

### THIRD REPORT ON EXCAVATIONS AT GREY FRIARS MONASTERY, DUNWICH, SUFFOLK, 1937-9.

By NORMAN E. S. NORRIS.

#### FOREWORD.

It was the intention of the writer to have completed the examination of the buildings before issuing this report, but, owing to the unsettled nature of things at present due to the war, it has been thought advisable to describe the progress of the excavation to date, so that, in case it is not able to be resumed by the writer in the future, the record of the discoveries shall not be lost.

The finds, which include stained window glass, pottery fragments, carved stonework, etc. will, it is hoped, all find accommodation in the excellent museum recently formed by Captain Barne in Dunwich, for the reception of relics connected with the old town.

I have once again to express my thanks to Captain Barne for his kind permission to carry on the excavations and to acknowledge the much appreciated help and encouragement of Mr. F. W. C. Chartres, and also Messrs. K. R. Davies, J. J. Griffiths, H. Green, W. Durrell and others.

#### DESCRIPTION OF THE EXCAVATIONS.

In my previous reports I gave a resumé of the results which were obtained by a superficial examination of the foundations of the Grey Friars or Franciscan Monastery lying to the east of the ruins at present standing in the precinct. These newly-discovered remains I considered to be part of the domestic quarters. I am now in a position to lay before my readers an account of a more thorough excavation of these and other remains. The entire block has not yet been uncovered, but I hope that this will form material for another paper at some future date.

The following plan (Fig. 2.) reproduced from the 25-inch Ordnance Survey plan (Suffolk, East, Sheet XL.13) shows the position of the precinct wall (aaa), the standing ruins (b), the discoveries of foundations to date (c).

The wing which has now been examined forms the southern part of a building of unknown size, the extent northwards not having been ascertained. Approximately it has an east-to-west length of 46 feet and breadth of 30 feet. It is attached to the rest of the building at its north-west corner by a range of rooms which have been only partially examined.

The principal part of this wing is taken up by a long corridor or narrow room (marked A on plan, Fig. 1) measuring 30 feet 3 inches by 9 feet 4 inches. This occupies the length of the wing all but a narrow space

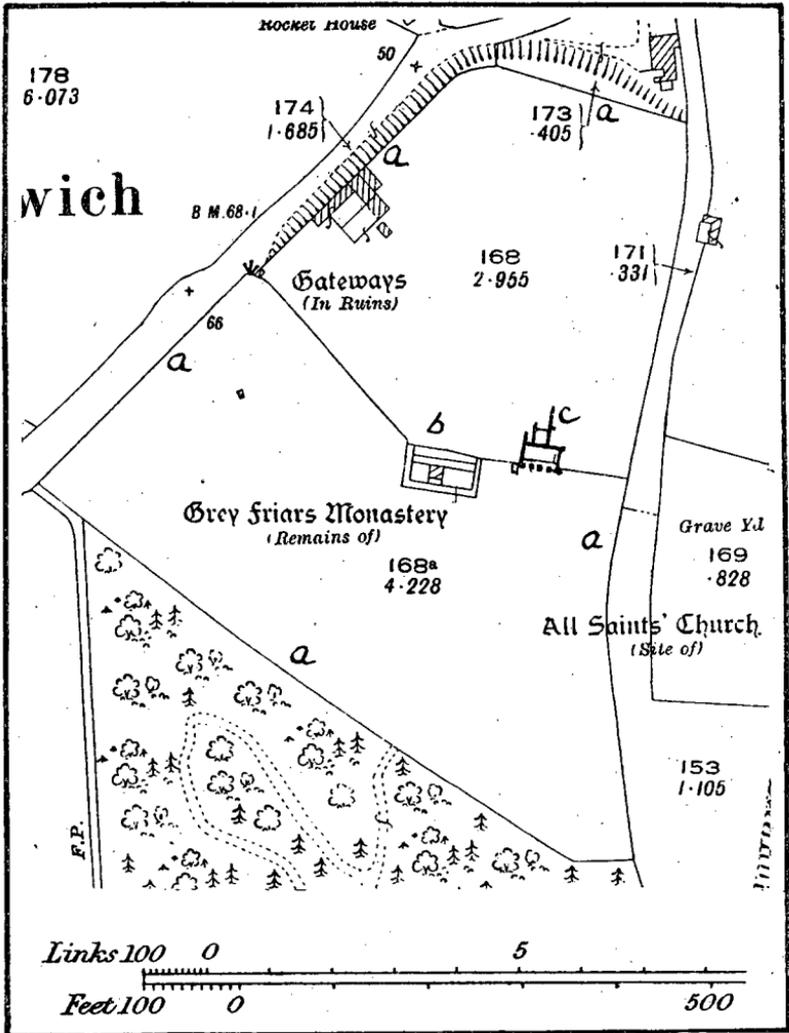


FIG. 2.

Plan of Grey Friars Monastery showing precinct wall (aaa), ruins (b), foundations discovered and excavated 1935-1939. (c).

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at the east end, divided off from it by a wall 11 inches in thickness. This space (marked B on plan, Fig. 1) probably contained a staircase leading to the upper floor, with a doorway into the cloister. This room A is very narrow for its length and has rather the appearance of a corridor. It may have had a stone or tile floor, but all trace of it has quite disappeared, and this is the case in all the other apartments examined. This room was entered from the outside by a splayed doorway in its west wall with chamfered brick jambs and sill (Fig. 3). In the north wall were two doors leading to apartments in the north part of the building, the one leading into the room marked C (Fig. 1) being the largest. It had a curious slant south-eastwards into room A. The jambs, sill and, no doubt, lintel were of wood, the recesses for which woodwork remain in the mortar and plaster of the doorway and are indicated by a dotted line in the plan (Fig. 1). This doorway and the one to be described next were inserted or relined at a later date than that of the building of the wall which contains them. A curious discovery was made in the sill of this door. In the plan of the building a circle will be seen in its threshold. This represents a circular slab of Purbeck marble which appeared on uncovering the doorway. Its upper surface is very roughly cut with no attempt at polishing. On examining the side of this slab where it was exposed by the recess for the missing sill beam it was found to have been turned smooth and polished. This stone was then photographed in situ (see Fig. 4) and, after the necessary measurements had been taken, was removed. It proved to be 4 inches thick and to rest almost on a similar stone, the two being separated by a thin layer of earth. The second had one side smoothed level with two dowel holes cut in it. These two fragments may be sections of the pedestal of a marble font. In the same doorway had been built the ornamented capital, much damaged, of a small attached pillar.

The other door in the north wall of room A gave access to an apartment, the limits of which have not yet been found. This door is smaller than the other two and of simple construction, the jambs being of brick faced with plaster. In the photograph (Fig. 5) of this doorway as it now remains it will be seen that there is a rough filling of flints and dressed stonework. This is part of a wall of clay and rubble built against the inside of the walls of this room, evidently to fit it for use as a lime kiln as the walling is burnt red and the floor of the room, where uncovered, was found to be covered with from one to two feet of lime. This kiln was probably made in the 18th or early 19th century when quarrying operations for rubble were carried out in the ruins.

The south side of the wing was occupied by a cloister walk 33 feet 7 inches long by 4 feet 8 inches wide, its southern side being divided by buttresses into four bays containing the same number of arches which were quite open, no traces of any sills or filling to the arches having been discovered. This cloister was paved with large rectangular sandstone slabs and the bays with bricks, a string of cobbles forming a division between the two types of paving. As the dividing

wall between this cloister and room A was demolished to a very low level, we do not know if a door existed in it. It is quite probable that one did exist in order to give access from the ground floor room A to the cloister, otherwise unapproachable from the building except through the staircase door we have supposed to exist in the end of space B.

Southwards the cloister opened on to an area between 4 feet and 4 feet 6 inches in width, the retaining wall on the land side of which has been almost completely destroyed, only the trench remaining in places. This area was neatly paved with cobbles set in sand. The whole paving slopes quite steeply from the north wall of the cloister to the centre of the area whence it rises again to the retaining wall. Opening on to the west end of this area was a small outbuilding of one storey, paved with square red tiles and measuring 4 feet 8 inches by 6 feet 10 inches. This may have been a garderobe. Most of the paving has been stripped from the floor. Close to the south wall a cess pit or soak-away was found, and, on clearing it out for some distance, it yielded about a dozen threadless iron bolts with nuts burred on the ends, and having remains of oak wood adhering to them. Whether these held in place a wooden lining to the pit, or came from some woodwork which has been thrown into the cavity while it was open was not easy to determine, as the sides of the pit had fallen in and displaced all. The bottom was not reached at 10 feet.

A section of the remaining portion of this tiled floor was taken up and the ground beneath carefully examined with the hope of finding some datable objects. Several shards of pottery, evidently refuse among earth used to level up the floor before tiling, and dating from the 14th to 16th centuries were recovered.

The south end of the foundation of the east wall of this outbuilding projects 20 inches south into the virgin earth perhaps forming the footing of a buttress.

It only remains to mention that the space between the west end buttress supporting the cloister wall and the wall of the outbuilding where it joins the main building was filled by a piece of battered walling (see Fig. 6. The north jamb of the doorway into the outbuilding is seen in the foreground and the base of the buttress with its cut stone plinth beyond, the battered filling between the two).

We now come to the two northern rooms of which only that marked C (see plan, Fig. 1) has been fully uncovered. Room C was on the same level as A and exhibited the same want of flooring material. The walls retain their whitened plaster and are perfect to a height of from 2 to 3 feet above the floor level. Much wall plaster was found lying on the floor, some pieces bearing traces of red and yellow ochre colouring, as if part of a fresco design. Several pieces of stained window glass found in this room indicate a window in the east wall where it would overlook the angle of the building. One section of stone window framing with part of the iron strengthening bar in its appointed place was found on the floor of this room.



FIG. 3. SILL OF BRICK DOORWAY IN WEST END OF ROOM A.

Access to room A was by a wooden-framed door already described (see description of room A). A flight of three stone and brick steps in the south-west angle of this room appears to have led into the next room, but the wall has been demolished below the level of the sill of the door (see Fig. 7).

The room to the north-west of A has, at a date subsequent to the dismantling of the building, been converted into a lime kiln. A rough wall of clay and rubble has been built inside the original wall and across the door between it and room A as previously mentioned. The floor is at the same level as the others. This room was added at a later period by doing away with the north-west corner buttress of the wing and continuing the west wall northwards.

Great quantities of the subsoil have been dug out and carried away from outside this wall, for what purpose is not known, but it is evidently connected with the quarrying operations for stone and rubble known to have taken place in the late 18th—early 19th centuries.

North of room C was another room of the same width which has not been completely excavated. In its east wall was a recess measuring 3 feet 10 inches wide and just over a foot in depth. This recess was wood-lined as shown by the impression on the plaster, and was probably a cupboard. The east wall of this range, outside this room, was supported by a buttress with dressed stone plinths, the bottom one of which remains in a fragmentary state. The wall between this room and C was of later construction, probably of about the same period as the cloister alteration. A splayed doorway in the west end of this dividing wall, formerly connected the two rooms, but this was soon afterwards blocked up.

Here we come to the limits of the area excavated. It now remains to give an account of the successive alterations and additions to the building which have been carried out as far as it has been possible to ascertain them from the variation of the materials of which the foundations are composed.

A careful examination of the composition of the mortar and a plan showing the distribution of the various types of masonry used in the foundations enables us to a certain extent to follow the progress of the alterations which the original form of the building underwent. As will be seen in the plan accompanying this report (Fig. 1), the original shape of the excavated wing, shown in black, took the form of the letter T with the cross-stroke towards the south, and not quite symmetrical. The four corners of the cross-stroke were strengthened with the same number of diagonally-placed buttresses, of which only the north-east one survived the changes. The remains of those at the north-west and south-west corners were visible in the foundation, encased in the later masonry, while the fourth, at the south-east corner, was entirely obliterated to its footings by the reconstruction of the east end of the cloister.

The original plan of the southern part of the wing is difficult to ascertain as the cloister seems to have been entirely reconstructed, if it existed before the alteration at all. That an area existed in the first structure however is shown by the fact that the lowest plinth of the old south-west corner buttress is at the present area pavement level.

All the doorways have been relined in the third and last period of alterations, so it is impossible to tell whether they were all present in the original building. We may, with safety say, however, that a door existed between rooms A and C.

The dating of this first building at present rests solely on the evidence afforded by a small pocket of animal bones and potsherds which was sliced through in digging the foundation trench for the east wall of room C (part of the original structure) in the angle where it meets the north wall of room A. These fragments consist of one small chip of yellow-glazed tile of soft red clay, with geometrical ornament in relief, and three pieces of black to grey unglazed cooking pot, the latter of little use for dating purposes as the type lasted from early times to the beginning of the 17th century as kitchen ware. The piece of tile however, may I consider, be dated in the middle of the 14th century which would date the building after that period. The character of the masonry of this early work is flint rubble with septaria stones and large, water-worn boulders of a material foreign to the district, and which were no doubt gathered from the beach. No bricks have been used.

The first alteration was the complete reconstruction of the cloister. This must have involved the almost entire rebuilding of the southern half of the wing. The paving was then laid down in the cloister and area. In these alterations the two south corner buttresses were destroyed and replaced by massive brick ones, set at right angles to the south wall.

The characteristics of the masonry are a flat, red, hard-baked brick, more squarely and compactly moulded than the others found in the building, and a hard, white mortar. This hardness is strikingly illustrated by the condition of the remaining portion of the south-west buttress. When the walls were demolished the workmen quarried out the soft material of the old embedded corner buttress almost to its footings. The later brickwork however proved so hard that they seem to have been content with taking it only a few inches below ground level. Thus a cavity, roughly the shape of the old buttress is left in the encasing brickwork. This is the cavity mentioned in the previous report (see Proc. Suffolk Inst. Arch. Vol. XXII., page 292). The walls constructed in this period are indicated by dotted shading on the plan (Fig. 1).

Certain window remains found among the rubbish of the rebuilt north wall of the cloister offer material for dating this work. They

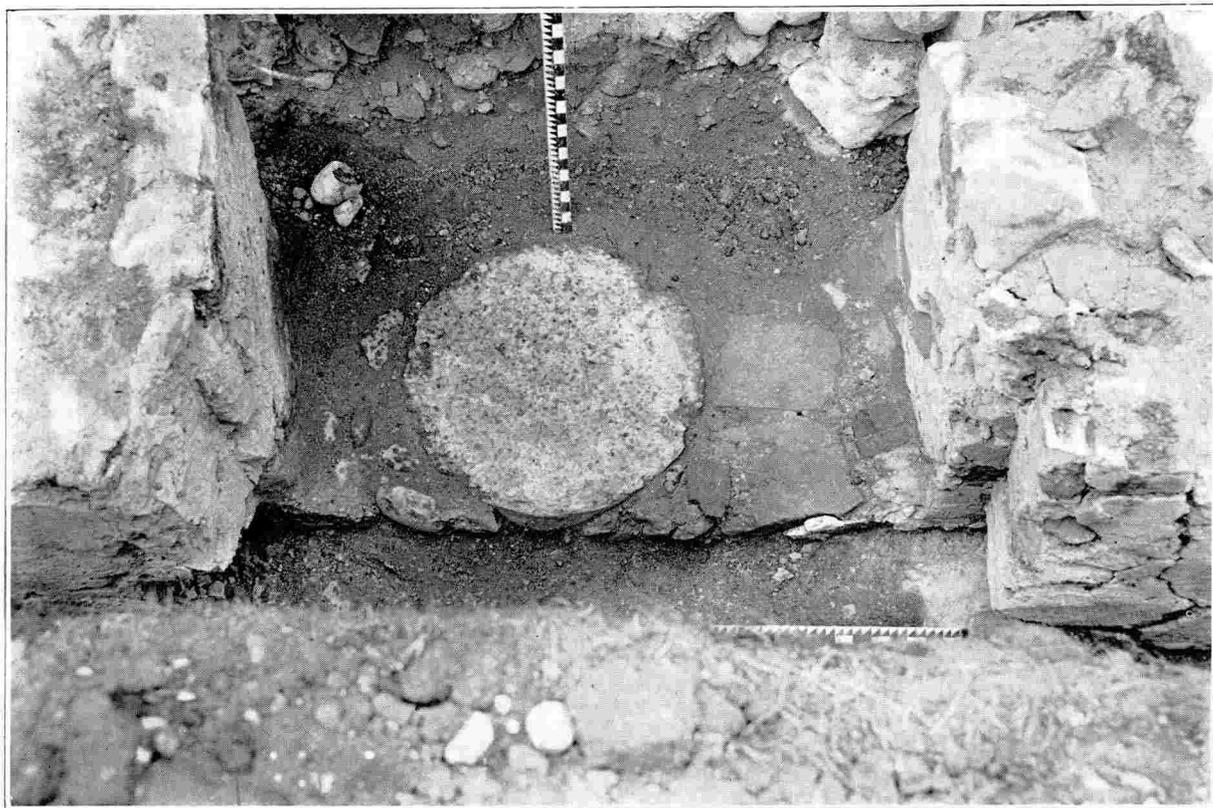


FIG. 4. CIRCULAR STONE IN BASE OF DOORWAY BETWEEN ROOMS A AND C.



FIG. 5. WESTERN DOOR IN NORTH WALL OF ROOM A SHOWING FILLING OF RUBBLE AND MASONRY.

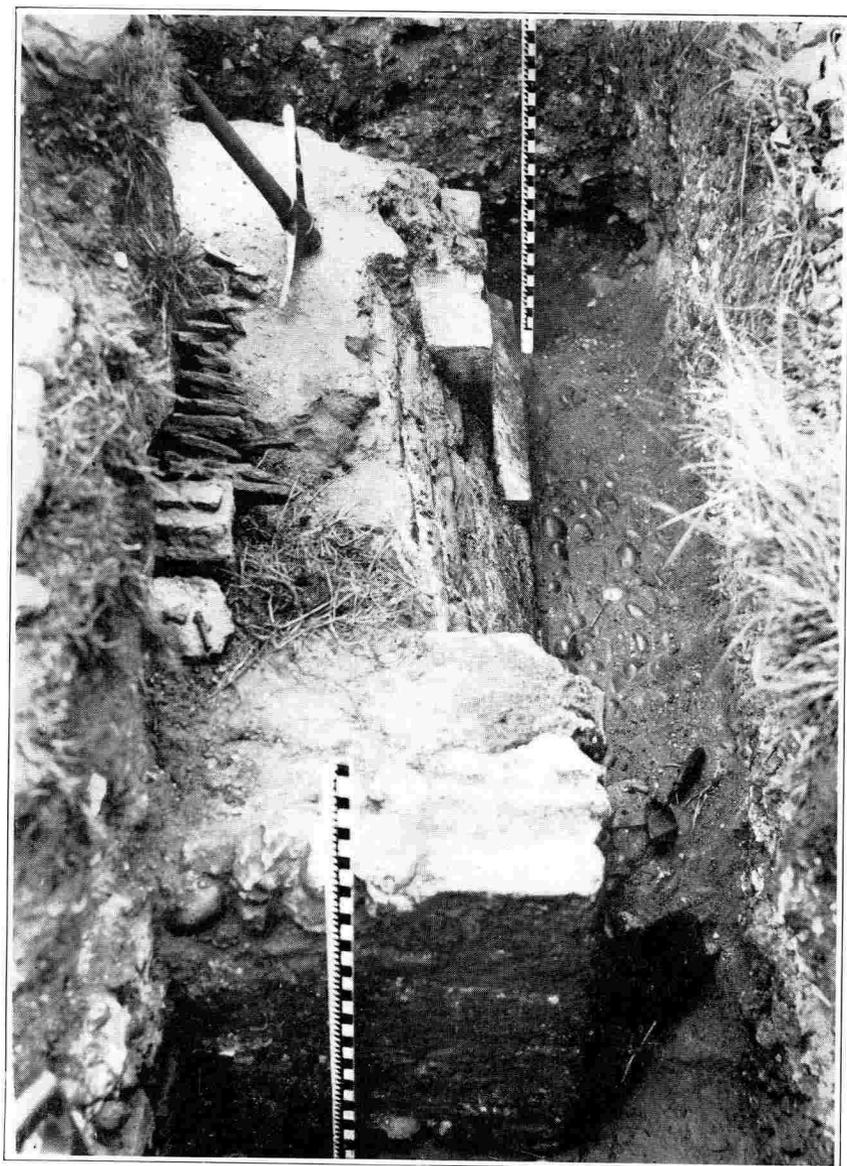


FIG. 6. BATTERED WALL FILLING BETWEEN THE JAMB OF THE OUTHOUSE DOOR AND WESTERN BUTTRESS OF THE CLOISTER. THE COBBLED PAVING OF PART OF THE AREA IS VISIBLE.



FIG. 7. WEST END OF THE NORTH WALL OF ROOM A SHOWING THE SMALLER OF THE TWO DOORWAYS AND THE STEPS LEADING OUT OF ROOM C.

comprise part of the main trifoliate head of a typically late-perpendicular style window, some mullions belonging to the upper lights of the same, and numerous chips and pieces of stained window glass of the peculiar yellow-stained variety, all of which seem to place the date of this work at about the middle of the 15th century, the same period to which the entrance gates to the precinct may be allotted.

The second series of alterations affect all parts of this wing and are characterised by the use of a hard brick of dark red colour running to mauve and yellow tints, and measuring about 10 by 4 by 2 inches, although the dimensions vary considerably, and beach pebble work; the two being used together promiscuously and set in a white, crumbly, pebbly mortar.

The additions in this material are the outbuilding at the west end of the cloister area; the cross wall at the end of room A, the lining of the doors leading from this room, the west wall of the room west of C, and the steps from it into C. Walls of this period are indicated on the plan (Fig. 1) by diagonally lined shading.

The type of brick used in the building are typical of those used up to the end of the 15th century, after which period their thickness began to increase, they became more uniform in size, and less roughly made.

The roofing material of this building appears to have consisted of tiles of tough, compact clay, rather larger than the ones at present in use, and with square peg holes. The hip tiles were of the rounded form and of much softer texture and thicker than the plain tiles. The ridge tiles were  $\Lambda$  shaped with ornamented crests. Only small pieces of the latter were found, probably because they were so brittle and of poorly-baked material.

#### SUMMARY.

The opinions given by the writer in his summary at the close of the previous reports (see Proc. Suffolk Inst. Arch. Vol. XXII) still stand, although the details of the periods and materials of the various alterations and additions have, as the reader now knows, been amplified.

With regard to paragraph No. 3 in that summary which suggests a use for the building, however, it is, in the light of the latest discoveries, quite possible that it may have been part of the infirmary, with its separate cloister of southerly aspect. This seems more possible when we consider that no part of this building appears to be of the 13th century when the monastery was founded here, the cloister and adjacent buildings of which we should expect to be of that period. An infirmary cloister and buildings, however, might easily be a later addition to the monastery. One would expect furthermore that the main cloister would enclose a court, which this cloister did not.

Several trial holes were made to discover the site of the tower marked on the plan of Dunwich by Aggas, but no remains of any buildings were found in this part of the precinct.

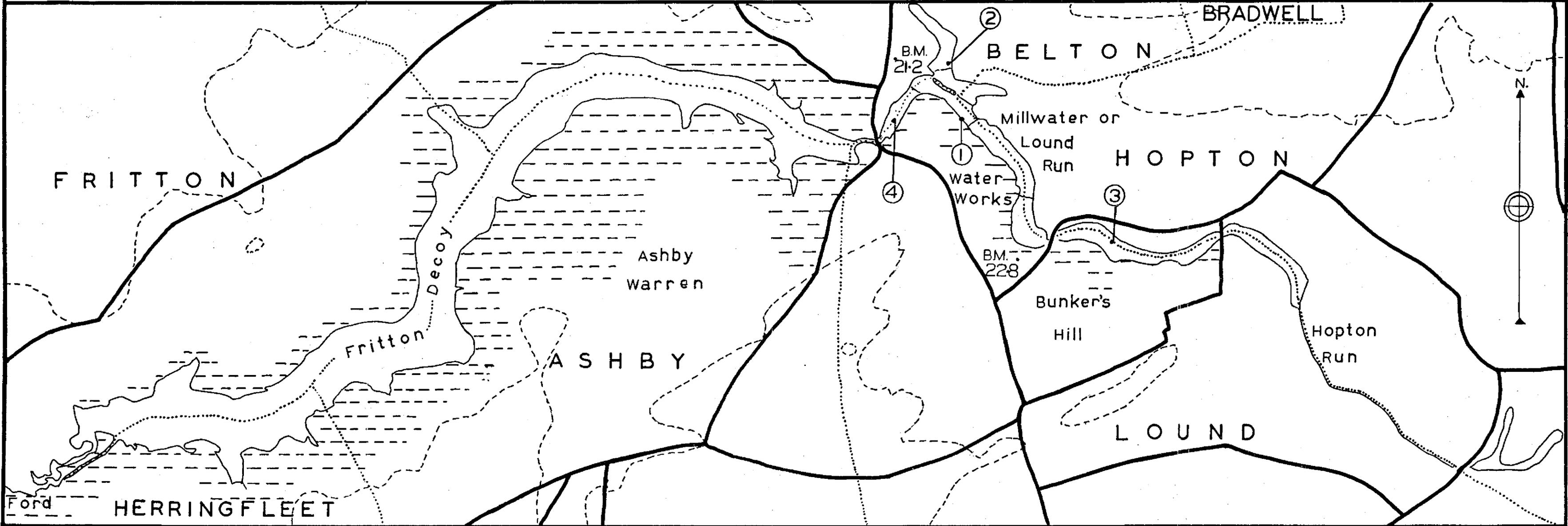
The reader is requested to make the following corrections to the text of the previous report :—

Vol. XXII. Page 287, line 14. For " John Lewk " read " John Lewl."

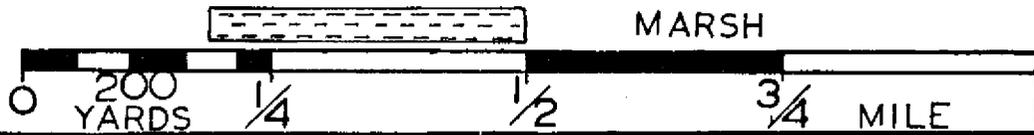
Page 287, line 16. For " Robert Lentylson " read " Robert Jentylman."

Description of Fig. 3, line 2. For " window bead moulding " read " trefoil-headed window."

# A VALLEY IN LOTHINGLAND, NORTH-EAST SUFFOLK



50 FOOT CONTOUR -----  
 PARISH BOUNDARIES .....  
 MODERN ROADS —————  
 BENCH MARK BM.



1. BRONZE CAULDRON 1898    2. HOARD OF FLINT AXES 1902-4  
 3. FLINT TOOLS | 1909    4. WORKED BONE    1937  
 R.C. 1939

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FIG. 1.