

**Various short items about the Abbey from the
Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History
and Archaeological Society
and other sources**

Francesca Radcliffe kindly scanned these papers.

Thomas Gerard: *General Description of the County of Dorset*. This was written in the 1620s, published in 1732 but wrongly attributed to Rev. John Coker. A facsimile was published, with correct attribution in 1980. This was the earliest book on the history and topography of the county, but is mainly concerned with prominent families.

The next Place wee meete withall [59]
 of anie note is *Abotsbury*, where, *B. 3 double Keys*
 if you will beleeeve a Relation in *O. 2, 1.*

The Register
 of *Abotsbury*
 Monks.

Bertufus.

Sir *Ore.*

Portsham and
Helton.

Cermill Ab-
 bie.

the Register of that Monasterie, was built, in the
 verie Infancie of Christianitie amongst the *Britains*,
 a Church to *St. Peter*, by *Bertufus* an holie Priest,
 unto whom the same Saint had often appeared,
 and amongst other thinges gave him a Charter
 written with his owne Hande, which will bee
 needlesse for mee to exemplifie; onlie in it *St. Peter*
 professeth, *to have consecrated the Church himself,*
and to have given it to Name, Abodesbry. But
 to leave this, *Abotsbury* after, as it seemes, be-
 came a retiring Place for the *West Saxons* Kings,
 who beeing afterwards vanquished by the *Danes*,
 King *CANUTE* gave to Sir *Ore* his Houscarle this
Abotsbury, as alsoe *Portsham* and *Helton*: All
 which the said *Ore* and Dame *Thole* his Wife,
 haveing noe Issue, gave unto the Church of *St. Pe-*
ter at *Abotsbury*, longe before built; but then de-
 cayed and forsaken, by reason the Rovers from the
 Sea often infested it. Here afterward the said *Ore*,
 with the Consent of *St. EDWARD* the King (whose
 Steward hee was) in the Yeare of our Salvation
 1044, built a faire Monasterie, and stored it
 with *Benedictine* Monks from *Cermill* Abbie,
 which Gift of his was confirmed by the Charter of
St. EDWARD, *WILLIAM* the First, *WILLIAM* the
 Seconde; and diverse succedeing Kings and Popes
 likewise granted them manie Immunities, as Free-
 dom from my Lorde Admirall, Wreck of the Sea;
 neither were the Gentry of those Times anie
 thinge

thinge behinde, in givinge large Revenues unto them, soe that they grew verie rich ; an apparent Testimonie of which was the often newe buldeing their Monasterie and Church ; and at the upper ende of that a Chappell, dedicated to the Virgine *Mary*, of most excellent Workmanshippe ; as alsoe neare halfe a Mile of the toppe of a rough high Hill another Chappell, dedicated to *St. Katharine*, built altogether with Stone with an arched Roofe of faire Workmanshippe, which still remaines, though to noe other Use than for a Sea Marke. But I will returne to the Abbie, which though it were stronge, yet was it not able to beare that fall Blow, which HENRY the Eighth gave to all Religious Houses, at which time was utterlie subverted the Church ; whence, as the Opinion is, the Bones of the Founder *Ore*, inclosed in a daintie Marbill Coffin, which I have often seene, were removed to the adjoineing Parish Church : As for the rest, who soe dearelie bought their Sepulchres, they have not nowe soe much Priveledge as those that bee in open Church Yards. After the Dissolution *Abotsbury* was purchased by Sir *Giles Strangways*, Sir G. Strangways. who, as I have hearde, preserved that curious Chappell for his Place of Sepulchre ; yet after was it demolished, and in place of the Abbie a faire Mansion House built, [60] nowe descended to Sir *John Strangways*. Sir J. Strangways.

Abotsbury Towne is but poore ; their chiefest Trade consists in Fishing. King EDWARD the First granted unto this Abbot a Market on the Fridayes, which

who understand *Weeke* as well to signifie the Carving or Reach of the Sea, as a Towne or Burrough. This Place with *Portland*, *Weymouth*, and others *Weymouth.* near adjoineing, were, by *Gilbert de Clare* Earle *G. de Clare.* of *Gloucestershire*, gotten from the Church of *Winchester*, by waye of Exchange; whose Posteritie after brought them into the Crowne, and ever since it hath beene allotted out for a Parcell of the Jointures of the Queene of *England*.

From *Weeke* the Sea, working somewhat farre into the Land, yeildeth a convenient and safe Harbour for Shippeing, in the Mouth of a small River called *Wey*, from which the Haven hath *River Wey.* the Name *Weymouth*. This Brooke, scarce three Miles offe, first breaketh out at *Wey*, which it nameth, nowe from the Scituation called *Upwey*; *Upwey.* but more antientlie, from the Owners, *Wey Ba-*

[66] *yonisse*. For the Land it was of *Allen de Bayouisse*, a Baron in King *Allen de Bayouisse.*
G. 3 Pallets O. on a Chiefe O. 3 Escallops G. JOHN'S time, whose Sonne *John*, 28

[67] of HENRY the Third, founded a little Chaunterie there; but his Cofin and Heire, *Elias Rabayne*, forfeited *E. Rabayne.* it to King EDWARD the First. After, in RICHARD the Secondes time, it was purchased by *Walter Frampton*, Ancestour, and alienated by his Sonne *W. Frampton.* *Robert* unto *John Gould*, who left that to his Sonne *J. Gould.* *John* nowe Owner of it.

The River *Wey* passing thence names little Villages, and then falls into the Sea at *Weymouth*, opposite to which on the other Bank stands *Mel-* *Melcombe.* *combe*, an antient Burrough; between whom and

which Charter, being long discontinued, was lately revived by the now Owner of it, Sir *John*.

Not farre from *Abotsbury* Towne passeth into the fleete Water a little River, which cometh downe from *Portsbam*, a large Parish heretofore belonging to the Abbot of *Abotsbury*, taketh its Course by *Ellworth*, an Hamlet, which King WILLIAM the First gave unto *Robert* the Sonne of *Pagan*, and his Posteritie to the before mentioned Abbie.

From this Shore runneth out a Bank or Ridge of Sand and Peeble Stone, even unto the Island *Portland*, which yeildeth a Land Passage into it, except a little Cut with a Ferrie Boat. Passing alonge this Beach you shall see nothings but little

Villages, amongst which are *Flete*, (nowe the Seate of *Max. Moone*, who deriveth his Descent from the more antient Earles of *Somerset* of that) and *Chikerell*, where heretofore dwelled the *Walleis*, Men of especiall note in these Partes, but nowe *Jesop*, as alsoe *Buckland*, *Ripers*, which Denomination it took from the *Ripers*, antientlie Lordes of it; but it hath for manie Descents belonged unto the *Framptons* newe Owners of it.

Not farre from which stands, almost environed with the Sea, *Weeke*, haveing the Name verie agreeable to the Scituation, if wee beleeve those who

[61]

Per pale A. and S.
a Fesse counter.

[63]

G. a Manch Er.
the Hand proper,
holding a Fluer de
Lis O. within a
Border A. a Cre-
scent.

[62]

Barre of 8 A. and
G. on a Canton of
the first, a Bend su-
sided of the seconde.

[64]

G. 6 Lozenges O.
3, 2, 1.

[65]

A. a Bend G. co-
tised S. a Crescent.



NOTES ON THE ANTIQUITIES OF ABBOTSBURY.

(BY THE REV. G. H. PENNY.)

DEAR PROFESSOR BUCKMAN,—*

These are busy days, and multiplied engagements occupy the time even of those country clergy who were wont to be considered men of leisure.

I hope these may plead in my own case an excuse for my addressing to you, in the shape of a letter '*currente calamo*,' what observations I have to make about the antiquities of Abbotsbury.

You saw that there was much to interest the lover of Nature in this parish. Up to a time within my own connection with it visitors were few, and the inhabitants and their surroundings had, to a great extent, escaped assimilating influences. "Portisham out of the world and Abbotsbury round the corner," was hardly too broad a saying to express the facts.

Very often I wished that someone versed in antiquarian lore, or geological science, were at hand to lead on a willing disciple in such matters. Hence, among other reasons, my readiness to welcome your co-partners and yourself when the Field Club came to us last Midsummer.

The neighbourhood has, to begin with, not a few reminders of the old inhabitants in the shape of cromlechs, stone-circles, and barrows. One of these last was opened lately at New Barn, and contained several interments of persons differing in age, and apparently also in the period of their burial. Most of these had been laid in cists of flag-stone set on end; and in some instances the interments were curiously huddled together, as if the burials had been effected without due regard to the former occupants of the tomb. Several urns of rude construction were found in fragments close beneath the turf around the barrow, only one being sufficiently

* These Notes have been kindly sent at our request, and we are much pleased with them, as they call to mind a most pleasant day, much of which was spent in examining antiquities specially exposed for us by Mr. Penny's kind exertions: and for these latter and the Notes upon them the Editor begs to tender his heartiest thanks.

entire at its base to show the original contents of calcined bones. It was singular to notice how the cists were packed with clay, through the continued action of worms and weather, even the long bones of the skeletons being completely filled up with hardened mud inside.

Some objects of interest rewarded careful search. Of iron, some arrow heads and a knife; whilst stains of rust on both the humeri of one skeleton showed that a weapon had been laid across the chest, but this had disappeared. Of copper, the chief matters were a lady's case for nick-nacks, two dress pins, and a ring; there were several rough flint scrapers, and perhaps a couple of dozen small, smooth pebbles from the beach, together with a curiously wrought piece of chalk, the size of two fists, shaped somewhat like an hour-glass, with a shallow saucer at one end, the ornamentation consisting of vandyke incisions all round the surface. Some of these specimens have been placed by the Earl of Ilchester in his Museum of Curiosities at Melbury. It might be worth the while of Archaeologists, could permission be obtained from the owner of the soil, to explore the mound connected with the Cromlech, at Gorwell, about a mile and a half from Abbotsbury.

I need not dwell upon the well known facts relating to the Benedictine Monastery founded here in 1044, but may pass on to state what is less widely known, that diggings undertaken during the last few years have laid bare sufficient traces, of the Abbey Church especially, to inform us of the size and style of that building. Through the kindness of Lord Ilchester these remains will be preserved for the inspection of the public, as will also such as exist in the Churchyard. Here the southern wall was raised upon the lower courses of the north wall of the Abbey Church, and vestiges of at least two side chapels are still observable, the encaustic pavement being yet upon the floor. The new piece of ground given a year or two ago by Lord Ilchester for an additional burying place turns out to have been an ancient graveyard. Interments are numerous found uncoffined at from three to six feet below the surface, generally in cists of rough stones laid side by side on edge, and covered with similar slabs. The leaden pipe that conveyed water to the Monastery runs athwart the plot, and in one case the feet of a skeleton had been removed to make room for this to pass. Some of the skulls, I have remarked, are singularly low in the frontal development. In digging a grave lately, no fewer than 16 skeletons were found within those various precincts, possibly the remains of some

of the soldiers who were slain in the siege of the Abbey House, October, 1644. Turning for a brief space to other matters, I would mention for the interest of your Natural History Section that the badger is still occasionally found within our borders, as the otter is over the hill. Many species of wild fowl visit the swanery in winter, and the wild swan sometimes joins its twelve hundred congeners on the Fleet.

Our immediate neighbourhood is not so highly favoured, botanically, as some places are, notwithstanding there is enough to interest the collector. I may instance the Henbane as a plant that was abundant here twenty years ago, but has been almost extirpated by the agriculturists. The Elecampane (*Inula Helenium*) grows freely both at Gorwell and Ashley. And now, dear Professor Buckman, I close these hasty lucubrations with the expression of a hope that we shall some day see our friends of the Field Club again at Abbotsbury, possibly (if all is true one hears) by railway! though for my own part I say, "*absit omen.*"

Whether or not we meet each other in this changing world, I trust that we shall enjoy a happy re-union, through mercy, by and by "in fairer scenes than these."

Ever yours,

G. H. P.

Abbotsbury, January, 1877.

Anon, 'Benedictine Monks', *Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society*, **53**, 1932, pp 28-30

BENEDICTINE MONKS.

(a) ABBEYS

ABBOTSBURY.

The abbey of St. Peter was founded about the year 1044 by one Orc, formerly steward of the household of King Cnut and afterwards occupying the same position under St. Edward the Confessor. It was peopled with monks from Cerne, and eventually attained to considerable wealth and importance. It is noticeable that most of the Benedictine monasteries of Dorset

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were founded or re-founded during the latter part of the tenth or first part of the eleventh century. This fact is probably due to the great impetus given to the religious life by such energetic monastic reformers as St. Dunstan, who did so much to foster and develop the true Benedictine spirit. The cartulary of the abbey was unfortunately destroyed during the civil war and consequently the records of the early history are very scanty. There is said to have been a church on the site from very early times, erected by a certain priest, named Bertulphus. St. Peter is said to have appeared to Bertulphus and ordered him to build the church which was afterwards consecrated to the saint himself. There is supposed to have been a college of secular priests here in 1026. The Strangways family were benefactors to the monastery at the beginning of the sixteenth century, and a chantry was founded in the abbatial church by Thomas Strangways in 1505, to which was attached the vicarage of Portesham. The last abbot was Roger Rodden, alias Corton, who was appointed in 1534, received the temporalities on January 16th, 1535, and surrendered the abbey on March 12th, 1539, at which time the community consisted of only ten monks who signed the surrender. There is a local legend that the last abbot was starved to death in a portion of the buildings still remaining, but there seems to be little or no foundation for this story. The monastery was granted to Sir Giles Strangways, amongst whose descendants the present Earl of Ilchester is numbered. Sir Giles converted a portion of the house into a residence for himself and retained the Lady Chapel as a burial place for the family. It was, however, almost entirely burnt down when it was being held for the King in the civil wars, when it was stoutly defended by the owner against the Roundheads. Orc and his wife Tola—whose name survives in Tolpuddle—were both buried in the church.

The present remains are fragmentary and consist of a small portion of the gate house, an isolated arch, an ivy clad gable, a building said to have been a chapel, and finally the immense barn, of which the eastern portion is now roofless. The site

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has apparently never been excavated and the plan and dimensions of the church are quite unknown. The annual revenue at the suppression was £485 3s. 5½d., according to *Speed*, while *Dugdale* gives it as £393 19s. 2½d.

Rev. Canon H G Green and Dr C P Green, 'Report on Excavations at Abbotsbury Abbey, Dorset 1967', *Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society*, **92**, 1971, pp 152-3

REPORT ON EXCAVATIONS AT ABBOTSBURY ABBEY, DORSET, 1967

The abbey church of Saint Peter at Abbotsbury seems to have been largely pulled down in the period immediately following the Dissolution. The site was excavated under the direction of the Revd. G. H. Penny in the years 1871-2, when several walls and patches of tile pavement were uncovered.⁽¹⁾ Some of the walls remained in view for a few years⁽²⁾ but the excavation appears to have been filled in subsequently to ground level.

More recently the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments found one fragment

1. G. H. Penny, 'The Abbey Church, Abbotsbury, Dorset', *The Antiquary*, Vol. 2 (1872), pp.285-6.
2. H. J. Moule, 'Abbotsbury Abbey', this Society's *Proceedings*, Vol. 8 (1887), pp.38-48.

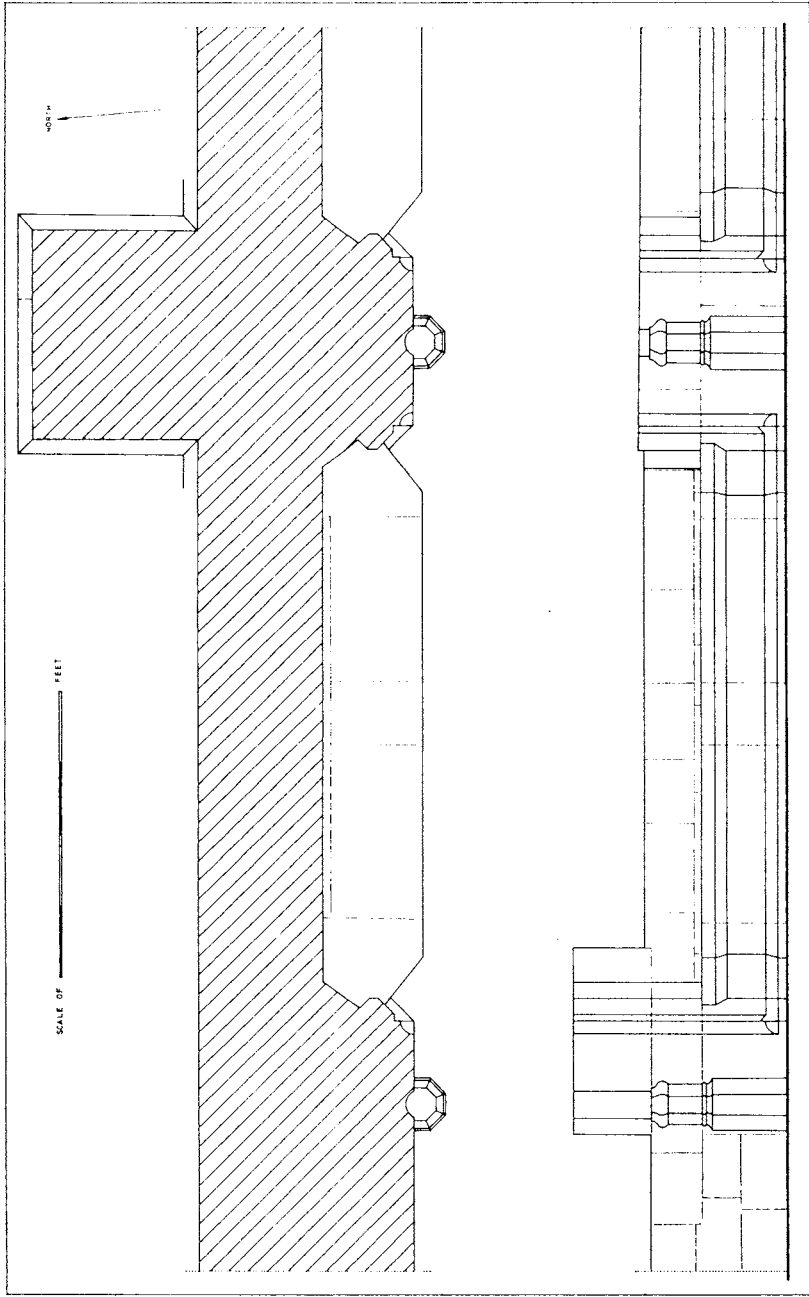


FIG. 18. North wall of Abbotsbury Abbey

only remaining above ground level, parallel with and 22 ft. to the S. of the parish church.⁽¹⁾ This is described as "one bay of the north wall (probably of the north nave aisle) with moulded and shafted responds and internal wall or window recesses". In 1967 this fragment was no longer visible.

This note describes the wall and floor uncovered during re-excavation on the site indicated by the Royal Commission.

On the N. side of the wall the turf only has been removed to reveal the line of the wall and the outline of a substantial buttress. A trench on the S. side of the wall passed through loose soil with an admixture of modern household rubbish to a depth of about 2 ft., where undisturbed patches of an original tile pavement remain.

The pavement consists of plain red square and rectangular tiles with a border of smaller tiles bearing worn traces of pattern, apparently arranged in a haphazard fashion. At the eastern end of the trench a rough stone slab of irregular outline replaces the tile pavement. Where the tiles are lacking, the mortar impression of their reverse survives in places; elsewhere a foundation of undressed stone is visible. The material excavated from the trench contained several fragments of mediaeval tile resembling those figured by Dunkin.⁽²⁾

The wall (Fig. 18) is built of the local Corallian oolitic limestone and comprises the bases of two piers, with the intervening bay and part of a second bay in the E. These bays are occupied by stone benches which project slightly into the aisle beyond the line of the piers. This arrangement is not repeated to the W. of the westerly pier; here the internal face of the wall is not recessed but continues the line of the inner face of the pier. A trial pit where the next pier to the W. might otherwise have been expected, showed only a course of roughly dressed stone of doubtful significance.

In front of each pier an attached octagonal base rises from the pavement level to a height of 1 ft. 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ ins. These bases appear to have supported circular monolithic shafts, but no trace of the shafts remains. The S. face of the westerly pier does, however, show the hollow with which the shaft engaged.

The moulding of the bases is typical of the 15th century. The piers and bases at Abbotsbury resemble larger examples in the retrochoir of Peterborough Cathedral. The latter must be referred to the period 1438-1471 and it seems reasonable to refer the work at Abbotsbury, provisionally, to the same period.

Excavations are continuing on the site of the abbey church and the authors hope to be able in due course to report more fully on the plan and development of the building.

The REV. CANON H. G. GREEN *and* DR. C. P. GREEN