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### Jersey Team Discovers Medieval Priory

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## DISCOVERIES

### *Jersey Team Discovers Medieval Priory*

Jersey archaeologists had the first chance to explore a rare medieval priory after uncovering a stone wall. Robert Waterhouse, Societe Jersiaise Archaeologist, said the St Clement's priory had been an accidental find. He said the society knew had existed based on documentary evidence, but its exact location was not known until now. Mr Waterhouse said: "In the summer we carried out a student excavation in the cemetery looking for [an] Iron Age and Roman settlement that was known to exist here. At the end of the investigation one of our



trenches came up with a substantial stone wall while the one behind came up with a great mass of building rubble and medieval pottery. We put in a larger trench and came up trumps. We got a substantial medieval wall in the south west corner of the building." It is thought the wall belonged to the

chapel of a priory founded by the Abbey of Mont St Michel in Normandy around 1150.

Waterhouse said there were rumors of where the priory would be -- most thought it would be on the site of the former Priory Inn, now a housing development. But archaeological work on that site in early 2000 showed no trace of medieval buildings. The team believes the priory would have been a collection of small buildings, with the chapel as the most important, as they have uncovered evidence it had a slate roof. "Previously no small medieval priories have been studied in Jersey. The only one that has been examined in the Channel Islands is at Lihou in Guernsey (reconstruction drawing at right). "We know of four or five of them and the best one is the one that was on Elizabeth Castle Island before Elizabeth Castle was built. We have no illustrations of this one so this is really exciting," Waterhouse noted.

Neil Molyneux, Vice President of the Societe Jersiaise, said: "We knew we were looking at the remains of a building of some importance. It is within a distinct date range that appears to be 12th or 13th century, which is the date the priory was fully functioning here. The priory would have been dissolved on the orders of King Henry V in 1413. He said: "The site of the priory has been lost for several centuries, so this is a very exciting find and a considerable coup for the Archaeology Section."



Waterhouse stated "There was an important building of the priory where we dug and we are confident it was the chapel. All the houses in Jersey and even the court house in town were known to have been thatched in the medieval period. Slate was only imported for the most important buildings." There would have been three or four monks living within the priory as well as a number of servants who would cook and look after the farm. "We know what the monks had on their tables, we know what their servants were cooking with so we can start to build a picture of what their life would have been like." Early in 2012 Mr Waterhouse was part of the team that recovered a hoard of nearly 70,000 Celtic coins from a Jersey field. He said this was a more important discovery for him. He said: "It is very enjoyable finding something this good, personally you can keep your coin hoards, give me a nice medieval building any day."

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