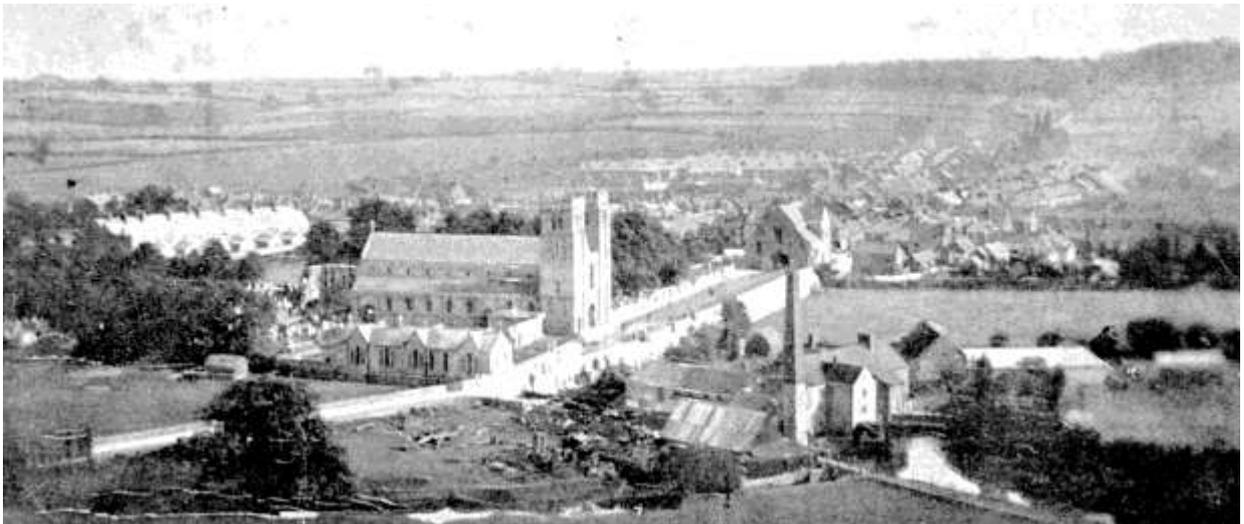


Worksop Priory

In about 1120 William de Lovetot was lord of the manor of Worksop. He also owned estates that included Hallam, Attercliffe, and Sheffield. He founded the Augustinian Priory in the parish of Radford near Worksop by the following charter: 'Be it known to T. Archbishop of York, the Archdeacon of Nottingham, and to all the barons, clergy, laity, French and English, in all England, and Nottinghamshire, that William de Lovetot, by the concession and consideration of Emma, his wife, and their sons, grants and confirms by his breve, the donation which he made to God, the holy church and the canons of St Cuthbert, of Worksop'. He gave 'his whole house ... all that meadow which is by the mill and fishpond; likewise, all the tithes of the pence of all his settled revenues, as well in Normandy as in England ... and all his churches of his demesne of the honour of Blyth, viz. the churches of Gringley, of Misterton, of Walkeringham, of Normanton Coleston, of Willoughby, of Wishou, and his part of the church of Tyreswell with all lands, tythes and other things belonging to the said churches: likewise the tythe of his pannage, and of honey, and of venison, of fish and of fowl, of malt and of all other things which tythes are wont and ought to be given...'

William's son, Richard, increased the grant by adding Clarborough Church and the whole site of the town of Worksop 'near the church inclosed by its great ditch as far as Bersbrig [Bracebridge] meadow, also without the ditch, a mill, dwelling house and Buselin's meadow ... a mill and pond at Manton'. The land that he gave also included the meadow and land bound by Kilton, from the water unto the way under the gallows, towards the south, and by the crosses which he and his son William erected with their own hands unto the moor.

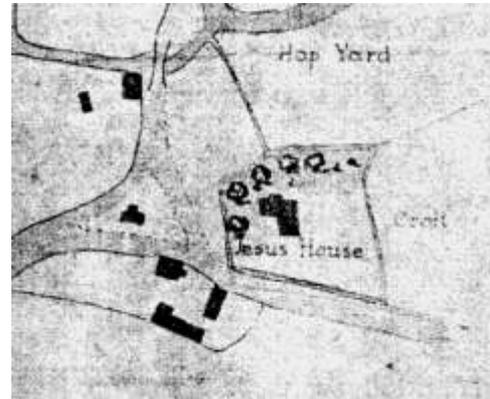


Worksop Priory in 1901,
With the mill in the right foreground

Richard also confirmed grants made by his mother Emma including a mill at Bolham. He gave permission for the canons of Worksop Priory to feed their pigs in Runwood, and for the keeping of two carts in his park at Worksop for the purpose of collecting all the dry wood that might be found there. The grants to the Priory were confirmed by a Bull of Alexander III dated February 1161.



Jesus House drawn in the 19th century during demolition



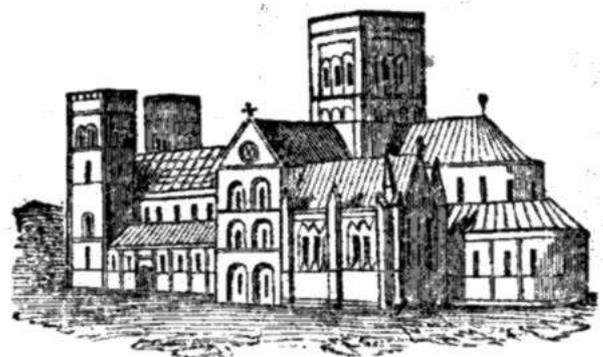
Kelk's map of Jesus House showing the line of the moat

The dwelling house that Richard Lovetot gave to the Priory was enclosed by a moat and later called Jesus House. This may have been a moated manor house occupied by the Lovetots, or possibly even the site of the Saxon Hall. When the Priory was dissolved Prior Thomas Stokes remained living there. By 1636 it was the home of farmer Henry Cole who also rented 1,284 acres of land from the lord of the manor. It is described in John Harrison's survey of 1636 as 'being moated about and containing 6 bays and 2 hay houses, a stable, an ox house, a garden and a fold lying next to the Nether Meadow towards the north and the Highway towards the west'.

In 1777 Reverend John Peacock, curate of the Priory church, lived there. By the mid 19th century it belonged to the Foster family but was allowed to become ruinous and was demolished. Long Wall Way, referring to the walls of the Priory, led from the Priory Gatehouse to Jesus House and Bracebridge. It was later called Cheapside.

The Priory church was built in two stages. Mr Richard Nicholson, the architect employed at the restoration of the church in 1845, noted:

'The two massive columns, one on each side at the east end of the nave, and the remaining portions of the present church eastward, as well as other fragments now extant, are of pure Norman architecture, and agree well with this date [1103]. From this it appears that the original minster was built in two different times, and probably as the nave indicates two distinct periods in its architecture, the earlier nave may have been partially destroyed, or the original design of the building was not completed until a less massive style began to be adopted, about 70 years after the original foundation, or about the year 1170.'



Ellis's interpretation of how the original Priory Church may have looked

William Lovetot II, son of Richard, gave to the Priory on the day of his father's burial the tithes of all the rents he then had or ever should have, whether on this side of the sea or beyond it. William died in 1181, leaving his only child Matilda, aged seven, to inherit his estates. She was given in marriage to Gerald Furnival by his friend, King Richard I. Gerald was a Crusader who had been at the siege of Acre during the Third Crusade. He later returned to the Crusades, died in Palestine in 1219, and was buried at his estate at Fournavail in Normandy. Gerald and Matilda's eldest son Thomas was killed in the Fifth Crusade in 1238, and his heart was brought back to Worksop by his brother Gerald. His mother built the Lady Chapel as its burial place. Crusader crosses can be on either side of the south doorway to the Priory which are said to have been cut by the Furnival family as votive marks. The south door was made of yew with decorative iron scroll work. It dates from about 1250 and is one of the earliest of such doors in England.

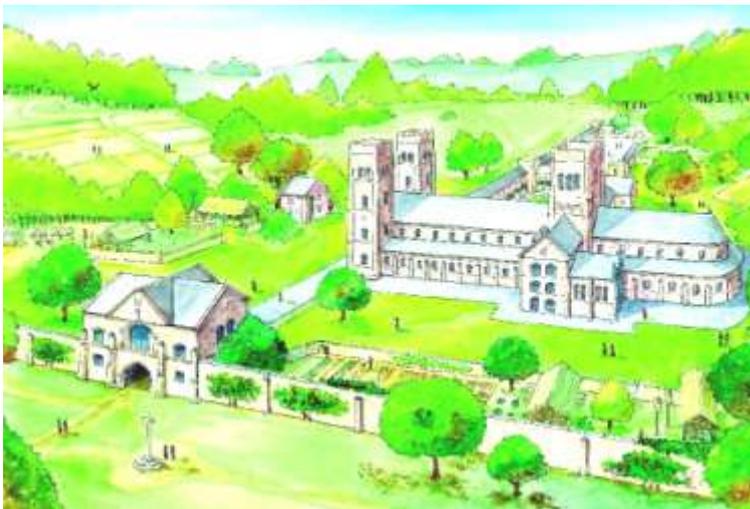


The south door. The crusader crosses are cut into the stone moulding on each side.



Two of the crusader crosses

The Priory was surrounded by a high wall with a large Gatehouse at the front built in the early 14th century. The road leading to the Priory buildings ran through the centre of the ground floor with guest accommodation for visitors on the first floor, where shelter and food would be given free to any visitor for up to three days. A number of kings visited Worksop Priory including Henry III in 1251. Edward III was a frequent visitor and in 1335 granted to the Priory part of Rumwood, to be free of rent forever in return for the 'manifold charges they had frequently incurred when he visited their priory'.



A reconstruction of how the priory could have looked in Medieval times

The statues in the higher niches on the Gatehouse are of St Augustine and St Cuthbert. The central figure represents the Holy Trinity, with God the Father holding the crucifix of God the Son between his knees, and the dove of God the Spirit above. The lower statues, now missing, are thought to have been knights representing the Lovetot and Furnival families. The roof timbers that are visible under the arch way are 14th century.

The porch with a shrine and chapel to the Virgin Mary were added about 1340. It had an entrance at each side so that a line of pilgrims could enter by one door, kneel and pray, and leave by the other door. Inside, a doorway led into a small oratory or chapel, and behind it was the porter's lodge. A statue of the Virgin and Child are still visible. To the left are two crowned figures bearing gifts representing the Magi. The Angel Gabriel remains from the scene of the Annunciation though other figures are now missing.

In the upper storey is a vaulted room, 42 feet by 21 feet and 15 feet high. Next to it is the cell of the Brother whose duty it was to look after the visitors. The upper storey was used as a boys' school from 1628 until the late 19th century.

The road continued to run beneath the archway until 1898, when the adjacent buildings were demolished and the road was diverted to one side. Restoration work on the Gatehouse was also carried out in 1974.



Above left: An early 19th century print showing the buildings that surrounded the Gatehouse



Above right: Moving the cross in 1898

Left: A photograph taken after 1898 when the buildings were demolished, road diverted and cross moved to its present position



The Tickhill Psalter, an illuminated manuscript of the psalms of David, was created between 1303 – 1314 by John de Tickhill, Prior of Worksop Priory who 'wrote and also gilded this book with his own hands'. It has been described as one of the most lavishly decorated of all 14th century English manuscripts.

The work was never completed as John was removed from the Priory in 1314 for financial irregularities, which may be related to the costly materials he used in the making of the psalter.

The psalter is now owned by New York Public Library who exhibited it in their exhibition 'The Splendor of the Word' in 2002 when it was described in their catalogue as: 'One of the most lavishly illuminated of all 14th century manuscripts... A formidable achievement both in concept and design... The overall effect is of a dazzling mosaic of tiny units of brilliant variegated colour and gold... The range of motifs in the marginal décor is astounding, which includes fifty different kinds of foliage and flowers, 28 heraldic shields and fantastic beasts.'

The illustrations of the psalms also depict every day life in medieval times, such as sheep shearing, archery, stag hunting, a wedding etc. which give us a unique picture of life in Worksop at that time.



An illustration from the Tickhill Psalter. Copyright New York Public Library

The Furnival family held the manor of Worksop for several generations until William Furnival died in 1383, leaving his daughter Joan as his heiress. She married Sir Thomas Neville who became Lord Furnival. He supported Bolingbroke, later Henry IV, against Richard II and was made Lord Treasurer of England. Sir Thomas was the brother of Ralph Neville, 1st Earl of Westmorland who married Joan Beaufort, daughter of John of Gaunt. Ralph and Joan were the grandparents of Kings Edward IV and Richard III.



Carvings from the tombs of Sir Thomas Neville and his daughter Maud Neville who married John Talbot, 1st Earl of Shrewsbury



Sir Thomas Neville's daughter Maud married John Talbot. John took the title of Baron Furnival in 1409. In 1442 he was created Earl of Shrewsbury by Henry VI for his military expertise in the war with France against Joan of Arc, and was described by Shakespeare in Henry VI Part 1 as 'the great Alcides of the field, the valiant Lord Talbot'. He became High Steward of Ireland and Marshal of France. He died at the siege of Châtillon in 1453 aged 80. The Earls of Shrewsbury remained lords of the manor of Worksop for the next 150 years.



The seal of Worksop Priory

A rhyming pedigree by Pigot, a canon of the Priory, was written before the Dissolution of the Priory sometime between 1475 and 1531. In over 30 verses he lists the history of the Priory from 1100, the Lovetot, Furnival and Talbot families, and where they were buried. It begins by referring to the Lovetot family: 'Which has that affluence and inspiration, the Monastery at Worksop first for to found, mortest thereto goods thereupon, woods, meadows and mounds, to say a great ground, therefore in special certs we are bound, to pray for his soul and his successors, as we nightly do, and daily at all hours'.

In 1536 King Henry VIII split with the church in Rome and closed all the monasteries in England. The following document lists lands and valuables that were seized by the King. The names of many of the parcels of land reflect the position of the amenities of the Priory including the fish ponds, well, bakehouse, water mill and infirmary.

It is called the Worksop, Survey, 1539, (Dissolution of the monasteries), source: Miscell. Book of Exchequer, No. 399, fol. 339.

Comitatus Nottingham, Worksop Priory

In Superuisa per Commissionarios domini Regis ibidem capto
25 November Anno Regni Regis Henrici VIII XXX alia continentur

The Demanez

First, the Gate house with a yard or court as there does extend afore the Front of the said late Priory and contains in ground half an acre. Value in rent 6 pence.

Item, there is adjoining upon the west a close called the Pond Yards now divided with a hedge in two parts and containing one and a half acres. Value in rent 2 shillings 6 pence.

Item, there is a mead called Bakehouse Mead with a ground called Torre Carr containing two acres. Value in rent 3 shillings 4 pence.

Item, there is a ground called Well House yard lying within the precincts of the same Monastery containing one and a half acres. Value in rent 3 shillings.

Item, there is a mead called the Long Mead or Broad Mead containing seven acres. Value in rent 9 shillings.

Item, there is a close called Fermerye Garth which contains three acres. Value in rent 6 shillings.

Item, there is a Water Mill for gristing the corn set in the same site, which is worth yearly 10 shillings.

Item, there is a waste ground being purlieu called Sparrow Thorn Hill lying open toward the Common Forest and containing two hundred acres. Value in rent 20 shillings.

Item, there is a house or habitation with a garden and a little croft which house is called Jesus House, set and being next adjoining the precinct of the same late Priory and is worth yearly to be let to farm 6 shillings 8 pence.

Item, there is a wood of oaks and beech called Stotburghede, extending by the highway and leading from Gateford upon the north side of the same way and adjoining upon the ground of the Lord Dacres to the south, upon the north side and so west to Gateford Park. The herbage where of does lie common and the same wood containing 20 acres. Value nil.

Item, there is a wood called Prior Romwood lying by the Rood Gate leading from Welbeck to Retfurthe and is a Royal forest. The herbage there is common and the wood half wasted and containing 40 acres. Value nil.

Item, there is a mead called Buslyngenes containing four acres and rents at 8 shillings.

Sum total 74 shillings 8 pence

Item, there is a Grange adjoining the said site called the Lathes containing and having a house suitable for deer or servants to dwell in, an ox house, a hay house and two barns, a yard and one little garden and one little croft and dove cot, all which is worth by the year 20 pence.

There is a croft called Myre Croft containing two acres and is worth by the year 2 shillings.

Item, there is a croft called Thomme Croft containing two and a half acres and worth by the year 3 shillings 4 pence.

Item, there is a croft called Lamb Croft containing three acres and worth by the year 5 shillings.

Item, there is a close called Lath Field containing twenty eight acres and is worth by the year 28 shillings.

Item, there is a close called Whyne Close adjoining Lath Field and containing twenty acres and is worth by the year 8 shillings, 4 pence.

Item, there is adjoining a parcel of wood called Arnold Park set with young oaks like rafters or spar and containing three acres. The herbage is worth nil.

Item, there is the Nether Town Field, three closes lying jointly together containing among them eighty acres and is worth by year 40 shillings.

Item, there is a ground called Coot Field containing thirty acres and is worth by year 20 shillings.

Item, there is a wood called Conygre set with young oaks containing three acres, the herbage which is worth by the year nil.

Item, there is a close of mead and pasture called Howathe containing three acres and is worth by the year 4 shillings.

Sum total 117 shillings 4 pence.

The Woods

Item, there is a wood called Warre Wood lying in the forest on the west side of Kingeston set with oak of 34 years growing and containing twenty acres as appears. The herbage is worth to be let to farm, nil.

Item, there is a wood called Hardwick Wood set with young oak of various ages and lies outside the Royal Forest and contains sixty acres. The herbage there is common.

Item, there is a wood called Skratta lying in the parish of Thorpe Salvin set with oak of middle age and birch, containing twenty acres

Item, there is a wood called Peryen Grove containing two acres and one other called Firth Wood containing 10 acres set with underwood. And so the same contains twelve acres.



Some of the ruined priory buildings that were destroyed during the Dissolution

Plate in Worksop Priory at its dissolution

First, 1 pair of silver candlesticks. Item, one censer of silver.

Item, one ship of silver [a vessel in the shape of a boat in which incense was kept. When required for use a little of the incense was taken out with a spoon, made for the purpose, and thrown on burning charcoal in the censer].

Item, five chalices. Item, 2 cups with gilt covers. Item, 2 salts with 1 cover

Item, 12 silver spoons. Item, 4 ale cups.

Exchequer – Queen's Remembrancer. Suppression Papers 833/34. 1538
County of Nottingham and York.

A brief certificate made upon the dissolution of diverse monastries and priories there surrendered in the months of November and December in the XXXth year of the reign of our sovereign Lord Henry the Eighth as here after ensues.

The name of the house with the names of the keepers – Worksop Priory, Earl of Shrewsbury.

The clear money remaining of the possessions over annual reprises £291.

The nowmebre of the abbots and brethren with their pensions, Prior £2, 20 shillings, brethren, £69, 6 shillings 8 pence.

The clear money remaining of the lands, £172 2 shillings 8 pence.

The Stock store and domestic stuff there sold with duties received £161 18 shillings 6 pence.

Rewards with the portions paid to the abbots £49 10 shillings.

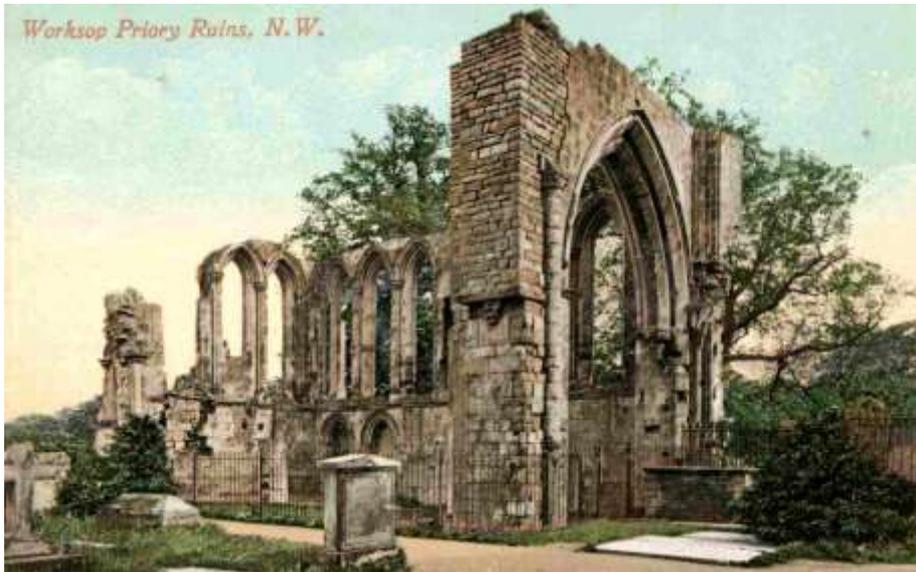
The remains of the price of the goods and chattels £112 8 shillings 6 pence.

Lead and bells remaining – bells 6, lead 1 Fother.

Woods and underwoods – 112 acres.

Plate and jewels – nihil hic quia billam annexam.

Although the Prior and the monks received pensions and were better treated than at some monastic houses, the Priory buildings were torn down leaving ruins except for the gatehouse and part of the church. The nave, originally 360 feet long, was reduced to 135 feet. Cannon balls, possibly used to break down the walls, were found during the 1845 restoration.. Damage to the walls is still visible on the south side. The church became the parish church of St Cuthbert and St Mary for Radford and Worksop.



The ruins of the Lady Chapel about 1910

The lands owned by the Priory passed to the 4th Earl of Shrewsbury, as the following document shows:

No 1003 1544 Tenth Report of the Deputy Keeper of the Public Records, Appendix 2

Shrewsbury, Francis, Earl of – Section 1 – Summary and particulars of exchange dated 1 July, 36 Henry VIII, mentions the following possessions appointed by the Earl to the King, viz.: the manor of Farneham of the yearly value of £38, woods of the yearly value of £659 6s 10d and the patronage of the church of Farneham of the yearly value of £13 6s 8d in exchange for the Demesnes of Warkyssoppe of the yearly value of £11 10s 5d. Lands called Jesus House, parcel of Warkyssoppe of the yearly value of 6s 8d, lands called Kings Meadow of the yearly value of 13s 4d. Parcels of land of the late Priory of Rocester, of the yearly value of £9 13s 10d. Lands of Pyllesbury of the yearly value of £19 13s 10d. Lands parcel of Roche of the yearly value of £7 13s 4d and also lands in the county of York.

The Earl is to hold the premises of the King in chief by the service of the tenth part of a knight's fee and 'to find to the King a glove for his right hand at his coronation, and to bare up his right arm the same day that the King does bear the sceptre in his graces hand'. The lord of the manor of Worksop continued to hold this honour until the mid 20th century.

Considerable problems with the church fabric after the Dissolution of the Priory are apparent from the Churchwarden's book, as the windows had no glass and the roof was seriously damaged. The book also shows changes which had to be made during the reigns of Edward VI, Mary I and Elizabeth I, as the state religion changed from Protestant to Catholic and back to Protestant.

Reign of Henry VIII, 1539 - 1547

First, to Thomas Johnson for a sheep skin to cover the mass book, 3 pence.
Item, for mending the said book, 2 shillings

Item, for making 4 books in English for the procession

Item, for painting the altar cloth and the lectern

Item, for bread and ale at setting up the sepulchre, 3 pence

Item, sold by Robert Rens, Thomas Johnson, John Byet, Waryn Gudlad, to Richard Ayeston the parclosse [screen] of Jesus choir with the loft where they sang, the price to which he added a partition to keep out the jackdaws, 3 shillings

Reign of Edward VI, 1547 - 1553

Item, to 2 masons for making the stone-work of a new window in the church, 12 shillings.

Item, for Florry to darken the images faces, 2 pence

Item, to a glazier for glazing a new window and for solder, 4 shillings

Item, paid to Robert Fermery and 4 labourers about the pulling down of the altars, 21 pence

Item, paid Edward Ward for making irons for the glass windows on Saint Katheryn's choir, 12 pence

Item, received for old vestments, 2 shillings 8 pence

Reign of Queen Mary, 1553 - 1558

Parcels of money collected and gathered for the casting of the bells and making of the bell frame, in the third and fourth years of the reigns of our Sovereign Lord and Lady, King Phillip and Queen Mary

Reign of Elizabeth I

Item, paid for bread and drink at the abolishing of the images and pulling down of the altar, 8 pence

Item, paid for a net for the west window, 6 pence

Item, paid to Cressey for making the trellises to keep out the crows, 2 shillings 6 pence

Item, paid to the painter's wife for whitening the altar and the rood loft, 16 pence

Item, paid to 3 masons for 6 days for meat and wages for making the church end, 13 shillings 6 pence. Item, paid to 4 servers to the mason, 8 shillings 4 pence

Item, paid to Richard Sherman, the plumber, for covering the church roof, £3 7 shillings 8 pence. Item, paid to the said plumber for the covering of the south aisle with lead, 26 shillings 8 pence

Parcels of money collected and gathered from the parishioners by the afore named church wardens, towards the repair of the church and other necessities

First, paid to Thomas Reve and Michael his brother, bell founders, for casting 4 bells and 3 brasses, £5, 10 shillings

Item, paid to Robert Burgoyne and his servants for making the bell frame with the wheels and other wood work there belonging, £8, 5 shillings, 8 pence

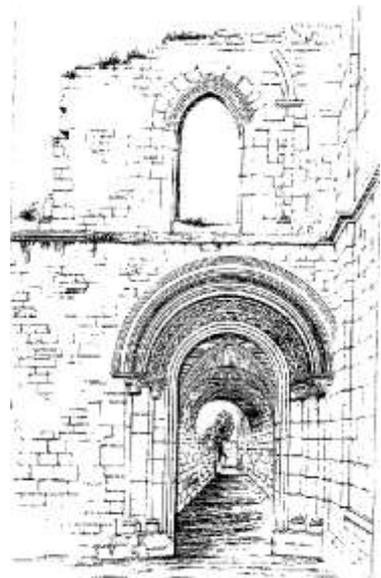
Item, paid for bread and ale at the hanging of the bells, 20 pence

If you would like to read more, please go to **Worksop Priory Church Warden's Book**

In 1852 Edwin Eddison described the remains of the monastic buildings at the time the church was restored in 1845:

'The remains of the cloisters are on the north side of the church, north and east of the site of the prior's house: they are vaulted over and have moulded ribs, the entrance to them from this house is a Norman doorway, the arch of which is considerably enriched.'

The entrance to the cloisters
drawn in 1845 by Nicolson



Eddison continues, 'We cannot now determine their original extent, but it is thought they formed a square or parallelogram, of which the church was one side. A row of corbels existing before the restoration, on the outside of the north aisle wall showed that some vaulted building had been erected against it; upon the removal of the latter, the heavy buttresses which stood there would be substituted as a support. North of the remains of the prior's house is an ancient wall with round-headed apertures and corbels, leading us to suppose that some vaulted building was also placed against it; on the top of the wall is a string-course and window sills, which indicate it as the outer wall of a two storied building, most probably cloisters with a dormitory over'. White's Directory for 1832 states: 'Some few fragments of the cloisters etc still remain and some parts of the monastic walls have been converted into small dwelling houses'.



An 1845 drawing by Nicholson before the restoration showing the remains of the cloisters on the right

The Priory Church remained the only parish church in Worksop until St John's Church was built in 1868 on Gateford Road. By the 1840s the Priory Church was in a very dilapidated condition and repairs were necessary as several walls were leaning outwards. An earthquake on 18 November 1795 had caused the church bells to ring, and during another earthquake at noon on March 17 1816, during divine service, the church tower cracked with a loud crash. Several houses were also damaged.



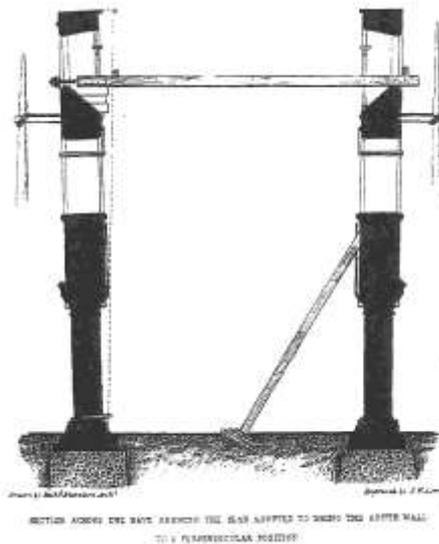
An 18th century print showing Worksop Priory before restoration

Eddison describes the restoration:

‘Mr Richard Nicholson, a native of Worksop, was the architect employed at the recent restoration of 1845. Previous to its restoration, the church was in an exceedingly dilapidated even dangerous state. By the practice of excavating for intramural graves, the pillars had been undermined, and those on the south side were thrown from their perpendicular in that direction, the wall above them being so to the extent of about fifteen inches. Solid blocks of stone were placed under the pillars to form new bases; these were secured by concrete, and by a simple but hazardous process, this immense wall, with a surface of nearly 4000 square feet, and comprising many thousand feet of solid masonry, was brought back to its vertical position without a single fracture occurring. This was effected by connecting the two opposite walls by large beams of timber passed across the nave, into and on the north side, through the clerestory windows’.



Left: Drawing of the interior in 1845 by Nicholson



Right: Diagram by Nicholson of how the repositioning was carried out

‘The beams on the north side were securely fastened to another beam extending the whole length of the wall, and on the south side eight rods of iron, welded to iron clasps at the ends of the beams, passed through another piece of the timber in close contact with the clerestory wall. These rods were provided with nuts and screws, by means of which the last-mentioned piece of timber, and by it the south wall, could be subjected to pressure. The crevices at the north bases of the columns caused by the oblique direction the latter had assumed, had wedges inserted in them; and as these were removed, the wall gradually fell, and resumed its original position.

The whitewashed walls were scraped, the unsightly galleries which the Worksopians of old had erected, with more regard to comfort than taste, were, with the pews, removed’.

Kelly's Directory for 1848 states:

'The Priory Church has 2 towers and 6 bells and is now undergoing considerable repair, the cost of which is estimated at near £5000 raised in part by voluntary subscription.

The north and south sides have been pulled down and rebuilt, the east end taken out and a magnificent Norman window with 3 lights inserted above which is a beautiful circular or wheel window, the gift of Henry Heming of Sparken Hill. Under the whole of the building has been inserted an entire new foundation. The old galleries and pews have been entirely swept away, open stalls being now erected, the ends of which are richly carved and ornamented'.

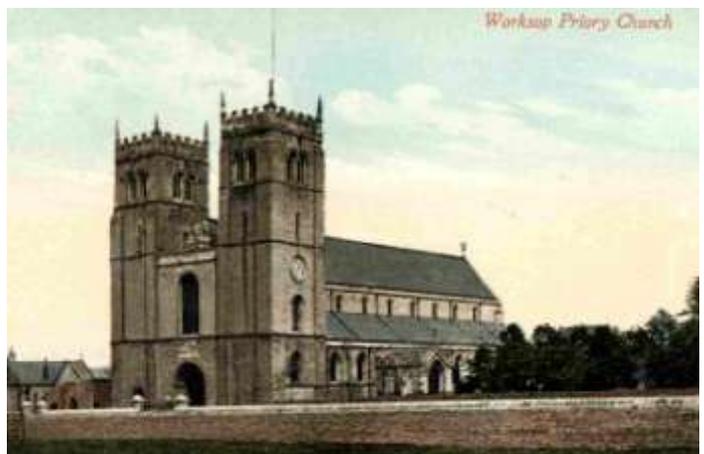
Further restoration work followed. White's Directory of 1864 says: 'In 1861 the church was thoroughly restored both internally and externally, the contract which was £2,122 12s 0d, of this £300 was raised by church rates, £600 by old materials and £1,429 19s 0d by subscriptions. Towards the latter the Duke of Newcastle contributed £500, the Duke of Portland £100, Earl Manvers £105, Sir T.W. White £50, Rev J. Stacey £50, H. Owen Esq. £50, and the two church wardens, F. Hooson and J. Miller £40 each'.

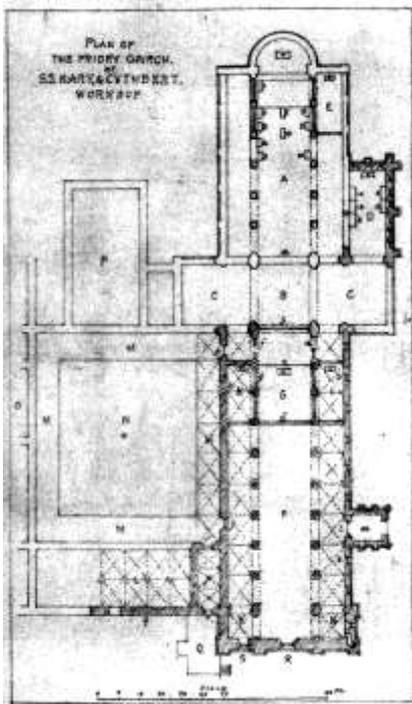
Two bells were added in 1883 giving a peal of eight.



An engraving of 1854

Worksop Priory in 1910





This plan of the church shows the nave was originally 360 feet long. After the Dissolution it was reduced to 135 feet.



An engraving of about 1850 shows the nave roof supported by eight pillars on each side, alternately cylindrical and octagonal, joined by arches ornamented with quatrefoils.



The nave interior of Worksop Priory in 1910

As a memorial to the men of Worksop who died in World War I, in 1922 the ruins of the Lady Chapel were restored by architect Sir Harold Brakspear, and in 1929 the chapel was re-joined to the nave. In 1935 the north transept was added.



Worksop Priory with the Lady Chapel re-attached taken about 1950

Additional restoration was carried out between 1970 and 1974 when the east end was redesigned by Laurence King.



The Priory exterior and interior showing the 1970s alterations