

## 4 ARCHAEOLOGY

### 4.1 Anglo-Saxon burh (Maps 6-7)

#### 4.1.1 Introduction

The extent of the Alfredian burh of Lewes is less clearly defined than some other examples, in that it lacks the surviving circuit of ramparts and ditches seen at, say, Wallingford or Wareham. Of published reconstructions David Hill's circuit is the most convincing in that the burh is confined to the more defensible part of the Downland spur bounded by Westgate, Brack Mount, and the top of School Hill, with the southern defences midway across the slope between High Street and Southover Road.<sup>223</sup> Hill's eastern line is less plausible, however, as he places the junction of North Street and School Hill just within the walls: Jeremy Haslam has pointed out that an extramural road junction is far more likely,<sup>224</sup> as is the case to the west of the town. Colin Brent's more recent suggestion that Hill's circuit be extended to include the area north of the castle is less likely. This tortuous circuit abandons his proposed intramural street (Market Street and North Street) half way along its length (presumably to avoid the sites excavated in North Street in 1975 and in Brook Street in 1974, with their emphatic evidence for no defences: see below) and then forms a northerly projection to encompass the churchyard of St John-sub-Castro. More worrying is the underlying aim to match the length of the perimeter of the defences to the value of the hidage for Lewes in the Burghal Hidage,<sup>225</sup> despite the fact that a strict relationship between hides, manpower, and wall length demonstrably does not apply throughout the system of Alfredian fortresses. Thus, the 1,300 hides allocated to Lewes do not imply a circuit of 5,363 feet, and any identification of the limits of the burh must be based on topographic and archaeological evidence.<sup>226</sup>

#### 4.1.2 Excavations (Map 5)

Few excavations have taken place within the area of Hill's suggested burh, and those that have mostly relate to the Norman castle. In 1972 an attempt was made to excavate the ditch to the west of the town's medieval west wall (along **Keere Street** and Westgate), but, not surprisingly, failed to reach the bottom of the ditch. As a result it remains uncertain as to whether the earthworks that underlie the medieval walls are the western ramparts of the Alfredian burh.<sup>227</sup>



Fig. 13. Westgate Street, showing the town wall.

There have been numerous excavations outside Hill's reconstructed burh, however, and several of these are relevant to the early development of the town. Excavations in **Brook Street** in 1974 were designed to investigate the traditional line of the medieval and earlier town wall. The substantial trench south of the road crossed the line of the wall identified by antiquarians and the Ordnance Survey and demonstrated that no such defences had existed and, equally importantly, that there was no evidence for any urban structures before the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>228</sup>

The Brook Street excavation is important for the interpretation of **Green Wall**, which apparently formed the northern part of the eastern defences of the town. This was subject to small-scale salvage excavation in 1967. The Green Wall proved to be an earth bank (no ditch was discovered) that was dated to the Mid Anglo-Saxon period, but the circumstances of the work, and the poverty and uncertainty of the report, indicate that the conclusions are unreliable.<sup>229</sup> The demonstrable absence of medieval and Anglo-Saxon defences in Brook Street increase doubts over the Green Wall results and strongly suggest that, irrespective of date, it did not form part of a complete defensive circuit.

In 1974, the southern side of the ditch and bank around St John-sub-Castro, in **Lancaster Street**, was excavated, with surprising results: the ditch was a 12<sup>th</sup>-century feature, possibly a short-lived defence created during the civil war

and anarchy.<sup>230</sup> A large medieval ditch exposed during works in 1971 north of the junction of **Wellington Street** and North Street could suggest other medieval defences in this part of the town.<sup>231</sup>

Two further trenches were excavated in 1975 on the east side of **North Street**, designed to explore the northern limits of the medieval town. Again there was no evidence for defences, though Saxo-Norman pottery gave a broad dating to numerous rubbish-pits that indicate occupation that was then abandoned by the 14<sup>th</sup> century and remained open ground until the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>232</sup> Apparently, similar rubbish-pits with Saxo-Norman pottery were found on the site of the **Naval Prison** on the west side of North Street in 1962-5, although there is no excavation report.<sup>233</sup> An archaeological evaluation was undertaken nearby at the north end of **St John Street**, in 2004, followed by fuller excavation in 2005. The analysis is weakened by the assumption that the site lay within the Anglo-Saxon burh, but the small trench was significant for revealing a ditch or pit with pottery dating from the late 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>234</sup> Limited excavations to the south at **Edward Street** (in 1971) produced no evidence of occupation earlier than the 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>235</sup>

Several excavations have occurred on the eastern side of the medieval town, in the general area of School Hill. Excavations at **Friars Walk** in 1976 produced one pit with Saxo-Norman pottery, similar to that found in North Street. Finds otherwise were of the 12<sup>th</sup> century and later.<sup>236</sup> Excavations at **Brooman's Lane (Clothkits)** in 1978 were re-assessed and published in 2001, and reveal continuous occupation from the 11<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> centuries, though much of the Saxo-Norman pottery appears late in date.<sup>237</sup> Similar caution is expressed about the Saxo-Norman pottery excavated from rubbish-pits at a nearby garden at **Brooman's Lane** in 1979,<sup>238</sup> at **Friars Walk** in 1976,<sup>239</sup> and at excavations at **Friars Walk (Clothkits)** in 1989 similar pottery from rubbish-pits again indicated continuous occupation from the 11<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>240</sup> At the nearby new **Lewes Library** site (Friars Walk), excavation in 2004 found features mainly dating from the 12<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, with the earliest pottery datable to the 11<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>241</sup>

Evidently, the archaeological evidence for the burh, and Anglo-Saxon Lewes in general, is limited, with neither the location nor the extent of the burh proven through archaeological excavation. A surprising lack of excavations within the High Street and back lanes south of the castle is to some extent countered by more activity to the north and west. In both these

areas Saxo-Norman occupation is attested, but this evidence is predominantly post-Conquest. Even if reliably attributable 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup>-century material is recovered from these areas this would not of itself suggest the extent of the burh, given the presence of a possible pre-burh minster church, with likely associated settlement. Indeed, it is probable that the burh had suburbs from the outset (most obviously linking the burh to the river crossing, or crossings, thus making a single functional entity<sup>242</sup>) and that these expanded in the 10<sup>th</sup> and early 11<sup>th</sup> centuries. Thus, the excavation of defences is necessary to define the limits of the Alfredian fortress, with the negative evidence of the Brook Street and Lancaster Street the most valuable to-date in that there are no longer any good grounds for assuming that the burh extended northwards to include the church of St John-sub-Castro.

#### 4.1.3 Topographic analysis (Maps 6-7)

Topographic evidence for Anglo-Saxon and medieval Lewes has both been dismissed<sup>243</sup> and, perhaps, over-elaborated.<sup>244</sup> The plan of the town, however, does provide considerable insight into the likely form of the burh and a basis for future archaeological investigation.

General factors defining the location of the burh include the topography of the natural chalk spur of Lewes, overlooking the River Ouse; the possible pre-existence of a minster church and any associated settlement; and the meeting of early routes – a road to the coast in the direction of Brighton (Rotten Row),<sup>245</sup> the east-west Downland route, the road to Malling and the Weald (North Street), and the crossing points on the Ouse.<sup>246</sup> The needs of defence and the location of the early routes seem to have weighed more heavily than the location of St John's church (if earlier) as the Anglo-Saxon burh appears to have been located further up the spur either side of the main east-west route.

The key feature that can be linked to the layout of the burh is the **gridded street pattern** of the town, in which parallel minor lanes (some now no more than twittens) meet the main spinal thoroughfare, the High Street, at right angles. The gridded plan is reinforced by additional lanes, now lost but recorded: Bull Lane (now Paines Twitten) formerly reached the High Street; and an additional lane was located midway between St Andrew's Lane and St Mary's Lane (now Station Street), on the line of the parish boundary (marked by the White Hart Hotel carriageway). Stewards Inn Lane runs parallel to the High Street and it appears to have extended eastwards beyond St Mary's Lane



(Station Street).<sup>247</sup> It has also been suggested that a direct southwards continuation of St Swithun's Lane was enclosed in the 18<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>248</sup> but the present offset line of Green Lane is evidently as early as George Randall's map of 1620. It is also possible that the short north-south extent of modern Bull Lane (i.e. immediately east of the Westgate Chapel) continued southwards.



Fig. 14. Watergate Lane: view northwards.

The antiquity of these lanes is not suggested purely by comparison with other similarly laid out burhs, but also by the fact that north of the High Street the imposition of the Norman Castle appears to overlie streets similar to those that survive to the south. The southernmost 80m of **Fisher Street** lies just outside the footprint of the castle and follows the same alignment as the lanes south of the High Street: Fisher Street is a continuation of Station Street (formerly, St Mary's Lane). West of the castle, the medieval town wall to the rear of the **Westgate Street** properties continues the alignment of that behind **Keere Street** on the south side of the High Street. The alignment of the southern part of Fisher Street and the northern section of the west wall are implausible if they post-date the construction of the castle (which had largely achieved its full extent by c.1100<sup>249</sup>).

Further, and invariably overlooked, evidence for the antiquity of the gridded street pattern is provided by the parish boundaries of St Michael and St John-sub-Castro (anciently the

boundaries of St Andrew and St Mary-in-Foro<sup>250</sup>) that lie parallel to the north-south lanes both south of the High Street and, significantly, to the north, as far as the castle. Finally, the difference between the gridded layout of the area between the west gate and the war memorial, and the street pattern of the early extensions to the town on School Hill and Westout (in existence by the early 12<sup>th</sup> century) not only helps identify the limit of the burh, but also suggests that the gridded plan is pre-Conquest and, thus, most probably datable to the establishment of the burh.

There are grounds, therefore, for a consideration of the gridded street pattern of Lewes as evidence for the location of the burh. We have seen that, notwithstanding the failure of the 1972 excavations, it is reasonable to suggest that the massive earthworks underlying the west wall of the medieval town mark the western limit of the burh (the most vulnerable side of the fortress). Likewise, **St Nicholas Lane** marks the eastern limit of the regular gridded street pattern and, as this coincides with the point just west of the junction of North Street and School Hill, it is likely that the eastern limit of the burh lies in this area, possibly coincident with the parish boundary (of St John-sub-Castro, previously of St Mary-in-Foro) that runs parallel to, but c.20m west of, the lane.<sup>251</sup> Placing the east gate of the burh to a more logical position just west of the junction of North Street and School Hill removes the eastern bulge of Hill's circuit and gives an eastern defence parallel to the strongly gridded street pattern, akin to the arrangement at other burhs with similarly regular street layouts (e.g. Wareham and Wallingford). It is unclear whether the origins of any of the former churches in this area (St Mary-in-Foro, probably on the site of what is now 49 High Street,<sup>252</sup> St Nicholas, where the war memorial now stands,<sup>253</sup> and, possibly, St Peter the Less<sup>254</sup>) lie before the Conquest (they are all recorded in the early 12<sup>th</sup> century<sup>255</sup>), but their concentration could reflect the proximity of the east gate of the burh.

The parallel lanes south of the High Street descend the hill to Southover Road, which marks the line of the medieval town wall. Hill has proposed that the Alfredian burh had defences uphill from the later town wall, making a more easily defendable fortress.<sup>256</sup> Stewards Inn Lane (set back c.32m from the High Street) could represent an immediately intra-mural street, but generally the slope of the parallel lanes is steeper from c.75m south of the High Street. Even if this simply reflects the natural form of the chalk spur, the break of slope represents an obvious location for defences. At this point a slight hump (c.10m long) in **Station Street**, and

major and long-term cracking (and patching) of the walls in **Watergate Street** could result from the underlying presence of rampart and ditch, but neither amounts to anything approaching convincing evidence.<sup>257</sup> Likewise, the slightly greater irregularity of the lower parts of the lanes could result from their later extension towards the medieval town wall, but is hardly conclusive. Moreover, there is no obvious change in the character of the western earthworks that underlie the medieval town wall: the earthen bank appears to continue as far as the south-west corner of the medieval defences, though, of course, this could be the result of later addition. Clearly, excavation is needed to test the logic that the defences were not at the bottom of the slope.

North of the High Street the imposition of the Norman castle obliterated most elements of the burh, other than the lower part of Fisher Street and the west wall (see above). However, the extreme topography of the town suggests that the northern limit was defined by the precipitous (and highly defensible) steep slope that was later utilized by the Norman castle and town (**Castle Banks**). It is probable that the circuit incorporated **Brack Mount** since this is largely a natural spur, albeit artificially heightened (possibly as a motte in the first phase of the Norman castle works<sup>258</sup> and, even, pre-burh as a barrow<sup>259</sup>).

## 4.2 Anglo-Saxon minster (Map 6)

### 4.2.1 Architectural evidence

Although the church of **St John-sub-Castro** was replaced by the present building in 1839, there are antiquarian records of the earlier church. Moreover, two architectural elements from the demolished church were reset in the external faces of the chancel of new building, and apparently relocated to the chancel when it was added in 1884: the so-called 'Magnus inscription' is on the east wall and the former south door is set into the north wall.<sup>260</sup>

Against the evidence, the Magnus inscription – 15 voussoirs with a Latin text in Lombardic and Roman letters referring to the cell of a Danish prince turned anchorite – continues to be associated with the Anglo-Saxon church and the chancel arch thereof.<sup>261</sup> However, it is evidently of much later date (possibly c.1200) and, at c.8ft diameter, can hardly derive from what was a 16ft-wide chancel arch. More probably it comes from an opening from the chancel to an attached anchorite cell.<sup>262</sup>

The re-sited south doorway is shown on antiquarian views of the medieval church towards the west end of the south wall of the nave. It was blocked up in 1779 (thereafter framing a 13<sup>th</sup>-century graveslab, as it does today in its reset location) and replaced by a doorway in the west tower.<sup>263</sup>



Fig. 15. St John-sub-Castro: the Magnus inscription.



Fig. 16. St John-sub-Castro: detail of re-sited 11<sup>th</sup>-century doorway (see also Fig. 3).

Surprisingly, the doorway has been subject to very little analysis. A recent assertion that it has shafts of Quarr stone is erroneous and significantly so:<sup>264</sup> there are only four pieces of Quarr, and these form part of the impost and their continuation as a stringcourse. Most of the stone is Caen, the first firmly datable and large-scale use in England of which is in Lanfanc's cathedral at Canterbury c.1070.<sup>265</sup> However, the small-scale use of Caen stone along the south coast does not necessitate conquest, and it is found in the lowest stage of Sompting church tower. In the works that pre-date the late 11<sup>th</sup>-century tower and arch, and which appear wholly



Anglo-Saxon in character.<sup>266</sup> Thus, the petrography at St John-sub-Castro does not preclude a pre-Conquest date. Moreover, several features do suggest Anglo-Saxon workmanship (although not necessarily a pre-Conquest date): the two-dimensionality of the decorative treatment of the doorway (the three orders of roll mouldings are all on the same plane); the curved and largely symmetrical mouldings of the impost; and the cutting of the lowest parts, or springings, of the roll moulding orders of the arches as integral elements of the impost.<sup>267</sup> The latter raise a problem, however, as they provide for four orders whereas there are only three today and, from the evidence of the voussoirs, no provision for an additional outer order. The oddly flattened profile of the arch roll mouldings could suggest that these are later, as could the misshapen voussoirs. Another anomaly is the treatment of the upper faces of the impost, where the moulding returns and meets the main plane of the wall: the impost evidently stopped short and did not continue through the doorway, yet a tympanum is hardly practicable unless a considerable portion of the height of the doorway has been lost. In short, the doorway at St-John-sub-Castro does not represent the original design or, probably, initial construction. The demolition of the porch and blocking of the doorway in 1779, the demolition of the medieval church in 1839 and the removal of the doorway to the replacement church, and the final relocation of the doorway in 1884 provide several opportunities for modification.

More tenuous evidence for the Anglo-Saxon church has been advanced. Until 1779, the nave floor was seven or eight steps below the west door. Far from suggesting a collapsed crypt,<sup>268</sup> however, this can be more reasonably interpreted as merely reflecting the rise in external ground level: the churchyard probably initially served a large *parochia* and, more certainly, in the medieval period was the burial place for several Lewes parishes (section 3.1.3).

### 4.2.2 Excavations and topography

The probable minster status of **St John-sub-Castro** (section 3.1.3) could imply a much more extensive precinct than the present churchyard, as John Blair has demonstrated elsewhere.<sup>269</sup> Excavation has yet to determine the location and scale of such a putative precinct. The floodplain of the River Ouse is almost immediately adjacent to the churchyard and limits any northerly projection, and it is wholly reasonable to conjecture that the minster site may have extended as far east as the ambiguous Green Wall and that it could have incorporated earlier

mounds on the site of the Elephant and Castle and at Abinger House, as well as the two mounds recorded within the present churchyard.<sup>270</sup> Such a purely hypothetical c.300m x c.200m extent would at least be typical for a minster. It would be likely that any precinct was significantly secularized and reduced by the 11<sup>th</sup> century, and, if there was a minster here, this is supported by the results of archaeological excavations in this part of the town (section 4.1.2). In more general terms, the location of the likely minster of St John-sub-Castro echoes the location of the more assuredly identified minster at Steyning (West Sussex), also on the edge of the floodplain and a similar distance up-river (in this case the River Adur).<sup>271</sup>

## 4.3 The Norman town (Map 8)

### 4.3.1 Buildings and monuments



Fig.17. Lewes castle: view from shell keep towards gatehouse (with 14<sup>th</sup>-century barbican), gun garden (bottom right) and bailey (now bowling green, top left).

**Lewes castle** is ruinous, but preserves significant upstanding masonry. Several sections of curtain wall that enclosed the substantial bailey survive above Castle Ditch, but have been patched and refaced. The herringbone flint-rubble construction of the wall at the north end of the gun garden (i.e. on the south of the bailey), however, is convincingly early Norman in character. This extends eastwards to the largest

remnant of the Norman castle: the gatehouse. Although only the south (outer) wall survives to any great extent, the plan has been recovered from excavation and gives internal dimensions of 9.75m north-south and 6.70m east-west, with walls c.2.40m thick.<sup>272</sup> It is of similar plan and scale to that at Bramber and, likewise, may have had a middle arch. The use of herringbone flint again suggests an early date, perhaps pre-1100.



Fig. 18. Brack Mount from the south-west motte.

Similar construction is used for the shell keep on the chalk-built motte. Here the southern half of the shell keep largely survives, together with a fragment on the north side. The shell keep is elliptical, measuring c.27.4m E-W and c.24.4m N-S. The flint wall has a batter and rises to what appears to be the primary wall walk height of c.6.7m above modern internal ground level. At the north-east of the bailey, another substantial artificial mound survives, now called Brack Mount. Although a masonry structure (possibly another shell keep) is shown on Randall's 1620 map of Lewes, no upstanding remains survive. It is possible that Brack Mount represents the motte from the first castle, quickly made redundant, but it is equally likely that two mottes functioned simultaneously, from c.1100.<sup>273</sup>

There are no accessible remains of buildings from the bailey, although the 18<sup>th</sup>-century house

called Castle Precincts is built over a barrel-vaulted undercroft with herringbone flint-rubble walling of the late 11<sup>th</sup> or early 12<sup>th</sup> century.

Although **Lewes Priory** is of great significance as the first and chief church of the Cluniac order in England, the upstanding remains are minimal. Of the great church (on architectural grounds, begun in the 12<sup>th</sup> century) nothing is visible except for the excavated base of the south-west tower. Upstanding remains of Romanesque buildings to the south are preserved, however, in the form of parts of an earlier (11<sup>th</sup>-century) church or chapel, the 11<sup>th</sup>-century rere-dorter (latrine), the undercroft that supported a c.1200 extension of the dormitory (also over the old rere-dorter), a new rere-dorter of c.1200, and the south wall of the refectory. Several of the windows in the latter have been interpreted as Late Saxon on the basis of double splays and arch-building technique,<sup>274</sup> but this stands up to little serious scrutiny and there is no convincing pre-Conquest architecture at the priory today.<sup>275</sup> As we have seen (section 3.1.3), there is no reason to assume that the gift of the church of St Pancras at the foundation of the priory in 1078-81 implies a pre-1066 church, let alone pre-Cluniac monastic buildings.

The demolition of the priory following its surrender in 1538 led to considerable re-use of stone and the *ex situ* preservation of sculptural details. Antiquarian interest since the first excavations in 1845 (section 4.3.2) has also led to the recovery of further fragments from the site. Such material includes a figure fragment with damp-fold drapery probably datable to the 1160s;<sup>276</sup> finely sculpted capitals of c.1160-70, transported with other ashlar to Kingston in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and re-used in Kingston Manor;<sup>277</sup> and 35 pieces of 12<sup>th</sup>-century Tournai marble sculpture, including the tomb slab of Gundrada (now in St John's church, Southover) and a shaft and base at Rodmell church.<sup>278</sup>



Fig. 19. Lewes priory: view westwards along rere-dorter.



Nothing survives above ground of the **hospital of St Nicholas** (first recorded in 1264), but late 18<sup>th</sup>-century views by Lambert record a massive gable with plain round-arched windows, supporting pre-c.1200 origins.<sup>279</sup>



Fig. 20. St John the Baptist, Southover: view of 12<sup>th</sup>-century nave arcade from the south-east.

The church of **St John the Baptist, Southover**, retains a late 12<sup>th</sup>-century arcade, with squat cylindrical piers. The westernmost pier is whole and not a respond, so the arcade has been shortened. There is no other Romanesque work to support or refute Godfrey's suggestion that the arcade was central to two evenly sized aisles of a hospital, or hospice, positioned near the gate of the priory (this being a normal location and reflecting the broader hospitality of the medieval hospital, exemplified by the hospice of St Hugh, at Cluny itself: 1095-1107<sup>280</sup>). Godfrey suggests that such a conversion happened in the 14<sup>th</sup> century as a chapel of St John built within the priory gatehouse became too small for the use of parishioners, with the hospital being replaced by that of St James.<sup>281</sup> There is an absence of 13<sup>th</sup>-century fabric, but substantial evidence of 14<sup>th</sup>-century work (the north wall of the nave) more consistent with a later date.

The **church of St Anne** (formerly, St Mary Westout) has a nave, west tower, chancel (the

western part thereof) and a south chapel (or single-armed transept) of the early 12<sup>th</sup> century. An aisle was added on the south side in the 1190s, with the inserted arcade of cylindrical piers with square abaci and sophisticated stiff-leaf capitals. At the same time, the south transept was opened into the aisle (evidently becoming a chapel if not one before) and given a rib-vault. The font is 12<sup>th</sup>-century.

No 12<sup>th</sup>-century fabric is visible at the **church of St Thomas at Cliffe**, although the thick-walled construction of the short chancel contrasts with the thinner walls of the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries and is likely to be Norman.<sup>282</sup>

Although the undercroft below the town hall (formerly the Star Inn) has been dated to the Norman period,<sup>283</sup> it is of the late 14<sup>th</sup> century, and there are no known examples of Romanesque domestic architecture in Lewes.

### 4.3.2 Excavations (Map 5)

Excavations at **Lewes castle** have been limited in scope. Work has focused on the south-western motte, with exploratory trenches dug in 1884, 1930 and 1974.<sup>284</sup> Subsequently almost the whole area within the 11<sup>th</sup>-century shell keep was excavated in 1985-8. This recovered the plans of buildings built against the keep wall. Two of these belonged to the period before c.1200. At the north-west of the keep much of a substantial stone building had been robbed and destroyed by later buildings, but extended c.5m from the shell keep wall and has been interpreted as a possible ground-level hall. Opposing this, to the south-east, a similarly scaled building appears to have been a kitchen: an apparent hearth against the keep wall was succeeded by a tile-backed fireplace in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The centre of the keep remained open.<sup>285</sup> The second motte, Brack Mount, has attracted less attention with minor investigations of the bottom of the chalk motte at 4 Castle Banks in 1971,<sup>286</sup> and excavations of a chalk-lined well, or cistern, in 1962<sup>287</sup> and 2001, neither confirming nor refuting its supposed origins as the first 11<sup>th</sup>-century motte at Lewes castle.<sup>288</sup>

The castle bailey has seen equally little investigation. A watching brief at Castle Lodge in 2001 found nothing of archaeological interest as a result of the shallowness of the trenches being monitored.<sup>289</sup> Another watching brief at Castle Lodge in 2004 monitored construction of a retaining wall, apparently located where building of the 18<sup>th</sup>-century house had cut away the motte. A pit of possible 12<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup>-century date here could indicate that the northern profile of

the motte has been reshaped by later medieval or post-medieval slumping.<sup>290</sup>



Fig. 21. Lewes priory: view of 'infirmarium chapel' from east.

**Lewes Priory** has been the subject of much archaeological interest since the site was disturbed by the cutting through of the Lewes-Brighton railway line in 1845. Most famously this almost immediately recovered the lead mortuary chests containing two skeletons and inscribed with the names of William and Gundrada (now in St John's church, Southover). Located in what was quickly identified as the chapter house, there is no reason to doubt that these are the remains of the founders. This stimulated excavation along the line of the cutting, exposing the eastern end of the great (i.e. 12<sup>th</sup>-century) church; parts of the cloister; the chapter house; and the north side of the refectory.<sup>291</sup> Later non-scientific excavations and clearance exposed more ruins: the south-west tower of the great church (1849-50), the dormitory area (1882), the infirmarium range (1900-2), and the lavatorium (1902-3).<sup>292</sup> These early excavations confirm that the church was heavily influenced by the vast third church at Cluny itself (1088-1130; mostly completed by 1109) in that it had an ambulatory with apsidal chapels, and double transepts.

More recent excavations (1969-82) focused on what had been known since discovery in 1900-2 as the 'infirmarium chapel', and on the rere-dorter.<sup>293</sup> Although this included, in contrast to earlier excavations, analysis of burials, pottery, building materials, and environmental material, the published report is seriously undermined by what Richard Gem has described as unacceptable use of 'speculations [relating to the

fabricated foundation documents in the Lewes chartulary] as a starting point for interpreting the archaeology'.<sup>294</sup> This applies to the questionable identification of an Anglo-Saxon free-standing chapel (with a dubious *sacrarium*), a first priory church in what was hitherto called the 'infirmarium chapel' (an hypothesis made in an earlier article<sup>295</sup>), and an Anglo-Saxon crypt. The excavation of the rere-dorter and analysis of the dormitory range at this time, however, was more satisfactory.<sup>296</sup> Here the excavations confirmed earlier discussion of the sequence of construction,<sup>297</sup> albeit with slight refinement of the dating: a late 11<sup>th</sup>-century rere-dorter was engulfed by the extension of the dormitory and the building of a new rere-dorter to the south of this c.1200. Significantly, the extension of the eastern range confirms that the late 11<sup>th</sup>-century location of the cloister, refectory (which is evidently late 11<sup>th</sup> century anyway) and monastic church was identical to that in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, and contradicts the identification of the late 11<sup>th</sup>-century monastic church further to the east.<sup>298</sup>

This has wider implications for the dating of the great church itself. Freda Anderson argues that the date of the cloister is the key factor in defining the chronology of the 12<sup>th</sup>-century church. This argument is based on the assumption that the earlier monastic church was the 'infirmarium chapel' and that this had a cloister that had to be demolished before the new church and cloister could be built.<sup>299</sup> Anderson quite reasonably identifies an *ex situ* Tournai marble double-base (and other single bases and shafts) as deriving from the main (and indeed only known) cloister, dating them to the 1160s or 1170s (although her arguments here are slightly circular as the dating of the bases draws heavily on the assumed date of the great church and cloister).<sup>300</sup> Hence the case for construction of the great church in the second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>301</sup> The *in situ* bases excavated in the south-west tower (still visible today) are the only datable architectural evidence for the main church, and Anderson cites these as further evidence for her dating. Even if the precise dating of these to the 1140s is accepted (and the simple forms are surely possibly earlier), this suggests (with conventional east-west progression of construction, as seen so pertinently at Cluny III itself) early 12<sup>th</sup>-century commencement of work on the priory church. Of course, the upper parts of the western end of the Romanesque church (nave and west tower, or towers) could have been built later than the 1140s, with the remodelling of the chapter house and dormitory range, and the cloister (including the building of the elaborate lavatorium) following on from c.1150-1200. In short, much of



the architectural development of even the identified elements of Lewes Priory (and many parts have yet to be located) remains unresolved.

The excavated evidence for the extent of the **Norman town** is considerable, and is discussed above in the context of the Anglo-Saxon burh (section 4.1.1). This confirms that the town extended as far north as Lancaster Street and Wellington Street, and as far east as the river. There has been insufficient excavation to show the southwards extent and density of the town (and thus the degree of separation from the priory precinct and the *extra mural* settlement it attracted at Southover) or the extent of the western suburb. Excavations at **Cliffe** in 1987 and 1988 failed to find evidence of Norman occupation.<sup>302</sup>

### 4.3.3 Topographic analysis (Map 8)

Excavations show how the Anglo-Saxon burh had been expanded by or during the Norman period, and a combination of archaeological and architectural evidence reveals the scale of the Norman creations of the castle and the priory (above). To this evidence can be added that of the 10 churches in existence by 1121 (section 3.2.4). Several of these were located outside the burh and, thus, are good indicators of the extent of the 12<sup>th</sup>-century town.

Between the probable eastern defence of the burh and the river were located All Saints (represented by the later surviving church at the bottom of the hill at the western end of Friars Walk) and the lost churches of St Nicholas (on the site of the war memorial at the junction of High Street/School Hill and Market Street) and Holy Trinity (at 214 High Street – the corner of School Hill and Eastgate Street).<sup>303</sup> We have seen that St Sepulchre might also date from the 12<sup>th</sup> century and that this lay between the churches of St Nicholas and Holy Trinity, either north or south of School Hill.<sup>304</sup> The existence of three, possibly four, churches in this area confirms the archaeological evidence for intensive occupation in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. All Saints' church also suggests that the borough boundary by this date extended to the bottom of the hill and that Friars Walk and, possibly, the flanking lanes of Pinwell Street (now lost<sup>305</sup>) and Church Lane were in existence.

To the west of the burh were St Peter Westout (lost, but on the site of St Anne's Rectory, 110 High Street<sup>306</sup>) and St Mary Westout (surviving as St Anne's church), suggesting a suburb extending at least 400m west of the burh and later town wall by the early 12<sup>th</sup> century. With

both churches directly on the High Street, this suggests ribbon development contrasting with the broader settlement of the School Hill area.



Fig. 22. St Michael's church, High Street.

Within the area of the gridded streets (and likely confines of the Anglo-Saxon burh) in the early 12<sup>th</sup> century there were the churches of St Michael (surviving), St Martin (probably on the High Street, west of St Martin's Lane<sup>307</sup>), St Andrew (probably on the High Street, west of St Andrew's Lane<sup>308</sup>), St Mary-in-Foro (on the eastern corner of High Street and St Mary's Lane, now Station Street<sup>309</sup>) and, possibly this early, St Peter the Less (perhaps around the area of the present town hall, High Street<sup>310</sup>). With the parish and mother-church influence of St John-sub-Castro in addition within this area (increasingly confined since the construction of the castle), the existence of so many churches at this date suggests that this area was densely occupied, although not necessarily significantly more so than the School Hill area. The addition of 'in foro' ('in the market place') to the name of the church of St Mary indicates that the market may have been concentrated at the east end of the High Street, where the burh met the School Hill area suburb. It appears that this church stood at least 9m forward of the frontage to the west and possibly to the east (these properties appear to have encroached on the street), thus making the church a projection or even an island within the medieval market place.