

Identifying and Dating Mont Saint-Michel's Early Monastic Buildings, c. 1070–1228

by GEORGE N. GANDY

ABSTRACT

One of the best-known monastic settlements of western Europe, the abbey of Mont Saint-Michel occupies the summit of a prodigiously steep island site off the coast of Normandy in northern France. The church was built between 1023 and c. 1080–85. The monastic buildings, to the north of the church, were arranged vertically as much as horizontally, reflecting the constraints of the site. They appear to have comprised three adjacent and interconnecting buildings, two of three storeys, the other of two. However, two of these three ranges were overbuilt in the early thirteenth century by an ambitious development which became known as the Merveille (c. 1212–28). This article seeks to identify the buildings that the Merveille replaced and thus the entire complex as it existed in the twelfth century. This inevitably involves a certain amount of speculation and perhaps for this reason the complex has hitherto been largely ignored, important though it is for an understanding of the abbey's early history. The article also discusses other building projects relevant to the monks, such as the cemetery, the twelfth-century *Hôtellerie* and the thirteenth-century infirmary and mortuary chapel, and analyses the genesis of the Merveille. Among the findings or propositions are that the monks' cemetery was housed in what may once have been a ducal palace; that the abbey's cloister occupied the same position as it does today but was at a lower, mezzanine level and was smaller than the present cloister; that the chapter house and infirmary were probably adjacent to the west walk of the cloister; that the original provision for kitchen and cellar and for sleeping space was inadequate; and that the Merveille, which was the work of Abbot Raoul des Îles, was not entirely new-build as sometimes thought, but a transformation and redevelopment of buildings that already existed.

The Benedictine abbey of Mont Saint-Michel is one of the best-known monastic sites in western Europe. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the monastery produced some of northern France's finest illuminated manuscripts and it was also fast becoming one of northern Europe's most important pilgrimage destinations (Fig. 1). The abbey is situated on a steep granite island off the west coast of Normandy, and to the south it also overlooks Brittany. Its monastic buildings lie predominantly to the north of the church. Since the thirteenth century, these have included the enormous structure — actually two interconnected ranges — known as the Merveille (literally the 'marvel'), built c. 1212–28, which took the place of earlier buildings dating from the eleventh and

twelfth centuries (Fig. 2). To the west of the Merveille, the earliest monastic range (here called the northwestern range) for the most part still stands — shown in an early model in Figure 3 — but historians have previously avoided suggesting in detail what the missing buildings might have been or when each was constructed. That is the gap this article attempts to fill.

Benedictine monks were installed on the island by Duke Richard I of Normandy in 966, replacing a community of clerks who had been there since 709. The duke did nothing to support the monastery, however, and it failed to prosper until around 990 when it began to attract donations from Brittany and the adjacent County of Maine, which lay to the south and southeast of the abbey. Around the year 1000, the ducal family finally paid some attention to the Mont, choosing the island on separate occasions as the setting for celebrating the weddings of Richard's daughter and son to children of Duke Conan of Brittany, which allied the two duchies. More usefully for the monks, in 1015 the duke's widow Gunnor made a substantial gift of property that enabled them to plan and commence construction of an ambitious abbey church, and this donation was followed by many others from leading Norman families.¹

The new church was many times the size of its Carolingian predecessor, which was preserved and put to use in supporting part of the nave of the new Romanesque building and is now known as the chapel of Notre-Dame-sous-Terre. Building work began in 1023 and the church was completed around 1080–85. It is remarkable for the technical skill with which its designers succeeded in constructing on the summit of an almost conical hill a substantial building, most of which had to be supported either by other built structures or by crypt chapels built up on the surrounding falling ground levels, rather than directly by the underlying rock.

No less remarkable than the church, although less frequently remarked on, is the complex of structures immediately to its west, which provided the means by which all visitors arrived at the abbey. Today the approach is from the east, by a stepped path (the Grand Degré) that arrives at the church's south door. But until the second quarter of the thirteenth century, visitors entered the abbey at its northwest corner, some 20 or 25 m below the church (Fig. 4). They then climbed up to it by a series of dark, interior flights of stairs, arriving finally (by a door that no longer exists) at a narrow terrace immediately beside the church's west door, almost vertically above their original point of entry to the abbey.

It is often thought that little can usefully be said about the monastic buildings to the north of the church that preceded the Merveille, because most of them were overbuilt by that development. If, however, one starts at the other end of the story, in the late eleventh century when the new abbey church was nearing completion, there is in fact a good deal one can say about the dates and probable functions of these buildings — and even about how they influenced the Merveille. Admittedly, most of the sources that are useful in elucidating Mont Saint-Michel's building history share the drawback that, with the exception of Thomas Le Roy — the seventeenth-century Maurist monk of the abbey who wrote *Les Curieuses recherches* — their authors seldom directly address new building projects at all.² They more often highlight the disasters that befell the abbey and the works of restoration those calamities demanded. This information, though, can be useful in identifying which buildings were standing by a certain date and the rooms they contained.



Fig. 1. *Mont Saint-Michel, northern France, aerial view from the south*

Filling in the gaps frequently depends on deduction or inference and occasionally on informed hypothesis. The site at least has the advantage of being so constrained by the steepness of the terrain that we may be confident that all of the usual monastic functions must have been accommodated within the spaces under consideration.

For its sources, this article relies primarily on *De abbatibus*, which Abbot Robert de Torigni commenced during the 1150s, and on a set of annals written in 1116, which Léopold Delisle believed, and Stéphane Lecouteux has recently confirmed, was interpolated and continued to 1154 by de Torigni as one of his aids in composing *De abbatibus*.³ It also makes use of later works, in particular Le Roy's *Curieuses recherches* and the *Histoire générale* by Jean Huynes (another seventeenth-century Maurist monk), and occasionally Arthur du Monstier's *Neustria Pia* (1663) and the *Gallia Christiana*.⁴ A model of the monastery, made by one of the monks before 1691 and now in Les Invalides in Paris (a detail of which has already been shown in Figure 3), has been useful for its representation of de Torigni's (no longer extant) *Hôtellerie* and for its confirmation of the appearance of the abbey buildings before the nineteenth- and twentieth-century phases of restoration. Regarding the planning of the Merveille, this article also draws on Edmond Martène's extracts from episcopal records.⁵

Much of the argument of the article turns on consideration of the site and on inferences that can reasonably be made about its building history. In that connection, although he was not invariably correct in his suppositions, Paul Gout's two-volume *Le Mont-Saint-*

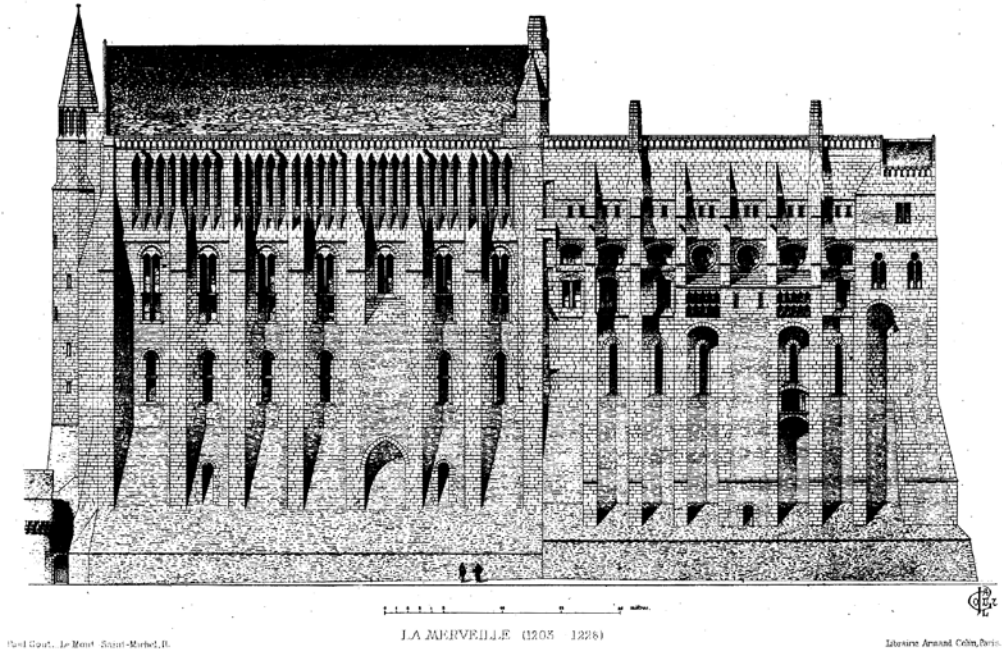


Fig. 2. Elevation of the Merveille, built c. 1212–28, from Paul Gout, *Le Mont-Saint-Michel*, 1910, vol. II, frontispiece

Michel, published in 1910, is the essential work of reference.⁶ Gout (1852–1923) was the third architect to work on the abbey’s rehabilitation after its post-revolution humiliation as a prison had ended. He was an indefatigable researcher into the history of the abbey and its buildings, and that informed his approach to its restoration. Wherever possible he preserved the buildings’ historical variety, avoiding the temptation to use renewal as an opportunity to create stylistic uniformity. The abbey and its surroundings as seen today are essentially Gout’s work. Moreover, his measured plans and analysis of the buildings’ structural history before restoration, supported by his archaeological investigations in parts of the site, constitute a source that cannot be superseded.

THE CEMETERY

This survey starts, however, with an oddity: the monks’ cemetery. The sources agree that a cemetery was built or created by Renouf, the abbot (1060/61–84) who was primarily responsible for completing the church and, as we will see, for planning the construction of most of the monastic quarters as well. *De abbatibus* tells us Renouf ‘made the monks’ cemetery and the porch over it’.⁷ In their 2019 article, Pierre Bouet, Olivier Desbordes, Marie Bisson and Stéphane Lecouteux read this as indicating that Renouf ‘installed the monks’ cemetery beneath the western part of the nave, over which he raised the porch of the church’.⁸ However, this goes some way beyond what *De abbatibus* says.



Fig. 3. Oak and card model of Mont Saint-Michel made before 1691, part view showing the northwestern range to the north of the church (Paris, Musée des Plans-Reliefs, © RMN-Grand Palais/Adrien Diderjean)

The authors may have been influenced by the much later statement in *Neustria Pia* that Renouf created the cemetery 'from a subterranean cave cut from the rock', and also the claim in *Gallia Christiana* that the cemetery was situated under the church.⁹

In fact, what these sources are referring to is Renouf's reuse of a freestanding, triple-aisled basilican structure lying immediately to the south of the church, a late tenth-

century building that may have been erected as a ducal palace for the accommodation of guests at the weddings of Duke Richard I's two children and was not suited to quotidian monastic use (Fig. 5).¹⁰ The church was on a higher level, but cut through the basilica's northern end (Fig. 6, B). Renouf will have had to destroy the raised central section of the building's roof, substituting for it a load-bearing platform or terrace (now known as 'Saut Gaultier'), which could be approached from the adjacent church. To support the new platform an arcade (still extant) was inserted, dividing in half the width of the original, very broad central aisle. Every week, in memory of their dead, the monks processed to the terrace above the cemetery, leaving the church by the adjacent south door that existed just for this purpose. Until the creation of the Grand Degré, which was built in the thirteenth century along the south side of the church, there was no other means of accessing this area and it would certainly have been regarded as a claustral space from which the public was excluded.

The putative palace occupies a complex site because the ground level outside it falls away from north to south. The structure has never had the archaeological investigation that it deserves and hence some of the following comments are necessarily speculative. The main door was very probably in the north wall that was destroyed by the construction of the Romanesque church, but it appears that there may have been another entrance on the lower ground near the southwest corner of the building, suggesting two interior levels linked by steps or stairs. To convert the building to cemetery use, Renouf created (or perhaps made use of) a third door situated in its northeast corner, which meant that the building could be reached by a short path leading from the monks' mortuary chapel of St Martin, situated beneath the south transept of the new church (Fig. 6, A). In the cemetery's interior, Renouf may have had to introduce terracing to be able to make use of the falling ground to the south, rather as in a garden on a sloping site, and steps linking the different levels of ground. He would also have had to import soil for what one might call the burial beds. A new door in the building's truncated north wall gave on to a landing on the stairs that rose from near the chapel of Notre-Dame-sous-Terre into the main body of the abbey church (hereafter referred to as the south stairs), so that the monks could access the interior of the cemetery from the church without going through the mortuary chapel, as well as process over it from the south door.

In the thirteenth century, the Grand Degré buried the cemetery as it piggy-backed over it to enable visitors to reach the church's south door, which thereafter replaced the west door as the laity's entrance to the abbey church. Only the pathway hard up against the church that led from St Martin's to the cemetery was left open to the elements. It is not difficult to see why in subsequent ages Mont Saint-Michel's cemetery came to be regarded as subterranean, as excavated from the rock or as lying beneath the church. In appearance, it was all of these things.

Why did Renouf go to these lengths to establish a new cemetery for his monks and to adapt such an unusual building for the purpose? There might have been practical reasons. The barren, rocky soil just outside the chapel of St Martin was no doubt hard to work for those obliged to dig graves. But there may also have been a symbolic or expiatory motive. Monks were believed to be more assured than others of salvation, so the substitution of a monks' cemetery for what had perhaps been a secular palace —

PAUL GOUT... LE MONT-SAINT-MICHEL

PL. XV

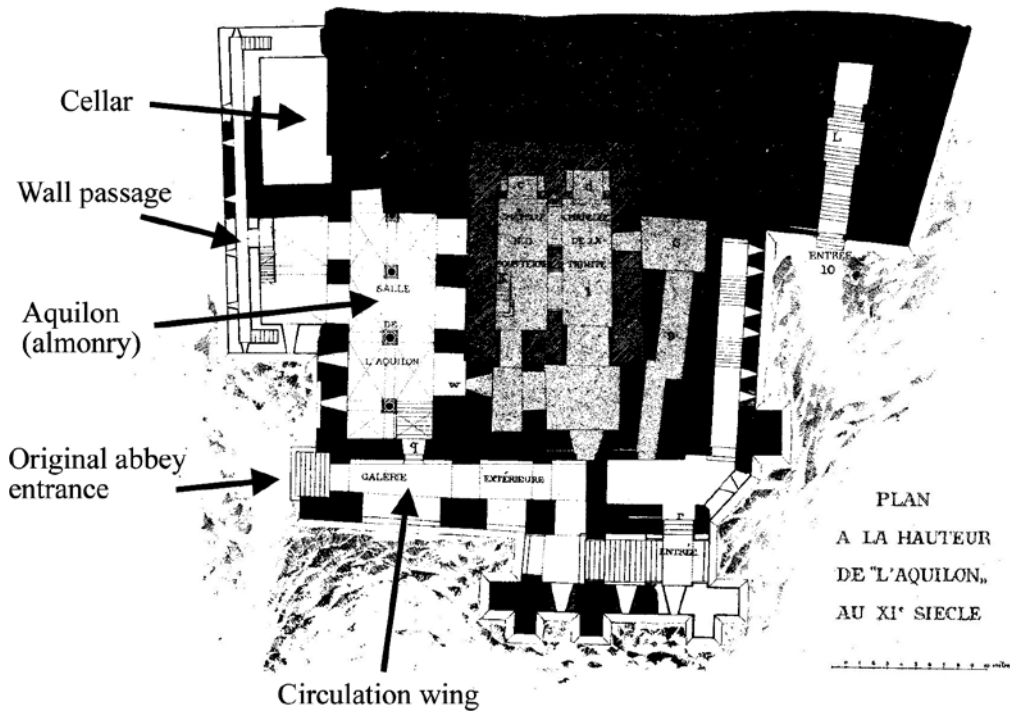


Fig. 4. *Plan showing the abbey's entrance and the Aquilon (almonry) in the eleventh century, from Paul Gout, Le Mont-Saint-Michel, 1910, vol. II, plate XV, following p. 392, with annotations by the author*

the very construction of which on a sacred island was possibly considered a sacrilege — might have constituted an act of purification, intended not only to cleanse the land through its occupation by the holy dead but perhaps also, by association, to assist others who entered and traversed the building. In the mid-twelfth century, de Torigni built an *Hôtellerie* nearby and seems to have encouraged his guests to walk through the cemetery on their way from there to the church, even though an alternative route could have been devised for them via the south stairs.

THE CIRCULATION WING AND THE NORTHWESTERN MONASTIC RANGE

Entry to the Romanesque abbey at its northwest corner was by a relatively inconspicuous door. If there was a more imposing outer gate somewhere, no evidence of it has survived. Immediately on their left as visitors entered was the almonry, known as the *Salle de l'Aquilon* for its exposure to the island's chilling north winds. Above this was a room inaccurately known to posterity as the *Promenoir*, which was approached by a broad staircase or gallery, oriented north–south, that was also part of the route up to



Fig. 5. Mont Saint-Michel, east arcade of the tenth-century basilican structure that became the monks' cemetery, photograph of 2022 by the author

the church (Fig. 6); and above that was the monks' dormitory. Adjacent to these rooms, to the northeast, lay a small ancillary block, part of which no longer stands (Fig. 7). Together these rooms constitute the northwestern range of the monastery.

As they entered the abbey, visitors found themselves in what could be termed, prosaically, the circulation wing (Figs 4, 6 and 8). Because it was used by everyone arriving at the monastery, this quarter lay outside the cloister proper and accordingly for the most part falls outside the scope of this article. It offered a means of reaching a number of important destinations, among them the Aquilon, the chapel of Notre-Dame-sous-Terre (the site of the eighth-century foundation church), the abbot's lodgings and the Promenoir, as well as the church. Relevant here are the abbot's quarters, comprising two rooms (or possibly two rooms and a small chapel) that visitors would have passed, almost certainly unaware of their existence, as they climbed towards the church by the north-south gallery. The abbot's rooms were accessed from a discreet door on the left from a landing a little below the door that led, on the other side of the stairs, into the Promenoir.¹¹ They could also be approached from the north by a means known only to the monks: a concealed passage within the thickness of the external wall, virtually

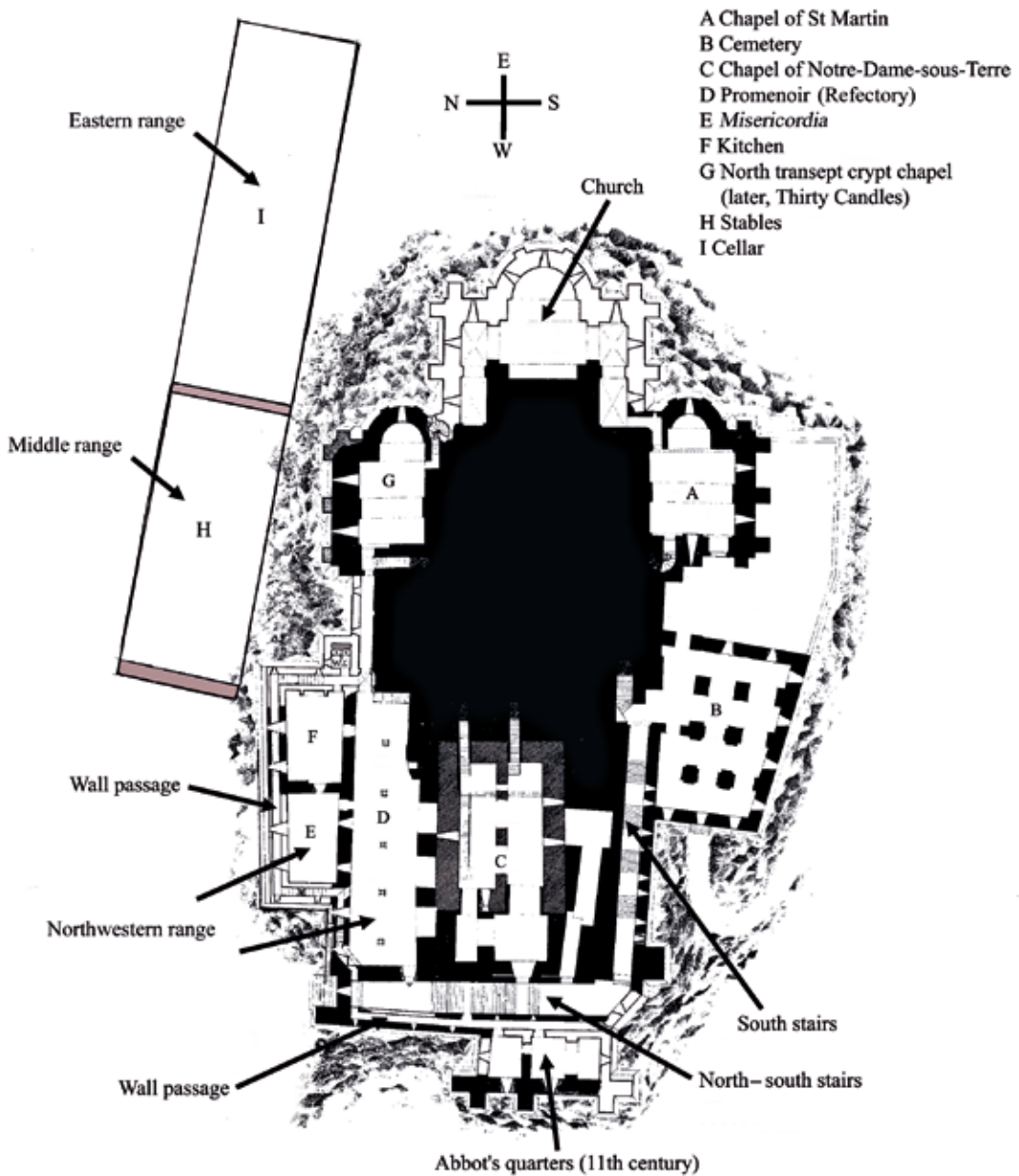


Fig. 6. Plan of the abbey in the eleventh century at the level of the Promenoir (refectory), from Paul Gout, *Le Mont-Saint-Michel*, 1910, vol. II, plate XVI, following p. 392, adapted by the author to show the approximate positions of the middle and eastern ranges, the ground-floor rooms of which are at a lower level than the Promenoir

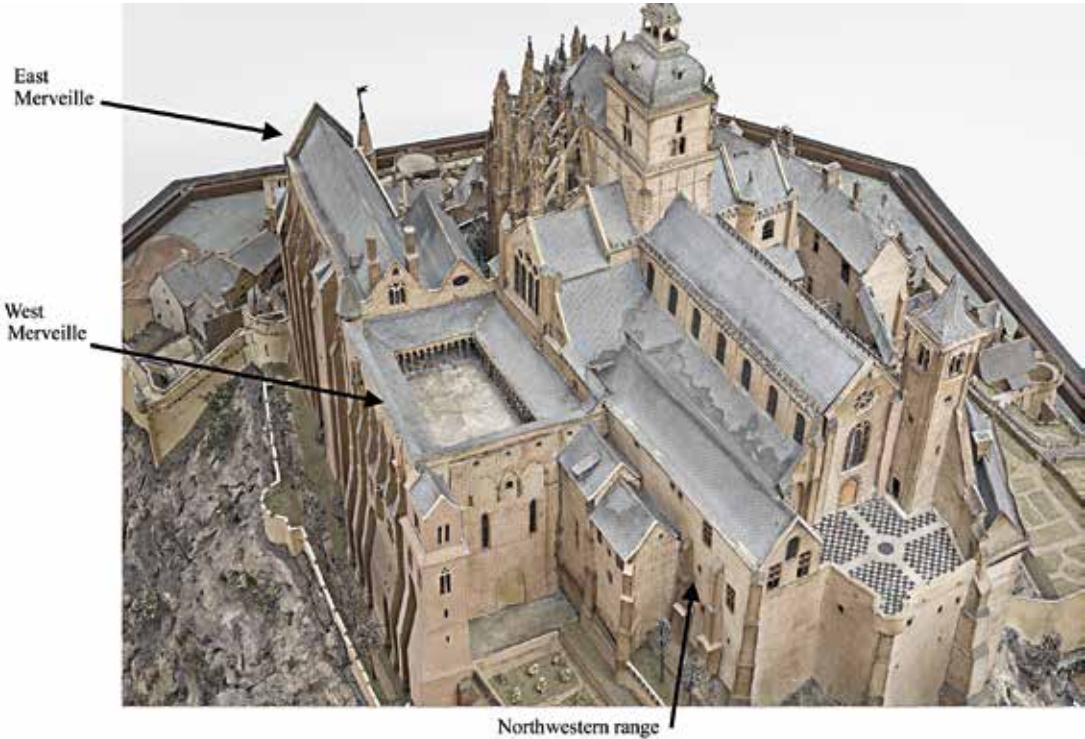


Fig. 7. Oak and card model of Mont Saint-Michel made before 1691, part view showing the monastic ranges as they existed between construction of the Merveille in the early thirteenth century and the fire of 1776 (Paris, Musée des Plans-Reliefs, © RMN-Grand Palais/Adrien Diderjean)

the full course of which can be traced on Figs 6 and 8. Shortly after leaving the abbot's quarters it turned eastward, passing over the abbey entrance and past the Aquilon, rising thence towards the abbey kitchen on the floor above, in the northwestern range.

Another point to note about the circulation wing is that the church's west porch protruded over — and consequently rested on — the north–south gallery. This is important because it means that if the church (which was certainly built from east to west) was completed in around 1080–85, then so too were all the components of the circulation wing. A further implication is that the northwestern monastic range must also have been completed, or virtually so, by the mid-1080s. There was no point in welcoming pilgrims to the abbey if the door on their left as they entered simply opened into space. The almonry was clearly there to receive them; likewise the kitchen on the floor above, which fed them; and the monks' dormitory, built against the north wall of the church in a proximity that was essential for the celebration of the night office. To judge from the complexity of the works involved, construction of both the circulation wing and the northwestern range must have commenced by around 1070. It is entirely possible that they were begun earlier still, while the nave of the church was still going up.



Fig. 8. Plan of the abbey in the twelfth century at the level of the Promenoir (refectory), showing also the first-floor rooms of the middle and eastern ranges, from Paul Gout, *Le Mont-Saint-Michel*, 1910, vol. II, plate XIX, following p. 458, adapted by the author



Fig. 9. *Mont Saint-Michel, observation squint in the wall passage overlooking the Aquilon, photograph from Paul Gout, Le Mont-Saint-Michel, 1910, vol. II, p. 427*

As for what went on within the northwestern range, the identification of the almonry is evident from its location, its complete isolation from the nearby conventual quarters, and the way it was serviced by the wall passage mentioned earlier. The passage descended from the abbey kitchen to a room immediately to the north of, and opening on to, the almonry. Here there was a door, more than a metre above floor level, from which a flight of steps down into the room allowed monks or their servants to deliver food to pilgrims in some security (Fig. 4). Gout believed these steps were removable, but this seems improbable given the difficulty of taking them up into the passage which would, so encumbered, have become impassable.¹² If they were permanent, the monks presumably depended on being able, at night or in the event of trouble, to close and bolt a door opening from the passage on to the steps. Occasional disturbances were certainly foreseen. Near the west end of the almonry, and so behind any throng of people that might be pressing into the room, a squint high up in the wall enabled monks to view

their visitors from within the darkness of the wall passage without being themselves observed (Fig. 9). These features of the wall passage incidentally suggest that pilgrims were permitted to sleep in the almonry.

The uses served by the rooms on the floor immediately above are more problematic. The room just to the northeast of the Promenoir was almost certainly the eleventh-century abbey kitchen (marked F on Fig. 6). The evidence is only indirect — 800 years later Gout found here no surviving evidence of a chimney, for example — but beneath this room he found steps descending into what appeared to be the original storeroom or cellar (Fig. 4).¹³ Besides, by means of the wall passage it also communicated (as we have seen) with the almonry, which suggests some involvement in the preparation of food.

There seems little doubt that the Promenoir was built to be the monks' refectory (Fig. 10 and Fig. 6, D).¹⁴ The smaller room which communicated with the Promenoir on its northern side (Fig. 6, E), was destroyed in the eighteenth century but might well have been a *misericordia*, where monks ate on the rare occasions when they were permitted to eat meat. In many monasteries this privilege was not accorded to all monks at the same time, which would be consistent with this being a smaller room than the main refectory, but close both to it and to the kitchen.¹⁵

The refectory would also have held the abbot's dining table, probably situated across its eastern end, where the abbot and any guests of his, sometimes including individual monks of the house, would dine. For the most favoured guests, invited to a private meeting with their host, the Promenoir had the advantage of being conveniently close to the abbot's chambers. The laity would have gained access to it by the door in the room's southwest corner that gave on to the north–south stairs of the circulation wing (as also the abbot would have done if he were coming from his chambers). Strictly, this marked a secular intrusion into a claustral space, but it was a ritualised and controlled event.

There remains a question, however, as to whether dining was the limit of lay use of the Promenoir. Could laymen also have slept there? No guesthouse has been identified near the abbey in this period, and the circumstance that the wall passage skirted around the Promenoir could imply that it was a room that monks might need sometimes to avoid because it was being used by laity outside the formal constraints associated with sharing a meal. However, in its western reaches the wall passage was certainly required for other reasons — to service the Aquilon and to reach the abbot's quarters without crossing the path of visitors — and its continuation past the Promenoir and further to the east might have offered a short-cut from the warming room (discussed further below). Thus the fact that the passage enabled monks to bypass the Promenoir has other plausible explanations than that it existed simply to minimise unnecessary contact with laity who were occupying the room. Added to this, the use of a core monastic space as guest accommodation would have constituted a serious intrusion into the seclusion of the monks' quarters. We should assume, therefore, that there was an eleventh-century guesthouse beyond the monastic buildings, even though no trace of it survives either on the ground or in the abbey's scant documentation (the paucity of which is largely the result of the Allied bombing of St Lô on 6 June 1944, which destroyed the building that housed the Departmental Archives, including those of Mont Saint-Michel). Almost certainly it would have been located close to the abbey's entrance and therefore to its north, where there was at least some flattish ground.



Fig. 10. *Mont Saint-Michel, the Promenoir*, photograph from Paul Gout, *Le Mont-Saint-Michel*, 1910, vol. II, p. 447

The floor above the Promenoir held the monks' dormitory (Fig. 11, Q) and next to it, above the kitchen, what must by process of elimination have been the infirmary (Fig. 11, R). Le Roy certainly believed this was the infirmary and, besides there being no other room on this cramped site that might readily have served that purpose, there are features of the room's position that suggest this identification is correct.¹⁶ For one thing, being above the kitchen would have kept the room warm, and sick monks were often privileged in such matters. Second, Gout noted 'the great inferiority' of this room's floor level when compared to that of the adjacent dormitory, although unfortunately he did not specify the extent of the difference.¹⁷ There was a historical reason for this. In the early twelfth century, the introduction of stone vaulting over the Promenoir raised its overall height, necessitating reconstruction at a higher level of the dormitory situated just above it. The floor level of the room to its north, however, was not raised at the same time. On its eastern side this room was also adjacent to, and even encroached on, the cloister, which was similarly at the original, lower level. Evidently it was considered more important that the room in question should communicate readily with the cloister than with the dormitory. With convalescence in mind, that would surely have applied to the abbey's infirmary.

There is no difficulty in identifying the dormitory, but it is worth dwelling for a moment on its capacity. The impracticality on a hillside site of extending the monastic

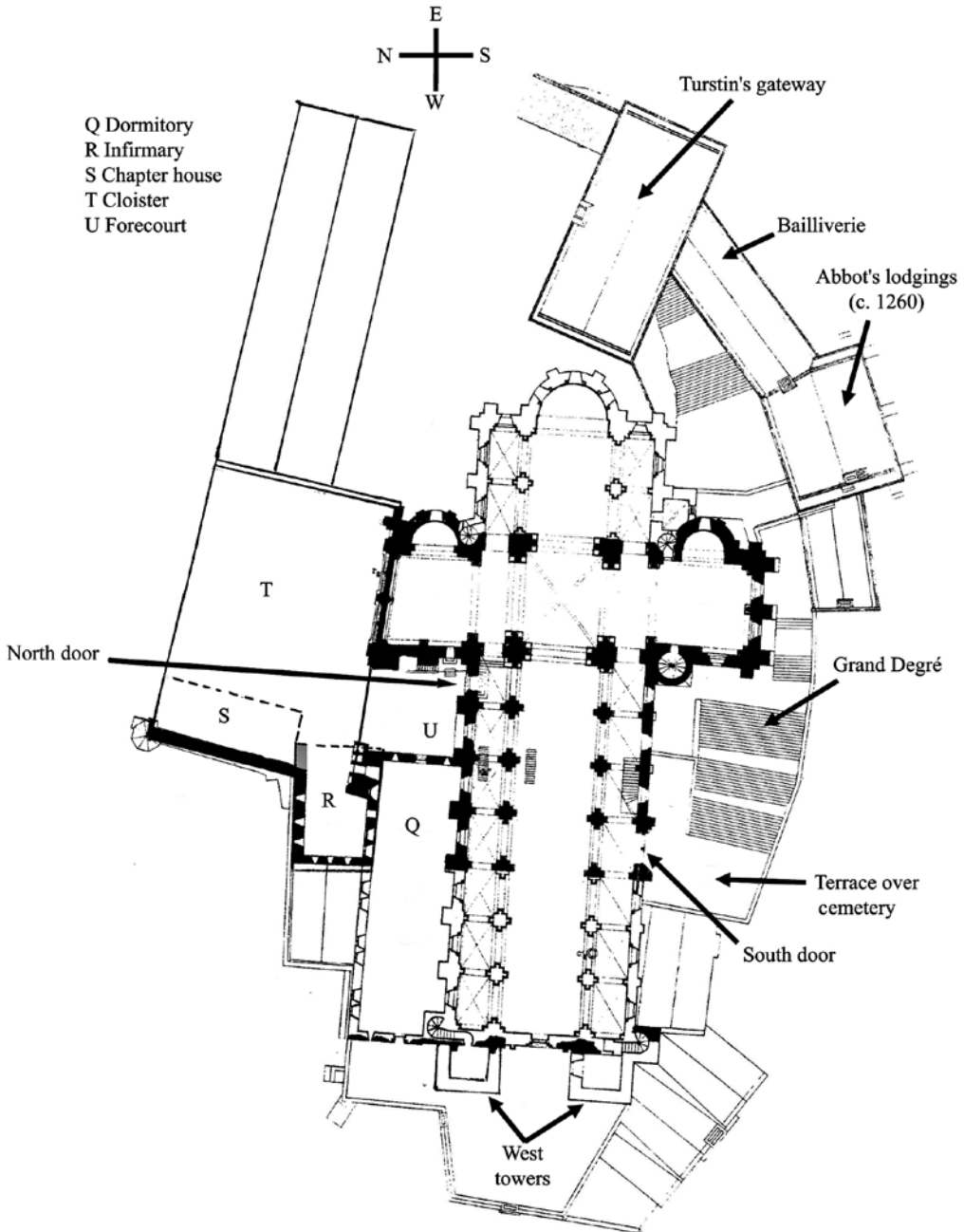


Fig. 11. Plan of the abbey in the thirteenth century at the level of the church from Paul Gout, *Le Mont-Saint-Michel*, 1910, vol. II, plate XXIV, following p. 514, adapted by the author to show the suggested relationship between infirmary, cloister and chapter house as these existed before construction of the Merveille

quarters farther and farther from the church, as might have been possible in a more conventionally located abbey, meant that during its heyday the community was often short of space. In particular, it would have been difficult to accommodate any substantial growth in the number of resident monks. It is worth emphasising that the monastic life entailed strict rules of conduct in the dormitory, aimed at avoiding physical contact between neighbours, discouraging conversation and ensuring that monks did not see each other naked. The devil preyed on monks at night when they were thought to be most vulnerable. It seems reasonable to assume a bed-width of around 75 cm and a similar distance between each bed (this would probably have been nearer 1 m because, besides the rules of good practice, not all monks were slim or nimble). The maximum internal measurements of the room were 8 m by 26 m, or rather less when account is taken of the direct intrusion into it of one staircase and the encasing wall of another. At a pinch it was wide enough to accommodate three lines of beds, although the monastic norm was only two. On this basis its maximum capacity would have been between forty-two and fifty-one monks, and probably closer to the former, without counting the novices and boys who must also have slept somewhere and who together could have numbered between ten and twenty. To put this into context, in the year 1000 the monastery is thought to have had fifty monks in residence. When de Torigni took up the reins as abbot in 1154 this had fallen to around forty, but at his death in 1186 it had risen to sixty.¹⁸ Even if they squeezed into it three lines of beds instead of the usual two, the dormitory as built was plainly too small for a flourishing abbey.

Much the same could be said of the kitchen and cellar. As we will see in the next section, this was not because it was impracticable to extend the monastic buildings to the east; rather it was because the northwestern range was not built out as far as it might have been to the north, which would have given the monks a wider, more capacious dormitory and a larger cellar and kitchen. The most likely explanation for this is they needed that land to accommodate ancillary services, such as bakeries, butchery, stabling, workshops and no doubt the guesthouse, which needed to be close by but for which there was very little easily levelled ground elsewhere (Fig. 12).

THE MIDDLE RANGE

The wall passage that rose to the kitchen did not stop there, but took a turn to the left and descended towards a door opening into what is today the Salle des Chevaliers (more properly, the monks' warming room), in the west wing of the Merveille. The course of this passage, which had begun by the abbot's lodgings in the circulation wing, proves that another building lying to the north of the church — and referred to here as the middle range — had also been planned, if not built, even before construction of the northwestern range started, and therefore by *c.* 1070 or earlier. As already mentioned, the infirmary that this article has located at the top of the northwestern range also extended on to part of the cloister in the middle range (Fig. 11, R) which, curiously, was built to wrap around this part of the northwestern range including the east end of the kitchen, the walls of which supported the infirmary (Fig. 8, F). We shall return to this below. It is known for certain, though, that the middle range was completed



Fig. 12. North–south section of Mont Saint-Michel, print from a drawing by Édouard Corroyer, c. 1873 (courtesy of Archives départementales, Maison de l'histoire de la Manche, conseil départemental, St Lô, Collections iconographiques)

no later than 1112, when the monastery was struck by lightning and suffered a severe fire. Following that disaster, according to de Torigni, Roger II (1106–23) had to make substantial repairs to the church roof,

and he repaired all the rooms that had been burned, and the court of the cloister that had first been of wood he replaced with stone. And beneath that, chambers similarly in stone, and on the third level down he wonderfully adapted the horses' stables by means of [stone] vaulting placed immediately beneath the vaulting above.¹⁹

It is not clear whether the fire spread to the cloister or the rooms beneath it, or whether the works to substitute stone for timber in this block were undertaken to avoid something worse occurring in the future. But 'all the rooms that had been burned' may well have included the Promenoir, which appears to have been vaulted in stone at about this time, and if that is the case it is very likely that the dormitory above it was another casualty of the fire.²⁰ It is known that the fire took the contents of the north crypt chapel (except for, miraculously, a statue of the Virgin), without apparently damaging its structure or the north transept above it.²¹ This suggests that the fire reached the chapel laterally, perhaps from the adjacent cloister.

Despite these uncertainties about the extent of the damage it caused, the fire of 1112 confirms the existence at that date of the middle range, and that it was a three-storey block that included stables on the ground floor. The wall passage would have led into a room on the middle floor. This was evidently a room from which monks could be summoned at short notice to attend elsewhere — on the abbot, for example, or in the Aquilon — and to which laymen were not admitted. There can be little doubt that it was the monks' warming room (Fig. 8, M). Above that lay the cloister (Fig. 11, T).

Although on its own this is not conclusive, that the door from the wall passage entered a room that had a successor — also, incidentally, a warming room — is one indication that the middle range occupied essentially the same footprint as the west wing of the Merveille a century later. This is scarcely surprising, as building entirely anew on a steep hillside would have been more difficult than reusing existing foundations; but from an analytical perspective it is extremely important because it enables us to consider what the Romanesque builders may have been seeking to achieve. Taking the orientation of the west wing of the Merveille as a proxy for that of the middle range which preceded it, one of the building's oddities is that its western end is pushed out further from the church than its eastern end (Fig. 8), so making the cloister irregular in form. This might make sense if the builders were trying to reconcile two different objectives.

First, obviously, they needed to ensure that the ground floor of the middle range lay some distance from the church in order to create the dimensions of a cloister in the space between the two. At Mont Saint-Michel, the cloister lay not on level ground in the lee of the church, as was usual elsewhere, but on a different level, above. The main constraint on its dimensions was that it had to be supported by man-made structures that were inherently weaker than the underlying rock. The abbey's builders, however, did know how to employ the peculiar terrain of the Mont to their advantage. At ground level they started with a conventional, double-aisle hall (Fig. 6, H), the length of which determined the length of the cloister, while its distance from the church fixed the cloister's width. Because of the steepness of the hillside they were able to rely in part on the natural rock to the south of this hall (as Gout illustrates in Fig. 6) to provide the structural support needed for the broader warming room and cloister they planned at first- and second-floor levels.

Had that been all they wanted to achieve they would probably have built the middle range to be parallel to the church, so creating the perfect square or rectangular space for a cloister. Instead they oriented the building so that its eastern end came closer to the church, which compromised that objective but permitted them to add on to the end of the range, and in alignment with it, yet another building (the eastern range), which could be entered at first-floor level from the ground surface immediately to the north of the church sanctuary and its crypt. Having this second objective in mind when they began construction of the middle range could well account for the way the cloister was tilted away from rectilinearity.

The irregular form of the cloister that resulted from aligning it with this further building was rendered less obvious than it might have been because the north wall of the nearby church transept was itself not quite rectilinear, being also tilted at its eastern end towards the south, which made it more nearly parallel to the north walk of the cloister beyond, thus sustaining the visual illusion that the cloister was of approximately rectangular character (Fig. 11, T). Similarly the north wall of the corresponding crypt chapel is oblique relative to the other side. Sophie Bourdon has established that the mortar employed in this chapel wall is of eleventh-century not thirteenth-century type, so confirming that the wall's orientation dates from its first construction rather than from the period when the Merveille was built, as is usually assumed. Bourdon concluded that it was the capricious configuration of the underlying rock that prompted this helpful irregularity.²²

The most unexpected feature of the cloister is that it was set at a mezzanine level, at any rate lower than its thirteenth-century successor, although by how much is uncertain. Several indicators point in this direction. The first, already mentioned, is that the floor level of the infirmary, which had a door on to the cloister, was 'greatly inferior' to that found today in the neighbouring dormitory. Both rooms would no doubt originally have been on the same level, but the dormitory had to be raised — probably in the aftermath of the 1112 fire — when stone vaulting was introduced to the Promenoir underneath it.²³ This appears also to have been when they opened a door directly from the north aisle of the church on to the cloister forecourt, the level of which must similarly have been raised when the adjacent dormitory was rebuilt. Before the early twelfth century, the monks had had to go from the dormitory to the church by crossing the forecourt to a door opposite, which gave on to a spiral staircase rising to the north transept.²⁴ Now they could go by a shorter route from the reconstructed forecourt directly into the church. All of these changes, however, will have required the insertion of a flight of steps down from the forecourt to the cloister.

The inconvenience of having the original dormitory at a level below that of the church is obvious, raising the question of why the community chose to create such practical difficulties for themselves when they might easily have built dormitory, forecourt and cloister at the same level as the church at the outset. The reason was probably that they wished to allow as much light as possible to reach the crypt chapel situated beneath the north transept, which played an important role in the community's daily liturgy (Fig. 8, G). The morning 'Mary' Mass was celebrated there and the chapel was visited in procession two or three times a week.²⁵ Many of the growing number of votive masses would probably have been celebrated there too, as the abbey church had fewer subsidiary altars than were commonly found in other major churches because the precipitous location meant that the nave had narrow side aisles and the ambulatory eschewed outwards-facing chapels.²⁶ The north transept chapel was a good substitute. It needs to be borne in mind that, because of the steep incline surrounding the church, all the crypt chapels at Mont Saint-Michel were above ground level and received natural daylight. Unavoidably, the cloister extended as far as the north wall of the north transept because it had to be accessed from the forecourt immediately to the west of the transept. By sinking the cloister, the builders could have ensured that it would not interfere with the flow of daylight to the adjacent chapel.

When the Merveille was built, priority was given to accessing the cloister from both the church and the dormitory without having to negotiate a long flight of steps. Accordingly, the Salle des Chevaliers was given loftier vaulting than the warming room it replaced, so pushing the cloister up to nearly the same level as the forecourt (the difference is 75 cm). This in turn had the consequence that the adjacent chapel's windows lost all access to natural light because they now opened on to the Salle des Chevaliers instead of on to the open air. To mitigate the problem, the window embrasures were enlarged and two new openings were made at a higher level.²⁷ Such measures, however, could never fully compensate and the chapel has ever since been known as Trente Cierges, or Thirty Candles.

Gout established that the east wall of the infirmary was aligned with that of the adjacent dormitory, which meant that it intruded into the southwest corner of the cloister by around 2.5 m (Fig. 11, R).²⁸ Why? One can only speculate, but this disruption to the line

of the cloister suggests that the remainder of its west side was occupied by the chapter house (Fig. 11, S). The pre-Merveille abbey certainly possessed a chapter house. One of the abbey's charters, made in 1128 or 1129, was expressly witnessed in the chapter house by no fewer than thirteen signatories, in addition presumably to the community, so it may have been a building of some size.²⁹ If it was here, its depth, measured externally, would have been 5 m or more — at any rate, comfortably more than 2.5 m — and it will thus have protruded significantly further into the cloister than the infirmary did. Hence it is possible that there was a small garden or sitting-out area in front of the infirmary that brought the two into alignment beside the west walk of the cloister.

Much about the character of the middle range remains uncertain, but the way in which today one enters the Salle des Chevaliers by steps descending about 3 m is surely an inheritance from the earlier range, intended to allow for the lower-than-expected level of the cloister above while still giving the warming room adequate height — particularly if the intention was also to facilitate manuscript illumination, for which large, high windows were an advantage. It seems likely, in fact, that this room would have incorporated a scriptorium, or perhaps opened into one at its eastern end. When these first monastic buildings were constructed, the quality of the abbey's manuscript illumination was at or near its height, and within this large space there was ample room for both warming room and scriptorium.³⁰

THE EASTERN RANGE

Another conundrum posed by the middle range is why its ground floor should have housed stables — and on a grand scale, measuring around 23 m by 10 m — when the space originally provided for the monks' own food cellar in the northwestern range was less than one-sixth as large. The implication is that by 1112 a more adequate monastic cellar must have already existed elsewhere, which can only mean in another new building to the east of the middle range.

Within the Merveille Salle des Chevaliers — the putative successor to the Romanesque warming-room-cum-scriptorium — there is one feature worth remarking on near its southeast corner: a flight of steps up to a door giving on to the porch situated before the Merveille Salle des Hôtes. This was an area to which the monks would not have required access in the thirteenth century because the Salle des Hôtes was devoted to entertaining the abbot's guests, which suggests that the door existed before construction of the Merveille, when it would have been a means of accessing the eastern range from the middle range.

There clearly was, therefore, a pre-Merveille third monastic wing. As we shall see later, it was of only two storeys. Its other peculiarity is that it was designed to be accessed by the monks at first-floor but not ground-floor level. This lower level occupied land that was excavated from the hillside, such that the room's southern wall lay against the rockface. The same is true of the adjacent stables; and the alignment of these two buildings, and the central position of the communicating door between them, incidentally confirms that the Merveille — but for one alteration affecting the western part — occupies the same footprint as the middle and eastern ranges that preceded it. The first floor of the eastern range was more or less on a level with the nearby crypts of the abbey church, which meant it could be entered by monks coming either from the

middle range or from the sanctuary crypt of the church (and that crypt must have had a door into it corresponding to the one that now gives access to its fifteenth-century successor, Gros Piliers).³¹ But there was no direct means whereby they could enter the sunken room that later became the Merveille almonry, which is one indication that it was built to be the monastery's new cellar.

More than half a century ago, using a quite different approach, Michel Nortier similarly concluded that the Merveille constituted entirely new work only in its upper storeys, and that the predecessor to its east wing had been of only two storeys. According to Nortier, old photographs taken before the Merveille was restored by Gout showed undressed rubble on the lower exterior walls, whereas the higher sections were characterised by carefully dressed stones, indicating that there had been two distinct periods of construction, although the change from one to the other was variable across the buildings. Nortier did not reproduce or identify the photographic evidence, but his interpretation is entirely consistent with that proposed here.³²

The construction of the eastern range, however, is difficult to date. We know that it was planned at the latest by the time they began to build the middle range, which could have been before the northwestern range had even been completed. Such an early start, however, would imply that the northwestern range's kitchen, cellar and refectory had been designed to be inadequate and temporary, which is implausible. It is much more likely that the middle range was not commenced until *c.* 1085–90, just after the northwestern range had been completed.

Almost certainly the eastern range had also been completed by 1112. The presence of stabling in the middle range by that date is evidence of there already existing a capacious cellar elsewhere, that is, in the eastern range. Other considerations point in the same direction. The enormous scheme of reconstruction undertaken by Roger II on the church roof and within the northwestern and middle ranges following the fire of 1112 makes it improbable that he would also have embarked on a sizeable new project such as this. It is even less likely that his immediate successor would have done so. De Torigni noted laconically that during the time of Richard de Méré (1124–30) 'one of the monks built [or possibly rebuilt?] in stone the monks' kitchen where the workshop now is': hardly the encomium we might expect if the abbot had made a substantial contribution to the monastery's fabric.³³ The eastern range is almost certainly earlier, therefore, and might well have been built while the middle range was still under construction. Both will probably have been completed by or soon after 1100.

It seems probable that the eastern range comprised a cellar on the ground floor (Fig. 6, I) with a refectory at the east end of the room above it and a kitchen at its west end (Fig. 8, O and N respectively) — very much as was later the case when the room was altered to become the Salle des Hôtes. The adjacent kitchen fire would explain why there was no door directly between the middle and eastern ranges at this level (instead they would have used the door previously mentioned in the southeast corner of the warming room or scriptorium). Initially the monks had to put up with the cramped spaces that were available within the northwestern range for the storage of provisions, the preparation of food and for dining; but once that range was completed, they would surely have contemplated a larger kitchen and refectory as soon as funding permitted, with a suitably large cellar below. The new kitchen and refectory occupied a space that



Fig. 13. Oak and card model made before 1691, part view showing de Torigni's Hôtellerie in the foreground; the double row of windows immediately beneath the roofline is not original (Paris, Musée des Plans-Reliefs, © RMN-Grand-Palais/Adrien Diderjean)

was as much as 34 m in length, as did the cellar below. A ground-floor cellar where today the Merveille almonry stands would have been well situated to receive supplies at its eastern end, where it abutted the path that led up from the village, while it could not be directly accessed by the monks (a wise precaution, perhaps) because its sole flight of stairs, in the northwest corner (assuming that the eastern range had the same single-staircase arrangement as its successor), connected only with the kitchen.

Indirect support for this suggested configuration comes from two other sources. The kitchen that was rebuilt in stone by one of the monks during the 1120s was surely no longer in use as such when the conversion work was undertaken. The labour involved would hardly have been left to a single monk to perform had the community still been dependent on this kitchen for all its meals. Second, a fifteenth-century source refers to the cellar as having suffered in the Breton attack launched against the abbey in 1204.³⁴ The author cannot have meant the small room beneath the original kitchen because this would imply its continued use as the monastery's cellar after the kitchen it served had moved elsewhere. The obvious conclusion is that kitchen and cellar were by the 1120s already in the eastern range — and, logically, the refectory also.

Nonetheless, it is probable that the entire eastern range represented a change of plan not envisaged until the northwestern range was completed in the mid-1080s, when it might first have become apparent just how cramped the originally planned combination of cellar, kitchen and refectory was going to be. What suggests this is principally the tilting of the middle range, which deprived the cloister of its symmetry and would not have been necessary in the absence of the eastern range. There would also have been no need to provide such palatial accommodation for horses. Hence it seems likely, from its relative closeness to the monks' quarters, that the ground-floor hall of the middle range was originally intended to be the abbey's second-generation cellar, but that this function was moved to the eastern range when the arrival there of the new kitchen and refectory created the opportunity for placing the monastery's cellar in ideal proximity to where its stores would be consumed. The space that the cellar vacated would have become the stables — which no doubt previously had been in the yard between the middle range and the abbey's entrance — because, like the room to which it was adjacent, it could not be accessed directly by the monks and therefore could not easily be adapted to monastic use. The stables would have moved out again in the early thirteenth century (although where to is not clear) and the cellar would have taken their place, when the ground floor of the east Merveille became the new almonry.

Thus, despite the considerable difficulties of building on the steep slopes of the Mont and of relating one part of the complex to another, it seems that by no later than 1112, and probably by *c.* 1100–05, the community had constructed a comprehensive suite of monastic buildings that met all its current non-liturgical needs.

THE FIRST PUNISHMENT CELLS AND A NEW INFIRMARY AND MORTUARY CHAPEL

During the later twelfth century, most new building at Mont Saint-Michel took place at the west end of the site under Abbot de Torigni and fell outside the convent proper. De Torigni's works included strengthening the defences of the abbey's entrance and extending his own lodgings (compare Figs 6 and 8). We know that the abbot's new rooms were completed by 1158 because he recorded that when King Henry II visited the Mont on the feast of St Michael on 29 September of that year, having heard mass at the high altar, he dined in the monks' refectory with his barons and then conferred with his host 'in the abbot's new chamber', probably the room now known from its decoration as *Fleurs-de-lys*.³⁵ De Torigni also demolished the church's Romanesque west porch, which was possibly something more substantial: in a region where massifs

occidentaux, or westworks, were common on greater churches; this may well have been an example. In any case, de Torigni replaced it with a pair of plain towers (indicated on the plan shown in Figure 11) – one of which subsequently collapsed (only one is included in the model shown in Figure 7). In 1163–64, he constructed an Hôtellerie at the southwest corner of the site (Fig. 8, K), close to his own rooms.³⁶

In most respects, de Torigni's building programme did not impact directly on the monastery proper. However, the abbot's lodgings now sat over a porter's lodge and beneath that de Torigni introduced a pair of cachots or punishment cells. Their limited capacity suggests that they were intended for the punishment of monks, not to house the abbey's external enemies. The monastic world had a complex relationship with chastisement but, given the absolute power that abbots exercised over their monks, abuses did sometimes occur at Mont Saint-Michel.³⁷ Shortly after de Torigni's death, Jourdain (1191–1212) was accused of having four of his monks placed in shackles for questioning his removal and disposal of valuables from the church, with fatal consequences for two of them.³⁸

The Hôtellerie collapsed in 1818, leaving only the scarred archaeological traces one sees today, although its general appearance is known from the model of the Mont made before 1691 (Fig. 13). A broad passage (hereafter referred to as the guests' passage, not illustrated because no longer accessible) led from the Hôtellerie to the southwest corner of the cemetery; and immediately above that was a room of similar dimensions (the vestibule: Fig. 8, J), which acted as a link between several other spaces. Directly or indirectly, the vestibule connected with the cemetery, the chapel of Notre-Dame-sous-Terre (Fig. 8, C), the south stairs to the church and also the north-south gallery. At its west end, two sets of steps led into the Hôtellerie: one set, rising, which gave access to what at some point became the monks' new infirmary; and the other, descending, which went to the guests' passage and thence into the main hall of the Hôtellerie.³⁹ It should be noted that although the church could have been reached from the Hôtellerie by means of the vestibule and the south stairs, construction of the guests' passage seems to indicate that de Torigni encouraged visitors to approach it by way of the cemetery.

In broad terms, the principal section of the Hôtellerie building consisted of a basement, where food and drink were prepared, and above it a nobly proportioned accommodation floor where the abbot's guests were entertained and fed (when not dining with the monks) and where they slept. Above that, in the eaves, was another floor, accessible by stairs descending from the abbot's own lodgings, to which it has been suggested that de Torigni transferred the monks' infirmary.⁴⁰ To have served as an infirmary, these premises would have required another means of access, which was provided by the door that led up from the west end of the vestibule.

The image of an abbot wishing to sleep close to the sick and dying members of his community is an affecting one, but is unlikely to be correct. When first built, the Hôtellerie was not well situated to hold an infirmary because it would have been immediately over a very noisy space, as well as being far removed from the conventual quarters and therefore from the practical and spiritual support of other monks. It would also have been difficult to go to and from such an infirmary without encountering members of the public in the circulation wing. It may instead be that de Torigni's first intention was to provide space close to his chambers not for the sick, but for his secretarial staff

and archival assistants and the monks who managed patrimonial revenues, the sort of people from whose ranks would soon emerge the role of bailiff (although de Torigni himself does not appear to have had a designated bailiff at his side).⁴¹ In the twelfth century came the beginnings of an enormous growth in documentation concerned with the management of monastic estates. Before de Torigni's arrival, Abbot Bernard du Bec (1131–49) had set in motion the compilation of Mont Saint-Michel's first cartulary, which Lecouteux points out was in some ways complemented by *De abbatibus*; and de Torigni, when he first arrived at the abbey, made a point of visiting all its estates, including those in the Channel Islands and in England, to familiarise himself with them.⁴² Administration of an estate on this scale would have necessitated a large staff, which the *Hôtellerie* could conveniently have accommodated.

In the early thirteenth century, probably around 1228, the abbot's guests were moved once more, this time to the new Salle des Hôtes in the Merveille. Soon afterwards, construction of the Grand Degré similarly removed pilgrims from the circulation wing, rerouting them past the south side of the church (Fig. 11). In these circumstances, it made sense to abandon the mortuary chapel of St Martin (Fig. 6, A), now located too close to this lay traffic; to make a new mortuary chapel the other side of the cemetery, in the vestibule (Fig. 8, J); and to turn the top floor of the former *Hôtellerie* into a new infirmary, with its own kitchen two storeys below. Infirmary, designated kitchen, mortuary chapel and cemetery finally lay in close proximity to one another, at some remove from the rest of the community but at least in a corner of the monastery from which laymen had now been excluded.

While direct evidence for the timing of these changes is lacking, consistent with the interpretation offered here is that at some point the ceiling in the guests' passage was lowered — presumably because it was no longer in use, which means after c. 1228. This in turn permitted a lowering of the floor level in the vestibule above and the introduction there of ogival stone vaulting to replace an earlier wooden ceiling, thereby creating a space of suitable dimensions and appearance to be the new mortuary chapel, dedicated to Christianity's first martyr, St Étienne (particularly fitting as all monks regarded themselves as living martyrs). This space was decorated with mural paintings of early thirteenth-century character, so these works were most likely undertaken only shortly after the abbot's guests departed for the Merveille.⁴³

Once the upper floor of the *Hôtellerie* was required to house the infirmary, the abbot's administrators probably moved downstairs into the former guest quarters until Abbot Turstin (1237–64) built a substantial Bailliverie next to his own new lodgings in the southeast of the precinct in around 1260 (Fig. 11).⁴⁴ Leaving aside the question of the infirmary, de Torigni's *Hôtellerie* did not fully resolve all the problems posed by caring for the abbey's guests. Moving the refectory in the early twelfth century to the new eastern range, away from the core of the monastic quarters, was convenient for outsiders arriving to dine at the abbot's table. But, because of the intervening monastic quarters, to get guests to the new refectory from the church would have entailed first entering the south transept, which held the abbey's relic collection, and thence descending a spiral staircase — although admittedly a broad one, designed for the conveyance of deceased monks — to reach the mortuary chapel of St Martin. From there guests would have passed through the sanctuary crypt, from the north side of which a door to the

outside world brought them before the porch to the refectory in the eastern range. It would have been no easier for guests who had just dined with the abbot to follow him from the refectory to his chambers to confer further together. These were the difficulties that Henry II and his barons would have encountered when they visited the Mont for the first time in 1158, so it is easy to understand why a socially ambitious abbot such as de Torigni would have wanted to reorganise the reception of his guests as soon as he could. His new Hôtellerie was the solution.

Whatever the problems the new refectory created for guests, it allowed a substantial increase in the number of monks that the abbey could accommodate. For an abbey of its renown and wealth, Mont Saint-Michel's monks were never numerous. In the fourteen years or so following de Torigni's death in 1186, their numbers fell from 60 to around 40, a level that scarcely changed thereafter until the Black Death further reduced numbers in the mid-fourteenth century. The fundamental issue was lack not of money but of space. It is possible that either or both the eastern end of the Promenoir and the nearby sub-forecourt had always been used as an overflow dormitory: Gout found that, even in the eleventh century, a wooden staircase linked the dormitory at its eastern end to the Promenoir.⁴⁵ But by no later than 1112, and perhaps by as early as *c.* 1100–05, the new refectory would have permitted the entire Promenoir and *misericordia* to be converted to sleeping accommodation, when and if needed (and perhaps the introduction into the dormitory proper of the more usual pattern of two lines of beds).

THE MERVEILLE

The final major determinant of the evolution of the abbey's monastic buildings was the assault by the Breton forces of Guy de Thouars in 1204, in the aftermath of which the pair of adjoining buildings known as the Merveille was built. The accepted narrative was once that the Merveille arose, phoenix-like, from the ashes of other monastic buildings that had been largely destroyed by the Breton conflagration.⁴⁶ This is clearly not correct. The Merveille was a redevelopment of two buildings that already existed and only involved entirely new construction on the upper floors. Even in functional terms, much of the Merveille, especially in its west wing, more or less replicated the services provided by its predecessors, the middle and eastern ranges.

Thanks perhaps to de Torigni's improvements to security at the entrance to the abbey, it appears that the Bretons may not in fact have penetrated to the monastery's interior, although they clearly managed to set fire to parts of it. Le Roy recounts (somewhat implausibly given the geography of settlement) that the invaders set fire to the town below and that it was flames from this quarter that rose and caught the abbey. He does not claim that the Bretons got inside the monastery.⁴⁷ The account in *Gallia Christiana* may be nearer the truth in suggesting that the Bretons set fire to the town only once they had been unable to breach the abbey's defences.⁴⁸

The part of *De abbatibus* written by de Torigni breaks off with the author's own arrival at Mont Saint-Michel and the work was not recommenced until the early fifteenth century. Nonetheless, its account of the damage incurred in 1204 is plausible. It asserts that the roofs of the church tower and refectory suffered in the attack, and also the

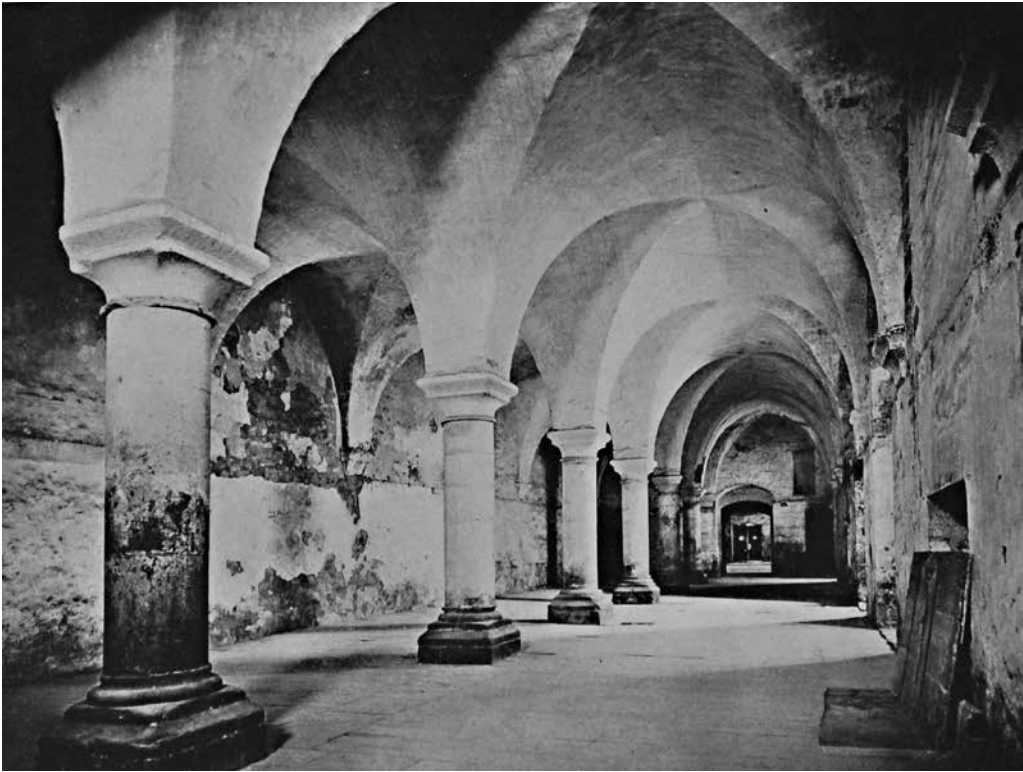


Fig. 14. *Mont Saint-Michel, the Merveille almonry, photograph from Paul Gout, Le Mont-Saint-Michel, 1910, vol. II, p. 465*

dormitory and the cellar.⁴⁹ It may be that, frustrated by their inability to invade the monastery, the assailants launched flaming projectiles from outside that set fire to vulnerable roofs. They may also have succeeded in breaking into the cellar, the first building they passed as they came up from the village and one not easily defended from within the monastic quarters, which had no direct access to it. The refectory to which they set fire would have been the room directly above the cellar, and that it had a combustible roof confirms that the eastern range was only two storeys high.

Unfortunately, the fifteenth-century author did not adequately research the abbey's archives to establish the correct dates of office of the abbots who might have designed and built the Merveille in the aftermath of the 1204 attack, and consequently the Maurists, and more recent historians who have relied on them, were confused by this issue too.⁵⁰ Thus Jean Huynes and Le Roy correctly identified Jourdain's dates as abbot as 1191–1212 (he died on 6 August 1212), but both erroneously believed that his successor, Raoul des Îles, died in 1218, whereas episcopal records put it beyond doubt that he was in post until the autumn of 1228 or even early 1229, when he was forced into retirement by a stroke (des Îles claimed to have been abbot for sixteen years and his successor, Thomas des Chambres, was elected on 4 April 1229).⁵¹ An inscription, no longer extant,

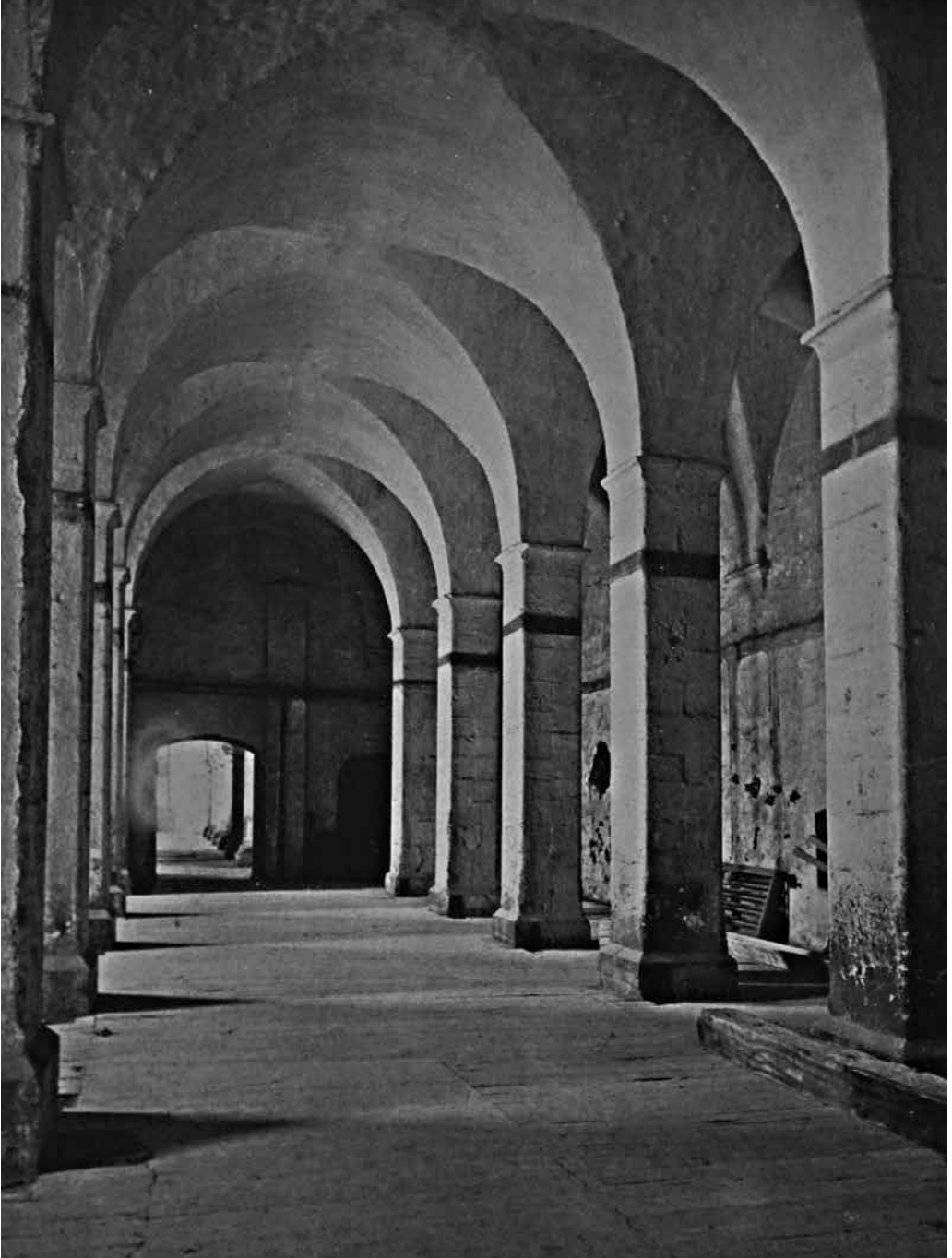


Fig. 15. *Mont Saint-Michel, the Merueille cellar, formerly the stables, photograph from Paul Gout, Le Mont-Saint-Michel, 1910, vol. II, p. 477*



Fig. 16. *Mont Saint-Michel, three openings from the Merveille cloister on to what was intended to be the abbey's new chapter house, photograph of 2022 by the author*

over a carved figure of St Francis in the west walk dated the cloister's completion to 1228, that is, during the abbacy of des Îles; but Huynes and Le Roy, thinking des Îles already dead and that his near-successor Raoul de Villedieu had ruled from 1225 to 1236 (whereas his actual dates were 1229–36), naturally credited him instead with this achievement. Véronique Rouchon Mouilleron has suggested on iconographic grounds that the representation of St Francis's stigmata on the cloister statuette would have been early if carved in 1228, although the dating of iconographically similar works from elsewhere is also insecure.⁵² Even if she is correct, though, this does not discredit the abbey's tradition that the cloister was in effect completed in 1228, before de Villedieu's abbacy, even if some of its sculptured decoration was unfinished. In any case, there are only two abbots who could have designed the Merveille, Jourdain or des Îles.

Although he evidently had his favourites, Jourdain was deeply unpopular with most of his monks, who accused him before Pope Innocent III of being secular in his living and profligate in his spending, not merely irreligious but sacrilegious, and violently cruel to his monks.⁵³ However, they never charged him with having failed to repair the damage caused by the Bretons in 1204, which they surely would have done had it been the case.⁵⁴ This is, nonetheless, a different matter from claiming he planned and initiated the project of the Merveille. Muddle over his possible role again stems from the accounts of Huynes and Le Roy, who both believed that Jourdain commenced, and even came

close to completing, construction of the refectory that now occupies the third storey of the east wing of the Merveille.⁵⁵ They seem not to have appreciated that, immediately before the fire of 1204, the monks' refectory was no longer in the northwestern range but already lay in the eastern range, one floor below its replacement. It seems most probable that what Jourdain did was to restore the existing refectory, without embarking on the much more ambitious programme of works that was to transform both the middle and eastern ranges into what we know today as the Merveille.

Thus we can say with some certainty that the abbot who conceived of, designed and largely built the Merveille was des Îles, a man whose ambitions for his monastery were manifestly expressed in its character. Des Îles claimed that he had inherited a divided community but had attracted novices and scholars from Paris to renew it, and had sought to instil in his monks not only faithfulness, honesty and a commitment to work, but also a love of literature, life and conversation.⁵⁶ The Merveille's rooms so evidently epitomise these hopes. Des Îles's last year in office, or at least in good health, was 1228. When the abbey commemorated that year as the date of the cloister's completion, it was surely an acknowledgement of it as his crowning achievement.

Under des Îles, the cellar on the ground floor of the eastern range became the new almonry (Fig. 14) and the cellar itself — that is, in functional terms — moved back to its originally intended position next door, in the middle range, displacing in the process the abbot's horses (Fig. 15). These particular changes might not have required substantial building works, but above the projected almonry des Îles must have demolished his predecessor's recently repaired refectory roof and rebuilt the room's walls, in order to embark on creating in its place the taller and no doubt grander Salle des Hôtes and, above this, his new refectory. According to Le Roy, the refectory was finished in 1217.⁵⁷

The arches of the proposed entry to a future chapter house that still stand in the west walk of the new cloister (Fig. 16) indicate that the Merveille had been intended to consist of three wings. It appears, moreover, that the entire scheme, including the third wing that was never built, was designed before the alterations to Jourdain's work were even commenced. This is evident from the fact that the desired level of the cloister determined everything else: first, obviously, the height of the ceiling vaults in the Salle des Chevaliers beneath the cloister, but equally those next door in the Salle des Hôtes, where des Îles started building, since the floor level of the refectory above this room had also to match the adjacent cloister.

This rather obvious point about the determining influence of the level of the cloister has sometimes been missed because of a conviction that the Merveille was an entirely new building, or pair of buildings. This misconception encouraged speculation about which wing was begun first (the consensus being that it was the east wing, which was certainly completed earlier than its pair, in 1217 as opposed to 1228). Certain markings apparent on the east wall of the Salle des Chevaliers, for instance, have sometimes been regarded as evidence of an intention, later abandoned, to install windows there — which, if true, would indicate that there had been no plan to build the west wing of the Merveille, including the cloister, when the Salle des Hôtes was built.⁵⁸ This is an understandable error given the interpretive starting point, but these wall markings are more probably evidence of an altogether different change of plan. Des Îles evidently conceived of a larger, more impressive cloister than its predecessor. In the course of

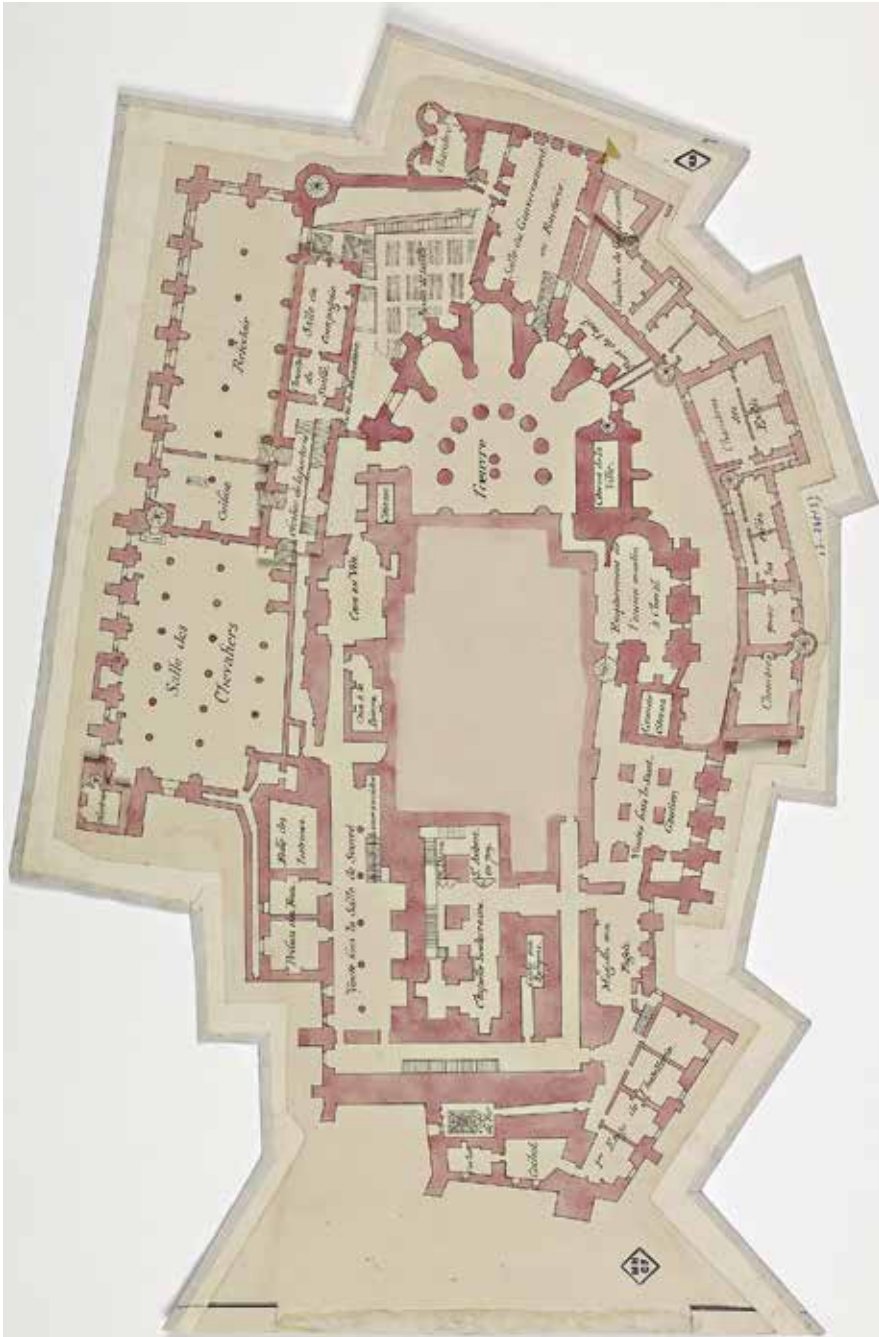


Fig. 17. Plan de l'abbaye et du château en 1776 by Lucien Sallé (Charenton-le-Pont, Médiathèque de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine, © Ministère de la Culture, distributed by RMN-Grand Palais)

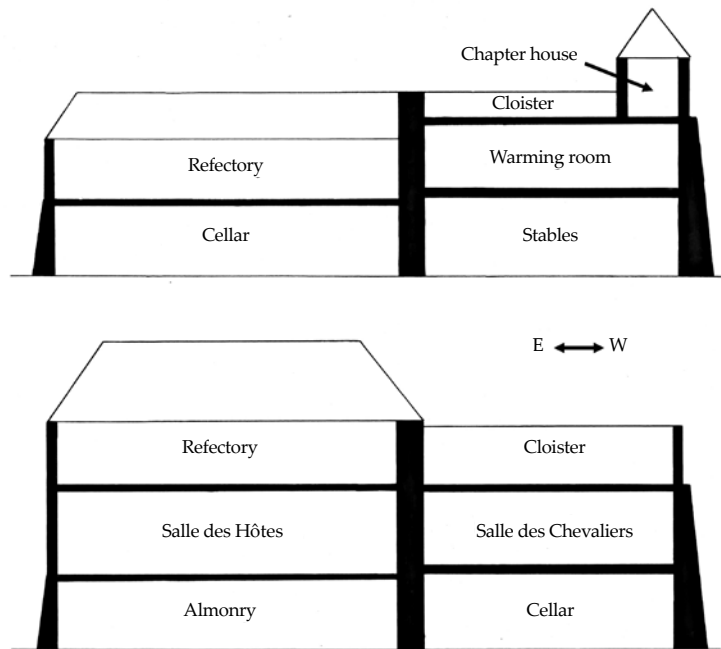


Fig. 18. Schematic longitudinal sections of the abbey through (above) the eastern and middle ranges, completed c. 1100–05, and (below) the east and west wings of the Merveille, completed in 1228, drawings by the author

construction of the Salle des Chevaliers, he seems to have decided to push its north wall further out, which obliged him to re-vault part at least of that room (hence, no doubt, the markings on its east wall) and likewise to increase the breadth of the cellar beneath (where a pilaster against the east wall confirms that this room too was widened).⁵⁹ As may be seen from the eighteenth-century plan in Figure 17, the building line of the west wing of the Merveille is consequently in advance of the east wing.

The Romanesque cloister would probably have looked quite small by comparison with its thirteenth-century replacement, for des Îles extended the space that the new cloister occupied to the west by eliminating from it the former infirmary and the putative chapter house that had occupied part of the original. The old infirmary would necessarily have been lower than the new cloister, which is again consistent with this being the moment at which the care of the sick was transferred to the former Hôtellerie.⁶⁰ It is not possible to show precisely how the middle and eastern ranges were adapted to give birth to the Merveille, but the main longitudinal cross-sectional changes that the transformation entailed are clear (Fig. 18).

The projected new chapter house never saw the light of day because the third wing of the Merveille was never built. The two wings that were realised are regarded, with good reason, as one of the supreme expressions of medieval Benedictine monastic culture. Nonetheless, their construction required significant changes in other parts of the abbey and in its organisation, some of which were possibly not anticipated. To protect the new buildings from another attack like that suffered in 1204 demanded a gateway at



Fig. 19. *Mont Saint-Michel, corridor (probably built shortly after 1228) against the southern wall of the Merveille Salle des Chevaliers, photograph from Paul Gout, Le Mont-Saint-Michel, 1910, vol. II, p. 480*

the east end of the abbey site and a high stone wall extending northwards from it as far as the Merveille, perhaps to the position where the Tour Claudine stands today. These new defences in principle offered the possibility of separating the flow of pilgrims from quotidian activities (butchery, stabling, forge, stone cutting, and so on), congregated around the space just to the north of the northwestern range. If the infirmary was to move to the former *Hôtellerie*, which was accessed from the circulation wing, it was desirable to remove pilgrims from that building as well. The solution to both issues was to locate the abbey gateway a few metres south of the new almonry and immediately in front of a new path, the *Grand Degré*, which, following the south side of the church and passing over the cemetery, brought visitors from the gateway or almonry directly to the south door of the church (Fig. 11). These changes must have been costly. It is not known which abbot was responsible. The new abbey entrance is usually credited to Turstin during the 1250s.⁶¹ Turstin certainly built the gateway that we see today, but his was probably not the first gate on this spot.⁶² Nor is it known when the *Grand Degré* was built, although the early thirteenth-century character of the mural decoration in *St Étienne's*, the transformation of which into a mortuary chapel must be roughly coterminous with building the *Grand Degré*, suggests that construction of the path cannot have been much later than 1228, when the Merveille was completed.

Looking after the abbot's guests when they left the Merveille was not entirely straightforward either. As we have seen, entertaining them in the pre-Merveille eastern range had posed difficulties if they were also to go thence to the church to pray, or vice

versa. De Torigni's Hôtellerie had resolved this problem, but the return of guests to the Salle des Hôtes in the Merveille brought it once more to the fore. To resolve it, the monks constructed a narrow corridor (Fig. 19) passing between the Salle des Chevaliers and the north transept of the church, which took guests to the sub-forecourt (Fig. 8, P), crossing paths with the monks on the way. Here a new staircase was built to take them up to the cloister forecourt (Fig. 11, U), from where they could enter the church by the north door. This was not an elegant solution. It is not known whether it was devised by des Îles or came later, but either way it appears to have been an afterthought and not part of the original conception of the Merveille. Instead of having its own ceiling, the corridor was oversailed by the vaulting of the adjacent Salle des Chevaliers; and in one especially narrow section, where the passage worked its way round the north transept, the spring of the adjacent vaulting had to be hacked away to increase the corridor's width and render it usable.

It seems improbable that, while he was engaged in overseeing the design and construction of something as ambitious as the Merveille, des Îles would also have set about building anything as dull and practical as the Grand Degré. More likely this fell to his successor, de Villedieu. Indeed, the improvised character of the corridor beside the Salle des Chevaliers rather suggests that des Îles did not give much thought to any of the practical problems to which his Merveille would give rise — an early instance, perhaps, of an architect who was too much the visionary.

CONCLUSION

Although not previously addressed in the literature, the construction of Mont Saint-Michel's Romanesque monastic buildings on such a challenging site was a programme as technically ambitious as raising the church at its core. Yet it was quickly achieved. The circulation wing and the northwestern, middle and eastern ranges were all completed by 1112, and probably by around 1100–05 — only twenty years or so after the completion of the church in the early 1080s. Moreover, the imprint of those buildings that no longer exist in their original form is still evident today. The early thirteenth-century development known as the Merveille was a redevelopment of the Romanesque middle and eastern ranges, not an entire replacement of them.

The verticality of the abbey's monastic buildings is visually their most immediate feature, the rooms being distributed over three floors instead of the more usual two in a pattern that reflected the situation of the abbey church on the summit of the Mont. Nonetheless, the arrangement of the claustral quarters was less unusual than this suggests since, as in most other Benedictine monasteries, the monks occupied only two floors, albeit here the two upper ones. The ground floor was devoted to the secular functions of almonry, cellar and stabling, which in another house might have been catered for in separate buildings set apart for the purpose. What was perhaps more unusual about Mont Saint-Michel was that, because of the steepness of the site, all the necessary monastic spaces were catered for in immediate adjacency to the church, the length of which was itself constrained by the surrounding terrain. An inability to spread outwards appears to explain why the original provision for the dormitory, kitchen and cellar was inadequate; and the earliest attempts to ameliorate these difficulties brought

other problems of circulation and of lay/religious separation in their wake, problems that even the early thirteenth-century Merveille failed entirely to resolve.

The precipitous nature of the surrounding terrain meant equally that there were few other buildings within the precinct that could be incorporated into the monastic domain, although what existed was used wherever possible and the eastern range, which was probably not originally planned, also added to capacity. In response to new opportunities, various rooms sometimes changed their uses: a kitchen became a workshop, a cellar an almonry and stables the cellar; a space probably created to house the abbot's administrative staff became the infirmary and a nearby vestibule became the new mortuary chapel; more unusually, the original refectory appears to have become an ancillary dormitory and, most curiously of all, what may have been built as a ducal palace became the monks' cemetery. In most monasteries the use made of each room or space remained true to its original designation, but not so in this case.

Mont Saint-Michel has always impressed visitors, but it can never have been an easy monastery to inhabit. This may be one reason — its cold and wet marine situation was no doubt another — why, despite its prestige and the enormous wealth generated by its pilgrimage, the abbey never attracted large numbers of monks. Ironically, by the time the Merveille's long and elegant refectory was completed in 1217, fewer than forty monks typically ate in a room that could have accommodated 200.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my warm thanks to Claire Foley for commenting on an earlier draft of this article, and to Jonathan Boughey and Stephen Hitchens for their help in producing the illustrations. Also to the anonymous reviewers of *Architectural History*, whose observations led me to refine my view of the Promenoir and the Romanesque cloister, and to the editorial team for their helpful input.

BIOGRAPHY

George Gandy has had a varied career. He originally trained as a social and economic historian, obtaining his BA/MA in modern history and DPhil at Oxford and holding lecturing posts at the University of Lancaster and Queen's University Belfast. He then switched to law and for many years worked as a solicitor in Oxford, before retiring from legal practice in 2005 and moving to France, not far from Mont Saint-Michel. Here he reverted to historical research, this time as a medievalist focusing on that island abbey, with articles in *Speculum*, *Medieval English Theatre*, *Annales de Normandie*, *Revue de l'Avranchin* and *Annales de Bretagne et du Pays de l'Ouest*. Email: george.gandy@orange.fr

NOTES

- 1 George N. Gandy, 'Retour sur la fondation de l'abbaye du Mont-Saint-Michel et le rôle du duc Richard I de Normandie', *Annales de Bretagne et du Pays de l'Ouest*, 123, no. 1 (2016), pp. 7–32 (pp. 22–27); Cassandra Potts, *Monastic Revival and Regional Identity in Early Normandy* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 1997), pp. 24–27, 81–104.
- 2 Thomas Le Roy, *Les Curieuses recherches du Mont Saint Michel*, ed. by Eugène de Robillard de Beaurepaire, 2 vols (Caen: Le Gost-Clérisse, 1878); new one-volume edition by Henry Decaëns (Caen: Société des antiquaires de Normandie, 2008), p. 113. Le Roy gives dates for the completion of several buildings and these

- are in general plausible, but how he came by this information remains unknown despite extensive research on his sources by Marie Bisson in 'Une Édition numérique structurée à l'aide de la Text Encoding Initiative des textes montois de dom Thomas Le Roy: Établissement critique des textes, recherches sur les sources, présentation littéraire et historique' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Caen, 2015). The Maurists were a seventeenth-century reformed Benedictine order that took charge of many French monasteries. They often produced fine new monastic ranges but not at Mont Saint-Michel, where they lacked the resources even to maintain the buildings they had inherited.
- 3 *De abbatibus*, in Thomas N. Bisson, 'On the Abbots of Le Mont Saint-Michel. An Edition and Translation', *Haskins Society Journal*, 22 (2010), pp. 163–91. Avranches, Bibliothèque Municipale, MS 213, printed in *Chronique de Robert de Torigni*, ed. by Léopold Delisle, 2 vols (Rouen: Société de l'histoire de Normandie, 1872–73), II, pp. 230–35; Stéphane Lecouteux, 'Écrire l'histoire des abbés du Mont Saint-Michel 2. Robert de Torigni, ses outils, ses sources et sa méthode de travail', *Tabularia*, 18 (2018), pp. 1–68, doi.org/10.4000/tabularia.2973, paragraphs 6–13.
 - 4 Le Roy, *Curieuses recherches*; Jean Huynes, *Histoire générale de l'abbaye du Mt-St-Michel au péril de la mer*, ed. by Eugène de Robillard de Beurepaire, 2 vols (Rouen: Librairie de la société de l'histoire de Normandie, 1872–73); Arthur du Monstier, *Neustria Pia* (Rouen: Jean Berthelin, 1663); *Gallia Christiana*, vol. 11 (Paris: 1759).
 - 5 Edmond Martène, *Thesaurus novus anecdotorum*, 5 vols (Paris: 1717), I.
 - 6 Paul Gout, *Le Mont-Saint-Michel: Histoire de l'abbaye et de la ville. Étude archéologique et architecturale des monuments*, 2 vols (Paris: Armand Colin, 1910).
 - 7 Bisson, 'On the Abbots', pp. 176–77 (author's translation): 'ibi operatus est [...] sepulturam monachorum et porticum super eam'.
 - 8 Pierre Bouet, Olivier Desbordes, Marie Bisson and Stéphane Lecouteux, 'Écrire l'histoire des abbés du Mont Saint-Michel 3. Édition critique et traduction', *Tabularia*, 19 (2019), pp. 1–31, doi.org/10.4000/tabularia.3773, n. 35 (author's translation): 'Il aménagea le cimetière des moines sous la partie occidentale de la nef, sur laquelle il éleva le porche de l'église abbatiale.'
 - 9 Du Monstier, *Neustria Pia*, p. 386: 'subterraneum specum, rupe incisa, in monachorum sepulturam parat'; *Gallia Christiana*, column 515: 'coemeterium monachorum subter majori ecclesia'.
 - 10 Marc Déceneux provides an excellent description of the building in *The Mont-Saint-Michel Stone by Stone* (Rennes: Ouest-France, 1996), pp. 28–29, although his suggestion that it was used as a chapel is not persuasive. See George Gandy, 'Who Built What at Mont Saint-Michel during the 10th Century?', *Annales de Normandie*, 65, no. 1 (January–June 2015), pp. 155–82 (pp. 172–80), where the case for its use as a palace, originally suggested by Edward Impey, is also explored.
 - 11 The northern of the pair of doors that today leads into this room from the north–south gallery is certainly later than the eleventh century. Jean-Marc Cobac states without evidence or explanation that the same is true of the other door and that therefore the Promenoir was not originally accessible from the circulation wing: Jean-Marc Cobac, 'Les Portes du ciel', *La Revue des amis du Mont Saint-Michel*, 21, no. 126 (2021), pp. 50–59 (pp. 53–55). Gout, however, who undertook the original restoration in this area, considered the southern opening to be eleventh century, even if since altered (see Fig. 6): Gout, *Le Mont-Saint-Michel*, II, p. 428. Gout must be right because this door was the only means by which the abbot could have reached the refectory from his chambers.
 - 12 Gout, *Le Mont-Saint-Michel*, II, p. 426, cf. plate XXX, following p. 618. The room, and the room above it which may have been a *misericordia*, seem to have been demolished following the lightning fire of 1776 that badly damaged the west end of the abbey church and may also have brought about collateral damage in this quarter: Jean-Luc Legros, *Le Mont-Saint-Michel: Architecture et civilisation* (Condé-sur-Noireau: Éditions Charles Corlet, 2002), pp. 46–47.
 - 13 Gout, *Le Mont-Saint-Michel*, II, pp. 429–30.
 - 14 Gout simply called this room the 'Promenoir', suggesting that he thought it was a type of cloister. Among more recent historians, Dom Laporte shared this belief. Déceneux, however, followed by Legros, has suggested it might have combined refectory, chapter hall and possibly also scriptorium. All these hypotheses share the misplaced belief that one should be able to locate all the usual monastic functional spaces in the rooms that still exist today: Dom J. Laporte, 'Le Mont Saint-Michel', in *Châteaux de la Manche: 1, Centre et Sud*, ed. by Jean Barbaroux and M Fauchon (Paris: Nouvelles Éditions Latines, [n.d.]), pp. 1–32 (p. 14); Déceneux, *The Mont*, p. 41; Legros, *Le Mont*, p. 46. Decaëns considers that the Promenoir was simply the refectory (personal communication, 28 December 2022).
 - 15 Gout thought this room had been the refectory. Other historians, perhaps taking advantage of its disappearance, have tended to ignore it altogether.

- 16 Le Roy, *Curieuses recherches*, p. 144. No usage other than as the original infirmary has been proposed for this room by other historians of the abbey.
- 17 Gout, *Le Mont-Saint-Michel*, II, p. 432: 'la grande infériorité'.
- 18 A list identifying fifty living monks of the abbey can be dated to 1005–09: Denis Grémont and Lin Donnat, 'Fleury, le Mont Saint-Michel et l'Angleterre à la fin du x^e siècle et au début du xi^e siècle', in *Millénaire monastique du Mont Saint-Michel*, 5 vols (Paris: P. Lethielleux, 1966–71), I, ed. by Jean Laporte, pp. 751–93. For the numbers during de Torigni's abbacy, see Le Roy, *Curieuses recherches*, p. 132.
- 19 Bisson, 'On the Abbots', pp. 178–81: 'et omnes officinas que combuste fuerant reparavit et aream claustrique prius erat lignea lapideam fecit. Et subtus ipsam aulam et cameras nichilominus lapideas, et in tercio ordine deorsum stabula equorum fornicibus super fornices libratis mirabiliter adaptavit'.
- 20 Gout, *Le Mont-Saint-Michel*, II, pp. 444–45; Yves Gallet, 'Les voûtes d'ogives du Promenoir des moines au Mont-Saint-Michel et le problème de leur datation', *Bulletin Monumental*, 164, no. 4 (2006), pp. 347–58.
- 21 Le Roy, *Curieuses recherches*, pp. 117–18.
- 22 Sophie Bourdon, 'L'Église romane de l'abbaye du Mont Saint Michel' (unpublished masters thesis, University of Rennes II, 1997), pp. 41–42.
- 23 Gout, *Le Mont-Saint-Michel*, II, Fig. 263, p. 428, pp. 431–32. Gout did not specify the difference in levels.
- 24 Gout, *Le Mont-Saint-Michel*, II, p. 432.
- 25 Joseph Lemarié, 'La Vie liturgique au Mont Saint-Michel d'après les ordinaires et le cérémonial de l'abbaye', in *Millénaire monastique du Mont Saint-Michel*, I, ed. by Laporte, pp. 318–19.
- 26 The one exception was an eastern, axial chapel, which was added in the twelfth century and dedicated to the Virgin. It is shown in the Limburg brothers' early fifteenth-century miniature of the abbey with a vertiginously steep decline (possibly exaggerated) in the ground level outside the ambulatory: *Les Très Riches Heures du duc de Berry*, ed. by Jean Lognon and Raymond Cazelles (London: Thames and Hudson, 1969; 1989), p. 134.
- 27 Bourdon, 'L'Église romane', p. 42.
- 28 Gout, *Le Mont-Saint-Michel*, II, plate XX, following p. 458; cf. plate XXIV, following p. 514, and p. 496.
- 29 Katherine S. B. Keats-Rohan, ed., *The Cartulary of the Abbey of Mont-Saint-Michel* (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2006), charter no. 76, p. 153.
- 30 Monique Dosdat, *L'Enluminure romane au Mont-Saint-Michel* (Rennes: Éditions de l'Ouest, 2006), pp. 69–109.
- 31 The sanctuary was not apsidal as Gout shows it: it had an ambulatory. Owing to its fifteenth-century collapse and complete reconstruction, Gout did not have before him clear evidence of the sanctuary's original form.
- 32 Michel Nortier, 'La Construction de la Merveille', *Annales du Mont Saint Michel*, January–February, 1965, pp. 10–14; March–April 1965, pp. 35–38; January–February 1966, pp. 7–11.
- 33 Bisson, 'On the Abbots', pp. 180–81: 'Huius tempore quidam monachus fecit coquinam monachorum lapideam in qua est modo fabrica'.
- 34 Bisson, 'On the Abbots', pp. 184–85.
- 35 Thomas N. Bisson, ed., *The Chronography of Robert of Torigni. Vol. 1: The Chronicle, AD 1100–1186* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2020), pp. 210–11: 'venit rex ad Montem Sancti Michaelis, et audita missa ad maius altare, comedit in refectorio monachorum cum baronibus suis [...] Postea in nova camera abbatis [...].'
- 36 Le Roy, *Curieuses recherches*, pp. 137–38.
- 37 On monks and chastisement generally, see Élisabeth Lusset, *Crime, châtement et grâce dans les monastères au moyen âge (XII^e–XV^e siècle)* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017).
- 38 Martène, *Thesaurus novus*, column 818.
- 39 For the plan of the vestibule, and how it and the guests' passage relate to each other and to the Hôtellerie, see Gout, *Le Mont-Saint-Michel*, II, Figs 284 and 285, pp. 454–55.
- 40 Henry Decaëns, *Le Mont-Saint-Michel, 13 siècles d'histoire* (Rennes: Éditions Ouest-France, 2011), p. 29.
- 41 Bisson, *The Chronography*, I, pp. xxxii–xxxiii.
- 42 Stéphane Lecouteux, 'Écrire l'histoire des abbés du Mont Saint-Michel 1. Les auteurs du De abbatibus', *Tabularia*, 17 (2017), pp. 1–21, doi.org/10.4000/tabularia.2927, paragraph 11. Bisson, *The Chronography*, I, p. xlv.
- 43 Gout, *Le Mont-Saint-Michel*, I, plate VII, following p. 198, and II, pp. 497–98.
- 44 Gout, *Le Mont-Saint-Michel*, II, p. 503–13.
- 45 Gout, *Le Mont-Saint-Michel*, II, p. 428, and plate XVI, following p. 392.
- 46 Gout, *Le Mont-Saint-Michel*, II, p. 461.

- 47 Le Roy, *Curieuses recherches*, pp. 149–50.
- 48 *Gallia Christiana*, column 521.
- 49 Bisson, 'On the Abbots', pp. 184–85: 'Tempore ipsius [Jordanus] combusta fuit ecclesia a Britannis et item reedificata in tectura turri et refectorio, dormitorium et celarium. Totum fecit novum.' Compare with the grammatically more correct reading by Bouet *et al.* in 'Écrire l'histoire des abbés du Mont Saint-Michel 3', paragraph 27: 'et item raedificata in tectura, turri et refectorio. Dormitorium et cellarium totum fecit novum'.
- 50 Lecouteux, 'Écrire l'histoire des abbés du Mont Saint-Michel 1', paragraph 14. Bouet *et al.*, 'Écrire l'histoire des abbés du Mont Saint-Michel 3', paragraph 61, n. 74.
- 51 Martène, *Thesaurus novus*, columns 956–60; Jean Laporte, 'Les séries abbatiale et priorale du Mont Saint-Michel', in *Millénaire monastique du Mont Saint-Michel*, I, ed. by Laporte, p. 275.
- 52 Véronique Rouchon Mouilleron, 'Saint François au Mont-Saint-Michel : Enquête sur la transmission mémorielle d'une image disparue', *Journal des savants*, 2 (2014), pp. 205–34 (p. 233, n. 53).
- 53 Martène, *Thesaurus novus*, columns 807–08, 818–19.
- 54 Le Roy and Huynes both suggest that Jordain died before he could complete the necessary works, but they may mean only that he did not complete the Merveille, which is not the same thing. Le Roy, *Curieuses recherches*, p. 151; Huynes, *Histoire générale*, I, pp. 179–80.
- 55 Le Roy, *Curieuses recherches*, p. 155; Huynes, *Histoire générale*, I, pp. 179–80.
- 56 Martène, *Thesaurus novus*, columns 957–58.
- 57 Le Roy, *Curieuses recherches*, p. 155.
- 58 Legros, *Le Mont*, p. 65.
- 59 Henry Decaëns, 'La Merveille', in *Le Mont Saint Michel*, ed. by Henry Decaëns (Paris: Éditions de patrimoine, Centre des monuments nationaux, 2015), p. 85.
- 60 The shortened building that was formerly the infirmary still exists, adjoining the Merveille cloister. By 1775, it contained latrines accessed directly from the dormitory on one side and perhaps also from the cloister on the other. This change of use entailed raising its interior floor level, thereby destroying evidence of the original level. See the plan by the engineer Fontiac reproduced in Gout, *Le Mont-Saint-Michel*, II, plate XXXII, following p. 618.
- 61 Déceneux, *The Mont*, p. 56.
- 62 Turstin would have had to rebuild any existing gateway because he wanted to place his courtroom, Belle Chaise, on top of it.