Reading Greyfriars

Statement of Significance

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1. Executive Summary

Greyfriars began life as the friary church of the Franciscan order in Reading. Built between c.1285 and 1311, it was their second friary in the town, the first (on a poor site grudgingly permitted to them by the Abbey) was abandoned due to regular flooding and its distance from the main settlement. The friary was dissolved by Dr London in 1538, and the church was purchased by the town merchant guild for use as a Guildhall. When a new hall was provided in 1614 the old church became a house of correction, and stayed in use as such for most of two centuries, barring brief occupations by military forces during the Civil War. By the 18th century the building housed the borough Bridewell too, and it was this use that was to prove the most damaging to the fabric since the dissolution; the nave roof was removed to prevent its collapse onto the prisoners, and cells were built within the north aisle and against the north wall. On the south side, a public house and the warden's house were built on the narrow strip of land between the south wall and Friar Street.

From the mid-19th century the population of the rapidly industrialising town rocketed, and new churches were built to serve them. The Bridewell at Greyfriars was increasingly unfit for purpose, condemned by both prisoner reformers and antiquarians who wished to see the 'noble' old church saved from destruction. W W Phelps, then vicar of Reading Trinity, proposed a scheme for the restoration of Greyfriars as a district church for the area in 1860, and the idea quickly gained popularity. Phelps bought the church and surrounding parcels of land in 1861, and the last prisoners were removed on 22 March 1862. Restoration work began just a month later under W H Woodman, who renewed the west window and arcades, built new transepts, and laid a new roof. Further repairs would take place in 1894. Wherever possible land adjoining the site was bought to allow extension of church activities; schools were built in 1864 and extended in 1867, and a memorial hall was built to the north in 1902. This intensive use of the site continued into the 20th century with the addition of a large west end extension and link to the memorial hall wrapping the old church building in 1972, and the demolition of the schools in 1971 to be replaced by a large multi purpose hall and meeting rooms in 1981-3. The church was reordered in sweeping modern style by Maguire in 1999-2000. Today the church remains as active as it ever has been, and has outgrown the existing facilities and spaces provided on the site. The area around it is a zone of urban regeneration, with large blocks of flats and a population set to increase once again with the arrival of Crossrail in 2018.

Overall the church building is of **high significance** as the most complete surviving example of a friary church in England. However, its ancillary buildings, including the west end extension, are of poor quality and **no significance**; they make poor use of the site and the latter in particular actively detracts from the west end of the friary church with its huge and nationally important medieval west window.

2. Statutory Designations

Entry Name: Greyfriars Church
Listing Date: 22 March 1957
Last Amended: N/A
Grade: I
Listing ID: 1321952
English Heritage Legacy ID: 38955
Location: Reading, Berkshire

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Listing Text

FRIAR STREET 1. 5128 (North Side) Greyfriars Church SU 7173 12/122 22.3.57. I 2. Church of England. Said to be the most complete surviving example of Fransiscan- architecture in England, and in use again as a church. The first site (1255-59) being unsatisfactory, the present church was built 1285 plus, and ready by 1311. It served as Town Bridewell during the C18 and

was only restored circa 1863 by the Borough Surveyor (W H Woodmn). Built of squared knapped flints with stone plinth, dressings and buttresses. Tiled roof swept down over aisles with small vents. 3 bay nave, large transept (added to church by Woodman, probably incorrectly), chancel removed after the Reformation and east chancel arch blocked. Gable over now carries Woodman's triple arched belfry. The nave has segmental headed 3 light windows of plain decorated style and an extremely fine west window of 5 lights, decorated style with reticulated tracery. The transept has 2 bays each side of main vessel, each with plain 'Y' tracery, the north and south windows 4-light in Decorated style. North and south doors in nave with moulded pointed arches. Interior spacious; crown post and wind-brace roof supported on original cruciform and quadrilobe shafts. Gabled and arcaded retable. Font and pulpit date from restoration. Entrance now in annexe to west.

Listing NGR: SU7121673588

3. Historical Context

The first mention of Reading is in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle for the year 871, when it was conquered and partially fortified by the Danes[1]. It was burned by the Danes in 1006, along with several other towns in the area. By 1086 it was a royal manor in the hands of King William, it having previously been held by King Edward; in the latter's time it was assessed at £40, by 1086 at £48. WIlliam gave Battle Abbey a church in the town together with 8 hides, two mills, two fisheries, and 29 *mansurae* (burgages - plots held in a town in return for annual rent).[2] Battle was a Benedictine foundation but it would be the Cluniacs that had the greatest role in shaping pre-Reformation Reading; they established an Abbey at Reading in 1121, and in 1125 they were granted the town "and Cholsey, together with woods, arable lands, pastures, meadows, waters, mills, fisheries, churches, chapels, churchyards, oblations and tithes with a mint and one moneyer at Reading", as well as the right to administer justice and receive the proceeds thereof. The grant of land included that previously gifted to Battle.[3] Under the rule of the Abbey Reading became an important cloth trading town and place of pilgrimage; Henry I gave the abbot the right to a four day fair at the feast of St Laurence, and the hand of St James.

The relationship between the townsfolk and the Abbey was not always a smooth one - there were periodic quarrels, one of which with the Merchant Guild in 1253 resulted in the issuing of a document listing their complaints: that the abbot had moved the ancient market, had forced them to plead out of their Guildhall, and had forced them to render dues and services they did not owe. The King had ordered his sheriff to "cause the abbot to cease from his malpractices" without effect.[4] In retaliation the Guild refused the abbot permission to hold the local court in

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[1] A Savage ed., *The Anglo Saxon Chronicles* (Greenwich Editions, 2000) p. 92
[2] Williams and Martin eds., *The Domesday Book* (Penguin, 2003) p. 140
[3] P H Ditchfield and William Page eds, 'The borough of Reading: The borough', in A History of the County of Berkshire: Volume 3. (London, 1923), pp. 342-364. British History Online http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/berks/vol3/pp342-364 [accessed 1 October 2017].
[4] ibid

their Guildhall; the dispute was only resolved in 1254 when the abbot agreed a liberal settlement that guaranteed the Guild's rights, governed by the his bailiffs, in return for the use of the Guildhall for the pleas. Nonetheless the relationship remained uneasy until the Reformation; the power of the town and Mayor increasing as that of the Abbey waned.

The Franciscans or Grey Friars were established in Reading in 1233. Their arrival was unpopular with the dominant Cluniac Abbey, who allocated the Grey Friars a poor and marshy riverside site, on a piece of waste ground near Caversham bridge - provided that the Friars never asked for permission to enlarge the site. This flooded almost every winter, necessitating that the friars move out or remain in great danger[5]; it was also so far from the town that it was difficult to supply. By 1282 the friars had asked the abbot for a different site; this was agreed in 1285 but subject to punitive conditions: the site, to the west of the old town, was a third of the size of the old one, and the friars had to agree never to impinge on the (extremely extensive) rights of the Abbey, or in effect ask the Abbey for anything else, on pain of losing the site altogether. This is where the friary would remain, and what ultimately became Greyfriars church.

The site was extended in 1288 by a grant of land from Robert Fulco that adjoined the friary on New Street (now Friar Street). In 1303 Edward I granted the friars 56 oaks from Asherridge Wood at Windsor. A small grant of five shillings in 1311 for the *opera fratum minorum* gives an likely end date for this phase of building works, though the phrase could equally refer to a donation for the "work" of the order in a more general sense. As well as the church and 'dorter' (dormitory) with associated service buildings there was "at least one pond", gardens and orchards[6]. There seems to have been little development of the site between the c.1311 completion and the dissolution of the friary in 1538. The friary church had a nave, aisles, and chancel; there is also reference to a "chapel of St Francis" in which Margaret Twynho, a local widow, was buried in 1501.[7] Excavations in 1862 for restoration work claimed to have found the foundations of transepts; but this is unlikely for a friary church; most likely is that the north foundations related to a friary building or perhaps the chapel, and that the south were of subsequent development[8].

Greyfriars was dissolved in 1538; on 18th September Dr London wrote to Thomas Cromwell to confirm that "I have inwardly defacyd the churche and dorter; the resydew of the howse I have left hole till I know your father pleasur, and clerly dispacchyd all the fryers owt of the doores in ther seculer apparell….Thys ys a town of moch power [poor] people, and they fell to steling so

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[5] *Reg. Epist. Peckham* (Rolls Ser.), iii, 211–12.
[6] M Summers, *History of Greyfriars Church, Reading* (Downs Way Publishing, 2014) p.8
[7] Ditchfield and Page, op.ct.
[8] Our views on the transepts differ from Pevsner, who asserts that the north transept was "built afresh" by Woodman; the west arch to his north transept seems to be original, as is a substantial amount of carved clunch to the lower reveal of the first east window, closest to the chancel arch. The same cannot be said for the windows of the south transept Pevsner claims to be built on original foundations. See Tyack, Bradley, and Pevsner eds.) *The Buildings of England: Berkshire* (Yale University Press, 2010) p.445

fast in every corner of the howse…[9] London also wrote to Cromwell pleading the case for Mayor's desire to have the church building as a new Guildhall, and this was indeed the role it was to serve from 1542-78. The remainder of the friary site and buildings were acquired by Robert Stanshawe in 1540, but subsequently subdivided and built on[10].

The Guild moved to a third hall in 1614, at which point the church became a House of Correction. It was occupied by Royalist forces, who used it as a barracks, in 1642; by Parliamentarian troops following the siege of Reading in 1643, before once again being taken by the Royalists in September of that year. During the civil war the friary site formed the north western corner of the town's defences. Severe damage was done to the building in this period, including the "pull[ing] down [of] a great part of ye said house [of correction]" that necessitated repairs paid for by the Mayor, Aldermen, and Burgesses costing £35 4s 6d.[11] The sum is at odds with the assertion that a "great part" of the building was lost; if both are true then it must have been patched up rather than put back to its pre-war condition and extent. If the chancel had not already been demolished by this point, it could have been the demolished part to which the source refers. Certainly it seems to have gone by 1722, at which point Joseph Haycock bought the land to the north and east of the church (including the former site of the chancel), and had his kitchen built against the east wall of the nave.

By the first quarter of the 18th century the church had gone from a house of correction, where the poor and unsupported would be put to work in return for their keep, to the borough and county Bridwell or prison. In 1776 it was described by the prison reformer John Howard as "formerly a church...a spacious room with four dark small huts on the one side for night rooms...It is dirty and out of repair. Women and men are together in the day time…[there is] no court [and] no water."[12] By 1786 the condition of the church had deteriorated to such an extent that the nave roof had to be removed to prevent it falling on the prisoners, who were evacuated to safety during the work.[13] They returned by December 1786, but without the county prisoners who had been moved to a new Bridewell at the Forbury in an attempt to reduce overcrowding.

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[9] MS Cotton, Cleopatra, E. iv, folio 223, *Letters and papers, Foreign and Domestic, 31 Henry VIII* vol 13 part 2 (18th September 1538). London was deeply involved in the dissolution but seems to have been of conservative instinct; he is known to have been involved in a plot against Cranmer five years after he dissolved Greyfriars, and was convicted of perjury as a politically convenient expedient to remove him from office. Following his conviction he was forced to ride through Reading facing backwards, and then pilloried with his crime written on his forehead. This very public display may have been to displace public anger about the dissolution from the King to London, but, perhaps more likely, may have been a warning to the townspeople, freshly "liberated" from the control of the monks, to remember their obedience to the King and his chosen administration.

[10] Summers, *op.cit* p.25. The exact disposition of the friary buildings is unclear. Speed's map of 1611 shows a walled site with a long building, possibly the dormitory, aligned on Old Road (now Caversham Road), a larger cluster of buildings at the north east corner of the site, and a building at right angles to the nave abutting it at the west; how much of this is reliable can only be discovered through archaeological investigation of the site.

[11] Payments for the house of correction Michaelmas 1641 to Midsummer 1657 (Berkshire Records Office)

[12] Summers, op.cit p.50

[13] Reading Mercury 2 October 1786

The church building had also gradually been surrounded by new building; a public house had been built against the south wall by 1790, as had a house used by the overseer of the Bridewell. Access to the church was between these two buildings through a link directly to the warden's house; the roofless nave itself had been subdivided with wooden partitions to create additional cells at the west end.[14]

Greyfriars remained a prison until 1860 when, following mounting pressure from local clergy and bodies such as the Berkshire Archaeological Society on the one hand, and from prison reformers on the other, the borough was persuaded to plan the closure of the Bridewell and sell the site to Reverend W.W. Phelps, the vicar of Reading Holy Trinity, for use as a new district church to serve the rapidly expanding town. The site of the church cost £1250, and a further £1206 was spent to secure the buildings and land to the immediate south and west. The buildings were quickly demolished, and work started on the restoration, under the supervision of architect W H Woodman, on 21 April 1862. The church was reconsecrated on 4 December 1863.

An ambitious series of clergymen continued to purchase parcels of land surrounding the church, and to develop what they had acquired for the service of God and the parish. Sackville Street was built in 1881 giving the church a fixed boundary to the north and therefore a site much smaller than that of the original friary; it was also constrained to the east by the c.1808 Austwick house which could not be purchased until 1884, and later became the rectory. Schools were added to the west end of the site in 1867, and a memorial hall to the north in 1902. At the turn of the century Greyfriars was providing substantial social and educational services to its parish, and the congregation numbered over 2000, in 1913 it would reach 4124[15]. The schools closed in 1932 and the buildings went into parish use, with a six year interval when they served as an army decontamination centre during the Second World War; they were ultimately demolished in 1971.

The next 12 years saw another period of development, with the building of the west end rooms and north link to the Memorial Hall by Ken White in 1972. The Greyfriars Centre was built between 1981-83 on the site previously occupied by the schools. Reordering of the main church building was carried out by Robert Macguire in 1997 and 1999, and a nursery opened in the old rectory to the east end of the church in 2006 which expanded into the memorial hall in 2009.

Greyfriars today is a vibrant evangelical church, with a large congregation and increasing number of groups and activities to accommodate on the site. There has been substantial pressure on this small site since its reconsecration in 1863, and this together with the need to continue to repair the main church building has driven its development ever since. With Crossrail due to arrive in Reading in 2018 the church anticipates a further surge in demand, and

[14] See 1861 legal papers relating to purchase of site and adjoining properties
[15] Summers op.cit pp.163-168

therefore launched an ambitious project to redevelop the site in 2007. Initial proposals to build over much of the car park are now under revision, and it is that revision that this statement has been commissioned to inform.

Parish Timeline

1233	First Greyfriars established in Reading on riverside site
1285	Greyfriars move to second site, the present church.
1288	Site extended along New Street (Friar Street) by grant of land from Robert Fulco
1311	Generally accepted end date for the building of the friary church
1538	Greyfriars dissolved; the church and dormitory interiors defaced. The King retains the church building, the rest is sold to Robert Stanshawe in 1540
1542	Church passes to Merchant's Guild for use as their Guildhall
1614	Guild move to new hall, church becomes a house of correction
1642-4	Church used as a barracks by Royalist and Parliamentarian forces during the Civil War.
1646	Repairs following civil war damage
c.1720	Bridewell (prison) established at the church, initially alongside the house of correction
1722	Joseph Haycock purchases land to north and east of church and has his kitchen built against the nave east wall.
1786	Nave roof removed; county prisoners relocated to the Forbury gaol.
By 1789	Warden's house and public house built against south aisle wall.
1808	Lawrence Austwick purchases extensive portion of old "Fryer's Ground"; his house, based on designs by Sir John Soane, replaces the Haycock house to the east of the church.
1860	W W Phelps and local clergy propose a "scheme for a new district church", Friary church site sold to Phelps.
1861	Phelps purchases land to the immediate west of the church
1862	Final prisoners and staff moved from Greyfriars Bridewell and warden's house; restoration work begins 21 April 1862 under architect W H Woodman.
1863	Greyfriars reconsecrated
1864-7	Building of schools at west end of site acquired by Phelps in 1861
1866	South (internal) porch and north vestry added
1867	W W Phelps dies
1881	Sackville Street built
1884	Church purchases 64 Friar Street (the Austwick House)
1894	New wall dressings in "calcareum" and repairs by W Ravenscroft
1902	Building of Memorial Hall, repairs to church stonework and installation of new heating system
1932	Schools closed and put into use of the parish
1954	Reroofing and new guttering, stonework repairs

1963	Demolition of old vicarage (Austwick house); new one built behind the reused facade.
1971	Schools demolished
1972	West end extension by Ken White
1983	Completion of Greyfriars Centre by J Alan Bristow, on site of former schools.
1988-9	£100,000 raised for external stonework repairs
1997	First phase of works by Robert Macguire (roof repairs)
1999-2000	Reordering by Macquire; nave reseated, new floor and immersion font.
2000	Temporary building placed in car park
2006	Nursery opened at 64 Friar Street
2007	Redevelopment project launched
2009	Nursery extends into Memorial Hall
2011	64 Friar Street extended

4. Architects and Craftsmen

4.1 W H Woodman (Poulton & Woodman)

A Reading based architect who worked in partnership with fellow local W F Poulton, from c.1850. The firm largely specialised in new and non-conformist churches[16]; examples of their work in that field include Bishop's Stortford (Congregational, 1860), Wokingham Baptist church (1861), Blewbury (Methodist, 1869), Abingdon Trinity (1873, Wesleyan Methodist), and Sawbridgeworth (Congregational, 1863), amongst many others. They also carried out a much smaller number of adaptations to older churches; the firm's only work grant aided by the Incorporated Church Building Society was the restoration and reseating of Moreton-in-Marsh parish church (1858, complete with rather outdated galleries), but Woodman was also responsible for the restoration work at Waltham St Lawrence (1863), Letcombe Regis St Andrew (1863-5), Pangbourne St James the Less (1864-6), Sandhurst St Michael (1865), and Harwell St Matthew (1867). The firm also carried out secular work in and around Reading; for example the Vachel Almshouses on Castle Street (1863-5), the frontage of the Victoria Hall (1863-4) the arcade of Reading department store Heelas (1870). Woodman was Reading borough surveyor during the period of his work at Greyfriars.[17] Despite his popularity with non-conformist clients Woodman was hardly prolific in terms of ecclesiastical architecture; only eight church projects of his are recorded in the Berkshire Pevsner[18], and none of his work has been considered to be of national importance to the extent of architects like his contemporary G E Street. Betjeman was scathing about his capacities in his write up of Greyfriars in *Murray's*

[16] Historic England list entry for Aylesbury cemetery chapels, list entry no. 1117893 accessible at https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1117893
[17] S Hylton, *Reading in 50 Buildings* (Amberley Publishing, 2016) ch.11
[18] Tyack, Bradley, and Pevsner (eds.), op.cit pp. 61-2, 66, 100, 175, 323, 325, 356, 421-2, 445-6, 452, 469, 471, 497, 584

Architectural Guide, calling him “that dull architect”[19]; certainly he seems to have had no particular style of his own and many of his interventions in older buildings were utilitarian first and aesthetic a (sometimes distant) second.

Woodman is responsible for the 1862-3 restoration of Greyfriars, which included the provision of a new roof, external refacing in flint, the addition of two transepts, refenestration, and the renewal of the great early14th century west window. It is also likely that he was responsible for the addition of the south porch and north vestry in 1866.

4.2 Robert Maguire

A pioneer of 20th century church architecture, Bob Maguire designed his first church whilst still an architectural student in the 1950’s. On leaving architectural school later in the decade he went into partnership with the designer Keith Murray. Their practice was best known for its new church buildings, which sought to give a modern and participative environment for worship that unite the principles of new brutalism with the “humanity and warmth” of scandinavian architecture.[20]

The firm was responsible for many church reorderings in the 1980’s and 1990’s, including major projects at Abingdon St Helen and Thame St Mary in the diocese of Oxford. Maguire’s approach to these reorderings was at first regarded as radical; his guiding principle was that for a historic building to be conserved (and therefore retained for future generations) is must be adapted to modern worship, so it could remain in use. The degree of adaptation he considered necessary was often far greater than statutory consultees were prepared to accept, with the result that he was often in dispute with English Heritage whose inspectors at the time usually wished to, as he saw it, preserve these buildings as found. In one case, of a church at Gislingham, he describes himself as being “at war” with one such inspector. Though not alone in championing the role of adaptation in securing church buildings for the future, Maguire was an important advocate and his work to existing church buildings should be seen in that context.[21] At Greyfriars he was responsible for the repair and insulation of the roof in 1997, and the interior reordering of 1999-2000 that stripped out the remainder of Woodman’s interior furnishing and installed a new dais with immersion font, ceramic tile floor with underfloor heating, and moveable seating.

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[19] J Betjeman and J Piper, *Murray’s Architectural Guide: Berkshire* (Murray,1949) p.139

[20] For a complete history and evaluation of the importance of the practice see G Adler, *Robert Maguire & Keith Murray* (RIBA publishing, 2012)

[21] A series of nineteen interviews with Maguire covering his whole life story to 2004 is available in the British Library *Life Stories: Architects’ Lives* collection - see interview 13 for his views on conservation and adaptation [http://sounds.bl.uk/Oral-history/Architects-Lives/021M-C0467X0079XX-0013V0]

5. Setting and Churchyard

Above: Greyfriars from the south west, on the junction between Friar Street and the Caversham road

Greyfriars is at the western end of Friar Street, at what was the western edge of the medieval town of Reading but is now essentially part of the town centre. The site is bounded at the west end by Caversham Road (A329), a busy arterial route to and through Reading that is partly a dual carriageway and set in an underpass. Above the A329 next to the church is a large roundabout providing the junction between Friary Street, the A329 slip roads, and Chatham Street heading west. There has been a substantial amount of regeneration in this area of the town in recent years, with large blocks of flats and new retail units. To the north the site is bounded by the back gardens of the 1881 houses built along the (also 1881) Sackville Street; to the south by Friar Street itself. To the east is 64 Friar Street, formerly a private house with gardens and outbuildings over the site of the chancel, later the rectory, and now a nursery in the ownership of the church with a high (c.3m) brick wall to all but the Friar Street elevation. To the immediate east of this is a large Sainsbury's with student accommodation over it.

On the boomerang-shaped site itself, the church occupies the east side, linked to the 1902 memorial hall with 1972 infill development on the north side. To the north and west of the church

is the 1972 extension by Kenneth C White, in flint. At the far north west of the site is the 1981-3 Greyfriars centre by Alan Bristow, which includes a hall, office space, cafe, and bookshop. The space between the church and the centre is tarmaced and used as a carpark.

The setting of the church is therefore entirely urban; there is no churchyard in the traditional sense and within the site boundaries only the area between the south aisle wall and the boundary wall to the south is grassed. There is a small triangle of land to the south west of the car park that is also grassed and has several mature trees; this obscures most of the south west end of the church site and therefore all the bulk of the Greyfriars centre from principle public approaches along Friar Street from the west.

All post 1863 work has carefully preserved views of the 14th century west window and kept the south (Friar Street) elevation clear of development; it is only these elements of the setting that are of **high significance**. Of **moderate significance** is the boundary line on the south side, as it is likely this preserves close to the original boundaries of the friary despite the loss of all medieval walling material.

6. Exterior and ancillary buildings

6.1 North Elevation

Above: north elevation of north transept, with the remainder of the elevation obscured by the memorial hall and houses of Sackville Street

The north elevation of the original church building is largely invisible, obscured by the old rectory wall, the memorial hall, and the houses of Sackville Street. The entire north wall of the north aisle is now within the 1972 extension linking the hall and the church, which runs almost up to the site boundary at the against the back garden walls of the Sackville Street terraces. This means that the north elevation is characterised as much by the 1902 and 1881 church properties on Sackville Street (the hall and numbers 2-4, the latter recently purchased) as much as it is by the north transept visible beyond them. Sackville Street itself remains much as it was c.1890, unlike Friar Street and the areas to the south of it which have been heavily regenerated; it is therefore important that any redevelopment of the church site seeks to respect this. Overall though, this elevation is of **moderate-low significance**; it is of evidential importance as surviving testimony to the 19th century character of the area, character that has already been lost on the other side of the church site along Friar Street, but it is not of great quality, artistic, or architectural merit.

6.2 South Elevation

Above: Greyfriars south elevation, from Friar Street looking north east. Note the 1972 extension to west end of the church, on the left hand side of the image. Below: the same view c.1860, prior to the restoration works.

Above: south elevation of the friary church, looking north

Below: south elevations of the west end of the site, with Greyfriars centre (left, through trees) and temporary building (centre). The backs of the Sackville Street terraces are visible over the temporary building.

The south is the principal elevation, and the one on which the church, as restored by W H Woodman in 1862-3, is most visible. It is dominated by the lofty south transept, and by Woodman's catslide clay tile roofs, in comparison to which the south aisle wall seems low and self effacing. The result is that the south entrance, once the main entrance, does not have particular presence despite being signposted by gate posts in the boundary wall; the current main entrance is through the 1972 extension to the west. It is easy to see how this could confuse visitors unfamiliar with the site, particularly given that the main church is unmanned unless an event is taking place, with the parish offices being at the opposite end of the car park on the first floor of the church centre.

This elevation of the church was obscured for a large portion of its post-reformation history, by a public house and the warden's house for the Bridewell. Access to the church at this time was through a yard between these two buildings and a porch or link that connected a doorway in the same location as the present one directly to the warden's house[22]. Reverend Phelps bought out both and had them demolished in 1862, and from the completion of the restoration one year later the elevation has remained essentially unchanged. For this reason, and because it is the only elevation from which the church building can be seen clearly without 20th century accretions, it is of **high significance**.

6.3 East Elevation

Above: east elevation from Greyfriars Road; 64 Friar Street, the old rectory and current church owned nursery, is on the left. The bell turret is Woodman's.

[22] See Summers op.cit p59 for plan of the Bridewell and warden's house

The east elevation of the church has not been built against, but is wrapped by the grounds of 64 Friar street and is therefore not directly visible from public roads or footpaths. As with the south elevation, most of the building here dates to Woodman's restoration; he built (or perhaps rebuilt) both transepts and the bell turret. The brick infill around the chancel arch is curious. At the time of the restoration many in the parish hoped that the chancel could be rebuilt, and Woodman's original sketch shows it; it may therefore have been his decision to infill in cheaper brick pending that work. On the other hand, the bricks could be 18th century, there are records of building against the east wall in the 18th century and the outline of the bricked up section is lower at the eaves and generally much smaller than the Woodman sketches indicate was his intention for the chancel. It is therefore most likely that this is the ghost of the demolished medieval chancel, bricked up post-reformation, refinished as part of the 18th century Haycock building works, and left untouched by Woodman who must have hoped he would be demolishing it in a later phase of work.

Overall this elevation is of **high significance**; though not much medieval fabric remains the elevation is the only one that shows traces of the building's post-reformation and pre-Woodman

history, and the ghost building outline, whether of the former chancel or an 18th century building, is of considerable evidential and archaeological importance.

6.4 West Elevation

Above: west elevation from church car park

The west elevation is best known for its early 14th century west window, sensitively renewed by Woodman. This is the most familiar view of the building and is the one that appears most often in historic images of it before the restoration works; the window itself is a remarkably complete and rare example of early 14th century Franciscan tracery of national importance. The curved west extension was added by K C White in 1972, obscuring the lower part of the original west end and of the window itself; this extension work also provided a new main entrance, as can be seen on the left hand side of the image above.

White's extension, in flint with concrete dressings, is sensitive in form, with a curved wall that reduces its perceived mass but unfortunately also reduces the usefulness of the interior space and places a visual barrier between the main road (Friar Street) and the main entrance. The selection of flint was clearly intended to complement the historic building but the effect is rather the opposite; the flint of the original church is lost against that of the extension (particularly in diffuse light), making it seem like a backdrop rather than the most important architectural feature

on the site. Overall the significance of the west elevation of the 1863 building is **high**, but that of the White extension **low**.

Above: flat roof to 1972 north link and west end extension
Below: junction of 1972 roof with renewed 14th century west window

6.5 The Memorial Hall

1902 by Ravenscroft, Son & Morris of the Forbury, Reading. Principal elevation and entrance to Sackville Street, though functionally it is accessed most through a small rear entrance from the 1972 link between it and the north side of the church. Flint with limestone dressings and clay tile roof. The main contractors for the build were Messrs Wheeler of Caversham Road, Reading, and the original building cost £750. Apart from the road facing elevation this is a plain building; on the road elevation the door surround crashes awkwardly into the large 10 light square window. A memorial plaque over the window commemorates the commissioning of the hall in memory of Martin Hope Sutton, who is commemorated within the church. To the rear of the hall is a small extension which accommodated the original WC provision, and a small yard that is used as an outdoor play space by the nursery. Overall the hall is fairly standard Edwardian work, competent but not remarkable. **Moderate significance**.

Top: Sackville Street elevation of Memorial Hall. Above: Hall rear extension and nursery yard adjoining north transept.

6.6 2-4 Sackville Street

Victorian terraces c. 1881. Bold polychrome brickwork facade with black and cream bricks to string courses, quoins, and windows, narrow arched doorways. Modern double glazing. Built as accommodation for town's industrial workers, but in recent times used as offices by No5 counselling services, a local charity. The facade is an important element of the streetscape but the rear extension and interior refurbishments have removed most of the original character of the building itself. **Low significance** as a whole, the facade **moderate significance** as a part of the streetscape.

6.7 The Greyfriars Centre

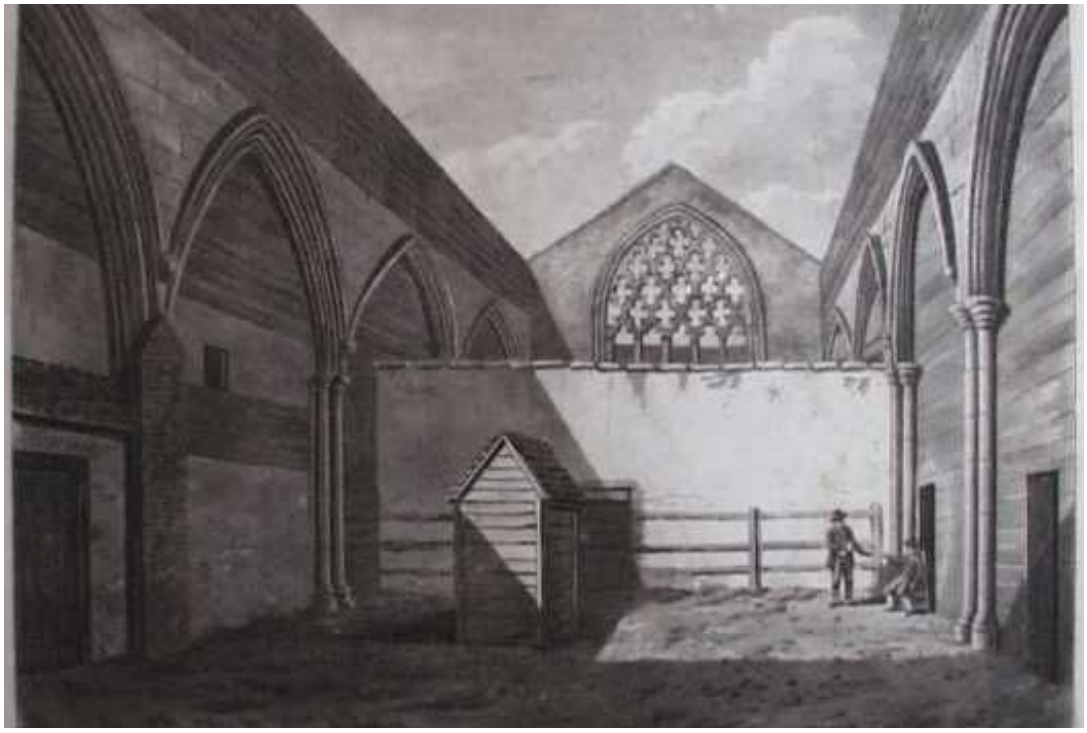
1981-3 by J Alan Bristow in dark brick with tiled roofs. Composed of two linked parts; a large hall, kitchen and cafe to the south, and a smaller series of meeting rooms with a bookshop to the north. Functional but of limited architectural merit and no historic importance. **No significance**.

Above: east elevation of centre; below: main reception area

7.Interior

7.1 Nave

Above: nave looking west during rewiring works. Note the cream floor tiles have protective coverings in place.
Below: the same view in 1816 with cell range in north aisle, partially blocked east window, and timber partition across the nave.



A well proportioned, lofty space of three large bays with grand late 13th/early 14th century arcades to the north and south, partly renewed by Woodman in 1863. The dominant feature is, unsurprisingly, the spectacular west window occupying most of the west wall, of five lights with reticulated tracery, of **high significance**. The window was partially blocked up during when the church was in use as a prison; the tracery was renewed by Woodman but he did his work sensitively, remaining faithful to the original design and keeping replacement minimal, for the standards of the time; the proportions and layout are exactly as they appear in pre-restoration sketches from the 18th century, and photographs from the 19th. Woodman's intervention in the west wall beneath the window is therefore likely to have been minimal; demolishing and rebuilding it with the window remaining in place above would be technically challenging and serve little purpose given that, at least according to pre-restoration photographs, its structural condition seems to have been sound. According to a structural engineer involved in the 1972 works piercing the west wall in the north and south aisles to create new doorways, the wall is c.1 metre thick, composed of two fair faced skins (the exterior in flint), with the space between filled with coarse rubble - all the characteristics of medieval construction though no specific dating evidence was discovered. It is therefore likely that the lower portion of the west wall, beneath the window, contains original medieval standing fabric beneath the Woodman plastering to the interior, and the 1972 plastering (and possibly Woodman refacing) to the exterior. It is recommended that any piercing of this wall, such as that proposed under phase 3, be conducted under the supervision of an archaeologist and subject to proper archaeological record.

Above: nave dais and blocked chancel arch

To the east end of the nave is a modern stone and tile dais rising two steps up from the main floor level; this contains the immersion font beneath a covering of green and blue tiles in the shape of a cross and dates to the 1999-2000 Maguire reordering. To the east wall of the nave is the chancel arch, blocked with plastered brick upon which is mounted the 1894 carved limestone reredos.

The simple king post nave roof dates to the Woodman restoration of 1863, with subsequent repair and insulation by Maguire; it is of **moderate-low significance**. The nave is lit by enamelled brass coronas suspended from elaborate wrought iron brackets at the spandrels of the arcades; these are original to the Woodman restoration (though subsequently converted to electricity) and are of **moderate significance**.

Overall the nave is of **moderate-high significance**. Substantial portions of the upper masonry to the arcades, west, and east walls, were replaced by Woodman out of necessity; the original floor was also removed during the house of correction/Bridewell phase. It was therefore only the shell of the medieval nave that survived; it is the most complete surviving friary church in England but that is saying little given the degree of destruction and robbing out of other friary sites during the reformation. The Maguire works have left it with a bright, modern character quite different to that of the Woodman interior.

Above: nave roof and west window; note elaborate wrought iron light brackets.

7.2 North aisle

Above: north aisle looking north west

Narrow aisle of three bays, with a plain catslide roof. Records of the Bridewell indicated that overnight cells were built in this aisle; cells for solitary confinement were built against the exterior of the north wall and new doorways made through the wall to access them.[23] Consequently Woodman's repairs seem to have been more substantial here; the north door to the western bay is entirely his, as is the tracery to the two windows above the original clunch jambs, and the roof. There is a modern doorway dating to the 1972 extension through the west wall.

The arcade is a good match for that shown on the pre-restoration photographs; Woodman conducted partial stone replacement to it rather than a complete rebuilding. It is therefore of **high significance**.

Overall this aisle is of **moderate significance;** though the arcade is largely original there have been substantial interventions in the north wall which reduce its significance compared to nave west wall and the south wall.

[23] Summers, op.cit p 54

7.3 North Transept

Above: north transept, looking north east. The window to the far right of the image contains medieval fabric at low level.

North window of four lights in the Decorated style with rose windows over; to the east and west walls matching three light windows with clasped colonette surrounds. The lower portions of these to the southernmost window of the east wall seem to be in clunch, suggesting a medieval date at odds with Pevsner's assertion that the north transept is entirely Woodman's creation.

Plans from the 1861 legal papers for Phelps' purchase of the site, though basic, suggest a structure the same width as the north aisle running all the way up to the east wall; the west arch from the aisle to the transept seems to be original and suggests the same. It is possible that this was the "chapel of St Francis" in which Margaret Twynho was buried in 1501, and certainly one would expect some sort of side altar or chapel at the east end of an aisle during that period.

Most of the transept is now occupied by the 1939 Compton organ at the north end, and the rest by the east dais extending into the space from the nave. The kingpost roof is Woodman's, matching that of the nave, and there are slender lighting coronas by Maguire.

Overall the north transept is of **moderate significance**.

7.4 South Aisle

Above: south aisle looking south; note the different colours of stone in the middle column and to the arches of the westernmost two bays of the arcade - the darker stone is the Woodman work.

An exact mirror of the north aisle; with similar levels of survival of medieval stonework to the jambs of the windows. The westernmost two bays of the arcade have crisp arches in the darker limestone Woodman used, but as with the north arcade most of the column stonework is

original. The medieval south door, main entrance between 1863 and 1972, has an internal lobby in the west bay; there is also a 1972 doorway through the west wall.

Overall the aisle is of **moderate significance**.

7.5 South Transept

Above: south arcade with transept beyond

As with the aisles, this is a mirror of its counterpart to the north that seems to have replaced the medieval aisle running the full length of the nave. Its footprint is very similar to that of the public house that occupied this part of the site until Phelps bought it and had it demolished immediately prior to the start of the 1862 restoration work. Whether that public house in turn was on the medieval foundations of part of the church or an adjoining friary building cannot be ascertained from the documentary record or from existing archaeological reports, but it is a possibility.

Overall the aisle is of **moderate significance**.

7.6 North vestry

Above: west end of vestry

A small extension, entirely by Woodman, with narrow west doorway and single light window. It is of no particular quality and **low significance**.

7.7 West end rooms and ancillary accommodation

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Above: west rooms - the west wall of the church is at the back of the cupboards on the left hand side of the image.
Below: kitchen

Above: refurbished entrance/welcome area

1972 by K C White; a large west extension with a curved west wall, with an entrance and kitchen to the north and link to the memorial hall to the north east. Two contemporary doorways made through the west end of each aisle give access to the nave.

Though these rooms have served their purpose well the architectural quality of the interior is poor; the ceilings are low and there are more corridors than there are useful multi-purpose spaces. The welcome area was refurbished in 2016 with a new vinyl floor and built in benches.

These rooms are of **no significance**, and in many ways actively detract from the listed church building by obscuring the important west elevation.

8.Furniture and Fittings

8.1 Communion Table

Modern table in light oak with three sided frame; incised decoration of wheat ears and central inscription “I am the Bread of Life”. Part of the 1999-2000 Maguire works. **Low significance**.

8.2 Pulpit

C. 1863 by Woodman, given by his daughter. Round drum top supported on pink marble colonettes with stiff leaf foliate capitals. The drum is decorated with a blind arcade; it has grey colonettes and shallow geometric decoration within the arches. It was relocated during the Maguire works and is currently used as the AV desk at the west end of the nave. It is a handsome piece but not of the first order; **moderate-low significance**.

8.3 Font

Again c.1863 by Woodman, a gift of the stonework contractors. The basic form matches the pulpit but the style is far more flamboyant. Caen stone tub with heavy decoration based around crocketed ogee headed tracery, supported by eight Purbeck marble colonettes. The cover was

given by architect William Ravenscroft following his repair project in 1894. **Moderate significance.**

8.4 Reredos

A large three bay limestone construction with a tall central arch surrounding a recessed marble tablet carved with the Ten Commandments; the upper section of his arch is carved with the same geometric decoration as the font. This is flanked by lower sections to the left and right, with Purbeck marble colonettes supporting triple ogee headed arches; the central arches frame further marble tablets with Bible verses. A handsome piece given to the church in memory of Reverend Barkworth in 1894, of **moderate significance**.

8.5 Organ

1939 by Compton, with a new console of 2001 by Pels d'Hondt, Belgium. 66 stop three manual. The instrument does not have an historic organ certificate and is of **low significance**.

8.6 Nave seating

Modern upholstered seats installed c.2000 as part of the Maguire reordering. **No significance**.

9. Monuments and memorials

9.1 War memorials - Soole brothers

South transept: Two brass tablets with vine borders to the sons of a former rector, Godfrey Hope Soole (d.1908 at Umra Killi), and Seymour Waldegrave Soole (1917 at Portsmouth). Nearby, an 1877 brass tablet to Admiral Fletcher (R.N.). All **moderate significance**.

9.2 Phelps memorial

North aisle: 1868, designed by Woodman and executed by Messrs Wheeler. A foliated arch supported on two marble columns frames a tablet of white marble bearing the inscription. The red Mansfield stone surround is also carved with foliage. Not of outstanding artistic merit but of considerable importance as a commemoration of the man who refounded the church, and as a creation of both the architect and contractor with whom he worked on the restoration. **High significance**.

9.3 Sutton memorial

1901, by Alfred Drury A.R.A, who was a student of Jules Dalou and himself exhibited at the Royal Academy for most of his career, including at the time this memorial was made. A neo

classical style wall monument with square columns and broken pediment topped by the arms of the deceased framing a three-quarter profile shallow relief portrait with an inscription tablet beneath. The inscription grandly proclaims Martin Hope Sutton to have been “instrumental in the restoration of this church” - a dubious claim; he gave £100 towards the 1863 works but this was a tiny fraction of the overall cost and Sutton seems to have had to formal role in the project.

This is not anywhere approaching the finest work by Drury, which is characterised by its close observation and natural style. His lesser commissions, this example included, are rather less well researched and more summary - almost thumbnail sketches by comparison. One is given the impression that the Sutton family was keener on the conspicuous appointment of Drury, famous sculptor to the great and the good, than they were on the quality of the art itself - Drury’s signature on the piece is certainly prominent. **Moderate significance**.

9.4 Soole memorial

North aisle: 1912, matching the Phelps memorial nearby. Seymour Henry Soole was the vicar of Greyfriars for 31 years, from 1874-1905. The designer/maker of this tablet is unknown, though it is not unreasonable to expect it could also be by Messrs Wheeler. **Moderate significance**.

9.5 Barnworth memorial

South aisle: red marble wall tablet of 1891, again a simplified version of the Phelps memorial . Dr Barnworth was the first incumbent of Greyfriars in 1863, and was responsible for the building of the (now demolished) schools to the west of the church. **Moderate-high significance**.

9.6 Thackway memorial

North transept: brass tablet to the former organist and choirmaster, who died in 1922; it is of no particular artistic merit but does have evidential value. **Moderate-low significance**.

10. Glass

Most of the glass to in the church dates to Woodman’s restoration and all of it is clear. It is of **low significance**, though of good quality. .