



The palaeontologist Gideon Mantell, a Lewes resident, wrote about the burial pit at Lewes Priory shortly after its discovery.

“A very remarkable discovery was made near the eastern termination of the foundations by the railway excavators. At the distance of eighteen feet below the surface they cut through a pit or well, eighteen feet thick and ten feet in diameter, which was completely full of human bones; the skeletons of bodies that had evidently been interred in a promiscuous heap.

This mass of remains, when first exposed, emitted so nauseous an exhalation that several of the men employed were ill from its effects. It has been suggested, with much probability, that these bones are the relics of persons who fell in the Battle of Lewes in 1264, in the streets and immediate vicinity of the town, and which were gathered together and afforded Christian burial within the precincts of the Priory, by the monks of St Pancras.”

Gideon Mantell

A day's ramble in and about the ancient town of Lewes (1846)