

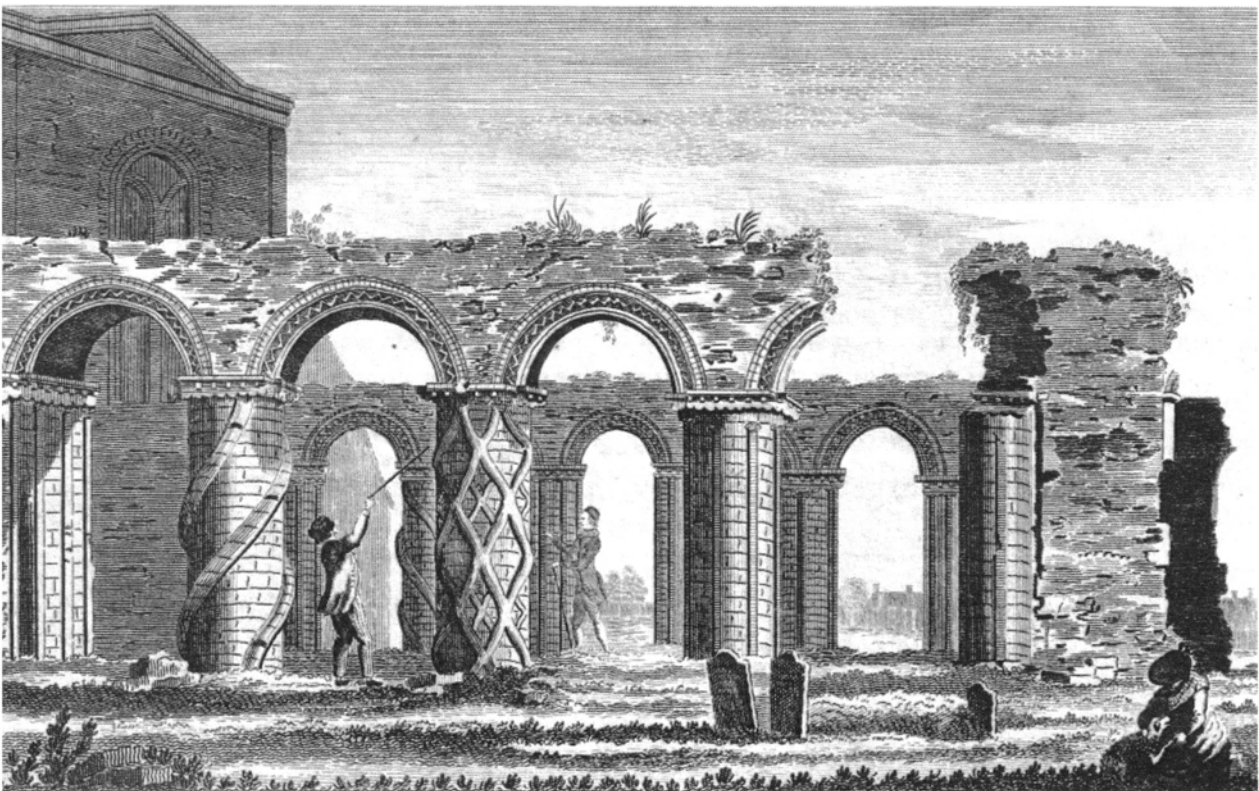
## JOURNEY TO THE EDGE

On the 6th of August 1787, at half past five in the morning, two young men set out from Ipswich to walk to Orford for a week's holiday, studying plants and birds. They were William Kirby, the grandson of John Kirby the topographer, and Charles Sutton, later a Doctor of Divinity. John was aged 18 and Charles about the same. From Woodbridge they were accompanied, on horseback, by the Revd Peter Lathbury, who had a house in Orford and was curate of Butley.

It was Charles who wrote the account of their observations and experiences, entitled in Latin *Iter Litorale* (Journey to the Edge) and subtitled '*a week's botanical excursion to the sea-coast at Orford*'. The manuscript was discovered amongst the Sutton family's papers and in 1959 was reproduced in the *Transactions of the Suffolk Naturalists' Society* in an article by Robert Gatherne-Hardy<sup>1</sup>. That article naturally concentrated on the record of the plants observed by the two travellers. For us, the greatest interest of the account of the two young men's journey lies in the information it gives us about the places they visited and the people they met.

### En route to Orford

Once past Woodbridge they found the countryside so little inhabited that they hardly met a human face. However, at one of the two thatched cottages at Sprat Street a farmer, named Sherard, treated them to some of his home-brewed ale. At Butley Oyster, where they hoped to dine, the landlady was able to supply only a meagre meal and the curate had to scrounge some beans, to augment it, from one of his parishioners, Mrs Bennington of Neutral Farm! They arrived at Orford before seven in the evening after a walk of 20 miles.



A View of the Ruins of Orford Chancel, Suffolk. Engraving from a drawing by Isaac Johnson, 1788. A scene, almost exactly contemporary with the journey of Kirby and Sutton, showing two young men taking a keen interest in the architecture of the chancel ruins. *Orford Museum*