

Hull's Monasteries (and Friaries).

There is a key difference between a Monastery and a Friary and that is the way Monks and Friars practised their beliefs. Friars made less of the building and existed by living in local areas and practicing their beliefs with local people whereas true Monks lived in closed orders in Monasteries and devoted themselves to a relationship with God in this way. Perhaps I can illustrate this by referring to the well-known Friar from Nottingham, Friar Tuck. Fictional or not he clearly did not meet Robin Hood in a monastery but out in the forest, with the people!

Friars feature in Hull's past and a couple of Street names give clues – Whitefriargate, one of the main shopping streets was the home of the "Whitefriars", and Blackfriargate, the name of a different order of Friars. The difference was largely to do with the habits (the dress) and its main colour. A further Augustinian Friary was established in a church, now buried under the car park in Lowgate.

The Charterhouse (Hull Charterhouse) was a Carthusian monastery and alms house (an early form of hospital, called Maison Dieu-Gods House), and it was the hospital factor that largely saved it from the ravages of the dissolution of the Monasteries by Henry 8th. It lies just outside the town walls and to the North of the route area of this guide. A rebuild took place in 1645 and 1780 and the building is in use today.

As explained Friars are different from monks in that they are called to live vows of poverty, chastity and obedience in service to society, rather than through cloistered in Monasteries. Friars work among laypeople was supported by donations or in another curious way for the Augustinian Friary in Lowgate as we will see later.

Carmelite Friars (known as White Friars because of the colour of their habits) arrived in Hull around 1293. They live on, of course, in the street name Whitefriargate. From 1303 there were Augustinian friars (known as Grey Friars) in Hull. The street name Blackfriargate which runs parallel to the A 63 near the large road bridge indicates there were Dominican friars (known as Black Friars because of their black robes) in Hull.

Having said that friars largely lived in the community, an Augustinian Friary, was built as a Church where the Argos Building is now in Lowgate, and extended, with its grave yard, the area beyond that of the 2001 built Magistrates Court. The church existed until around 1632.

This Church and its friars survived on charitable giving, but also made money by letting off coffin space on the wide window ledges of the Church, and, applying commercial principles, the nearer to the altar, the nearer to God and the greater the charge.

Incidentally an excavation of the graveyard and work on the remains, revealed a high incidence of the sexually transmitted disease syphilis, 200 years before it was said to have been imported by Christopher Columbus from the Americas.

In the well preserved graves were flagellation whips used by the monks as part of their religious ritual. The skeletons taken from the graves revealed a lot of arthritic conditions, as

befitting the swampy conditions of this area but the bones were re-interred in St Charles Catholic Church near to Hull New Theatre just to the North of the area of the tour.

Many of the coffins were made of oak, found by carbon dating, to come from Latvia in 1420.

The area around the old High Street and Market Place has little or no remains that can now be seen of the once bustling area frequented in some numbers by the friars and their early charitable work of mediaeval England. A symbol of the Augustinian Order however is etched into the glass of the doorway of the Magistrates Court.