



Denny Abbey

Teacher's Guide



How to use this guide:

This guide suggests a route for your self-led tour around the Abbey, the Nuns' Refectory and Walnut Tree Cottage. It suggests key questions you might want to ask the group and provides answers you might need.

- Any questions can be left out, if time is scarce!
- The questions in **green** are the key suggested questions for the group.
- The bullet points tell you the answers you might need.
- *Any text in italics is a suggested extra question for the children to think about.*

ABBNEY TIMELINE:

1159: Benedictine Monks built a church and a monastery on-site, called Denny Priory.

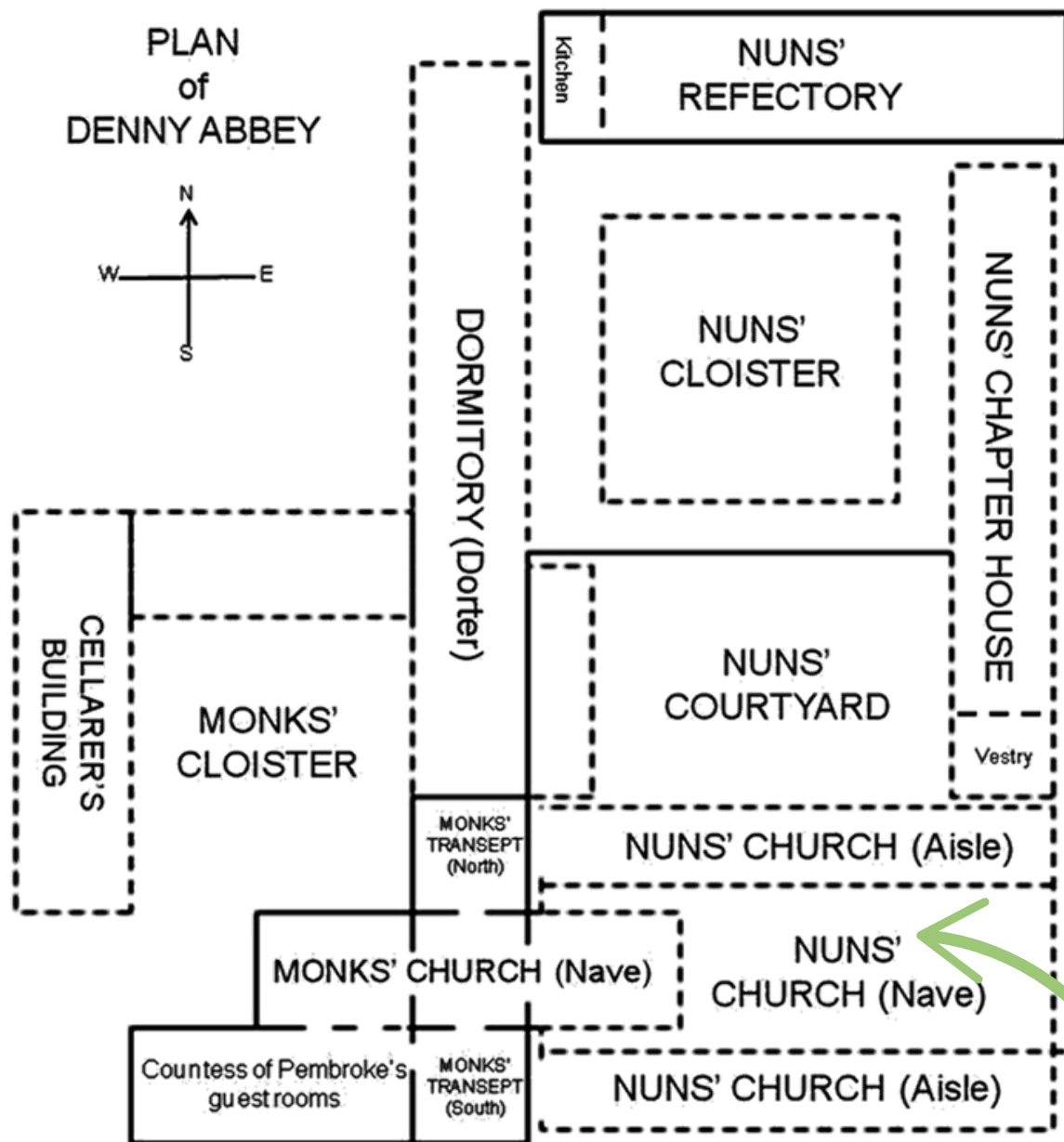
1170: Denny Priory was transferred to the Knights Templar and used as a hospital for old and sick members of the order.

1327: The Countess of Pembroke is given the abbey. She turns the abbey church into her lodgings and has a new church built for the Poor Clare Nuns who moved from Waterbeach Abbey.

1536: The dissolution of the monasteries. The abbey is taken over by the crown. The abbess' lodge was retained as a farmhouse and the nave demolished.

Map and start point:

The areas marked with dashed lines are suggested locations of buildings which were destroyed.

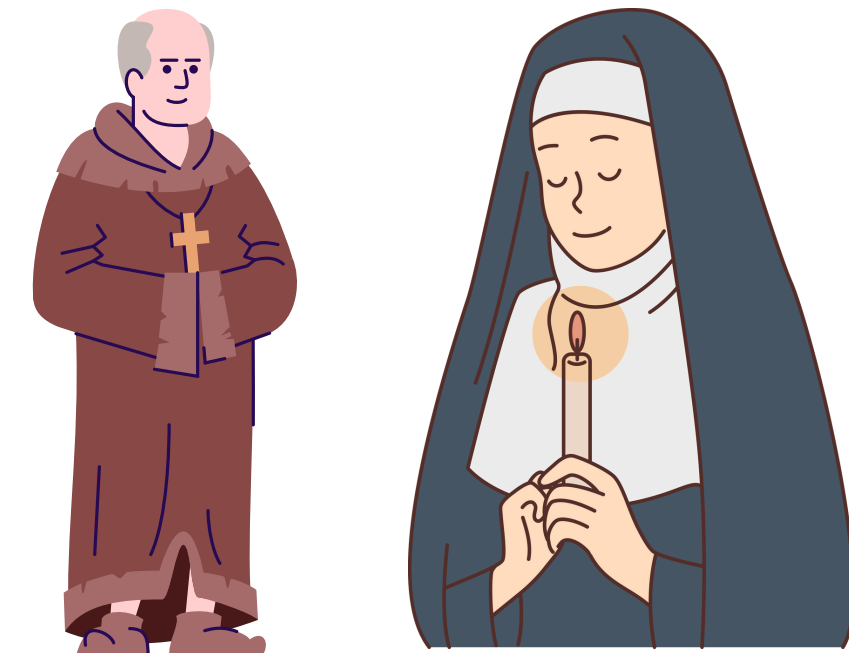


We recommend you start **here**.
(nearest Walnut Tree Cottage)

What does it mean to be a monk/nun?

What do you think an abbey is? Who lives there? Why do they live there?

- An abbey is a place where monks or nuns lived.
- The nuns or monks that once lived at Denny Abbey were people who wanted to dedicate their lives to God. They promised to help others and live without luxury.



Where did they pray?

Look down at the ground. What do you think the lines in the ground are?

- The thicker outline shows the end of the first church.
- The thinner lines show the inner wall of the church of the Poor Clares, the nuns that lived here.

Why do you think the nuns would need a big church?

- The nuns who lived here had to pray 7 times a day.
- Their first prayer was at 2am!



Would you like to wake up that early?

Have you ever been in a church? What was it like?

**Walk around the abbey to the West Front.
(Near the bookshop)**

Why are there two front doors?

Look at the big archway in front of you. What do you think that was used for?

- The large, decorated archway was the front door for the Knights Templars, who lived in Denny Abbey in the 1200s.
- The smaller, less fancy door was added much later when the building was used as a farm house.
- *Which door do you prefer, the old one, or the new one nearby?*



Go inside the abbey through the small door.

What was it like inside?

Walk to the area with the display cases. Look up. What do you think the wooden beams were for?

- They are the supports for the second floor which was added by the Countess of Pembroke. The room directly above us was used as a ballroom at one point.

- *Would you like to attend a party here?*



If you are able to go upstairs - please do so and walk all the way through to the room in front of you.

Can you see anything carved out of stone in here?

- There is a lion head which was added in the 1970s by a builder!
- If you look up there are Tudor roses carved into the walls as this room was added in the Tudor period.

Now leave the abbey, turning left as you exit to go through the archway in the wall.

Where did the nuns eat?

Where do you think the nuns would have eaten their food?

- The refectory was used by the nuns to eat. It was connected to the abbey by a cloister and corridors.

What do you think they might have eaten here?

- The nuns would eat very well. All of their vegetables were grown in the fields around and they had sheep, cows and fishponds.
- *Do you think you would have liked to eat here then?*

Overall, do you think you would have wanted to live here? Why/why not?

