

THE CARMELITES OF IPSWICH.

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The recent excavations which led to the exposure of the site of the Carmelite Priory in Ipswich, and the interesting finds made by Miss Nina Layard upon this spot, have helped to bring to notice the small amount of information which exists concerning the establishment of the Order of White Friars in the town. Through the courtesy of Miss Layard I had the privilege of examining the excavations before all vestiges of the Past were re-covered, and from the appearance of old foundations and other relics brought to light, it was easy to conceive that the buildings of the community were both extensive and important.

The foundation of the Carmelite Priory in Ipswich is shrouded in almost as deep a mystery, as is the foundation of the Order itself. It is not clearly manifest what burgess was the first to welcome the Carmelite Friars, nor upon what exact spot stood the first building of the Carmelite Priory. The honour is conferred by Dugdale upon Sir Thomas de Loudham, and by Speed upon Lord Bardesley (? Bardolf), Sir Jeffrey Hadley, and Sir Robert Norton.* It is more than probable that the date, 1279, fixed by Dugdale for the coming of the White Friars, lies near the mark. It was the year 1279 which saw the passing of the Mortmain Act by the monarch who bestowed many

* Tanner's *Notitia Monastica*, 1744, p. 529.

favours upon the Carmelites, and who desired to be buried in the habit of their Order. Edward I. visited Ipswich in 1277, and there is a possibility that the religious house was established between the date of his visit and the passing of the Mortmain Act.

Excellent judgment was displayed in the selection of a site. The Black Friars dwelling near to the river were able to preach the Word to the merchants and sailors collected on the wharfs and quays; the Grey Friars could stay the constant flow of traffickers passing from the quays to the Westgate, but the Carmelite had an ever present congregation in the townsfolk who frequented the markets in his immediate neighbourhood. The spot chosen for the priory was east of S. Stephen's Lane, where the parishes of S. Lawrence and S. Nicholas were co-terminate; it lay to the north of Colehill. An idea of the extent of the premises may be obtained from a grant* made in the year 1297 of the enclosure of a lane about 150 yards long, which bounded the lands of the Priory on the east. The road was known as "Erodeslane," probably because it adjoined the property of the owner of adjacent lands, Seman Erode, or as the name appears in another charter, Seman Harold.† An inquisition‡ was held on the day next following the Feast of S. Vincent, 25 Edward I. (11 Jan., 1297), in the presence of the bailiffs of Ipswich, John de Whatesend, Lawrence Cowe, Roger May, Robert de Elmsete, Robert de Breset, Geoffrey de Holbroke, Roger de Bosco, Clement le Espicer, William Bayley, John Sewate, Roger Helewys, and Hugh de Claydon. After this "*inquisitio ad damnum*," licence§ was granted by Edward I., when he was at Harwich about to sail for France, for the Carmelites to enclose "Erodeslane" 26 perches long and 8 feet broad. The jurors were evidently selected from among the inhabitants who held land in the neighbourhood, for when the friars wished to extend their

* Patent Roll, 25 Ed. I., pt. 1.

† A Seaman le Bakester held lands at Le Colhel in S. Nicholas parish 12 Edward II.—Corporation Records.

‡ Eschaet. Suff., 25 Ed. I., No. 28. § Patent Roll, 25 Ed. I., pt. 1.

premises still further eastward, they purchased land from some of these jurors. Edward I., with his court, remained in Ipswich from 25th December, 1296, until the 11th day of the following January. Nearly twenty years later, the friars, who had found numerous benefactors among the townfolk, purchased eight plots of land for the enlargement of their house. These plots, comprising about one acre in area, appear from the dimensions to have been contiguous, and to have extended the whole length of Erodeslane. The names of the vendors and the size of the plots are given upon the licence, as follows:—

John son of Seman Herodes	120 ft. by 30 ft. }
Roger Helwys	120 ft. by 32 ft. }
Ida Falleden & John Thurston	130 ft. by 70 ft. }
<i>Astorsewade</i> Thomas son of John Kettleberge	70 ft. by 70 ft. }
Roger le Moneter, & Richard le Moneter	30 ft. by 26 ft. }
John Sewat & William his son	78 ft. by 26 ft. }
John Gayelisford	130 ft. by 40 ft. }
William Newyng	100 ft. by 42 ft. }

By this acquisition of land an extension was made of the Carmelite premises toward the east, but the newly acquired soil did not lie close to S. Stephen's Lane, for a piece of "common soil" lay alongside this highway beneath the walls of the Friary, and was granted to Roger Stannard as "waste land" in 1475.* A great part of the Herodes or Harold's estates were in the parish of S. Nicholas, for in the year 1296 a grant was made by Lawrence Harold to John the Prior and Convent of SS. Peter and Paul of Ipswich, of two shillings yearly rent from a messuage opposite Ipswich Gaol, in exchange for a similar rent arising from a tenement in S. Nicholas parish.† Ipswich Gaol was erected in 1178.

"Et pro facienda Gaiola de Gippeswic. xxxis."‡

Further purchases of land were made by the Carmelites in 1329, so that the friars were enabled to still further enlarge their dwelling. Three adjacent parcels of land, containing in all about 50 square perches, were

* See next page. † Charter A3527, Record Office. ‡ Pipe Rolls, 24 Hen. II.

acquired from John de Claydon, John de Thurston, and Thomas de Cokefield, Thomas Short, and John le Monetere. The survey of the land was made by Simon de Hereford.* John le Monetere was probably a relative of the Roger and Richard mentioned in the former grant; their names are not recorded by Fitch† in the list of Ipswich moneyers. In 1332 licence was granted for the alienation in mortmain by Thomas le Cutiller of Ipswich to the Prior and Carmelite Friars of Ipswich, of a messuage for the enlargement of their dwelling.‡

The final enlargement of the premises was made in 1396, by the purchase of two messuages from John Warton and Margaret his wife by John Reppes, Prior of the Convent, for the sum of one hundred marks. A William de Reppes held Letheringham Manor in 1311, and a John de Reppes, junior, possessed Gelham Manor, near Wickham Market, in 1359. There is further evidence that all the walls of the friary were not close to the highway, for a piece of common soil in S. Nicholas parish lay between the walls and the highway leading to Stoke Bridge. This piece of land was granted in 1377 to George de Felbrygge [? of Playford] and Richard de Martlesham. The gate of the Friary appears to have been in S. Stephen's parish, for John Boydon, "plomer," mentions in his Will dated 1500, his tenement in this parish, "*standing at the White Friars Gate sometimes called Stonehames.*" Other notices of the situation of the walls of the Carmelite House are to be met with in the "General Court Books of Ipswich"; 1415—1485. §

14 Edward iv. ". . . a piece of waste land near S. Stephen's Church between S. Stephen's Lane on the East, and the walls of the Carmelite Friars on the West."

16 Edward iv. ". . . a common way near Colehyll alongside the walls of the Carmelite Friars on the South."

Of the character and formation of the buildings little is known. John Drayle, in his Will dated 1463, makes mention of a chapel in the Carmelite Church, which

* Patent Roll, 3 Edward III., pt. 1, m. 34.

† Patent Roll, 6 Edward III., pt. 2, m. 3.

‡ "Ipswich and its Early Mints," 1848

§ Brit. Mus. Add. mss. 30158.

chapel was dedicated to S. John the Baptist, of whom S. Elias, the reputed founder of the Order, was the prototype.

When Edmund Brounfeld was appointed Abbot of Bury on the death of John Brinkele, 30 December, 1378, he met with great opposition from the monks of Bury, who drove him to seek refuge in the Carmelite House at Ipswich,* during the year preceding the Peasant's Revolt, in 1381, when the house of the Rector of S. Stephen's, Ipswich was ransacked.

Although the Ipswich House may have at first been an off-shoot of the Carmelite Friary at Norwich, yet in course of time it became so famous for its learning and education, that it was supplied, not with mature friars from Norfolk, but with earnest youths from Suffolk villages, who from the earliest years of boyhood sought after that wisdom and knowledge for which their teachers gained so great a renown.

Thomas de Yllea† (Monks Elleigh) having obtained his degrees at Paris, preached as a Carmelite Friar throughout Flanders. He returned to his native country and died at Ipswich in 1290.

Richard Hadley, s.T.P., wrote certain notable works, and was buried in the Ipswich Convent, 1 Ap., 1461.

John of Bury S. Edmund's, a Carmelite of Ipswich, was also known as an author. His chief work was a Commentary on S. Luke's Gospel. He was instituted to the living of Semer, near Ipswich, 1313, on the presentation of the Abbot of Bury S. Edmund's, and was living in 1350.

John Polstead was a novice at the Carmelite Friary. He was a renowned preacher and skilful writer. He took the degree of s.T.D. OXON., and was elected Prior of Lynn Friary, 1335. He died at York, 4 October, 1341, and lies buried beneath a magnificent marble slab in the Cathedral of that city.

* Powell's "Rising in East Anglia, 1381," p. 16.

† Fanner's "Bibliotheca Britannica," 1744.

Richard Lavenham entered the confraternity at Ipswich, and was conspicuous for the zeal in which he carried on his studies, and for his piety. He received a further education at Oxford, and was appointed Prior of the Carmelites at Bristol. He wrote several works, among which were, "De origine Carmelitici ordinis," and "Contra heresin Joannis Purveii." It is asserted by some writers that he was slain with Simon of Sudbury, Archbishop of Canterbury, in 1381.

According to Foxe,* John Kiningham was educated among the Carmelites of Ipswich. He obtained the degree of D.D. at Oxford, and was strongly favoured by John, Duke of Lancaster. He died at York, where he was buried, 1399.

Thomas Lavenham, of the Carmelites at Ipswich, wrote a Commentary on Aristotle's Physics. He was among the first Fellows of All Saints' Coll., Oxon., 1447.

John Paschal, of noble origin, was educated among the Carmelites of Ipswich. He proceeded to Cambridge, where he was remarkable for his learning. Upon his return to Ipswich his fame as a preacher came to the ears of William, Bishop of Norwich, who appointed him Bishop Suffragan. Subsequently he was raised to the See of Llandaff, 1348. He died, 1361, and was buried in his cathedral of Tarenus.

John Barningham, Carmelite of Ipswich, Prior of his Order, was a voluminous author. He was buried at Ipswich, 22 January, 1448.

Many burgesses desired to find a resting-place within the precincts of the Carmelite Church.

John Drayles in his Will, already mentioned, made a request that he should be buried within the chapel of S. John the Baptist, near the body of William Debenham, merchant, and desired that the friars should have 105 marks yearly to sing mass for his soul. His name was to be woven upon the friar's surplice.

* Martyrology, ff. 437—439.

Henry Fulslo bequeathed a barrel of beer to each of the three orders of Ipswich friars, 1486.

Reynold Jacob of S. Nicholas' parish, desired that four friars should bare him to the church and then to the grave, and "have honestly for their labours." 1522.

John Whelmeton, tailor, bequeathed to every friar in Ipswich, a cloak, 1495.

John Bolton desired to be buried in the church of the Carmelite Friars, Ipswich, and bequeathed to the Friars of that church 20s. 1470.

At the dissolution of monasteries the Carmelites petitioned Cromwell for his assistance. They had been compelled to sell several messuages for £28, and the Visitor allowed them only an annual pittance of £4. One Copping, himself not in affluent circumstances, withheld from them their dues. This Copping may have been a relative of the George Copping by whom the "Ancient House" of Ipswich is supposed to have been erected, near to the site of the ancient Friary.
