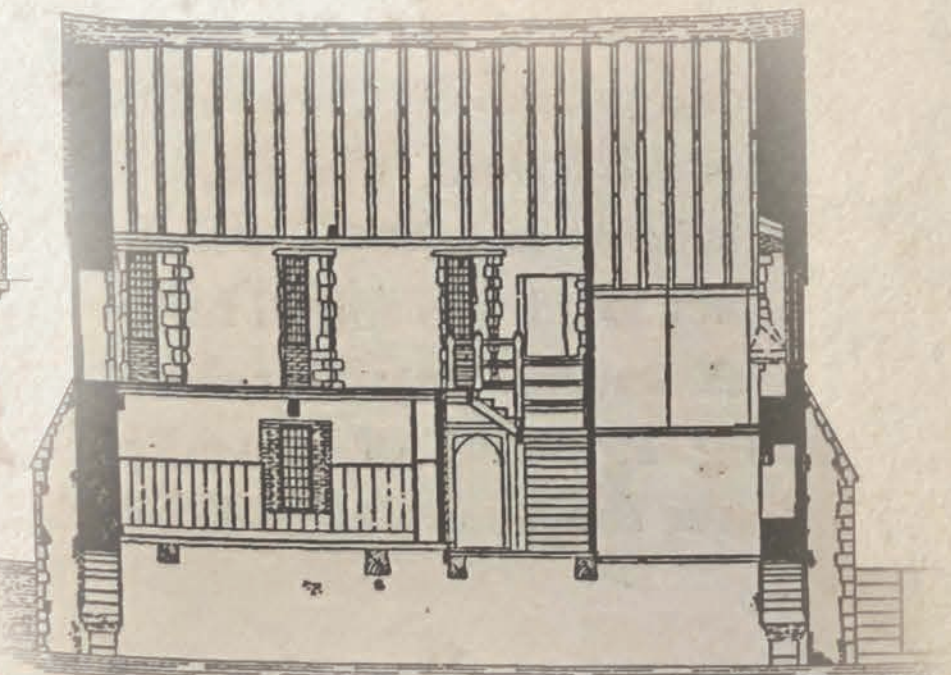


# Major Project

site: Greyfriars Chapel



Cecily Foster  
2025



# The Greyfriars Chapel: A Legacy of Change and Discovery

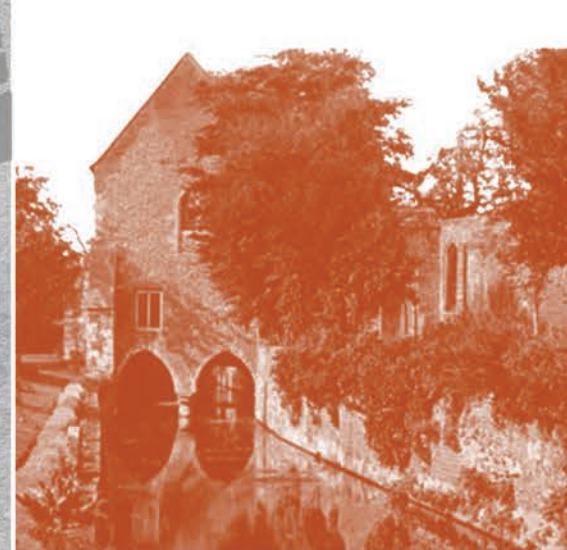


## Founding of Greyfriars Chapel

The Greyfriars were the first to arrive in Canterbury around 1224. Dedicated to aiding the poor and vulnerable in their communities, they embraced a vow of poverty and chose to live in the humblest of dwellings, following the teachings of St Francis of Assisi. Named for their grey cloth habits, the Greyfriars eventually acknowledged the necessity of acquiring land and buildings to sustain themselves by 1250. Construction of a monastery began in 1267, culminating in the establishment of the friary, with its grand church consecrated by Archbishop Walter Reynolds in 1325.

## Arrival and Early Establishment in Canterbury

The Greyfriars arrived in England via Dover in 1224, with four friars staying in Canterbury to establish a residence. Initially living behind a school hall, they later moved to a chapel near the hospital. Following the Pope's directive, they acquired and drained 18 acres of marshland, including an abandoned part of Watling Street, for agriculture. Between 1267 and 1325, although the land itself was vested in the city, the friars were forbidden from owning property.



## Challenges and Changes Over Time

The Black Death in the 14th century greatly affected the Greyfriars, but Henry VIII's reformation brought greater upheaval. The friars refused to accept his divorce or the Act of Supremacy, leading to the imprisonment of several and execution of two in 1534. By 1538, the Franciscans surrendered their estate during the Dissolution of the Monasteries, and most buildings, including the east and north gates, were demolished, permanently transforming the site.

## Remaining Structure and Later Uses

One building from the Greyfriars estate, originally a mill, survived and may have later served as a guest house. Between 1538 and the late 19th century, the estate passed through various private owners, including notable figures such as MP William Lovelace and his son, Cavalier poet Richard Lovelace. The building's use evolved over time, including serving as a jail in the late 18th century, with a room believed to have been a prison cell for inmates awaiting transportation. Names and dates of the inmates carved into the cell's wooden doors are still visible. It also provided accommodation for Huguenots, functioned as a tea garden in the 19th century, and later became a market garden in the 20th century.

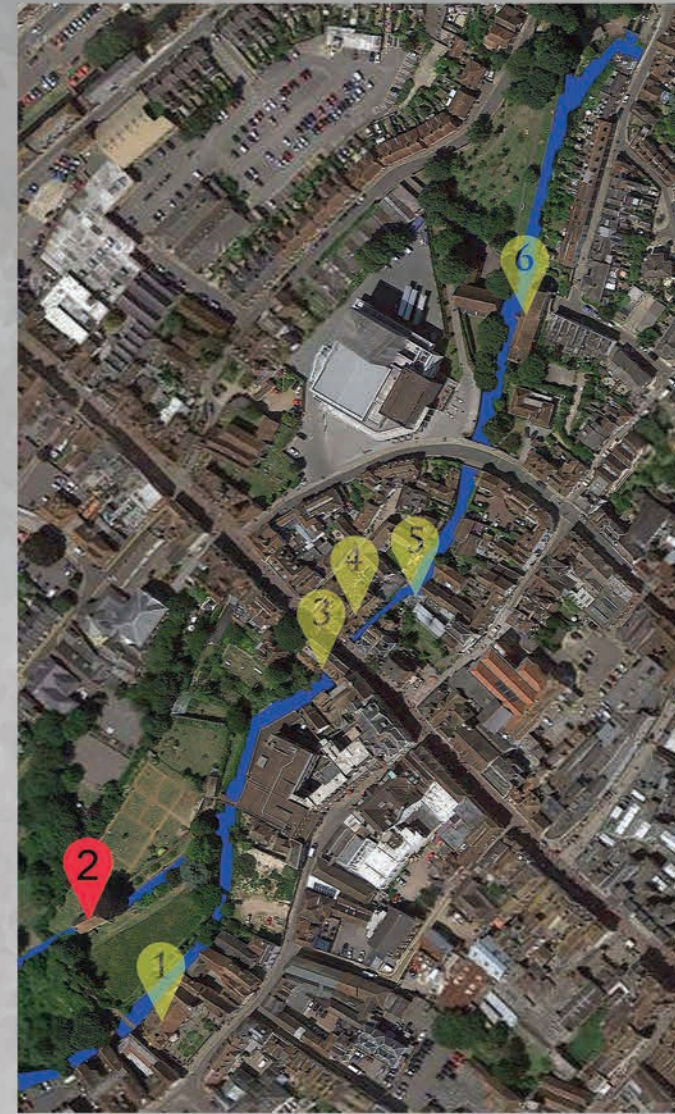


In 1959, the property was sold to the Dean and Chapter of Canterbury, and in 2000, the Franciscan Gardens and Greyfriars Chapel were transferred to Eastbridge Hospital of St Thomas the Martyr, a registered charity. Now a Scheduled Monument protected by Historic England, the gardens are maintained by Eastbridge and hold the potential for significant discoveries, as the site remains largely undeveloped.





## Canterbury punting tour map

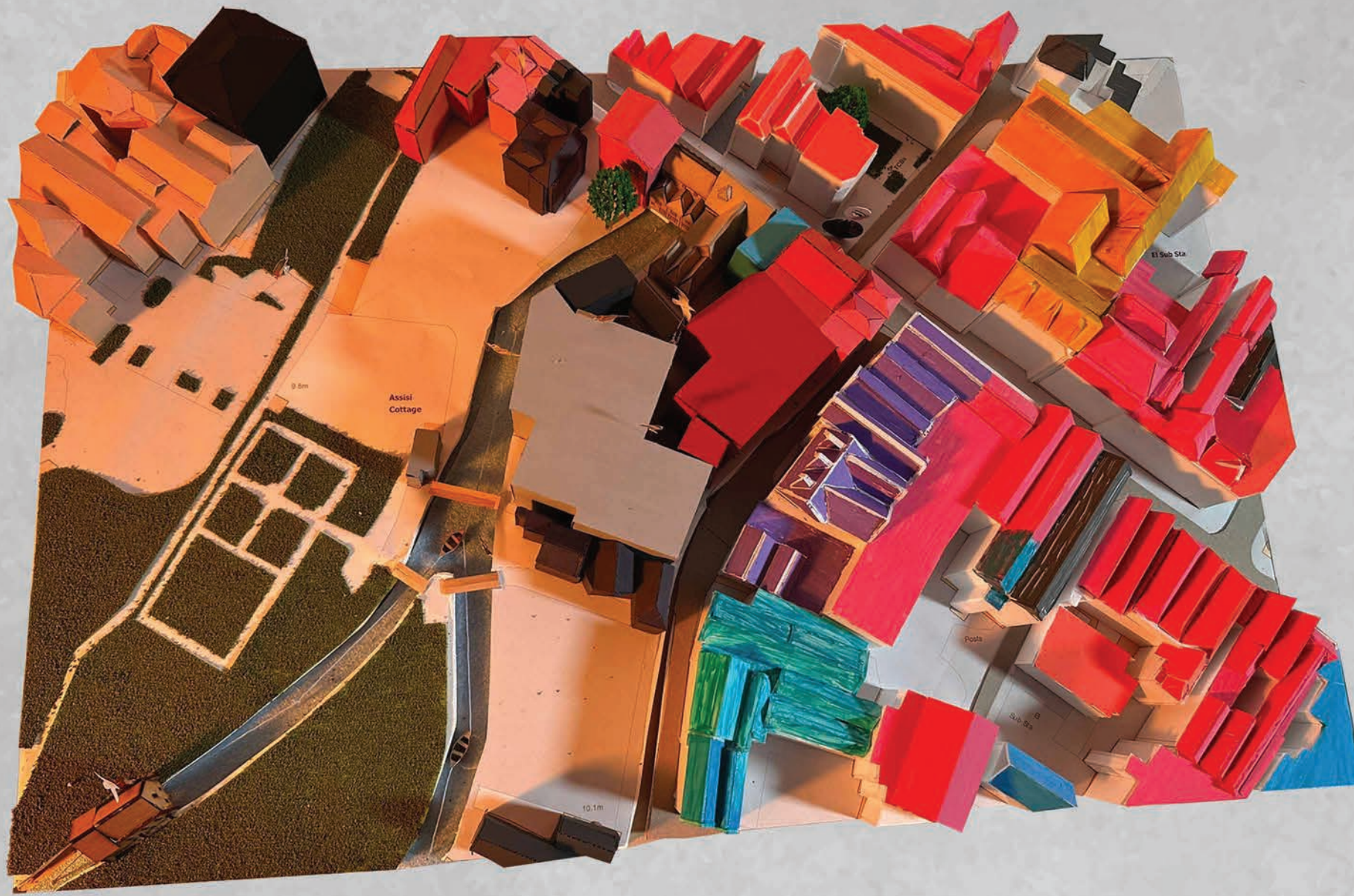


1. Poor Priests Hospital
2. Greyfriars Chapel
3. Eastbridge Hospital
4. 50 Yard Tunnel
5. Old Weavers House
6. Blackfriars Dominican Priory

<https://www.canterburypunting.co.uk/pages/the-tour-overview>







## Colour Key for Greyfriars Chapel Site

Garden Spaces = Green

Residential = Grey

Shops = Pink

Restaurants / Cafes = Orange

Pub / Bar = Blue

Hotels = Purple

Museums / Library = Yellow

Post Office = Red

Religious Sites = Black

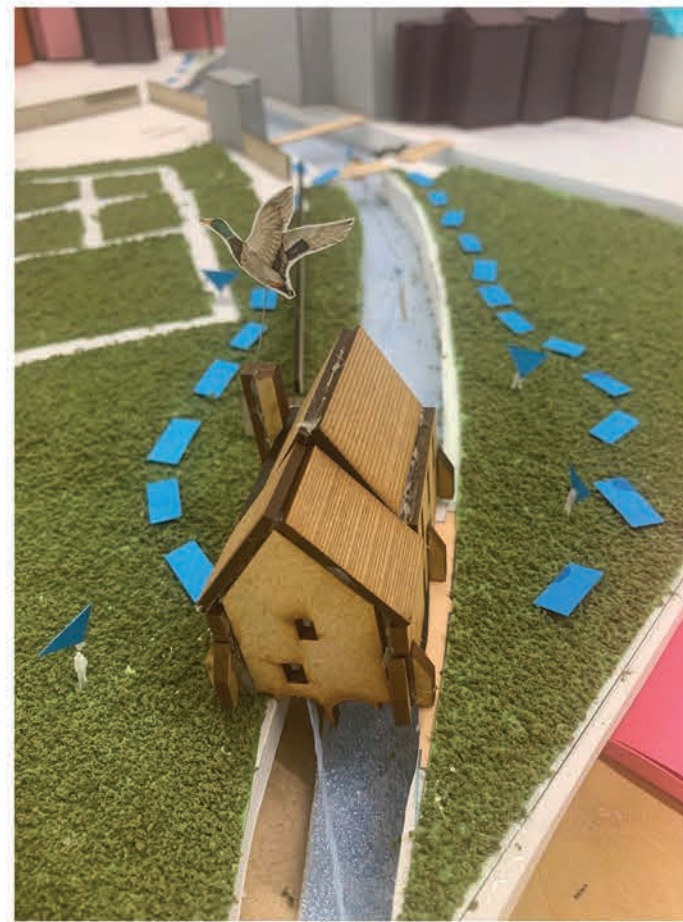
Council Buildings = Brown

Schools = Beige





Photos of Greyfriars  
Chapel site Model



= Pathway in and out of Greyfriars Chapel





# The Artist's Cloister: Creating Among the Shadows of the Past

## Target Audience

### Artists

In the quiet of the Greyfriars garden, artists can find the same stillness that shaped the daily lives of the Franciscan monks who lived and served here centuries ago. This project encourages artists to slow down, observe, and draw inspiration from a place once defined by silence, humility, and devotion. The garden becomes a studio without walls a space to sketch and reflect while the museum provides the historical context that deepens each line on the page.





For many visitors, Canterbury is a city of charming views—its cobbled streets, the gentle flow of the River Stour, and, of course, the awe-inspiring spires of its famous cathedral. Tourists stroll through the city, capturing snapshots of its picturesque scenery, but few take the time to look beyond the surface. Beneath its postcard-perfect exterior lies a deeper, more profound narrative: Canterbury's history is not just something of the past—it actively shapes the present.



Gateway to the North Hall of the Ancient Priory



West End of the Cathedral at Canterbury by Samuel Hieronymous Grimm



St George's Gate, Canterbury (demolished 1801), Viewed from the South East W. Gadesby

From its Roman foundations to its medieval significance as a pilgrimage site, Canterbury has always been a city of transformation. Every ancient stone tells a story, and every street is a thread in a tapestry woven with the lives of those who came before. The echoes of history are not just found in museums or grand landmarks but in the very fabric of the city itself—its culture, its traditions, and even its modern architecture.

Greyfriars Chapel, nestled quietly amidst lush gardens, is one such hidden gem that embodies this deep connection between past and present. Once home to Franciscan monks, it now stands as a testament to Canterbury's layered history, a place where art, faith, and time intertwine. Spaces like this remind us that history is not static; it is alive, influencing creativity, shaping ideas, and inspiring those who walk in its footsteps today.

To truly experience Canterbury is to look beyond the views, beyond the obvious. It is to recognise that its beauty is not just in what is seen, but in what is felt—the weight of its past, the resilience of its



Interior of Canterbury Cathedral Showing Quire and High Altar Peeter Neeffs the younger (1620–1675)





# About the user

# Artist

## Definition of an Artist :

*A person of any age who creates art ( such as painting, sculpture, music, or writing ) using conscious skill and creative imagination.*

*Merriam-Webster*

## Why do artist creat?

It's so nice to be able to lose yourself in crafts. I dabble at a few things but am happiest card-making, be it stamping, decoupage, embroidery, iris-folding, beading etc. I also enjoy cross stitch and tapestry, but these projects take much longer than making a card! I am a Groovi fan and in awe of the delicate work that crafters produce. Although I've been stocking up on Groovi products since they came out I am very much a novice and need time to improve. I have also

I love to be creative, to make something from other materials, to design a thing, have an idea, and then bring it to fruition.. Sometimes, to not have an idea, just wing it and see what happens. I also knit, and do colouring, and do

When I lost my daughter carding making gave me something to help loss myself in even if just for an hour. I made many friends around that time, they were the ones who helped me through when I didn't feel up to crafting it watching others on tv crafting crocheting just presently is helping were pain in joints shoulders is helping ease some of pain love my crafting community done I have only spoke to on Fb through clarity but love them and there support means a lot looking forward to meeting more of are American friends on here.



# Collage of the Garden: Walking Alongside the Ghosts of the Past

Step into the peaceful garden where echoes of the Greyfriars still linger. As you walk the paths they once tended, imagine the quiet rhythm of prayer, reflection, and labor that shaped their daily lives.





# Case Studies:

## The Cloisters – The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City

The Cloisters offers a model for how medieval monastic life can be made accessible and immersive for modern visitors. With reconstructed chapels, cloisters, and monastic spaces, it emphasizes the daily rhythms and spiritual devotion of medieval monks just as my exhibition does through life-sized sculptures and interactive displays. The Cloisters also highlights the intersection of art, architecture, and faith, mirroring my use of sculpture, replica clothing, and period-inspired environments to bring the world of the Greyfriars to life.

## Jarrow Hall – Anglo-Saxon Farm, Village, and Bede Museum (Jarrow, England)

Jarrow Hall presents early monastic life through reconstructed buildings and practical demonstrations, helping visitors step into the shoes of historical figures very similar to my Try-On Station and hands-on experiences. Both my exhibition and Jarrow Hall focus on how monks lived, worked, and interacted with their communities. By recreating the sensory and physical realities of monastic life, Jarrow Hall serves as a strong example of how educational, experiential exhibits can deepen public understanding of religious history.





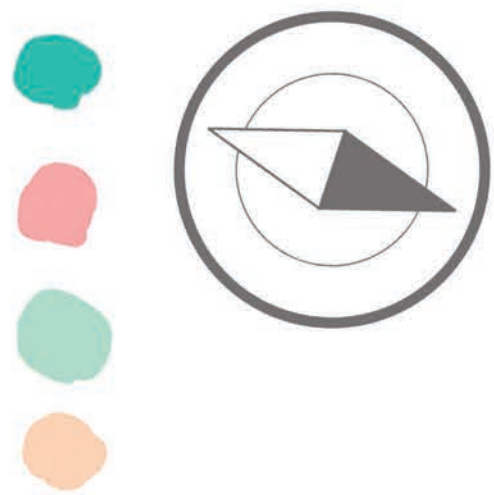
# From Habit to History: Designing the Greyfriars Experience



## Design Phase

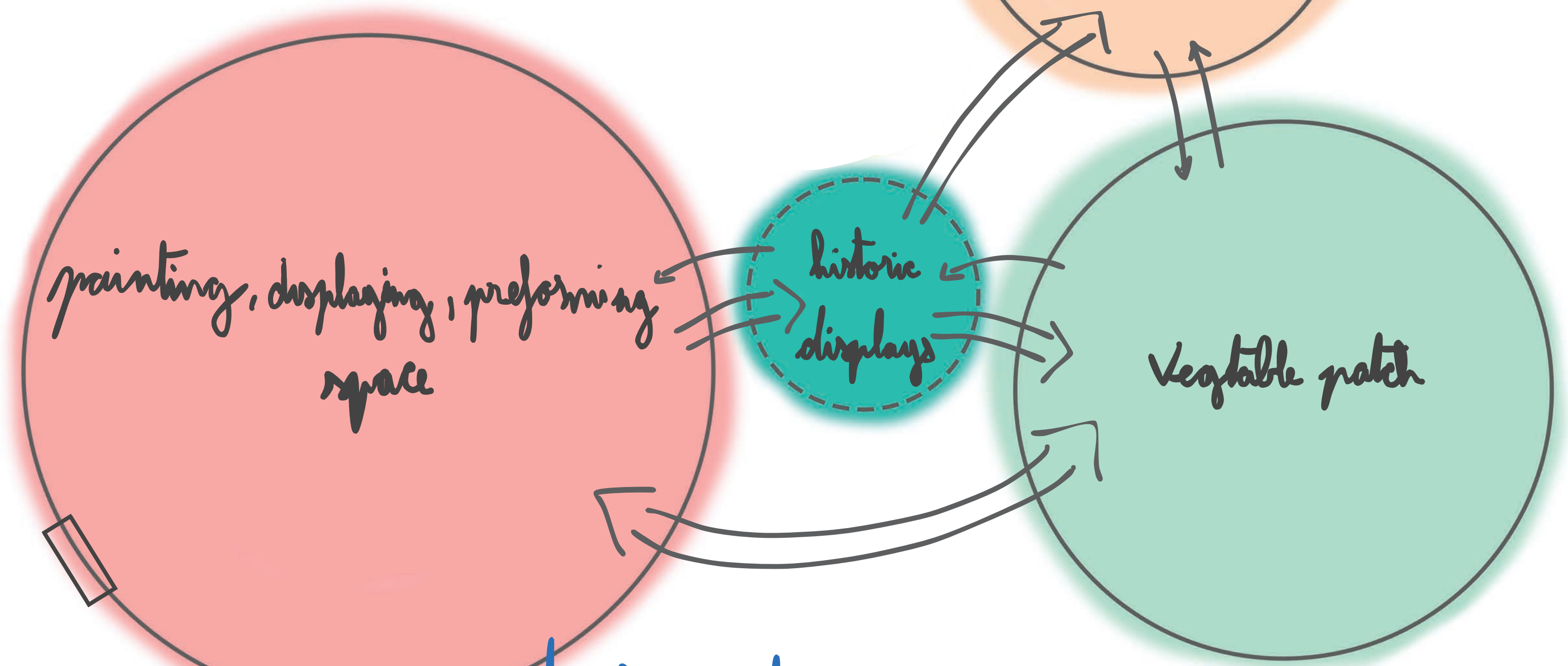
This project is a multi-layered, immersive experience that uses spatial design, sculpture, storytelling, and interactivity to explore the daily life, values, and legacy of the Franciscan Greyfriars in Canterbury. From a design standpoint, the project functions as a narrative environment, where every element layout, materials, textures, and scale is crafted to evoke emotional response, historical awareness, and personal reflection.



historic displays  
painting, displaying, performing space  
vegetable patch  
drawing space



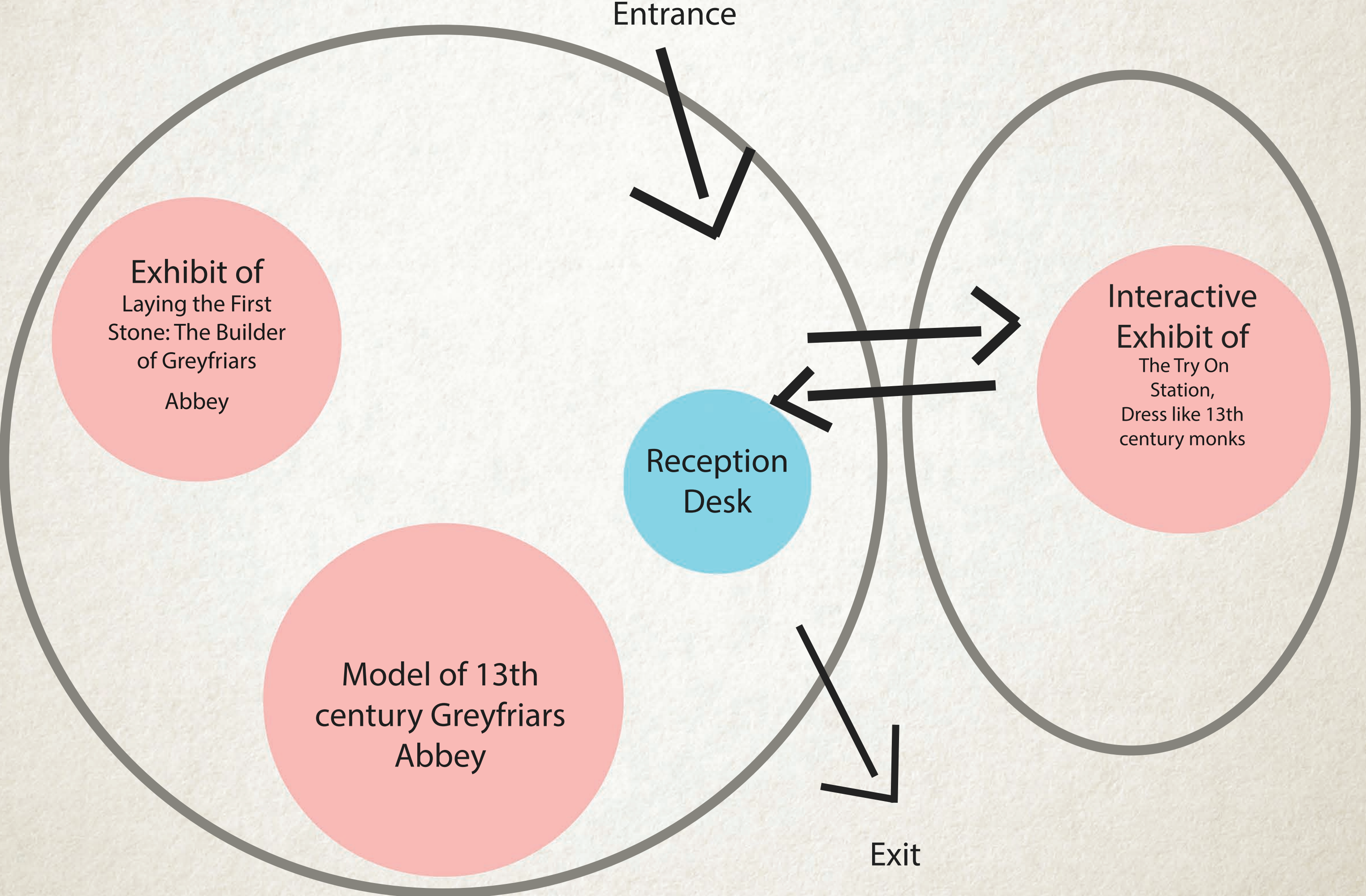
indoors   
entrance 



bubble diagram of the site

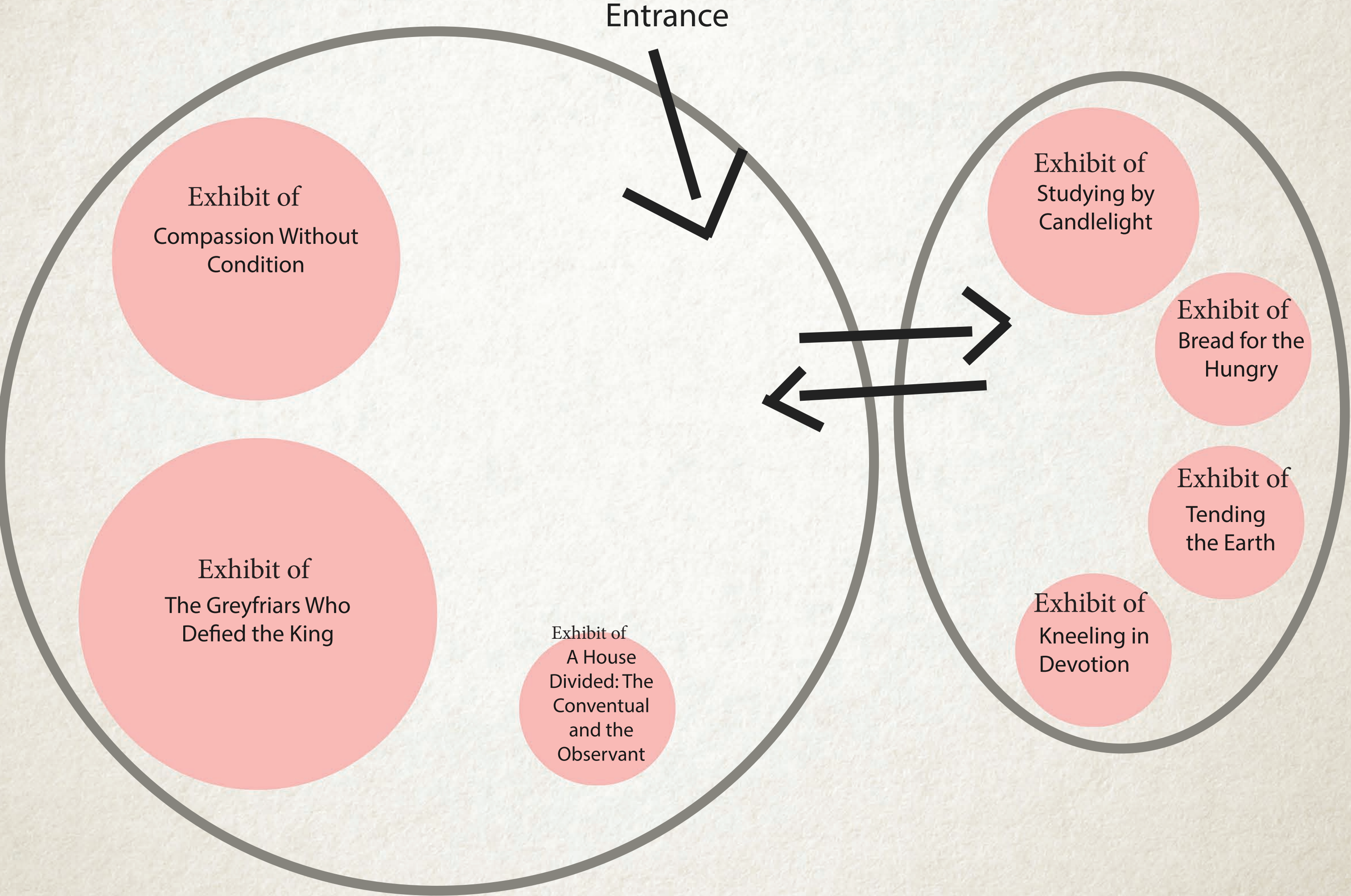


Bubble Diagram of the Ground Floor :





Bubble Diagram of the First Floor :

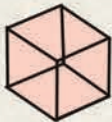




# Schematic Diagram

ground floor

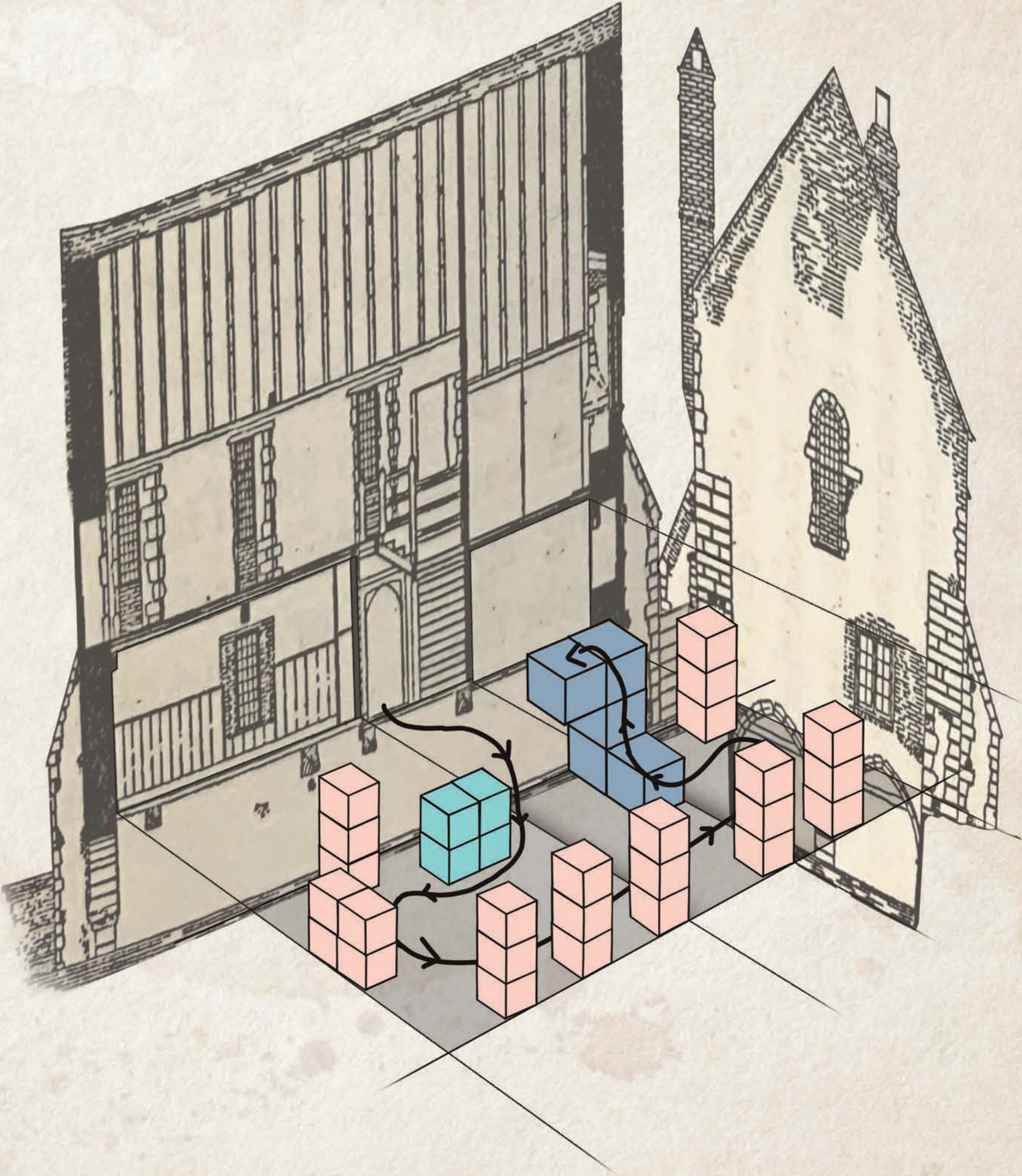
Historical representations displays



Stairs



Reception Desk





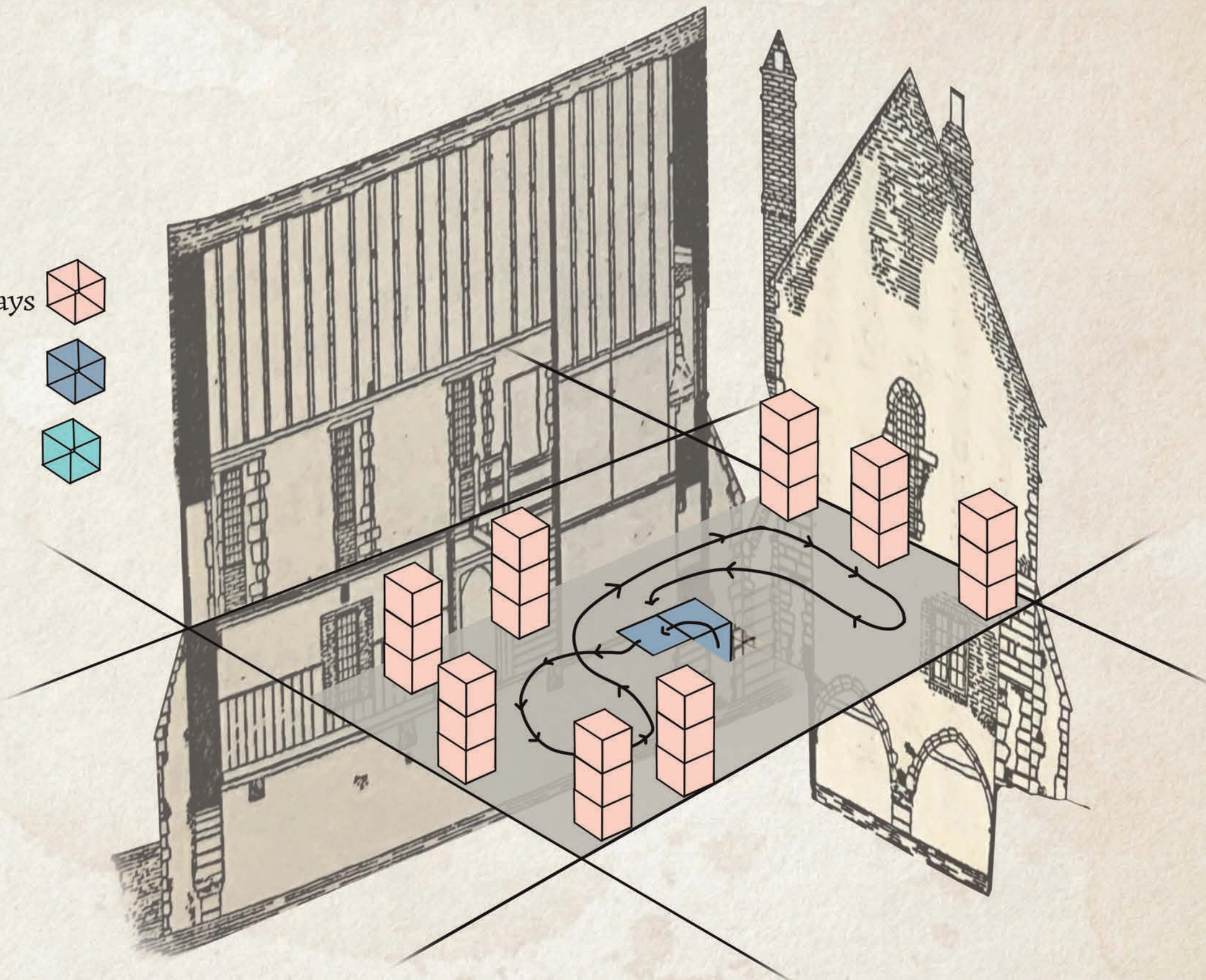
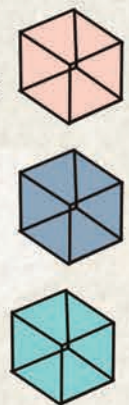
# Schematic Diagram

First floor

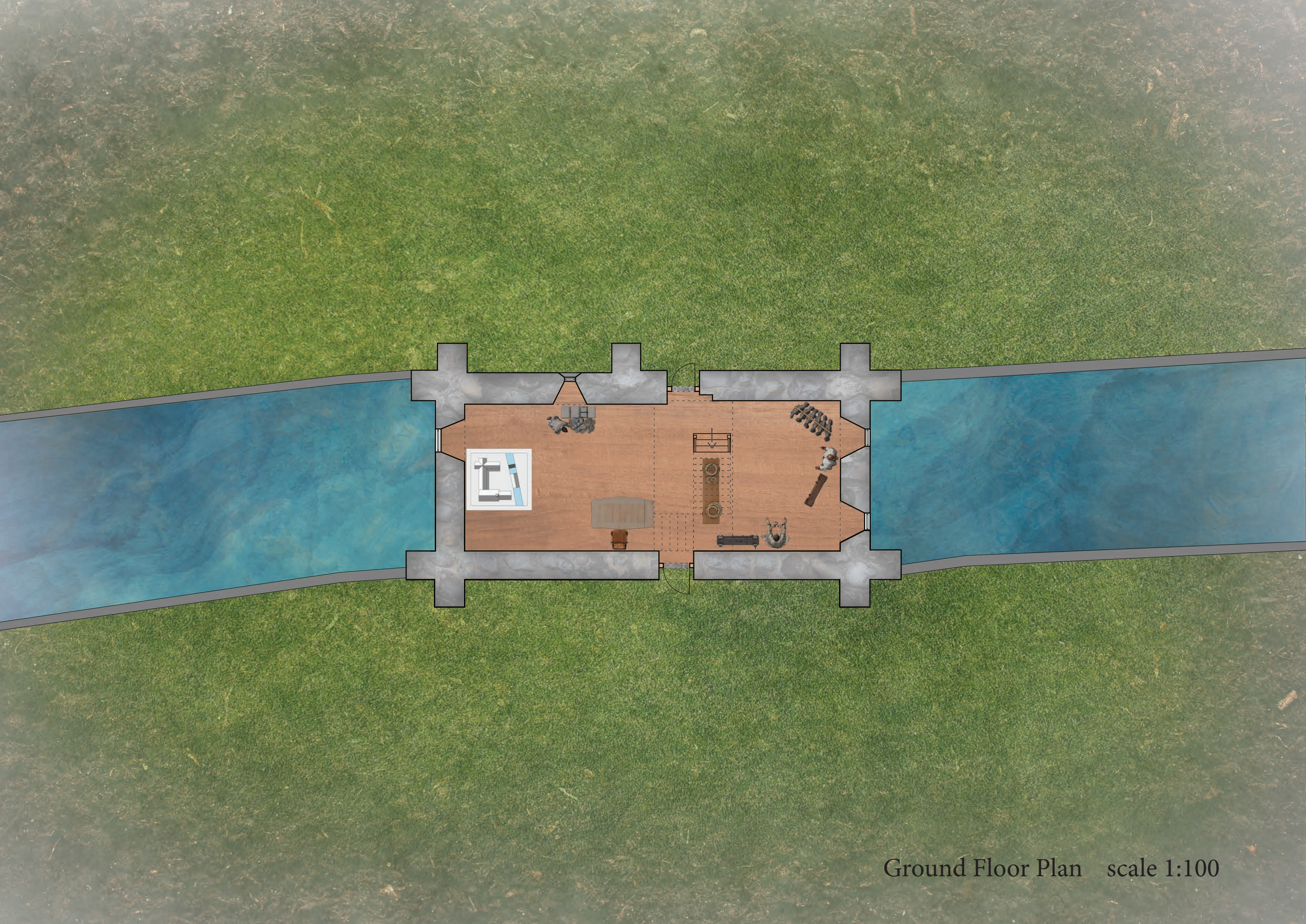
Historical representations displays

Stairs

Reception Desk







Ground Floor Plan scale 1:100



# Ground floor exhibits:



## Laying the First Stone: The Builder of Greyfriars Abbey

This life-size sculpture represents a poor 13th-century English villager, captured in the act of building the first wall of Greyfriars Abbey. Dressed in simple, worn clothing and kneeling beside a pile of flint stones, he symbolizes the many unnamed labourers whose hands helped shape the foundations of the friary.



## The Gaol Door: A Glimpse Into Confinement

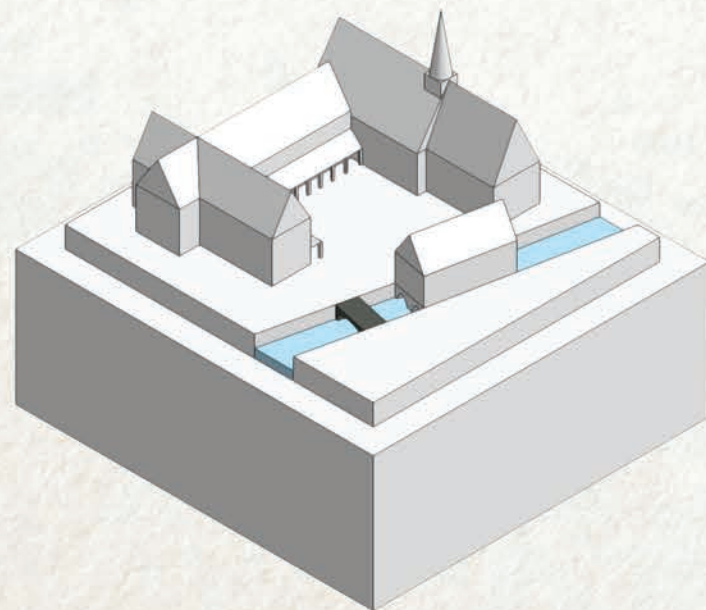
This original wooden door once belonged to a gaol (jail) set up in Greyfriars Chapel in the late 18th century, long after its time as a place of worship.

Carved into the wood are the names and dates of inmates, etched by prisoners during their confinement personal traces of lives once held behind this door.

Displayed alongside a life-sized sculpture of a seated prisoner, the exhibit invites visitors to reflect on the harsh conditions of imprisonment and the enduring Franciscan legacy of compassion for the forgotten and suffering.



The Reception desk



Crafted using historical research and architectural clues, the model gives visitors a chance to imagine how the monks lived, worked, and worshipped within the abbey walls.

At the Try On Station, visitors are invited to slip on replicas of the simple grey wool robes and rope belts worn by the Greyfriars.





# Ground floor, Try On Station: Step into a Monk's Shoes

The Try-On Station invites visitors to experience the daily life of a 13th-century Franciscan monk in an engaging, hands-on way. Visitors can slip on replicas of the Greyfriars' simple grey wool robes and rope belts designed to be worn comfortably over regular clothing.

Once dressed, visitors are encouraged to explore the museum while wearing the monk's robes. As visitors move through each exhibit, they gain a deeper understanding of the humble lifestyle, beliefs, and values of the Greyfriars. Wearing the robes helps visitors connect more personally with the history, turning observation into immersive experience.

Whether trying on the robes for fun, reflection, or learning, visitors get to step into the past and see the world through the eyes of the monks who once walked these paths.





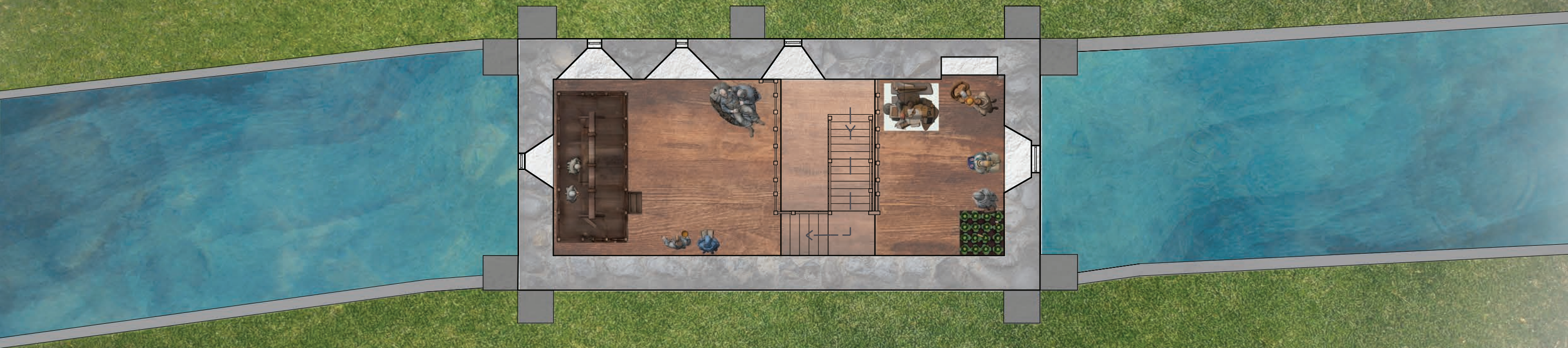


Ground Floor Plan scale 1:100

## Collage of the Ground Floor Experience:

This section explores the arrival of the Greyfriars monks in Canterbury and what the abbey may have looked like when it was first built. Visitors will learn about the monks' beliefs, their mission to serve the poor, and their dedication to living in poverty themselves. Experience their journey firsthand by dressing in the simple robes of a Franciscan monk.





First Floor Plan   scale 1:100



# First Floor Exhibits: Sacred Routine: The Everyday Acts of a 13th-Century Franciscan Monk



## Studying by Candlelight

This life-sized sculpture captures a 13th-century Franciscan monk immersed in study by the warm glow of candlelight. Surrounded by a heap of open books and scrolls, the monk sits at a wooden desk, his expression focused and contemplative. This exhibit highlights the Franciscan commitment to learning not for status, but for understanding Scripture and better serving others. Education was central to monastic life, and many friars became respected teachers and scholars in their communities.



## Compassion Without Condition

A Franciscan monk kneels beside a sick man lying on a straw bed, gently tending to him. The monk's face shows concern and calm, as he offers comfort with no expectation of reward. This powerful scene highlights the Franciscan commitment to care for the sick, especially those cast aside by society. Whether in homes, infirmaries, or on the roadside, monks like these lived out their faith through acts of mercy—embodying healing, dignity, and kindness.



## Bread for the Hungry

A Franciscan monk is shown offering a simple loaf of bread to a starving man clothed in rags. The monk's gentle posture and open hands reflect the order's vow of poverty and their mission to serve the most vulnerable. This life-sized statue captures a moment of compassion, reminding visitors that Greyfriars were not only men of prayer, but active caregivers in the streets feeding the hungry, clothing the poor, and walking beside the forgotten.



## Tending the Earth

In this exhibit, a monk stands in a small garden, holding a cane in one hand and a worn leather satchel filled with seeds in the other. He leans forward, checking a patch of young lettuce with quiet care. Gardening was a daily task for the friars, not only to sustain the community but also as an act of humble, hands-on devotion. This life-sized figure reminds us of the monks' deep respect for creation and the simplicity of labor rooted in purpose.



## Kneeling in Devotion

This statue shows a monk kneeling in prayer before a stained glass church window, his head bowed, hands folded, and his posture still with reverence. The colored light from the window falls gently across his robes, symbolizing spiritual reflection and divine presence. Prayer anchored every part of the Franciscan day before work, after meals, and into the quiet hours of the night. This exhibit invites visitors to pause, reflect, and imagine the deep spiritual rhythm that shaped the monks' lives.





# First Floor Exhibits: Silent Resistance: The Friars Who Refused the King



## The Greyfriars Who Defied the King

This exhibit features a full-scale wooden gallows, a stark and sobering symbol of the friars' fate. Two less-than-life-sized sculptures represent the two friars that were executed in the 16th century for openly opposing Henry's decision to break from the Catholic Church. Standing solemnly on the platform, their eyes fixed on the nooses before them.

Their small scale serves as a visual metaphor for how powerless they were in the face of royal authority yet their legacy looms large. With hands at their sides and heads bowed or raised in resolve, the figures invite visitors to reflect on the cost of conscience, and the courage it took to defend one's beliefs in the face of death.

This powerful installation honours not only their martyrdom but the enduring Franciscan commitment to truth, humility, and moral conviction even under threat of execution.

Model in plan



## A House Divided: The Conventual and the Observant

This exhibit presents a striking contrast between two branches of the Franciscan Order—the Conventuals and the Observants—brought to life through two life-sized sculptures standing side by side.

On the left stands a Conventual Franciscan monk, dressed in a black wool robe, thick and warm, reflecting his community's acceptance of modest comfort and practical living. He wears sturdy leather shoes and holds an open book, symbolizing the Conventuals' focus on teaching, scholarship, and active ministry within the stability of well-established friaries.

Beside him, an Observant Franciscan monk embodies a different path. His thin grey robe, worn and simple, hangs loosely over his frame, and he wears basic sandals. He holds a small wooden bowl, reaching out humbly in the act of begging. The Observants followed a stricter interpretation of St. Francis' Rule—living in radical poverty, owning nothing, and depending entirely on charity.

This powerful visual contrast illustrates a deep division in the Franciscan Order that came to a head during the reign of King Henry VIII. When the king declared himself the Supreme Head of the Church in England, many Observant friars refused to recognize his authority, remaining loyal to the Pope and the traditional Catholic Church. Their unyielding stance led to persecution, imprisonment, and even execution.

The Conventuals, by contrast, were more likely to comply with royal demands, valuing the survival of their communities. This exhibit invites visitors to consider the cost of faith, the meaning of obedience, and how two men in the same order could walk such different paths.



# Collage of the First Floor Experience

Highlighting the legacy of the Greyfriars and the rhythm of their everyday life.



adventurer



Begging for food – Living in poverty, the monks relied on alms to sustain themselves and others.

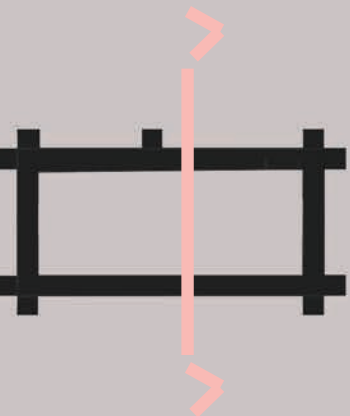


Helping the poor – Offering aid, comfort, and compassion to those in need.



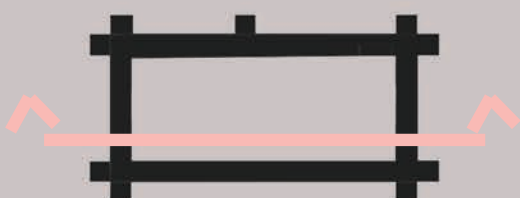
Praying for others – Devoting their spiritual lives to prayer on behalf of the sick, the poor, and the entire community.





Section A, Greyfriars Chapel scale 1:100 scale





Section B, Greyfriars Chapel 1:100 scale