the lower parts of the buried wall may well preserve its ashlar facing and base mouldings, the profile of which might provide evidence for the date of its construction.

#### INTERIOR

Of the interior elevations and arrangements of the west structure, some large tantalizing bits remain, but they yield relatively little precise information to aid either a verbal or graphic reconstruction.

#### *The West Transept*

The east face of the western wall is now almost entirely hidden by the houses (Nos. 1–2, from north to south) built against it. A single early view of the west front from the east survives. It may be a copy, perhaps of the late 18th century, of an original dated 16 July 1681.<sup>27</sup> It shows the south octagon without any visible roof, and it and the central section of the front without the domestic infill. One large arched recess – the south one – is open and half of a second to

the north – the middle one – is visible adjacent to the house (now No. 1) which occupies the northern recess. The south face of the north end wall of the transept, with two pointed arches high up, is also shown. Otherwise than confirming those major features still mainly visible today, the drawing reveals no informative details which would aid a reconstruction of the east face of the west wall.

Nothing of the south recess is now visible from inside the room of house No. 2 immediately behind it. In another upper room of No. 2, and in a closet opening off it and in the roof space above, portions of the curve and mass of the barrel vault of the central recess, covered by lath and plaster work, can be seen (Fig. 24C, *h*). Part of the vault of the north recess is also visible in an upper room of house No.1, likewise covered by plastered lathing (Fig. 24C, *i*; Fig. 30). In addition, in an attic room above this room (still in No.1: Fig. 24D, *j*), there is another semicircular arch and barrel vault. On the wall above this arch – which is the east face of the wall seen on the exterior immediately north of the stair turret – the horizontal coursing of mixed rubble and ashlar gives way to a number of courses which slope down to the north. After what could be taken as the line of a former roof, the coursing returns to the horizontal and the lower parts of two blocked rectangular openings (a black stone is used for their jambs) appear – these are the two windows which are visible from the west on the exterior (Fig. 28). Under the arch of the recess are the springers, to both north and south, of a Gothic vault with profiles of five ribs (a diagonal, two tiercerons and two wall ribs or the beginning of a fan conoid?), a vault apparently inserted to strengthen the Romanesque barrel vault of the recess, as rubble fill is found between them. Both the inserted vault and the arch above it are at a

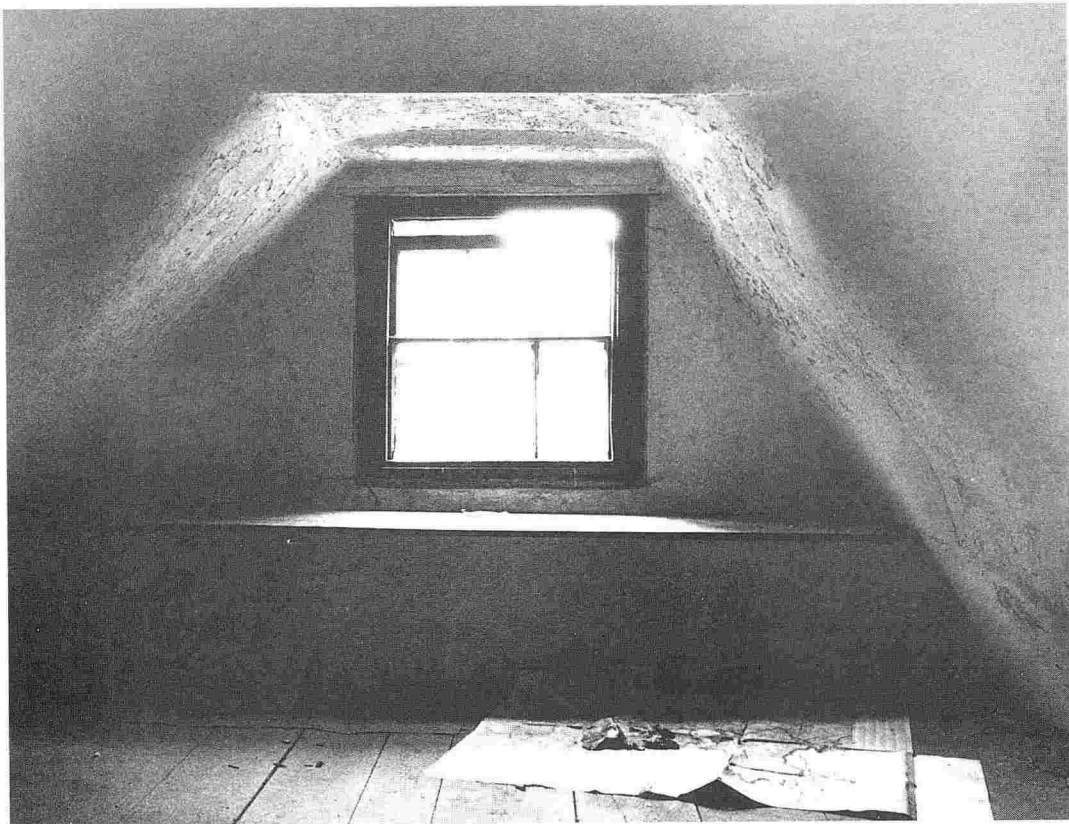


FIG. 30 – Arch of north façade recess from inside upper room in house No. 1 [Fig. 24C, *i*] (photo: author).

higher level than the arc of ragged voussoirs suggesting the slightly pointed arch of the north recess, visible on the exterior and in the room below.

Outside this attic room, as well as in the staircase leading up to it, the mass of the springing of the north crossing arch and its respond are also still visible, although covered with lath and plaster (at *k* in Figs 24B and 24C; Fig. 31). From a vantage point on the houses' roofs, what appears to be the springing of an arch or vault between the south and central recesses, composed of ashlar and rising from a corbel, is visible, but close inspection is not possible. Possibly of greater significance and interest is a sliver of a curved ashlar walling, located east and south of the stair turret, also visible only from a position on the roof (Fig. 24D, *l*). The curved surface faces to the east, *into* the church.

The north end wall, more easily visible from a position in the gardens extending behind the houses, forms the most conspicuous remains of the transept. It is virtually solid, with two, apparently late, pointed arches high up on the wall supporting an increased thickness of the wall. The voussoirs of the single archivolt of each arch are relieved only by a hollow on the outer angle which forms an over-hanging lip. A third identical arch, now plastered over, is also visible in the same attic room of house No.1 mentioned above (Fig. 24D, *m*; Fig. 32). The middle one of these three arches retains the upper courses of the ashlar facing which once covered the rubble now exposed to view.



FIG. 31 – Mass of north-west respond of west tower hidden under plastered lathing in staircase of house No. 1 [*k* in Figs. 24B and 24C] (photo: author).

Rather less remains of the corresponding south end wall, although there are a few more distinguishable features. The portions visible from the gardens behind house No. 2 are as solid as those on the north. At the east end of the remaining section, on the north face of the wall, there is the springing of a broad arch in a north-south axis (Fig. 24B, *n*). Judging from its level relative to the remains of the (distant) east crossing piers, it belonged to the gallery and most likely was the arch that formerly opened into the transept, and, indeed, provides evidence for the existence of the latter. It has three orders on its east face, and only one on its west. Adjacent to and west of this putative gallery arch, but still on the north face of the south end wall, there is a small, semicircularly-arched blocked opening or shallow flat-backed niche (at *o* in Fig. 24C; Fig. 33). A similar feature is located further to the west, now visible only from a position on the roofs of the houses (at *p* in Fig. 24C; Fig. 34). They form the only discernable features of the transept's south elevation except for a series of small rectangular sockets – at least six – higher up. There is no evidence of a set of three large pointed arches corresponding to those on the north end wall.

It would seem that the present state of the interior faces of the transept walls are the result of rebuilding, or, rather, refacing, either after the disastrous collapse of the crossing tower in 1430–31 or the fire of 1465. There is no masonry visible on the north and south elevations securely identifiable as Romanesque; this would suggest that before refacing, and possibly thickening the walls, the Romanesque ashlar had been stripped away, perhaps because it had been calcified by fire.

The original relationship of the transept space to the flanking chapel blocks is now only visible on the north face of the north wall and the south face of the south wall. At this stage it is therefore only possible to offer a partial reconstruction of the interior elevation of the transept.

The east side of the transept can in any case be reconstructed only on the basis of presumptions, since the crossing piers are not preserved above ground level (Fig. 27). Once again, excavation might produce their remains; until then, we can only surmise that they bore multiple shafts similar to the crossing piers at the east end of the nave. North and south of the piers, there would have been the arches of the aisles and above them the lower ones of the galleries of which the southern springing of the south gallery arch only is preserved. Nothing remains to indicate the nature of the clerestory which was most likely also returned above the gallery arches (as it is at Ely).

Despite the fact that substantially more of the west side of the transept exists, it is much more difficult to understand and visualize because it is buried under the lath and plaster walls of the infilling houses. As has been described, only in places can the ghostly outlines of its contours be seen. These contours suggest that between the responds of the arches of the crossing tower, and between them and the end walls of the transept, the west wall was distinctively characterized by tall barrel vaulted recesses echoing or, rather, anticipating the giant recesses of the exterior (Fig. 27). These arches may have been even taller, equal to the three storeys of the eastern side (while the exterior recesses may have corresponded only to the height of the aisle and gallery); of these three arches, the central one may have been apsidal. No evidence survives for any passageways through the west wall.

#### *The Chapel Blocks*

Of the flanking chapel blocks, that on the south is best preserved, although only its north wall survives.<sup>28</sup> At the east end of the latter, there is a small segment of a curve indicating the chapel's apsidal termination (at *q*<sup>1</sup> in Figs. 24A, B and C). The solid wall of the curved section is relieved by an arch which may have formed a shallow niche or a bay of blind arcading on this part of the curve of the apse wall which did not have a window because it faced towards the aisle wall. West of this, rather unexpectedly, is a small semicircularly-arched window with the remnant of a groin-vault above it (Fig. 24A, *r*<sup>1</sup>): this window must have looked *into* the aisle.



FIG. 32 – Westernmost arch of three 15th-century arches of north end wall of transept as seen inside attic room of house No. 1 [Fig. 24D, *m*] (*photo: author*).

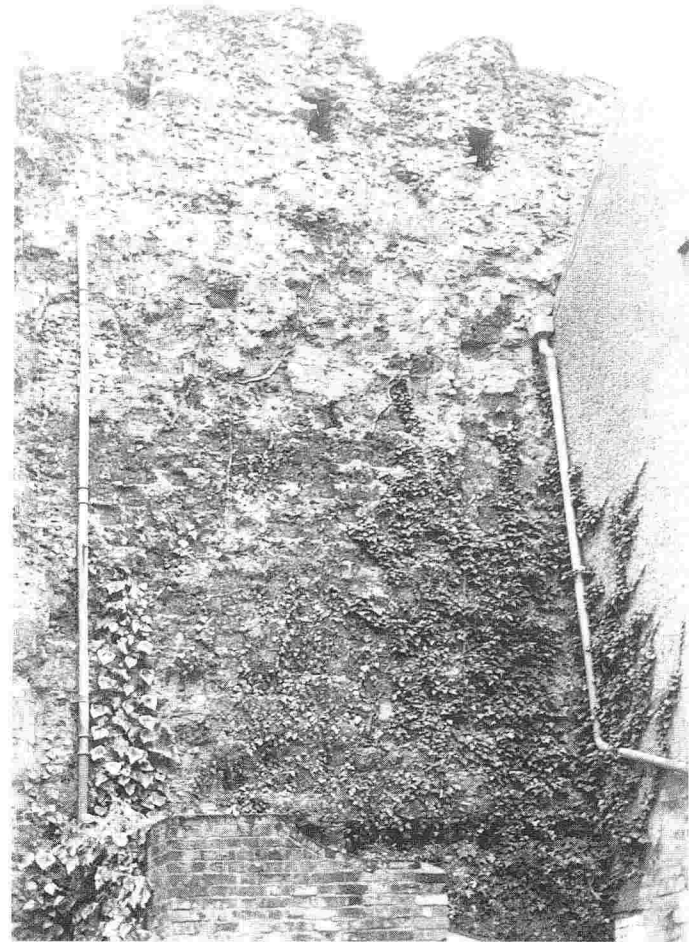


FIG. 33 – Eastern half of north face of south end wall of transept as viewed from garden behind house No. 2 (*photo: author*).





FIG. 34 – View over house roof tops to western half of south end wall of transept and south octagon (*photo: author*).

There then follows, at a point opposite the springing of the gallery arch on the other side of the wall, a blocked stair vice (Fig. 24A, *s*<sup>1</sup>). Similar features have been recently uncovered on the north side where the stair vice had also been blocked (Fig. 24A, *s*<sup>2</sup>).<sup>29</sup> A (blocked) window and the blocking of the vice are also visible on the south face of the north chapel's south wall in the garden behind house No. 1.

To the west of the blocked stair vice of the south chapel, there is one of the few fragments with any preserved detail – a large semicircular arch (*l*<sup>1</sup> in Figs. 24A and B). Some of its ashlar voussoirs have fallen away revealing the mouldings – a rather thin roll and a hollow – impressed into the blocking fill (of the fifteenth century). Above it is another much lower, less well preserved arch, also blocked up, which has been revealed by the partial collapse of the core of the wall on its south face. There are slight remains of the springing of a vault between the upper and lower arches.

The corresponding arches have been uncovered on the north side where it was possible to ascertain that the upper chapel, also vaulted, was only 2.50m in height.<sup>30</sup>

The tall, wide arch connecting the north-west bay with the transept space to the north is preserved, but less conspicuously, under lath and plaster walling in house No. 3 (*u*<sup>1</sup> in Figs. 24A and B).<sup>31</sup> (The corresponding arch is preserved on the north side where, until recently, only the north face of the arch could be seen.) Between these two ground level arches, there are the remains of an arch springing to the south which, together with the remains of vault springings at three points (at the north-east, north-west, and south-east) within the rooms of house No. 3, suggest that the space between the transept and the flanking octagonal structures

was two bays wide as well as two bays deep (Fig. 35). This would mean that there were four groin-vaulted bays forming the main body or nave of the chapel.

On the opposite side of the wall, within a side passage of house No. 2, running parallel with the west end of the south wall of the transept, a pointed arch of narrower span is visible (at *v* in Fig. 24A; Fig. 36), indicating that the western arch, like the eastern one, had been blocked up and, in this case, a much smaller archway inserted (off-centre, towards the east) in order to allow continued communication between transept and chapel.<sup>32</sup> At an upper level, there are traces of the western 'half' of an arch with rounded jambs – the 'reverse' of the arch visible in house No. 3.<sup>33</sup>

Directly above this wide arch, now in the attic or roof space of house No. 2, are the remains of two archivolts of an arch, somewhat narrower in span, which would have been the upper chapel's western arch to the transept (Fig. 24C, *w*). Under it is a rectangular recess, 1.20m wide, with a stepped floor and ceiling, with heights of 1.90m, 2.40m, 2.20m: the arch may have been blocked up, except for a narrow doorway which was, in turn, later blocked.<sup>34</sup>

The corresponding arches have now been partly revealed at the north end of the transept, along with the first preserved architectural details from the 12th-century fabric. Here the north face of the wall between the chapel block and the transept has been exposed. Parts of the archivolts, piers and responds of the two arches – four metres wide – opening between the transept and the west end of the chapel block were brought to light as a result of tearing away the lath and plaster facings and partitions inside the northernmost domestic unit (Fig. 24A, *t*<sup>2</sup>, *u*<sup>2</sup>). Part of a single jamb-shaft and a large roll-moulded archivolt of the eastern arch were uncovered. Of the pier between the arches, three shafts on its south face have been revealed. And of the west arch, part of its mouldings were revealed, along with evidence of three shafts on the south side of the axis of its west respond. Several capital blocks remained *in situ*, although none was fully uncovered. The capitals were of the cushion type, and their abaci were chamfered with a groove on the vertical face. In addition to these parts of the large arches between transept and 'vestibule', and the arch opening from the upper level chapel into the transept, part of the curve of the chapel's apse is preserved, as well as a semicircularly-arched window (here only blocked by a thin brick wall) west of it which seems to have opened into the aisle (Fig. 24A, *q*<sup>2</sup>, *r*<sup>2</sup>), as on the south side.

The design of the Romanesque end elevations of the transept may now be reconstituted in its general outlines (Fig. 27). At floor level there were two large arches, apparently as tall as those of the aisles; above them there were two much lower arches opening into the upper chapels. These upper chapels and arches, surprisingly, seem to have been lower than the galleries over the nave aisles: at Ely, the arches to the (two) upper chapels which open off the transept space (one in each arm), were as tall as the gallery arches. No evidence survives for the clerestory, but if one with its passageway was maintained at the same level as in the nave, the small arch still evident (adjacent to the springing of the gallery arch) may have formed a series of arches, either blind or open to a lower level wall-passage.

The collapse of the western tower in 1430–31 may have resulted in the removal of the clerestory and the blocking up of the arches to both the upper and lower chapels. Judging from the south side, communication between the transept and the chapel blocks may have been maintained by a much smaller pointed archway in the blocking fill. Very probably, the stair vices which provided access to the upper chapels were blocked at the same time. Whenever blocked, their blocking indicates that there must have been an alternative access to the upper level at some location in the west wall, of which there is no trace today. It may also have been in this phase that the tierceron or fan vault was inserted under the vault of the northern interior recess in order to strengthen it.

It may have been after the fire of 1465 that the end walls of the transept were refaced, involving the creation of three large recessed panels. The arches of these panels remain only on the north wall but, presumably, this is due to the 15th-century facing having completely



FIG. 35 – Springing of 12th-century groin vault inside house No. 3 at north-east corner [Fig. 24B, between t' and u'] (*photo: author*).

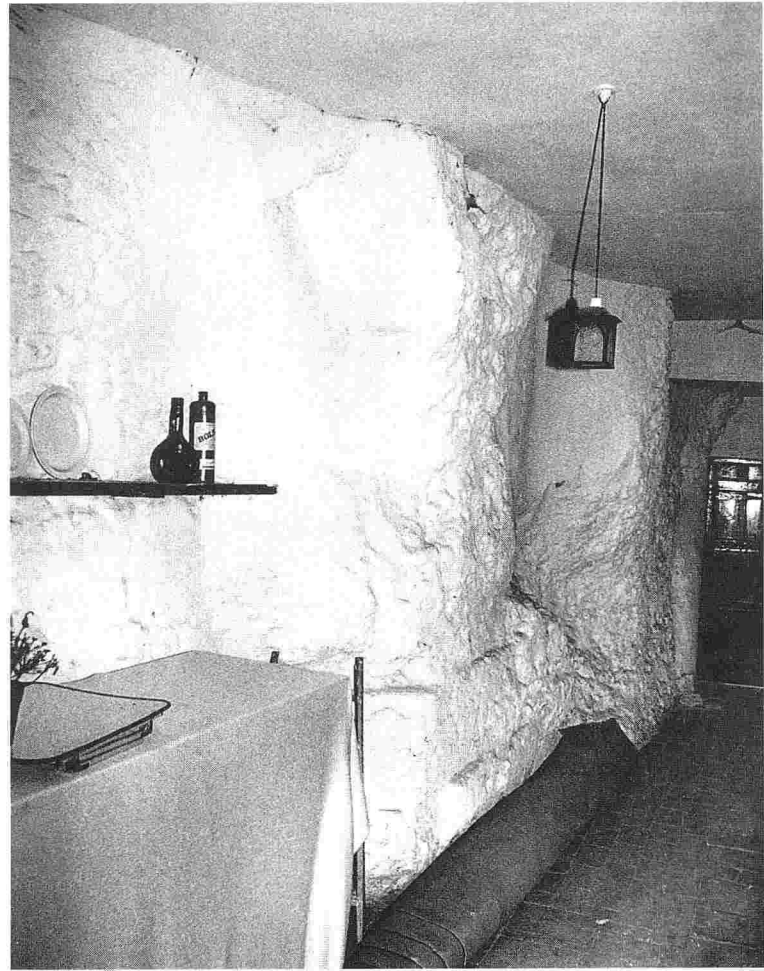


FIG. 36 – West side of blocked 15th-century arch, inserted in eastern arch between south chapel block and transept, seen from inside house No. 2 [Fig. 24A, v] (*photo: author*).

fallen away on the south. Unfortunately these panels seem not to have had any blind tracery: the rebuilt transept must have looked very austere indeed.

A major problem in any attempt to visualize the final appearance of the interior of the transept is the interpretation of the wall surviving above the Romanesque barrel vault (under which the later fan – or lierne – vault was inserted) but below the two small narrow windows (visible on the exterior: see Fig. 28) at the top of the wall (as now preserved). Several feet above the former, the horizontal coursing of the rubble and ashlar wall is succeeded by several courses sloping downwards to the north, as if in preparation for a roof. However, a roof sloping to the north over the entire length of the transept arm seems highly unlikely constructionally, especially as there are no indications of sockets or corbels for roof beams on this same wall. Consequently, the interpretation of these sloping courses remains problematic. There are, however, a series of sockets high up on the south end wall (Fig. 33) which could be explained as having supported beams running from the wall to one above the south crossing arch of the tower, a relatively narrow span, being equal to the width of the aisles, and therefore considerably less than the width of the transept. The small windows themselves would belong to a new and rather timidly-scaled clerestory, possibly erected after the 1465 fire.

Many aspects of the west side of the transept must remain enigmatic until such time as the interior labyrinth of flimsy lath and plaster walls are stripped away (not in my lifetime I am afraid!).

To return to the chapel blocks, the evidence from the south side, corroborated by aspects recently revealed on the north side, indicates that the apsidally-terminated chapels were covered by groin vaults (the indication of vaulting preserved on the south), and that the apses were preceded by a nave-like space of four bays, also groin vaulted. The resulting plan, comprising a space subdivided by two piers on axis relating to a single apse, may initially seem implausible, but can be paralleled, albeit on a somewhat smaller scale, by the outer pair of radiating chapels (the chapels of the Holy Innocents [north] and St Gabriel [south]) in the crypt at Canterbury Cathedral.<sup>35</sup> The square space of the nave has a central column from which spring four bays of groin vaulting so that a second column and two arches open into a single apse. It is necessary to presume that a similar plan was used for the upper chapels at Bury, which were also vaulted, as is evident on the north side.

So far as can be judged from the present remains, the south chapel block seems to have been little affected by the disasters of either 1430–31 or 1465, except for the blocking up of the newel stair and the arches opening to the transept space. Such, however, was not the case with the northern chapel block. The recent revelation of its south wall has made it evident that it was profoundly modified in the 15th century. Not only were its stair vice and the arches to the transept blocked up, but both the lower and upper levels of vaulting were removed, creating one large unbroken space apparently covered by a wooden roof. As we are told that it was the south side of the crossing tower which collapsed first, and then the east, one wonders if the extensive alterations to the chapel were necessitated by the fire of 1465, and if at the same time the northern octagon was so badly damaged it was taken down altogether.

### *The Octagons*

The remains of the north wall of the north chapel block, long visible on both its faces, also have a number of features preserved on three levels. On the south face, at ground level, there is a blocked arch, the archivolt now just above present ground level, which must have been the archway of a corridor leading to the (destroyed) north octagon (x in Fig. 24A; Fig. 37).<sup>36</sup> The second level has a triplet of arches; the middle one is the widest, while the eastern one is only half the height of the other two. The latter, just above the east jamb of the corridor arch, penetrates the wall (Fig. 37); east of it again, are traces of a wall respond with the line of an arch (or vault?) springing on its west side. The eastern arch may be shorter than its companions because of its proximity to the curve of the vault in this north-west bay of the

chapel block, thus revealing that the arch to the linking corridor was not centred within the larger arch of the bay. At this same level, inside the room spanning the west end of the courtyard (part of house No. 1A), at the east end of its north wall, the wider blocked middle arch is partially visible (having been converted into a Gothick recess). (The third tall narrow arch is only visible on the north face of the wall.) In the room above, on the third level, there are the remains of a blocked 15th-century opening: only the lower jambs are preserved.

The north face of this wall shows a wide blocked archway with a small arched opening above its east jamb (corresponding to the one in the south face) and a taller (twice the height), narrow arched opening above the west jamb. Between the two are traces of a tall but wider arch now blocked up. Above this unit of three, there is the outline of another large arch, again blocked, of a span equal to the arch at the lowest level. At the west end of the wall is the impression of what was probably the vice of a large newel stair (y in Figs. 24A and B), with the east half of an archway on the highest level, at the extreme west edge of the preserved masonry. As mentioned above, no trace of the north octagon proper remains above ground.<sup>37</sup>

On the south side, the east exterior wall of the link between the chapel block and the octagon remains but without any revealing detail. Within, there is a tunnel-vaulted corridor of which its west half is constructed as two half-bays of groin vaulting (Fig. 24A, z). Because it is covered



FIG. 37 – South face of north wall of north chapel block, with the short opening through the wall above the arch (lower left) of the former corridor leading to the (destroyed) northern octagon [Fig. 24A, x] (*photo: author*).

over by thick layers of plaster and paint, it is impossible to ascertain the date of this fabric.

The base of the southern octagonal structure survives complete in its circumference (Fig. 24A, *c'*). On its interior, it has been bisected by a wall at the present ground level and subdivided by an inserted floor.<sup>38</sup> The lower level is now lighted by tall neo-Romanesque semicircularly-arched windows, the upper by round ones, both sets of the 19th century. As the interior walls are completely covered by lath and plaster work, there is no visible evidence of any original mural articulation or subdivisions.

Since there has been no investigation of the medieval fabric hidden behind the modern lath and plaster wall covering, nothing can be said about the medieval articulation and disposition of the interior space. It would be particularly interesting to know if there was any evidence for the internal subdivision of the octagons by wooden floors or vaults. Excavation down to the original floor level, in addition to possibly uncovering the remains of shafts and bases belonging to dado blind arcading or placed in the obtuse angles between the facets, might uncover some material indicative of the octagons' function. (The recent conversion of the south octagon into a visitor's centre seems to preclude the possibility of any investigation within the immediate future, if not for decades to come.)

#### PREVIOUS GRAPHIC RECONSTRUCTIONS

The above description of the remaining evidence, and its interpretation, for the form of the western complex reveals that any attempt to reconstruct graphically the appearance of the complex actually has very little solid material on which to build.<sup>39</sup> This is especially true for the upper levels of the front. Three reconstruction views have been made, of which only one – that by A.W. Whittingham – attempts to reconstruct the appearance of the west complex in its initial state, before the collapse of the western tower in 1430–31.<sup>40</sup> It strikes me as far too exaggerated in its treatment of the missing parts of the building, i.e., all the elements above the existing 'skyline'. This is true not only of the central tower, with its three tall storeys and four minor registers of arcading as well as a spire almost equal in height to the tower itself, and of the octagons, literally towers in three major stages – the upper equal to the lower two in height – with, once again, tall spires, but of the chapel blocks as well, where, once more, the upper storey is equal to or taller than the lower. (If a tower of the magnitude depicted by Whittingham had collapsed, surely the entire western transept and part of the nave would have been totally demolished!)

Two other reconstruction views, both earlier than Whittingham's, purport to show the abbey in its final days, *c.* 1500, after the rebuildings due to the collapse and then the fire of 1465. The earlier one, by W.K. Hardy, *c.* 1883, places an Ely-like lantern on top of a tall Perpendicular tower rising out of a western block which has a screen-like width due to the fact that the chapel blocks are each treated as tall towers rising to the base of the central one!<sup>41</sup> By comparison, the octagons are rather modest lower structures, not exceeding the height of the nave galleries. It might also be noted that the three tall recesses – still so very evident today – have disappeared, 'replaced' by five portals and two tall recessed arches in the end bays of the west wall of the transept. A later attempt at a reconstruction, that by Cyril E. Power, *c.* 1923, is altogether more plausible than those of Hardy and Whittingham, for the height of the upper levels and of the towers is not so exaggerated.<sup>42</sup> Nonetheless, it still may be questioned whether the octagonal elements are not carried up too high, even though they do not exceed the clerestory. Other aspects may also be questioned: large arches, imitating the three central giant recesses, appear on the west walls of the chapel blocks which also have large western portals; the connection with the octagons is fudged for they are depicted immediately adjacent to the chapel blocks, thus eliminating the connecting corridors; and, finally, stair vices also rise at the western angles of the transept arms, for which there is no evidence.

## EPILOGUE

Western transepts had appeared in earlier medieval architecture, particularly in Germany during the Carolingian and Ottonian periods, but they were always associated with a west sanctuary, usually but not necessarily apsidal in shape. The limited appearance of the western transept in Britain is of interest because in each case the western sanctuary was eliminated and replaced by western portals: the transept in effect seems to have become a vast entrance hall. This transformation was not restricted to England and Scotland, for there are several, near-contemporary examples on the Continent, in north-eastern France. These include major monuments such as the cathedral of Noyon and the abbey church of Saint-Germer-de-Fly, as well as smaller churches such as at Wassy (a priory) and Glennes (a parish church).<sup>43</sup> The transept at Bury may have been one of the earliest to have made such a profound change.

The building history of the abbey church is reasonably well-documented, but only in general terms, the medieval accounts as usual lacking specificity in many respects.<sup>44</sup> Thus we know that the Romanesque church was begun under Abbot Baldwin (1065–97/8), probably *c.* 1081. Work was far enough advanced by 1095 to allow the translation of the relics of St Edmund. This work has been identified as consisting of the crypt and the choir (on an ambulatory and radiating chapel plan). Between this work and its continuation, a change in scale is visible which involved not only an increase in the width of the choir's central vessel but which may have affected the plan of the transept. The progress of the work after the translation is not further documented until sometime in the period 1121/25–1142/46 when there is mention of doors for the west entrance being commissioned from one master Hugo and the dedication of a chapel at the west, that of St Faith, described as being above that of St Denis. As the sources also tell us that a church of St Denis built by Baldwin had to be pulled down to make way for the completion of the nave and west front, it is clear that Baldwin did not anticipate a nave of the length finally erected, and probably did not include in his initial plans a façade complex of such magnitude as that ultimately erected. Thus, it is likely that the idea of a west transept was introduced no earlier than the last years of Baldwin's abbacy (1095–97/8), but possibly not until after 1107 when work on the church seems to have been actively resumed.

The closest rival for the position of priority appears to be Ely. The west transept there was almost certainly not begun until after the civil wars between King Stephen (1135–54) and the Empress Matilda (died 1167) were over; that is, no earlier than 1155/60. But the question remains, when was a west transept first included as part of the patron's intentions? This is less easy to answer with any precision, but it might be suggested that it was not until after Ely had been raised to cathedral rank in 1107. With the close relationship between Bury and Ely, the date and details of the former become especially significant. The unpicking of the modern fabric in house No. 1A produced the first *in situ* carved architectural details which allow the constructional history of the abbey church as sketched by the sources to be checked and, possibly, refined. The details of the simple cushion capitals, the chamfered abaci, and the bold roll/hollow mouldings of the arches permit the dating of the initial phase of the west complex to the 1120s – the earliest date suggested by the contemporary sources. The continued unpicking of the inbuilt fabric promised to reveal other *in situ* architectural details which would have permitted a closer dating of the construction, and the identification of building phases, of this enormous fabric which was still unfinished in 1180, for the documents reveal that it was only after this date that the west tower was raised above roof level and it and the north octagon completed, the south octagon perhaps only then begun.

Because of the importance of Bury in the history of the west transept and because of its other unusual, if not extraordinary aspects – the chapel blocks and the octagons – it is particularly to be regretted that the decision has been made not to investigate the medieval structure further and, instead, to proceed with the rebuilding of the domestic structures within the ruins of this unique monument. As the interiors of the infilling houses possessed no architectural qualities

of any merit or interest (there being a complete lack of detailing), the houses were more a matter of curiosity than of significance. Since by the late 1980s the structures were in such dilapidated condition as to be in many places unsafe and verging on collapse, their 'restoration' has become a matter of complete new building – therefore, in fact, not restoration at all. These intrusive structures could and should have been removed, except perhaps for their façade walls filling the large arches of the giant recesses, which are of minor interest and mild aesthetic impact. To rebuild these derelict structures, at the expense of the further archaeological investigation of the west front, and, indeed, to make such investigations nearly impossible, in my judgment, reflects a very topsy-turvy set of values. Lamentably, a monument of outstanding historical importance is thereby reduced to a merely picturesque framework for a mundane function.

#### NOTES

- 1 This paper had its origins in part of a study on the phenomena of the west transept in Great Britain, a study still in progress. The research was mainly carried out under a grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, whose support the author gratefully acknowledges. For a brief statement of the problem see McAleer 1991.
- 2 Since both Ely and Peterborough possessed western transepts, and hence will be discussed further below, it is perhaps only necessary here to say a few words about the façade of Lincoln, which did not have a western transept. The Romanesque façade-block, probably complete by the time of the consecration in 1092, was wider than the nave and aisles behind it, and was later extended into one of the widest façades, a type of 'screen façade', in the second quarter of the 13th century (completed c. 1235–40): see Webb 1956, cf. plans 32 fig. 19 and 78 fig. 46, or Pevsner and Harris 1964, plan on 86. Pevsner and Harris, 101, speculated that the designer's inspiration may have been Bury's enormous width.
- 3 For the west complex of Bury in particular, see McAleer, 1998.
- 4 For a complete plan of Ely and the present state of the west transept see *V.C.H. Cambridgeshire*, IV, 53, or Pevsner 1954, plan on 267 (2nd edn., 1970, p. 341). See also Webb 1956, pl. 48.
- 5 For a complete plan of Peterborough, with the final form of the west front, see *V.C.H. Northamptonshire*, II, facing 440, or Pevsner 1961, plan on 351, or Pevsner 1968, 306; also Webb 1956, pls 71 and 72. The giant loggia was a later alteration (c. 1190–1238) to the plan, its stair turrets extending its width beyond that of the salient transept.
- 6 For a plan of Kelso see MacGibbon and Ross 1896–97 I, 348 fig. 311, or R.C.A.H.M.C., 1956, 242 fig. 297, or Webb 1956, 54 fig. 31 (also pls 53 and 54A).
- 7 For a plan of Kilwinning see Galloway 1878, pl. I (96/97).
- 8 For Sankt Pantaleon see Grodecki 1958, 50, 51 fig. 16, 269 fig. 88, or Kubach 1975, 22, 65, 67 pl. 58. An English precedent for western chapels, but not for the particular formal solution, may have been found in the western façade-block of Lincoln, if the hypothesis of Gem 1986, 19–20, is correct.
- 9 The large rectangular chapels, the north one with a central pillar to support its vaulting, open off the two western bays of the nave aisles; a two bay extension (equal to half the width of a chapel) overlaps the Romanesque façade-block at each end. The southern chapel served as the Consistory Court, while the northern one is known as the Morning Chapel. For this aspect of Lincoln see Pevsner and Harris 1964, 102–03; Kidson 1978, iii, viii (plan), and illus. 1/5/1–1/5/2, 1/5/85–1/5/89.
- 10 In B.L., MS. Harl. 1005, f. 121[115]r (*Gesta Sacristarum* [old pagination in brackets, here and in subsequent manuscript citations]: see Arnold 1890–96, II, 291.5; James 1895, 153–54, Lehmann-Brockhaus 1955–60, 150 no. 541. The *Gesta Sacristarum* was composed in the mid-12th century, with continuations to c. 1294.
- 11 See Woodman 1981, 124–25 and fig. 93.
- 12 Stubbs 1879–80, I, 28–29, or Cotton 1930, 19.
- 13 Since, in the description which follows, the houses will be used as reference points for the location of features contained within them, it is necessary to identify them in general terms, relative to their occupation of the major elements of the west complex at the end of their life (their internal divisions were not rigidly fixed, as some rooms seem to have migrated from one house to another). Their numbering began at the north end. Thus: house No. IA ('The Courtyard'), occupied the south half of the north chapel block; house No. 1, the first to be built (before 1681), occupied most of the area behind the north and central recesses; house No. 2 (with two entrances), an area behind the southern third of the central arch and all of the south recess;



- house No. 3 ('Registrar's House'), most but not all of the nave of the south chapel block; and, finally, 'Samson's Tower' (originally refurbished to serve as the probate registry), the south octagon and its linking corridor. For a history of these houses (not accurate in all respects), see Burgess (*c.* 1933).
- 14 An account of the collapse and rebuilding is found in B.L., Add. MS. 14,848 (Registrum Curteys), ff. 105[87]*v*–106[88]*r*: see Gage 1831, 329–30; Hills 1865, 52; James 1895, 122; Whittingham 1951, 175.
  - 15 See Arnold 1890–96, III, 283–87; James 1895, 122, 205–07, and 208–12; Whittingham 1951, 175: based on B.L., MS. Cotton Claudius A.xii (Registrum Hostilariæ), ff. 193[190]*r*–194[191]*v*.
  - 16 Apologies are perhaps due from the author to readers, if the latter find the following description difficult to read – or visualize. Unfortunately, due to economic factors, the number of photographs which could be published as illustrations to this paper was necessarily limited. Consequently, their selection has focused on those aspects of the building which are generally inaccessible because inside the houses. While often seeming singularly dreary and, initially, uninformative, it is hoped that they reveal the potential for new discoveries if the interiors of the houses should be stripped away. Readers are referred to McAleer 1998 for additional illustrations – also limited in number.
  - 17 The published plans are: Battely 1745, pl. II (by J. Burrough, 1718); King 1786, pl. XV; Yates 1805; Hills 1865, pl. I; James 1895, 212 (plan reproduced from Hills); Whittingham 1951, pl. XXI, and Whittingham 1971, foldout (both of which were based on James). The most accurate published plan is the (unfortunately) small plan in Fernie 1993, fig. 42 (measurements by Fernie), similar to the unpublished Ordnance Survey plans of 1885 and 1964.
  - 18 Whittingham 1951, 171–72, which is repeated in a somewhat condensed form in Whittingham 1971, 19–21.
  - 19 The following description depends upon my own observations, greatly aided by the measured plans and sections of the portions of the west front occupied by later structures made for the Department of the Environment (Ancient Monuments Branch) by W. Ball, M. Holmes and G. Lang, carried out between October 1970 and April 1972: Theodolite and Tape Survey, Job No. 305, esp. drawings nos. 43, 45–47, 49–54. I am grateful to Mr Ball for copies of these drawings. The survey did not record features on the walls extending beyond the domestic dwellings, nor did it attempt to probe behind existing paint, plaster, etc.; distinctions in periods of masonry were not attempted. See also a new set of plans, sections and elevations, for houses Nos 1A and I, based on the same principles: Purcell Miller Tritton and Partners, in partnership with Cleverly and Jacob, Job 5013 ('West Front – Abbey Ruins'), made in 1987. In addition, there are three plans by R.C.H.M. England, 'Houses in the Ruins of the West Front of the Abbey Church, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk' (based on plans by the Building Survey Division, Borough of St Edmundsbury, 1985). Permission to use them as the basis for Figs. 24 A-D is gratefully acknowledged; gratitude is also due to Raymond Lewis, a graduate student in the Faculty of Architecture of the Technical University of Nova Scotia, for skilfully reproducing my tracings, and especially my drawing for fig. 27, by means of a computer.
  - 20 This was determined by a *sondage* carried out in 1988 within the dwelling which occupies the site of the north flanking chapel; excavation was halted before the floor level was found: English Heritage Report [1], 7–8. Cf. Whittingham 1951, 171, 'The ground has risen about 7 feet'; Pevsner and Radcliffe 1974, 139, 'W front buried to a depth of 8–10 ft'. The ruins of the west front do not connect with the remains of the nave, most of which also awaits excavation.
  - 21 The total width of the west front is said to have been 246ft (75m): Morant 1874, 387, and Whittingham 1971, 19; both were following Yates 1805, plan, and Yates 1845, chap. IV, p. 35. According to Yates 1805, plan, the total width of the nave was 83ft (25.295m), the nave being 35ft (10.665m) wide, the aisles 18ft (5.485m) each, and the walls 6ft (1.83 m) thick. William of Worcestre, *c.* 1479, left two accounts of paced measurements for the church but failed to mention the west crossing and transept in either (Cambridge, Corpus Christi College Library, MS. CCX: James 1895, 123–25 (English), 163–65 (Latin); Harvey 1969, 162–63 (see Harvey, xv, on the reliability of Worcestre's paces).
  - 22 According to Hills 1865, 39, the walls survived in his day to a height of 30ft to 50ft (9.145 to 15.24 m).
  - 23 Measurements taken between existing wall surfaces yield maximum widths of 4.40m (north), 6.40m (centre), and 4.60m (south).
  - 24 See Whittingham 1950, pl. XX (170/71): the photograph by H.I. Jarman is in the Spanton-Jarman Collection, S.R.O.B.
  - 25 See Dufty and Radford 1960, 2–3, and sheet of sections, section A–B. The trench cut was only 4ft wide; the wall of the west front was found to rest – at a depth of 8ft – on a 'raft' of flints set in mortar at least 18in thick. The lowest stone projected about 2ft beyond the face of the wall above which looked 'as though the outer part had been split off by stone robbers'.
  - 26 The neo-Romanesque windows were inserted in 1863 when the octagon and the adjoining nave of the chapel block were remodelled by William Rednall for use as the Bury St Edmunds District Probate Registry and as a residence for the registrar (plans and drawings in S.R.O.B.). See Hills 1865, 40; Statham and Serjeant 1980, 6 (pl. 3). At the same time, the thatched roof visible in earlier engraved views of the ruins was replaced by the present roof. From the early views, it is difficult to be certain of the nature of the original openings: they appear pointed, with three blind bays (of arcading?) above them; the latter were replaced by the round windows.

- 27 The watercolour and ink copy (250 x 480mm), formerly in the J.W. Green Collection, The Athenaeum, Bury St Edmunds, is now on display in the Manor House Museum as a 17th-century original. As recorded on the frame, it was presented to the Athenaeum by Gery Milner-Gibson-Cullum, F.S.A, on 5 Oct. 1910; it was identified on the back, in an ?18th-century hand, as 'St James's Church in Bury St Edmonds, Suffolk from an Original drawing in the Collection of Dr Coombe, drawn 16 July 1681'. The present whereabouts of the original are unknown. An engraving ('St Edmunds Bury') after 'an original drawing in the collection of Dr Coombe. Drawn in 1680 [sic] was published 1 July, 1790 by E. Harding ('Sparrow Sc.').
- 28 Excavations on the site of the north chapel were carried out in 1988: English Heritage Report [1], 6–7. One trench laid out on the line of the north wall of the chapel encountered the south face of the wall 500mm below modern ground level; it was faced with flint. A second trench came down upon the flint core of the apse wall at the same level; no facing was exposed but the curvature was clearly visible. Yates 1805, in his plan, gave measurements for the chapel of 26ft 6in (8.075m) in width, 62ft 6in (19.05m) in length.
- 29 English Heritage Report [2], 1. The internal radius of the newel stair was about 1–1.2m; the shallow arch is about 2m wide.
- 30 English Heritage Report [2], 1, and [4], 1 (sec. 2), para. 4. The writer of the report (Philip Aitkens) also considered that the upper chapel's arch towards the transept had been blind from the beginning.
- 31 This arch, heavily plastered over but apparently roll moulded, lines up with the one visible on the second floor of house No. 2 – in the upstairs hall: see n. 34.
- 32 This archway, of somewhat irregular profile, at least 2.60m wide and 2.75m high (Department of the Environment, Plan 305–54: section E-E), is at the east (garden) end of the south wall of the long entrance passageway of house No. 2.
- 33 The diameter of the semicircular arch is about 4.70m; its apex is approximately 5.30–5.80m above ground floor level (Department of the Environment, Plan 305–54: sections E-E and F-F; modern floor levels are not at the same level in the two adjoining houses).
- 34 Department of the Environment, Plan 305–52: section A-A or Plan 305–54: section F-F (I have not gained access to this roof space). There is a further shallow 'niche' in the back wall, 200mm deep, 1.20m high and 800mm wide, and a smaller hole in its back wall, as if someone had attempted to remove some of the blocking material of the doorway.
- 35 Woodman 1981, 51–54 and figs 28, 29.
- 36 A stairway, leading to a small cellar, occupies the archway which was about 3.60m wide; the remaining wall core varies at this point from 1.60 to 2.00m in thickness.
- 37 The site of the north octagon has never been excavated, except for the limited area explored in the search for the basilica of St Denis: see Dufty and Radford 1960, excavation plan, 'North West Tower' (A.D.S. Nov. 1957).
- 38 Yates 1805, plan, cited an interior diameter of 30ft (9.14m) for the octagons; the corridors leading to them were said to be 13ft (3.96m) long. The external diameter of the octagon at present is approximately 12m; the internal diameter (between finished wall surfaces) of the ground floor room is 7.80m. The walls therefore might be 2m thick. A clear internal measurement could only be taken in the upper room: its diameter measured approximately 7.77m.
- 39 It is rather ironic that, although the houses built in the ruins of the west complex have been meticulously recorded, those elements of the west complex, such as the north and south end walls of the transept or the south face of the north wall of the south chapel block, have never been measured and drawn. Thus, without a complete set of measurements for all of the features of the west complex, inside and out, with an indication of their co-ordinating levels, it is impossible to attempt a detailed graphic reconstruction which would not be misleading in the correspondence of its parts.
- 40 Whittingham 1971, 12 (see also 7).
- 41 A copy of the reconstruction by Hardy is on display in the Abbey 'Great' Gate (of 1346) – the original is in the Manor House Museum: see Statham 1988, 39, bottom plate; it is also available as a postcard. A second later and different reconstruction by Hardy – an original watercolour – is on display in the cathedral church of St James.
- 42 See S.R.O.B., K511/102a, 102b and K511/373.
- 43 For bibliography relating to these buildings see McAleer 1991, 355 nn. 27 and 28.
- 44 The 'facts' of Bury's building history, with slight variation in interpretations, are repeated from one modern authority to another, e.g. James 1895, 117–20; Cox 1907, 58–59; Whittingham 1951, 169–72. They are primarily based on B.L., MS Harl. 1005 (*Liber Albus*), ff. 120[114]v–121[115]r (*Gesta Sacristarum*), and f. 217[213]v (*De Dedicacionibus*), as well as B.L., MS. Cotton Tiberius B.ii, f. 78[77]v, and Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS. Bodley 297, p. 397. For the most recent summary, citing specific sources, see McAleer, 1998.

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*Abbreviations*

- R.C.H.M.E. Royal Commission on the Historic Monuments of England.  
S.R.O.B. Suffolk Record Office, Bury St Edmunds Branch.