

*Bridlington
Priory Church*

Joseph B Braithwaite

THE PRIORY CHURCH, BRIDLINGTON.

The following information, concerning the once powerful and flourishing Augustinian Priory of St. Mary of Bridlington, has been gathered together and put into consecutive and readable form, so as to give to the casual visitor a fairly accurate account of this famous community and beautiful Cathedral Church.

It is mainly gathered from the work, "North and East Riding", now a very old book, Canon Solloway, vicar of Selby Abbey, Yorkshire, George A. Shore, Esq., Richmond Hill, Surrey, and W. Barnes Steveni, Esq., Bridlington.

The whole is dedicated to the Augustinian Society, Bridlington, founded for the purpose of gathering together and preserving whatever is of antiquarian interest and value in connection with the Priory and district; and under whose united and indefatigable work so many of the scattered fragments of this once noble pile that have been covered up for so many years are now being collected together and stored up against the day of restoration. The foundations of the domestic quarters have also been excavated and charted, so that a fairly accurate knowledge of the vast extent of the Monastery has now been obtained.

JOSEPH B. BRAITHWAITE,

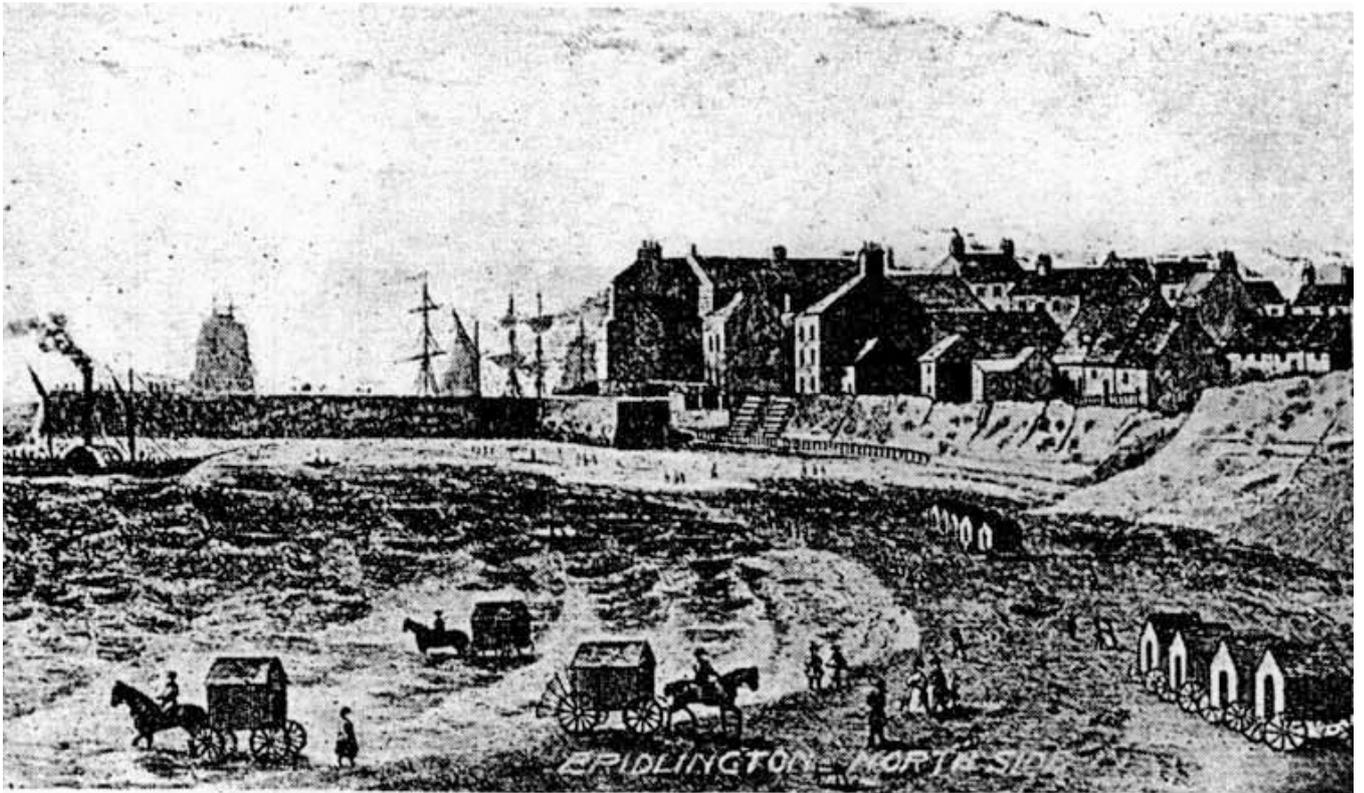
Member of the Augustinian Society,

BRIDLINGTON

1923

THE PRIORY CHURCH, BRIDLINGTON.

BRIDLINGTON, or Burlington, is the head of a Parish of eight Townships, and of a large Union, under the New Poor Law. It is one of the Polling Places at the Election of the Parliamentary Representatives of the East Riding of Yorkshire, and is pleasantly situated on a gentle acclivity, a little over a mile from the shores of the North Sea. The old portion of the town having principally grown up around the Monastery, while the new, commonly called the Quay, has extended North and South along the Cliff fronts, and has now developed into a large and fashionable Watering Place.



BRIDLINGTON. NORTH SIDE IN 1800.

It formerly constituted a township of 3,060 acres of land, which belonged to various freeholders, but has now become considerably enlarged, and from having a population of 3,130, in 1801, it has risen to 21,000 in the year 1922. It is situated 31 miles N. by E. of Hull, 40 miles E.N.E. of York, 18 miles S.E. by S. of Scarborough, and 208 miles N. of London; being in 54 deg. 13 min. North latitude and 16 minutes West longitude. It is in the recess of the beautiful bay to which it gives its name, the Northern part of which is formed by the rocky cliffs which here jut out into the sea more than four miles, and form the lofty promontory of Flamborough Head—the Eastern termination of the lofty chalk hills called the Wolds, which shelter the town on the North and West.

The antiquity of Burlington is unknown, but it was certainly occupied by the Saxons, and is supposed to have had a Roman station in its immediate vicinity, for there are traces of a Roman road across the Wolds, in the direction of Rudstone and Sledmere. The Manor was given by William the Conqueror, with many other possessions to Earl Morcar, but on his attainder in 1072, it was given to

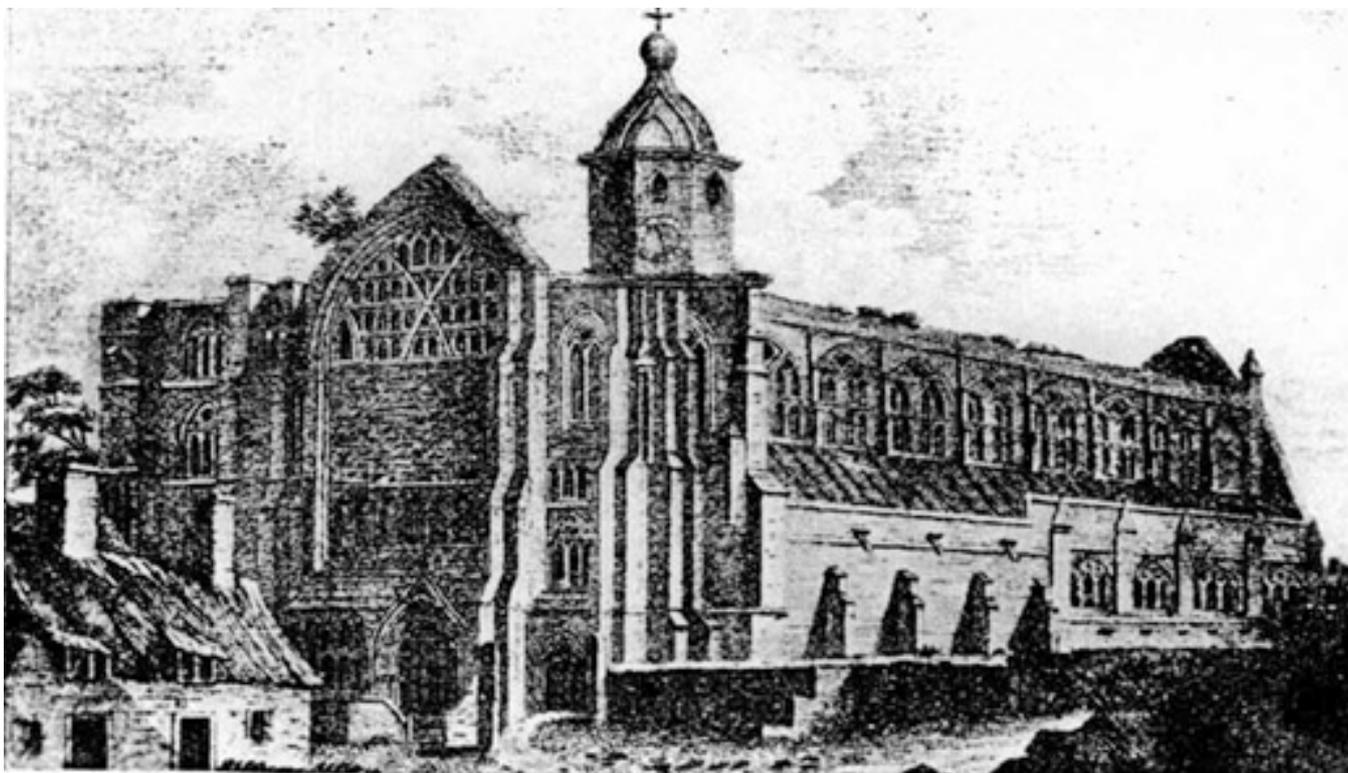
Gilbert de Gant, or Gaunt, and at the Domesday survey, it is described as having a church and four burgesses, paying rent for 13 carucates of land.

Walter de Gant, the son of Gilbert, greatly improved the town, and founded in it a magnificent Priory, early in the reign of Henry I, for Canons regular of the Order of St. Augustine, dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

This Priory, which stood at the East end of the town, commanded a fine sea prospect, but was, according to Burton, enclosed with walls and houses, built of stone and lime, in 1388, in order to fortify it from the enemy's ships, which frequently entered the harbour. It was not, however, merely against their enemies, but also against their friends, that the canons found it necessary to seek protection, for, under the Pontificate of Pope Innocent III, they complained "that the rich deacon of Richmond, going to one of their churches, had travelled with 97 horses, 21 dogs, and 3 hawks—tribus avibus venatoriis, whereby he consumed more of their provisions in one hour than would have maintained their house for a long time;" on which His Holiness forbade that ecclesiastics should, for the time to come, travel with a greater retinue than is allowed by the Statutes of the Council of Lateran, which limit the train of an Archbishop to 50 horses, a Bishop to 30, a Legate to 25, and an Archdeacon to 7.

The Priory continued to flourish through a succession of ages, but in the time of Henry VIII, it shared the fate of other religious houses, and William Wode, the last Prior, was executed at Tyburn, for high treason, in the year 1537, on a charge of having engaged in the rebellion in the North and East of Yorkshire, which succeeded the Pilgrimage of Grace, and aimed at the same object.

At the period of the dissolution, this Monastery was endowed with rents of the value, according to Dugdale, of £547 6s. 1d., and according to Speed, of £682 13s. 9d. per annum. The Church of the Priory appears, from the extent of its nave, now the Parish Church, to have been once a very noble structure. The West end displays a considerable degree of Gothic magnificence, and originally had two towers, of which only one is at present fully restored and completed. The East end, the transepts, and the principal tower, are also entirely destroyed; and of the walls and fortifications which once enclosed the Priory, nothing now remains but an arched gateway, known as the Bayle Gate, at the distance of about half a furlong from



THE PRIORY CHURCH IN 1763

the West end of the Church. Above this arch is a large room now used for various purposes by some of the public bodies. Beneath are some gloomy cells, called the Kitcote, which have served as places of confinement for petty delinquents.

At the entrance to the North aisle will be found examples of the richly decorated front of the ancient cloisters. They have been reconstructed from the gathered fragments that were once scattered throughout the district, and they give a very striking example of this once most beautiful portion of the Priory.

This Monastery has been the residence of several persons distinguished in their day and generation; amongst these may be reckoned Robert the Scribe, who flourished about the year 1180, and who possessed not only great dexterity in writing, at a time when that art was a rare accomplishment, but also composed and left several books to posterity. William of Newburgh, the celebrated Monkish historian, was a native of Bridlington; as also was John de Bridlington, the saint whose shrine was considered a place of miracles. Sir George Ripley, the distinguished alchemist, who spent twenty years in searching for that grand desideratum of an ignorant and credulous age, the philosopher's stone, was a canon here.

Bridlington Parish Church (St. Mary), as has just been seen comprises only the nave of the original structure, but yet impresses one with a sense of the vastness and grandeur of the former edifice. The present Church contains about one-third of the original structure, and is in a state of thorough repair, with accommodation for 2,000 persons. The West front displays a centre flanked by two towers, the whole now thoroughly restored, but which, in the year 1800, rose no higher than the roof, and the one at the South-West angle was surmounted by a small octagonal brick turret, and contained three bells, procured in 1763, the tenor weighing 1,199 lbs.

The great Western door is richly ornamented, but much of its exquisite foliage is defaced. The porch on the North side shows a fully restored specimen of the elegant architecture of the 14th century. The windows are all beautiful specimens of the pointed style, but the East end having been compiled from the ruins of the monastery, exhibits no clear order of architecture, and is supported by two enormous buttresses. All parts of the fabric are now thoroughly restored; and its interior dimensions are, length 188 ft., breadth 66 ft., and height of the nave 69 ft. Its great West window is 50 ft. high and 27 ft. broad. The Burial Ground was formerly on the North and North-West side of the Church, but it was enlarged by the purchase of land on the South and East sides of the Church in 1809, which was consecrated in 1813. In preparing this land for sepulchral purposes, a long range of foundations and other remains of the priory were dug up. Stone coffins and other antique relics have at various periods been dug up in the vicinity of the church.

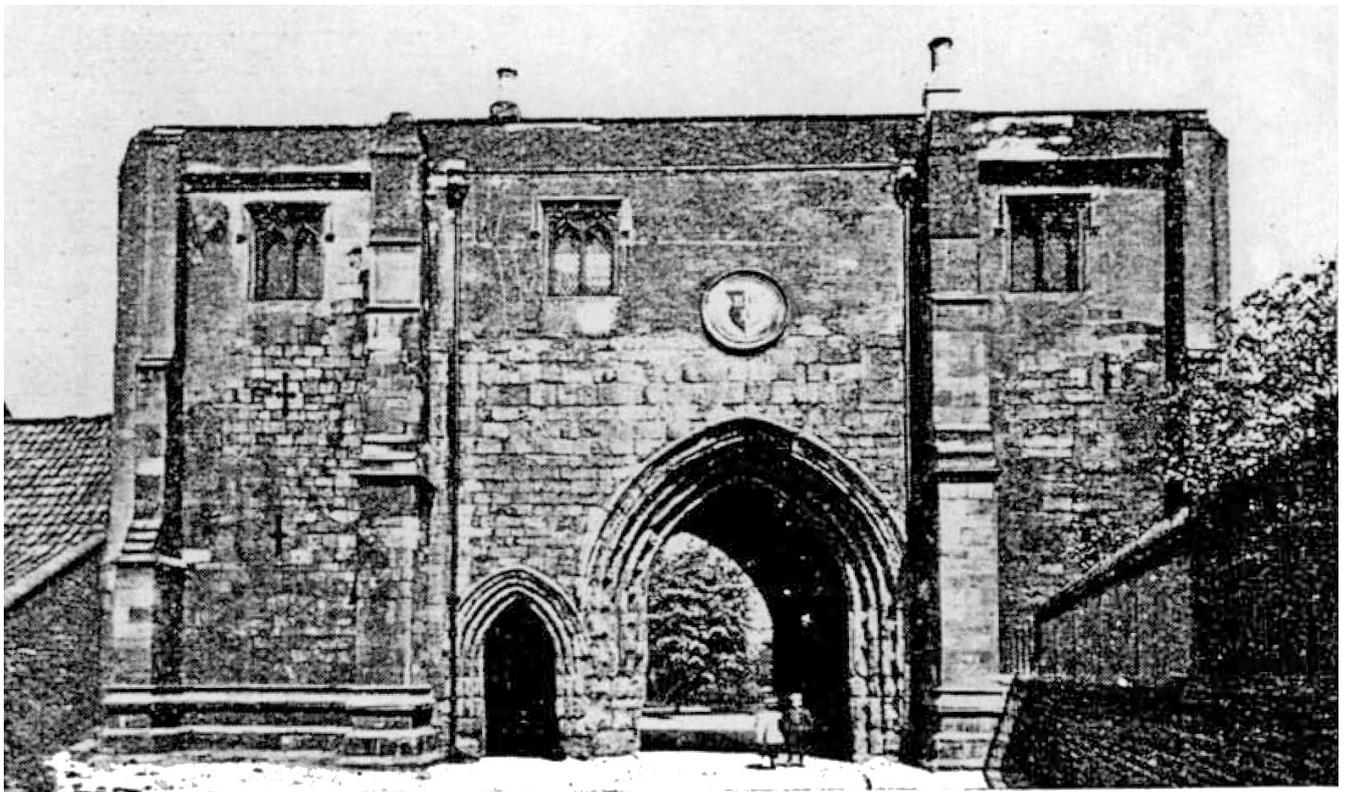
At the Dissolution, the Priory and Manor of Bridlington were vested in the Crown, together with the impropriate rectory. The latter was afterwards granted to various persons, and in the 10th of James I, was sold to Sir Matthew Boynton, who sold it to Henry Fairfax, whose heiress carried it in marriage to the Earl of Buchan. In 1759, it was purchased by James Hebblethwaite, Esq., in whose family it remained for a considerable time. The advowson was vested with the Archbishop, but was transferred in 1747 to the Rev. Matthew Buck and his heirs, in consideration of a donation of £200 for the augmentation of the living—a perpetual curacy—and then valued at £143, being augmented with £400 of Q. A. B., in 1747 and 1769, and with £2,600 in Parliamentary grants in 1812 and 1817. The present income is returned in Crockford at £450 per annum, which at the present time, is sadly inadequate for so important a living. The present patrons are the Trustees of the late Rev. Charles Simeon, of Cambridge. The Manor was granted in the 8th of Elizabeth to 12 of the inhabitants, but they failing to pay the fee-farm rent, it was granted, in 1590, to John Stanhope, Esq. In 1624, it was conferred on Sir John Ramsey, Earl of Holderness, and was purchased by his successor, in 1633, for £3,260, on behalf of the freeholders and tenants, for whose benefit it was vested in 13 lord-tenants, to whom 12 assistants were added in 1636. A chief lord tenant being elected annually, in whose name the Manorial Courts are held on February 2nd.

Much of the land possessed being purely common lands, it was enclosed in 1768. In 1664, Richard Boyle, second Earl of Cork, in Ireland, was created Earl of Burlington, but the third Earl died without male issue in 1735, when the title became extinct, but his Yorkshire estates were carried in marriage by his daughter to the Cavendish family, and are now mostly held by the Duke of Devonshire, whose relative and heir, George Augustus Henry Cavendish, was created Earl of Burlington in 1831.

The Early English Choir of nine bays, the transepts, sacristy, treasury, a decagonal chapter house and cloisters, have all entirely disappeared.

The restoration of the church was begun in 1846 and continued to 1857, under the direction of the late Edmund Sharpe, Esq., M.A., and E. G. Paley, Esq., Architects, when the roof was raised and partially renewed, the West window thoroughly repaired and filled with the existing glass, and the interior cleaned and renovated, and the whole area of the nave reseated.

In 1875 a handsome reredos of Caen stone was erected, and the restoration of the entire West front was begun in the summer of 1876, under the direction of the late Sir G. Gilbert Scott, R.A., the North porch, an Early English work with graceful details, and the North-West Tower, also Early English with a decorated upper storey, being restored by the late Rev. Y. G. Lloyd-Greame, M.A., at a cost of £3,000; this tower has a plain flat-topped parapet, supported on machicolations between the buttresses and surrounded with an arcading.



THE OLD BAYLE GATE.

The South-West tower, which has been almost entirely rebuilt, is an elegant structure in the Perpendicular style with double buttresses at the angles, gabled and crocketed, and rising into tall octagonal spired pinnacles, enriched with crocketed gablets and finished with vanes; the upper stage is panelled and lighted by large ogee windows; the parapet is embattled and relieved by four spirelets; the tower contains a clock with two dials, and also a peal of eight bells, cast by Messrs. Taylor of Loughborough, and given in 1902 by W. B. Jameson, Esq. The total cost of this restoration was £21,703.

The old organ was presented in 1834 by Robert Lowry, Esq., of Bridlington, but was considerably altered and enlarged, and in 1892 a new organ was placed at a cost of £1,000, subscribed by the parishioners, which has also been much improved, until it is now one of the finest in the kingdom.

In 1900 new stalls of carved oak, executed by Messrs. Elwell & Son, of Beverley, were erected in the choir for the use of the Clergy.

The Priory seems to have been very much the same in architecture as Beverley Minster. Of the domestic buildings of the Priory there are now no remains, with the exception of portions of some columns of a vaulted chamber beneath the Prior's lodge, which adjoined the church on the South-West. The foundations of the South transept have been traced and outlined in stone; the cloisters extended South of the nave, and had the dormitory on the East and the refectory on the South side.

It appears that Filey Parish Church was built by the monks of the Augustinian Priory of Bridlington, and was called a cell by them. Scarborough Parish Church was also under the authority of the Priory at Bridlington, and preachers were sent to carry on the regular services of the church there, and also some famous preachers were continually sent forth to preach in the churches of the surrounding district. We read of Langtoft, Thwing, Bempton, and many other places being constantly visited by them. The Priory was noted for its learning and distinguished preachers for many generations, and one cannot help but deplore the short-sighted and foolish conduct that accomplished the destruction of the glorious piles that stood for so much that was good amongst the people of their time.

It was the reform of the individual that was wanted, a revival of the great spiritual aims that prompted the building of these glorious witnesses to man's belief in God, not wholesale destruction, that should have animated the reformers in the time of Henry VIII. It is almost a wonder that so many of our beautiful cathedrals were spared to be the glory of our generation and of those which are to come, especially when they were associated with the great religious orders of his reign.

Let us be thankful for that which remains, and remember that after all, it may have been in accordance with the Divine Plan that these great religious orders should have spread themselves over the face of our country, and so, have kept alive art and learning, and the preaching of the gospel in an ignorant and superstitious age.

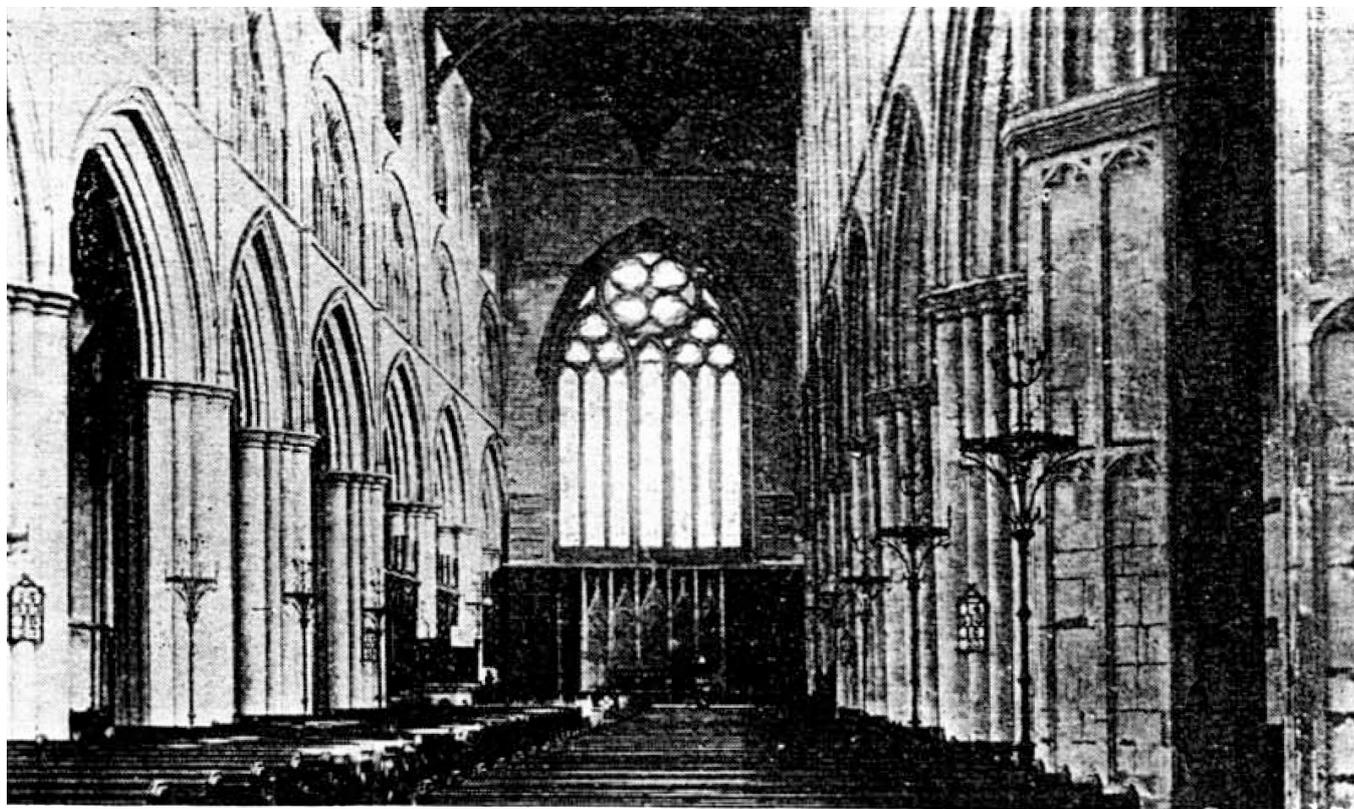
These old stones speak to us of devotion and willing service; every one a free-will offering to Almighty God, and wrought by skilful craftsmen. Who shall say that these monks of old did not fulfil a place intended for them in God's plan for the good of the world? Who else could have reared such magnificent witness to their faith? Such stately buildings that were to point mankind to worship and service down the ages.

The scattered stones of the old Priory are to be found in many of the yards branching off from the North Back Lane, the old walls in various parts of the old town, and even built into the front walls facing High Street and Market Place. Many foundations of the older property in Bridlington are entirely composed of the ruins of the ancient Priory. Much old stone is plainly visible in the house fronts along Cemetery Road, the walls of the old farm buildings in the High Green, and also in the walls of the old workshops along the North side of the town. Field House is also very rich in old stones from the Priory.

Some of the foundations of the various buildings extending southwards were exposed about forty years ago, in the gardens at the back of the terrace in the Priory Green, and many beautifully carved specimens were taken out and deposited in the Church. A sacred ewer for containing holy water was found, and rested in the Nursery Gardens near the Priory Church, but disappeared a short time ago. One of the ancient fonts was also found, but has been split up by exposure to the weather.

A vault was also found some ten feet from the door of the second house, quite in the midst of a flower bed, and it was said at the time to have been quite an interesting find, also another vault exists close

to the boundary wall on the East of the garden, and about on a line with the one in front of the house. Many years ago something very much like one of the Almoner's chests was found in these gardens, which contained some valuable coins, it is said, and probably other valuables belonging to the Priory at the time of the demolition. This chest might have been one that was used for storing some part of the vast income of the Priory in its most prosperous times, and probably some strong and secret vault still exists hereabouts for containing all the income of the Monastery, and access to which would only be known to the Prior and his Chief Almoner. The Monastery having often to be put into a state of defence to repel the raids of Sea Rovers, such secret hiding places would almost be a necessity.



THE PRIORY CHURCH. EAST

Another very interesting matter that has come down to us like a tradition is the reputed tunnel across the Green from the old Bayle Gate to the South-West corner of the Priory. Many years ago, some fifty or sixty, probably, an old labourer digging some nine feet North-East of the staircase entrance, found a groined cellar, with a staging round for casks, which he called a wine cellar, but I have always thought that as this cellar was at the top of Applegarth Lane it was more probably the cider cellar, because from this roadway you would enter into the great apple orchard, and also near to the Bayle Gate would be placed the cider press for brewing the famous cider of the Order. Then running more Eastward was another vault, not far from the front of the old Bull and Sun Inn, and as a connecting tunnel was found leading down to the vault opposite the Bayle Gate, and which seemed to have access to the same, it is thought that a secret tunnelled way gave the Prior an opportunity of passing unobserved to the various storing cellars, and also the opportunity of coming out on to the top of the Old Bayle Gate and seeing at close quarters something of the life that was going on around him.

On demolishing the old houses along Back Street, opposite the Bayle Gate, to make way for the Church Green Improvement Scheme, in May, 1915, two splendid cellars with vaulted roofs, and having a broad passage between them, were discovered under the house formerly occupied by the late Misses Bielby. They were altogether of too elaborate and well-built a nature to have belonged to the kind of property over them.

As the Guest House of the ancient Priory was situated exactly on the piece of ground covered by these houses, it is most likely that these cellars were built by the Augustinians for the storage of the food and wines used in dispensing the hospitality for which the Order was so famous. They were much damaged, and altogether filled up with the rubbish from the dismantling of the surrounding property.

An interesting find of treasure-trove was made in the floor of one of these old houses which stood near to the top of St. John Street, consisting of 1 George II Golden Guinea, 33 George III Half-Guineas, 27 George III Five-shilling Pieces, 3 Charles II Five-shilling Pieces, 1 Louis XV Five-shilling Piece, 2 William III Five-shilling Pieces, 8 Charles II Half-crowns, 15 William III Half-crowns, 1 George II Half-crown, 1 William III Shilling Piece, 2 Queen Anne Shilling Pieces, 5 George I Shilling Pieces, 11 George II Shilling Pieces, 2 William III Sixpences, and 9 George II Sixpences. They were in a good state of preservation, and were mostly contained in some old earthenware, and were torn up by the pick of one of the labourers when clearing the foundations in preparation for widening the street leading to the old Priory.



THE PRIORY CHURCH. WEST.

The usual inquest was held upon them, and they were claimed by the Authorities in London. Specimens having been purchased back, they are now on view in the Museum over the Old Bayle Gate.

Mr. George A. Shore, Richmond Hill, Surrey, writing to the Yorkshire Post in 1910, on Yorkshire Monasteries, says:—Since my last note I have come across, amongst my cuttings, an account of Bridlington Priory which, though very much abridged, may possibly interest others.

In its palmy days the famous foundations were safely shut in by a strong and high wall, and was, to vary Scott's reference to Durham, half Church of God, half fortress against the North Sea pirates. That wall is now levelled, but the great gatehouse, the Bayle Gate, still stands. In the gatehouse are preserved documents showing charges for the costs incidental to the civil wars, and on more commonplace occasions when men and women were, for their sins, whipped round the town, and for the liquor consumed on similarly joyous occasions when men and women were placed in the stocks, and when heavy charges were levied for the repairs to same, and more moderate payments for the repairs of the cross, and similar entries gave glimpses of life in Bridlington under the Stuarts.

At the time of the Domesday Survey in 1086, a church already existed, and it was in the church, in the earlier half of the reign of Henry I, that Walter, son of Gilbert de Gant, founded a Priory of Augustinian Canons, not earlier than the year 1119, in which year Pope Calixtus II, who confirmed the foundation, came to the papal throne, nor later than 1120, in which year one of the witnesses of the foundation deed died.

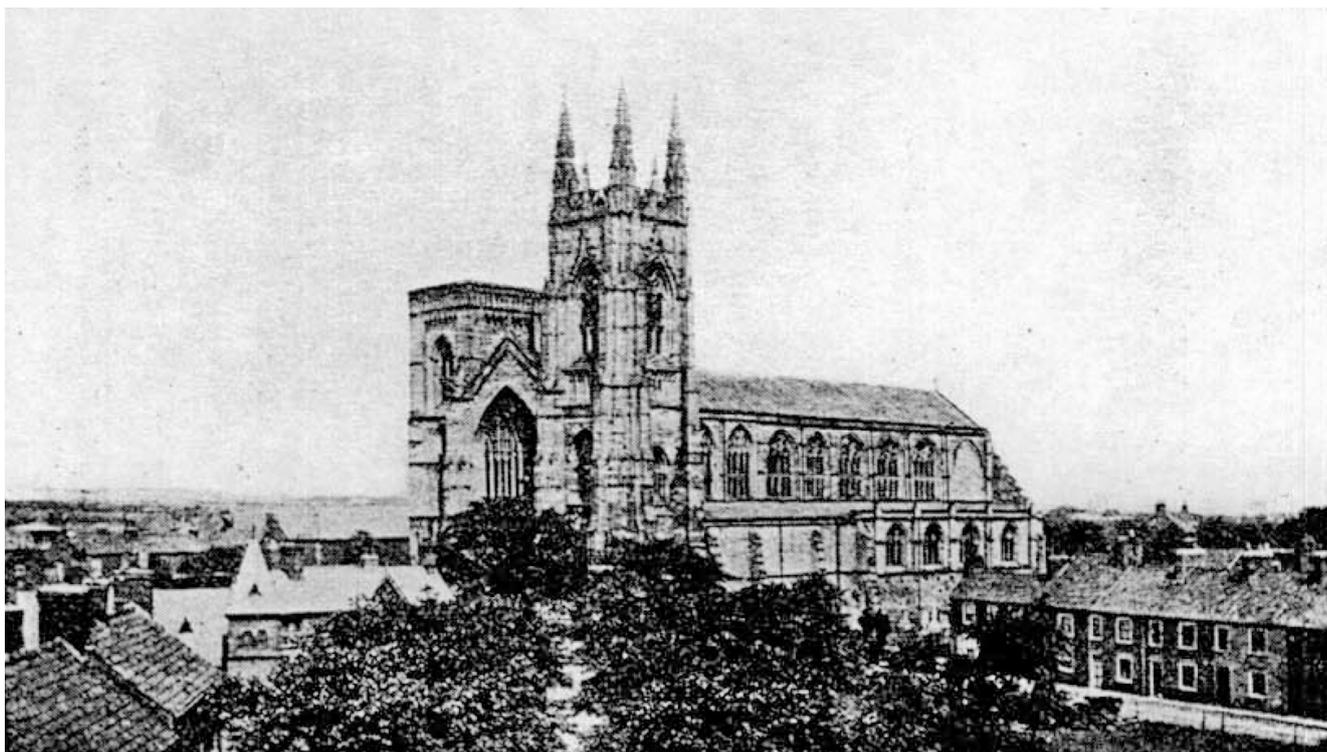
The Augustinian canons observed rules much like those of monks, and the main difference was that whereas the canons were, of course, clergy, the monks need not be, and until fairly late mediæval times usually were not in holy orders. It was the Canons of Bridlington who lodged the well-known complaint with Pope Innocent III (1198-1216) against the Archdeacon of Richmond, for bringing with him so large a retinue, and also for consuming so large an amount of their provisions.

The more notable of the inmates of the house was Prior John de Thwenge, who died in 1379. Not only was he a strict disciplinarian and an able administrator, but his devotion to the cause of religion and the noble example of piety which he set had a marked effect on the fortunes of his house. It was not long after his death that miracles were reported to have been worked at his tomb, and in 1386 Archbishop Alexander Neville directed evidence to be taken as to the truth of the reports.

In 1401, in response to the petitions of the late King Richard II, of Henry IV, and of the prelates, nobles, and commons, the Pope issued a decree canonising the Blessed John. In the decree of canonisation a few of Prior John's miracles were mentioned, including the multiplication of corn in the Priory barn, his walking on the sea to the rescue of certain men in a boat caught in a storm, his raising to life five persons at different times, including one who had been killed with a sword, and had lain unburied for three days owing to the absence of a certain officer called the Coroner, without whose inspection, according to the customs of the country, he could not be buried, and the healing of the blind and of the deaf and dumb. For other miracles the Pope referred the faithful to the authentic books in which they were set forth, and for proof of them to the votive offerings at the tomb. About two years later the body of the Blessed John was translated, and his shrine became one of the most celebrated in the North of England. In 1409 the Pope Alexander V granted permission for the Prior Thomas and his successors to wear the mitre, ring, and other pontifical insignia. The significance of this privilege could be appreciated when it was recollected that he only mitred abbots North of the Trent were the heads of St. Mary's, York, and Selby. The last Prior, William Wood, was one of the leaders of the Pilgrimage of Grace, and paid the penalty with his life, being hanged at Tyburn in 1537. By his attainder the property of the Priory passed into the hands of the Crown at a somewhat earlier date than the majority of the greater Monasteries.

Touching on the suppression and spoliation of the Priory, some interesting letters exist which showed the Duke of Norfolk of that time as the active agent in the work. The Duke, who was the King's

Lieutenant in the North, wrote to Henry VIII: "If it be your pleasure to have the houses of Bridlington and Jervis (Jervaulx) suppressed I will ride thither and accomplish your commands. I think I should be at the suppression because the neighbouring country is populous and the houses greatly beloved by the people, and also well stored with cattle and other things that will not all come to light so well if I be absent. Jervis is well covered with lead, and as for Bridlington there is none like it. It has a barn all covered with lead, the longest, widest, and deepest roof that ever I saw. The whole lead cannot be worth less than £3,000 or £4,000, and standing near the sea it can easily be carried away." On June 5th the Duke wrote again to the King saying that he was sending up to him in two boxes all such things of gold as were on the shrine at Bridlington. "The rest of the silver gear remains here," he added. "It is very old stuff and would be better broken up, amounting to about 3,470 ounces." The domestic buildings and the church, saving the nave, which was a parish church, were destroyed in 1539.



THE PRIORY CHURCH. SOUTH-WEST.

I venture to say that even these few items in the history of one house are sufficient to urge more light being thrown upon the "common round" of the monastic orders and their many houses, which in their day were undoubtedly the "back-bone" of English civil life.

In speaking of the Priory at Bridlington, Canon Solloway, D.D., Vicar of Selby Abbey, says that no one can enter the Priory Church as we now have it, without being struck by its beauty, its loveliness, its grandeur; but no casual visitor can readily judge of the original dimensions of the sacred edifice from that which still remains. The Church, big though it is, is only a fragment of the Priory Church of mediæval times. In those days the building was a cruciform one, consisting of nave, transepts with central tower, and choir. The transepts, the central tower, and the choir are all gone. They stood East of the church we now possess, which is simply the double-aisled nave of the old cruciform church. And lovely as the existing building is, there is every reason to believe that those portions which have disappeared were not less beautiful. Nay, it is pretty certain that the glories of the pre-dissolution church were in that portion of it which stood to the East of the present East window.

Equal in beauty to anything that the shire of broad acre possessed was the Priory Church when it was completed, and in size second only in Yorkshire to the Great Minster at York. The nave was 185 feet long, the crossing at the central tower about 30 feet, and the choir about 174 feet, giving a total length of

about 389feet, a length considerably in excess of that at Selby Abbey, Beverley Minster, or St. Mary's Abbey, York.

At the dissolution it was evidently intended that the transepts and central tower should be spared, and that together with the nave, they should be used as the Parish Church. There is the merest fragment of the South transept still left, with a slender shaft and a slight indication of the stone groining. There is also in existence a step marking the line of the West wall of this Transept.

The great central tower, we are told, was very high and dangerously in decay when the King's Lieutenant came to carry out his mission of destruction. It contained seven bells, "mete to berongen all at one tyme yff yt so happen." Before the dissolution there had clearly been some defect in this part of the building, and the tower had to be supported by a huge, hideous, internal buttress which still remains, though the tower is gone. Probably when the choir was taken down its removal deprived the tower of its main support, and it either fell, taking with it the transepts, or else the whole of this part of the fabric was deliberately demolished.

The choir was approximately 174 feet long, and, like the nave, had North and South aisles. It was only eleven feet shorter than the nave, and would consist of nine bays, and not seven, as has been frequently stated. On the North side were eleven narrow windows, all of one height and all filled with white glass. They would probably be E. E. lancets, like those on the North side of the nave, seven of the bays containing single lancets, two having double ones. The South aisle also had "narrow windows" of the same height, though two of them had "fyv lights a pece." The East end of the choir must have been a fine composition. There were eleven windows, ten of one light, and one of three lights. This probably means that there would be two tiers of triple lancets in the centre with double lancets at the East end of each aisle, and a three-light window in the gable.

The high altar must have been a very fine one. The reredos had a figure of Christ at the Assumption of our Lady, and there were statues of the twelve apostles, "with divers other images of a great height and well "gylted."

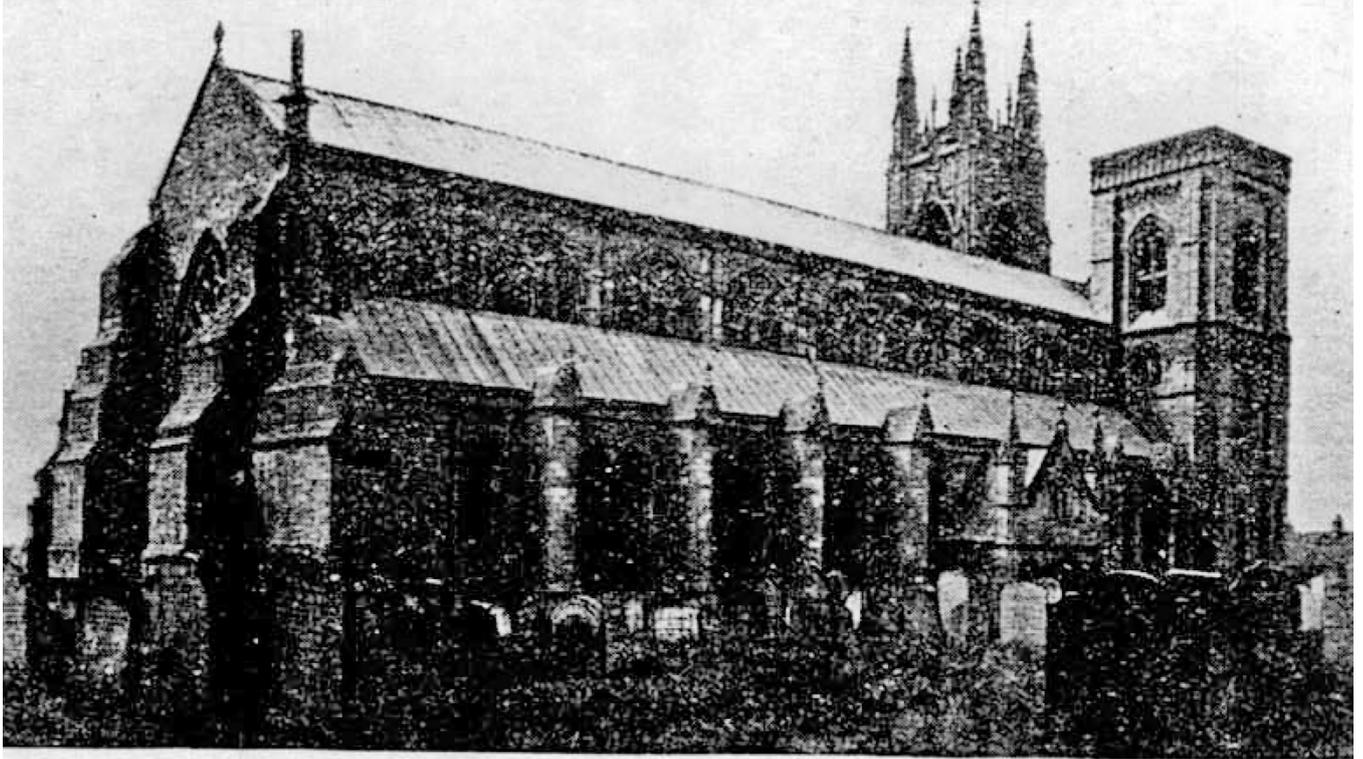
The shrine, between the high altar and the East window, was the great treasure of the Priory. This "as the shrine of the local saint—"St. John of Bridlington." It was a splendid affair, being in a "fair chapel on high," and having on either side a stair of stone "for to go and come by." Beneath the shrine were five chapels with five altars and small tables of alabaster and images.

The domestic buildings are all gone, but their dimensions and positions are all approximately known. On the South side of the nave were the cloister court and the Prior's house, consisting of dining-room, bedroom, chapel, Prior's hall, buttery, pantry, and kitchen. South of the cloisters were the frater (refectory), the dorter (dormitory) and the treasurer's house. There were also the infirmary (farmory), the old frater, St. Cuthbert's Chapel, and a room called the "new chamber." To the South of the choir was the fine decagonal chapter house, and somewhere to the South of the church were the bakehouse, the brewhouse, and the "horse-mill." On the North side of the church was the agricultural department: a big barn, 117 paces by 27 paces, at right angles to which, at the West end and stretching in the direction of the church, were the stables and cow byres. Parallel to these at the East end were the granary and other stables and cow byres. Between these two blocks was the great barn yard, 4 acre in area, and East of the granary were the malt-house and the kiln-house.

A practically complete list of the Priors is known. One of them was a pre-eminently saintly man. His life was filled with deeds of humility, charity, and self-denial; and after his death in 1379 miracles were reported as taking place at his tomb. Steps were taken, therefore, by the Priory authorities, aided by the Archbishop of York and others, to secure his canonisation. This was eventually effected in the year 1401, and Prior John de Thwenge was enrolled for the Church Kalendar as "St. John of Bridlington." the day to be annually observed in his honour being the anniversary of his death, October 10th.

The greatest honour bestowed upon the Priory was the grant of the mitre. The papal document conferring this distinction was dated from Pisa, 15th October, 1409. Probably the honour was given to the Priory because of the recent canonisation of John de Thwenge. At all events the event took place eight years after the canonisation. The grant ran as follows:—

"To Thomas, Prior, and the Convent of Bridlington, O. S. A., in the diocese of York. Indult for the Prior and his successors to wear the mitre, ring, and other pontifical insignia, and in the Priory, its subject places, and in Churches belonging to it to give solemn Benediction after Mass, Vespers, and Matins, provided that no bishop or papal legate be present."



THE PRIORY CHURCH. NORTH-EAST.

Much might be said of the many distinguished men that have, at various times, been connected with the Priory, such as Peter de Langtoft, who was the author of the Metrical Chronicle of England; William de Newburgh, who wrote the well-known History of England from the Conquest to the time of King John; and Sir George Ripley, the famous philosopher and alchemist. All the three were Canons of Bridlington. To deal adequately with the lives of these men and others equally distinguished, must be left to some large and complete volume doing justice to this important subject.

After a vigorous existence of four and a quarter centuries, the corporate life of the Austin Canons of Bridlington came to an end. William Wode, the last Prior, took part in the Pilgrimage of Grace, and in 1537 was hanged in London. The Canons were turned adrift, and the revenues, amounting to £547 per annum, equal to about £6,000 in modern money, were seized by the King. The choir was demolished, the domestic buildings stripped. The nave, as has been said, was the only portion left to do duty in the days to come as the Town Church. And then, the emoluments gone, a period of poverty, neglect, and decay set in. The two western towers had probably never been finished, but were left as squat towers like those at Selby Abbey. In course of time, as the great central tower had gone, a bell turret was raised on one of them; galleries were erected in the church, one of which partly blocked up the beautiful West window. Then better days followed. A restoration of the church began in 1846, and, *inter alia*, the West towers were completed, the church now presenting a very pleasing appearance, though shorn of so much of its pristine glory and magnificence.

As will be seen from the notice board fixed on the church frontage, a sum of £70,000 has been expended on the restoration of this noble building, and the whole has been raised locally, with one exception, when a small grant was made by Parliament.

It is sincerely to be hoped that someone may be found to restore the beautiful cloisters, and also to provide a richly carved oak rood screen for the chancel.

Mr. J. Barnes Steveni has contributed some interesting historical matter concerning that interesting relic of the original Priory of Bridlington, better known as the "Bread Stone," from which the alms of the church were distributed to the poor of the parish.

That ancient grave-stone can be seen supported on stone pillars, and standing on the right-hand side, as you enter the church by the South-West door beneath the tower. He says that much mediæval superstition and historical tradition is attached to it; but in spite of all that, it is a most valuable and historic relic of the ancient Priory of Bridlington. He had taken the trouble to examine the tablet with his own eyes and his own mind, and found that the so-called Bread-stone was not only an early Norman tomb-stone, much finer than any he had seen in the temples of that period (Henry I) but in all probability belonging to a very wealthy and important personage. The fine, hard quality of the stone or marble, which was brought from Normandy, its unusual size, and the heraldic carvings on its surface, were all indications that it must have been carved in honour of some person of very high rank. The figures of beasts, dragons, and other animals on it strongly resembled the designs on the border of the Bayeaux tapestry, which was the work of Mathilda of Flanders, the first wife of William the Conqueror, and aunt of Walter of Gaunt. On the upper part of that massive stone, which was early Norman in design, there are two drakes (war dragons) with which emblems the Normans and Norsemen were so fond of ornamenting their ships, shields, banners, brooches, and swords. Under the dragons, which seemed to be sparring or fighting, there was a carving in relief of an old Norman church, exactly like one of those low quaint buildings depicted in the Bayeaux tapestry, and tiled with the same narrow rounded tiles still used in the Stave churches in Scandinavia, from which country the Normans derived their ideas of ornament and design. He also found that the pillars supporting the quaint little Norman church (probably a representation of the first Priory) were of the same design and shape as the Norman pillars of the beautiful cloister arcade, the remains of which had been set up in memory of the late Mr. Thomas Harland of Bridlington, in the opposite aisle.

Immediately underneath the Norman edifice mentioned there was a rough carving of two animals and an object resembling a barrel or vase. The design was locally believed to represent the Greek fable of the Fox and the Stork. But in view of the fact that the Normans were not conversant with Greek literature, and that the animals in question resembled a wolf and a dove, that explanation of the enigma was not satisfactory. According to St. George Hare, a well-known Irish painter, to whom he had shown three photographs of that ancient monument, the figures of the two animals were part of an acrostic, and in Ireland there was a similar Early Norman tomb-stone, which also had an acrostic instead of the name, or nick-name, of the person in whose honour it was carved. At the foot of the Bread-stone was a lion rampant. As Walter de Gaunt, the son of Gilbert de Gaunt, was closely related to William the Conqueror, it is quite possible that he would have been allowed to have on his tomb-stone the Lions of Ghent, for the arms of his father was a lion crouching. The three leopards were subsequently, he believed, introduced by the Black Prince. In the Domesday Book they found that Bridlington and the Manor, with its two boundaries of Hilgesthorpe and Willesthorpe, was valued at £32 per year; also that it was granted by William the Conqueror to Gilbert de Gaunt, a Flemish nobleman, who was also one of his chief auxiliaries. Gilbert, or Gillibert, de Gaunt as he was called in the Domesday Book, was the father of Walter de Gaunt, the founder of the Priory, who died after the Conquest, and was in all probability buried according to the customs of those days, in the religious edifice he had endowed with immense estates, which were afterwards acquired by the Canons. According to the Chartulary of Bridlington Priory, he also presented the Priory with the costly relics he had received from Baldwin, Count of Flanders.

In the Domesday Book they also found the same Gillibert possessed of a Castle at Hunmanby, and extensive estates at Pocklington, Flottmanby, Foggarthorpe, Bridlington in Yorkshire, and also at other places in Lincolnshire and Rutlandshire. His son being enormously wealthy, it stood to reason he would have a tomb-stone fitting his worth and rank, and would naturally be buried in the Priory he had founded, so that the monks could say Masses for the repose of his soul, which was the custom in those superstitious days, when men fondly believed that every sin under heaven could be compounded by saying Masses and building churches. In the great work of vandalistic destruction carried out by the minions of Cromwell, when Henry VIII hanged the last Prior of Bridlington it was remarkable that the beautiful memorial stone, which was in such an excellent state of preservation, was not completely destroyed. There was, however, nothing of a religious character about it, excepting of the design of the church alongside, to show that it belonged to one of the Priors, whose tomb-stones were generally of ordinary limestone, decorated with a crozier or with a simple Latin inscription in Gothic letters. It was exceedingly rare that one found a tomb-stone with the carving of a church upon it, and were it not for the sacred building that monument would be wholly heathen in character. Taking into consideration the circumstances, that the Priory was built by Walter de Gaunt between 1100 and 1135, during the reign of Henry I, and that this early Norman tomb-stone dated back from the same period, and that it was the usual custom in those days to bury men in churches they had endowed, they had good grounds for believing that the so-called "Bread-stone" was the original tomb that once covered the mortal remains of Walter de Gaunt, ancestor of John Gaunt, and that the crude carving of the church on its surface was really the design of the original Norman Priory founded by him during the reign of Henry I, the younger son of the Conqueror.

That valuable relic, which had recently been damaged, was probably only the upper part of the stone coffin or sarcophagus of the founder of the Priory, which may also some day be found amongst the scattered ruins of this ancient religious house, which in the Middle Ages was famed for its learning, wealth, and piety.

The beautiful font in Winchester Cathedral is apparently of the same stone and workmanship as the Bread-stone in Bridlington Priory, both having come from the same place in Normandy, viz., Tourney, and were presented by Bishop Henry of Blois, grandson or nephew of William the Conqueror, a relation of Walter de Gaunt, the founder of the Priory.

PRIORY CHURCH OF ST. MARY, BRIDLINGTON.

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|-------|------|---|
| A.D. | 1086 | Church mentioned in Domesday Book, and dated probably from the VII Century. |
| Circa | 1114 | } Priory founded by Charter of Henry 1st. to Walter de Gant. |
| | 1124 | |
| | 1537 | Perpetual Curacy after dissolution of the Monasteries. |
| | 1567 | Vicarage. |
| | 1881 | Rectory. |

PRIORS OF BRIDLINGTON.

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|------|------|---|-----------|------------------------------|
| Ante | 1124 | Guicheman or (Wikeman). | 1506 | John English (Died 1510). |
| Ante | 1141 | Adelbold. | 1510 | John Hempton (Died 1521). |
| | 1145 | Bernard. | 1521 | William Brownefleete. |
| | 1160 | Robert (the Scribe). | 1531 | Robert. |
| Ante | 1181 | Gregory. | Ante 1537 | William Wode. (Hanged 1537.) |
| | 1189 | Hugh. | 1563 | Robert King. |
| | 1200 | Helias. | 1598 | Percevall Rounton. |
| | 1218 | Hubert. | 1610 | Walter Ashton. |
| | 1231 | Thomas. | — | Thomas Cape. |
| | 1250 | John (Resigned 1255). | 1646 | Thomas Collinson. |
| | 1260 | Geoffrey de Nafferton (Resigned 1289). | 1657 | Peter Thompson. |
| | 1295 | Gerard de Burton (Resigned 1315). | 1659 | George Winteringham. |
| | 1315 | Peter de Wynthorpe (Resigned 1321). | 1662 | John Lucke. |
| | 1321 | Robert de Scardeburg (Died 1342). | 1662 | Ellis Weycoe. |
| | 1342 | Peter de Appleby (Resigned 1356). | 1677 | Henry Walker. |
| | 1356 | Peter de Cotes. | 1704 | Thomas Walker. |
| | 1362 | St. John of Bridlington (John de Twenge). | 1705 | John Topham. |
| | 1379 | William de Newbald. | 1714 | John Elleray. |
| | 1398 | John Qweldryg. | 1748 | Cornelius Rickaby. |
| | 1409 | Thomas | 1786 | Francis Lundy. |
| | 1420 | John de Gisburne (Died 1429). | 1809 | George Smith. |
| | 1429 | Robert Warde (Resigned 1444). | 1849 | Henry Frederick Barnes. |
| | 1444 | Robert Willy. | 1874 | Richard Paul Blakeney. |
| | 1462 | Peter Hellard (Resigned 1472). | 1885 | Isaac Hellmuth. |
| | 1472 | Robert Bristwick (Resigned 1488). | 1891 | Henry Woffindin. |
| | 1488 | John Curson (Resigned 1498) | 1896 | James Allen Pride. |
| | 1498 | Robert Danby (Died 1506). | 1915 | John Topham. |

