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## **Grey Friars, Gloucester**

by V. M. Dallas  
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## THE GREY FRIARS, GLOUCESTER

by VERA M. DALLAS

THE house of the Grey Friars in Gloucester was founded within a few years of the landing of the Friars in England. The grant of land in South[gate] street, known as John le Boteler's tenements, is recorded in the register of Llanthony Priory, Gloucester; <sup>1</sup> the priory conveyed it to Thomas Lord Berkeley and William de Chiltenham his steward. The exact date of the foundation is not proved, but it is recorded by Friar Thomas of Eccleston that the windows and the painted pulpitum in the chapel at Gloucester caused the visitor who brought to England the Bull of Gregory IX *Quo elongati* which was issued 28 September, 1230, to act with great severity against the friars.<sup>2</sup> Henry III granted five trees from the Forest of Dean to the Friars Minor of Gloucester in the year 1231,<sup>3</sup> which implies that building was in progress at that time. At first the friars appear to have been content with a small plot of land,<sup>4</sup> but it is not long before their records betray a tendency to extend their area and they were more fortunate in their attempts to enlarge their site than they were in decorating their church. The Provincial Minister, Haymo of Faversham, permitted, in 1239, the acceptance from the founder, Thomas of Berkeley, of the additional land which Agnellus of Pisa,

<sup>1</sup> Reg. Llanthony, f. 53 B, cited in Fosbrooke, *History of Gloucester* (1819), fol. ed., p. 148. *Monumenta Franciscana. Fr. Thomae de Eccleston. De Adv. Minorum* (Rolls Ser., ed. Brewer) 1, 35.

<sup>2</sup> *Collection d'Etudes et de Documents, vol. VII. Fr. Thomae de Eccleston. De Adv. Minorum.* Edited by Dr A. G. Little, 1909, p. 47.

<sup>3</sup> *Cal. of Close Rolls (1227-31)*, 15 Henry III, p. 480.

<sup>4</sup> *Eccleston*, ed. Brewer, 1, 35.

the first Minister, had compelled them to relinquish. Haymo of Faversham decided that it was better for the friars to have land to cultivate that they might provide their sustenance instead of begging from others.<sup>5</sup>

The rather meagre history of the house consists mostly of the record of the acquirement of plots of land and of a regrettable number of disputes, chiefly with their monastic neighbours. An account of this early history is to be found in the Victoria County History of Gloucestershire ;<sup>6</sup> it is perhaps of interest to record that in 1246 King Henry III allowed the friars to set up a school of theology in a tower of the town wall, which was let to them for the purpose together with a way called ' Scademan ' leading from their house to the said tower.<sup>7</sup>

The house was in the custody of Bristol.<sup>8</sup> The number of friars in 1277 was 24, in 1284 there were 40, in 1326 there were also 40,<sup>9</sup> but there seem to have been only 31 in 1337.<sup>10</sup> Dr Little gives the figures for several houses in 1326, from which it would appear that London, Oxford and Cambridge had between 70 and 80 each, Norwich 47, Lynn 38 and Reading 26. Winchester had 43 in 1315 and Newcastle had 34 in 1299 and 32 about 1345. It would seem, therefore, that Gloucester was a fairly sized house, the peculiar conditions of a university town accounting for the large numbers at Oxford and Cambridge. The increase in numbers at Gloucester between the years 1277 and 1284 is interesting, particularly as Royal grants of timber, indicating building, were made and the site was enlarged in 1284-5

<sup>5</sup> *Eccleston* ed. Brewer, I, 34; *Eccleston*, ed. Little, pp. 55-6, 170-1.

<sup>6</sup> *V.C.H. Gloucestershire*, II, p. 111.

<sup>7</sup> *Cal. of Close Rolls* (1242-1247), 30 Henry III, p. 447.

<sup>8</sup> A. G. Little, *Studies in English Franciscan History*, 1917, pp. 235-8.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 68-72 and A. G. Little, *The Greyfriars in Oxford* (Oxf. Hist. Soc.), p. 44, n. 1.

<sup>10</sup> *Trans. B.G.A.S.* XIII, 179.

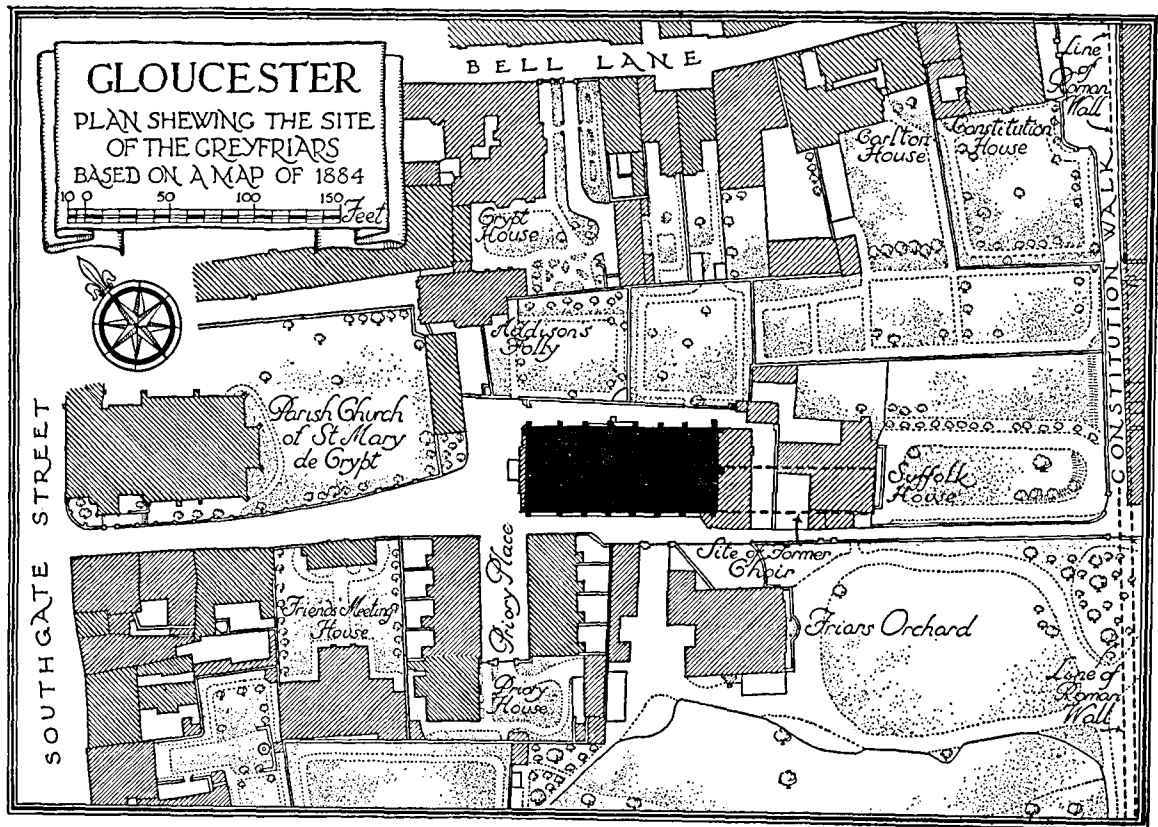


Fig. 1

The church was rebuilt in the first half of the 16th century, owing once more to the benefactions of the Berkeley family. In Smyth's *Lives of the Berkeleys* it is recorded that 'Isable', wife of James Lord Berkeley 'the first of that name' died 'at Gloucester Satterday before Michaelmas day in the 31st of Henry the sixth, Anno. 1452 . . . And lyeth buried in the chancell of the Church of the ffryars mynors āls gray ffryars at Gloucester, which place her grandchild the lord Maurice Berkeley in honor of her memory in the 21th (sic) of King Henry the eighth afterwards repaired'.<sup>11</sup> This lady, by her first husband Henry Ferrars, Lord of Groby, had a daughter Elizabeth who married Sir Edward Gray, Lord Ferrars and Groby. Their son was the Sir John Gray whose widow, Elizabeth, afterwards married Edward IV.

In the will of William Marquis of Berkeley, 5 January 1491, it is provided 'That another fryar should singe at the gray fryars at Gloucester in like maner, for the said soules; To the repair whereof hee gave twenty pound in money'.<sup>12</sup>

Finally a codicil to the will of Maurice Lord Berkeley 'the sixth of that name' dated 12 Henry VIII states: 'And for the reedifying and building of the church and chancell and stalls of the ffryars minors in Gloucester whereof (saith his will) I am founder, And where dame Isable Berkeley my grandame lyeth buryed; which work (saith the said will) I have now began and in case I dye, Then my executors substantially to finish the same'.<sup>13</sup> He appears to have begun the rebuilding in 1519 for Smyth says 'In the tenth of king Henry the 8th began this lord Maurice to allow 6 *li.* 13s. 4*d.* p. ann̄, ex eleemosyna sua, out of his almes and bounty, towards the repaire of the church of the gray ffryars in Gloucester; which liberallity hee continued many years, yea after his death,

<sup>11</sup> Smyth, *Lives of the Berkeleys* (ed. Maclean), II, 81.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* II, 134.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* II, 201.



GREY FRIARS, GLOUCESTER: NORTH SIDE OF NAVE

till the same was finished ; Of which place this family were founders ; as before touched in this lords life '.<sup>14</sup>

At the time of the suppression the house shared the usual fate of its contemporaries and the details are given by various authorities.<sup>15</sup> The house was surrendered to Richard Ingworth, Bishop of Dover, in July 1538 and an inventory of its possessions is given in a previous paper of this Society.<sup>16</sup> Ingworth reported to Cromwell that it was a ' goodly house much of it new builded, especially the church, choir and dorter, the rest small lodgings, divers leases out for years of lodgings and gardens ; no lead but a conduit and small gutters '.<sup>17</sup> The friars appear to have possessed 147½ oz. of plate and various vestments, etc., but little of any value. It is notable however that the inventory refers to a library which Dr. Little thinks to be the only instance among the Grey Friaries. The site was granted to John Jennings in 1543 and the official ' particulars ' for the grant record that the area of the site (which was valued at twenty shillings per annum) was 4 acres and there was also in addition a garden in Southgate street belonging to the friars in the tenure of Thomas Morgan and ' one close of pasture with the appurtenances lying and extending from the walls of the city of Gloucester in length from the east side to the walls of the cemetery of the late house on the west and in width between the lane called Marelane on the north side and the church of the said late house on the south let to Hugh Gethen by Indenture under the seal of the guardian and convent of 27 April 1535 ' for a term of 20 years at an annual rent of eight shillings.<sup>18</sup> It is evident from this

<sup>14</sup> Smyth, *Lives of the Berkeleys* (ed. Maclean), II, 203.

<sup>15</sup> *L. & P. Henry VIII, XIII* (I), 1109 and 1484.

<sup>16</sup> *Trans. B.G.A.S.* XIII, 181-6.

<sup>17</sup> Wright, *Suppression of the Monasteries* (Camd. Soc.), 199.

<sup>18</sup> P.R.O. Particulars for grants 35 Henry VIII, 644. (I am indebted to Mr A. R. Martin, F.S.A., for this reference).

that the friars' cemetery was on the north side of the church, the monastic buildings lying to the south.

The remains of the houses of the Grey Friars in England are very scanty and they do not present any parallel to the existing building at Gloucester. In a recent paper on the houses of the friars in Wales<sup>19</sup> there is a brief description of the salient features of these buildings, including the typical friars' steeple and the single-armed transept which was normal in Ireland and occasional in England. These features however do not appear to have been present at Gloucester. The plans of the English houses are varied: Winchelsea, built in the 14th century, had a chancel with a three-sided apse, a nave of uncertain length and side aisles. Of Chichester (13th century) only the plain rectangular chancel survives. Richmond (Yorks) had a chancel, central steeple and a nave with a south transept. In London the chancel and nave were both aisled and separated by the 'walking place' with a central steeple above it. At Reading the chancel has disappeared and the existing nave has aisles and transepts. Coventry was similar with the addition of a steeple west of the choir and chapels to the east of the transepts. Mr A. R. Martin has recently excavated the site of the house at Walsingham and determined the plan of the church, which had a chancel, central steeple over the 'walking place' and a short aisled nave. At Kings Lynn the central steeple still stands, and finally there is a curious building at Lincoln, where the church has been divided into two storeys by the insertion of stone vaulting. At Gloucester nothing is left of the plan of the choir except the start of the north wall and the jamb of one window from which it may be inferred that it was an aisleless building, probably a rectangle, and if the central steeple existed it must have been of timber only. The nave and north aisle which

<sup>19</sup> A. W. Clapham, 'The Architectural Remains of the Mendicant Orders in Wales'. *Arch. Journ.* (1927) LXXXIV, 88-90.

# GLOUCESTER

## *The* CHURCH of *the* GREYFRIARS

■ EARLY 16TH CENTURY    ▨ MODERN    10 5 0 10 20 30 FEET

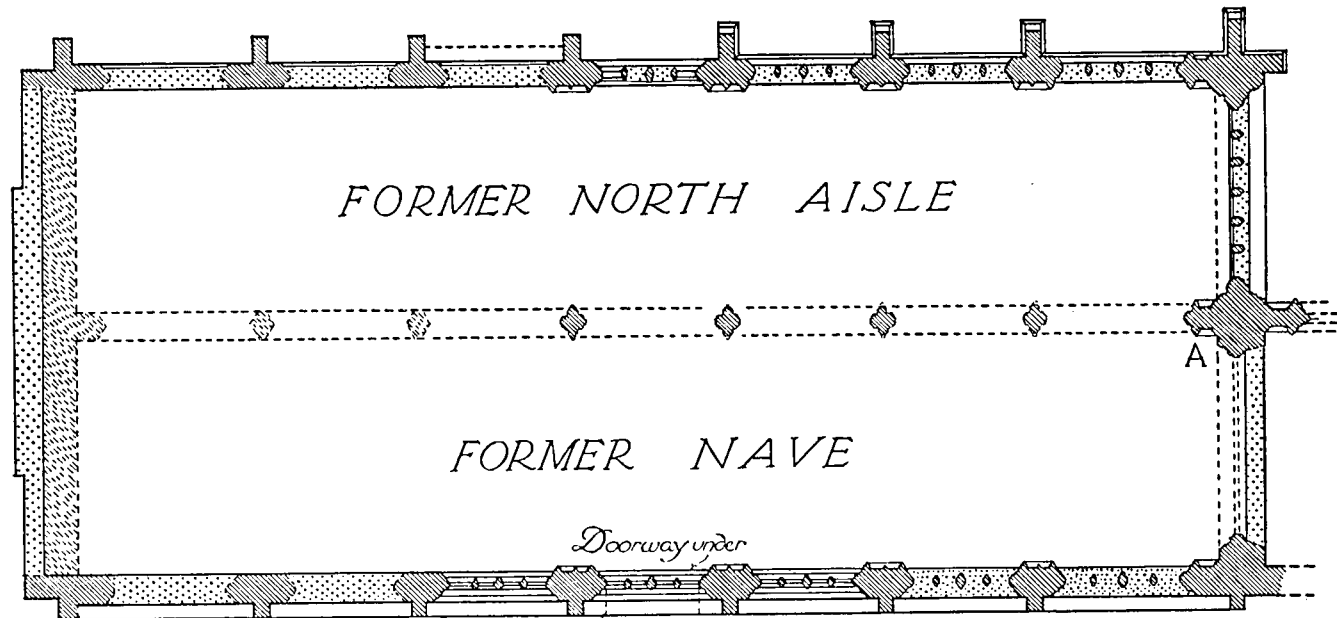


Fig. 2

still remain were of equal length and of nearly equal width ; they were roofed in two spans forming a type of double plan of which there is no other example known among the remains of the friars' houses in England, but, as Mr Clapham has pointed out, there are some Dominican churches in France which exhibit the same feature—the central arcade dividing the building into two equal or nearly equal compartments. These churches are those of the Jacobins, Paris<sup>20</sup> (now destroyed), at Agen<sup>21</sup> and at Toulouse,<sup>22</sup> the last a very remarkable building with a central arcade rising to a great height and having a series of small apsidal chapels opening out of the main eastern apse.

At Gloucester the shell of the nave and north aisle of the 16th century church remains, but internally it has been converted to secular uses. The west front was entirely rebuilt *c.* 1800 and the western part of the building is occupied by the residence and office of Mr J. W. Bayley, who very kindly allowed me free access to his property. The eastern part has been converted into a dwelling-house on the north, recently acquired by the Gloucester Liberal Club, and tenements on the south ; the eastern part of the building has suffered very much from neglect, but it is understood that the new owners intend to repair it.\*

There is nothing recognizable left of the conventual buildings although it was stated in 1888–9 by the Rev. W. H. Silvester Davies that forty years previously fragments of the prior's lodging and the conventual buildings were in existence on the south side of the church.<sup>23</sup>

The nave and aisle consisted of seven bays with large four-light traceried windows on the north and south.

<sup>20</sup> See plan in Viollet-le-Duc, *Dictionnaire*, 1, 272.

<sup>21</sup> Plan in P. Lauzun, *Les Couvents d' Agen*.

<sup>22</sup> Plan in *Cong. Arch. de France, Toulouse*, 1929, 88.

\* This has been completed (March 1933).

<sup>23</sup> *Trans. B.G.A.S.* XIII, 186.

Those on the north, with one exception, are blocked and have had modern windows inserted, but their arches and, in most cases, portions of the tracery in their heads remain. Of those on the south, three retain their original tracery and have been boarded over externally; the re-

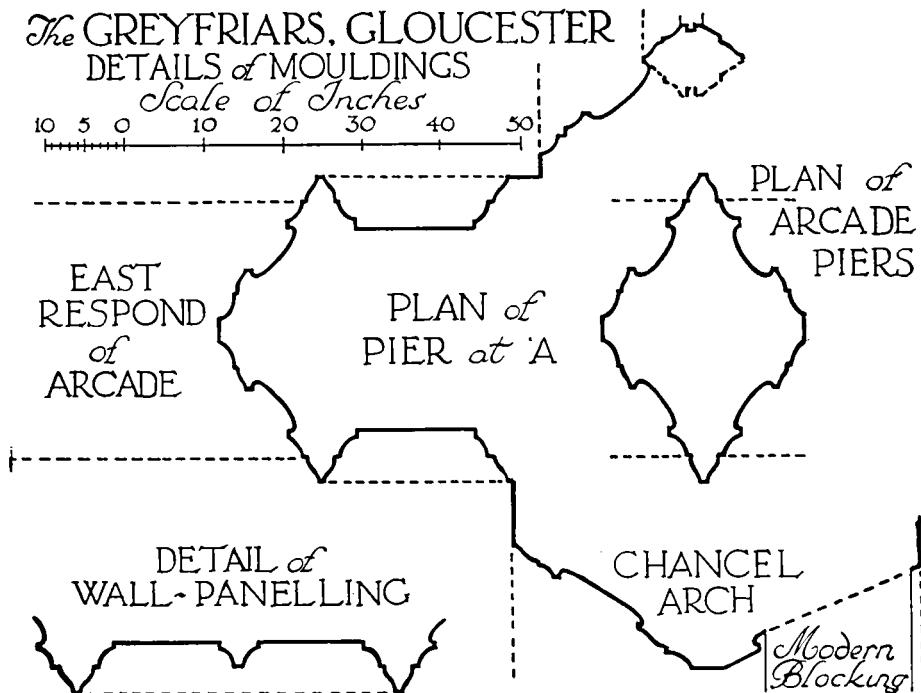


Fig. 3

mainder are blocked. The six-light east window of the aisle has been blocked but the head and jambs and indications of the tracery remain. The east end of the nave has been blocked, but the chancel-arch has been incorporated in the modern building; a small portion of the north respond is visible externally; the west face of

the moulded arch and both responds are to be seen from inside. The start of the north wall of the choir exists east of and between the nave and aisle and the west jamb of a large window can be seen in the photograph; the presence of this window makes the possibility of there having been the usual masonry tower between the nave and choir extremely unlikely, in spite of the large size of the existing pier.

Inside the building, the nave was divided from the aisle by an arcade of moulded pointed arches resting on lozenge-shaped, moulded piers with moulded caps and bases. The two westernmost of these piers and the west respond have been removed, but four piers and the east respond still exist and have been incorporated in the modern reconstruction. The whole of the building appears to have been formerly lined with stone panelling and most of this remains in the eastern two-thirds of the building.

There is little evidence of the position of the former doorways. A western door to the nave may be assumed to have existed; the present entrance on the south is possibly in the position of the former doorway to the cloister.

Reset on the outside of the south wall of the nave, above the present doorway, are two stone armorial shields, possibly from a former funeral-monument; they are the arms of (a) Chaundos, or a pile gules and (b) Clifford of Frampton, chequy or and azure on a bend gules three lions argent. The connexion is as follows: 'Margaret (sister and heiress of John Lord Chaundos who died in 1428) married Thomas Berkeley of Cubberley. They had two daughters and coheirs: (1) Margaret whose family became extinct in 1457-8 and (2) Alice who married Thomas Bridges. Their son Gyles Bridges became heir to his mother's Berkeley property and in 1457-8 he became *de jure* Lord Chaundos; he married Katherine

daughter of James Clifford of Frampton.<sup>24</sup> The family owned property in various parts of Gloucestershire, and the great-grandson of Gyles Bridges was Sir John Bridges of Cubberley who was created Lord Chandos of Sudeley.

With the exception of these shields there do not appear to be any remains of other monuments although it is known that in addition to the Lady Isabel Berkeley mentioned on p. 120, Ralph of Maidstone, who was Bishop of Hereford (1234-9) and who subsequently joined the convent of the Grey Friars in Gloucester, was buried in the friars' choir of the church in 1246.<sup>25</sup>

Leland has two contradictory references to the Grey Friars. He says 'The Graye and Blake Friars within the towne'<sup>26</sup> and elsewhere 'The Graye Friars [colledge] stod without the towne not far from the southe gate. One of the Lord Barkeleyes was founder of it. It is now a brew-house'.<sup>27</sup>

The Grey Friars in Gloucester was confused by Stukeley with the White Friars. His view of the buildings is<sup>28</sup> called 'White Friars'.\* This mistake is perpetuated on a trade token of 1797 of which a specimen is in the collection of Lt.-Col. G. R. B. Spain, C.M.G., F.S.A.

I am very much indebted to Mr A. W. Clapham, C.B.E., F.S.A., for advice in the preparation of this paper, which was commenced at his suggestion and completed with his help; to Mr W. H. Knowles, F.S.A., for much help in the actual measurement of the building; and to Dr Little and Mr A. R. Martin, F.S.A., for reading the paper and for many notes and suggestions.

<sup>24</sup> See *The Complete Peerage*: Chaundos.

<sup>25</sup> *Eccleston*, ed. Little, p. 107 n. 6.

<sup>26</sup> *Leland's Itinerary* (ed. Toulmin Smith, 1910), v, 158.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* (1908), II, 58.

<sup>28</sup> *Itinerarium Curiosum* (1776) no. IV, facing p. 67.

\* The house of the Carmelites was in the northeast part of the city, on the site of the present cattle market—EDITOR.