

THE REFORMATION IN NEWARK

The violent enforced change known as the Reformation took place over a 50-year period and was the most divisive revolution in English history, inexorably dismantling the structured way of life that had been in place for hundreds of years.

To some people at that time, the medieval Catholic religion with the Pope as Head of Church on earth, its accumulation of indulgences, proliferation of religious images and relics, the making of pilgrimages, the Masses for the dead, all seemed abhorrent. Protestantism taught that salvation was only achieved through faith in Jesus and the Bible rather than through the teaching of the Church. The Pope was considered by some to be a foreign power wielding considerable and unnecessary control and sway over the English people and monarch. The Act in Restraint of Appeals of 1533 read:

“this realm of England is an empire and so hath been accepted in the world, governed by one supreme head and king”



A CRUEL DEATH - THE PUNISHMENT FOR REFUSING TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT HENRY VIII WAS THE NEW HEAD OF THE CHURCH IN ENGLAND

During the time-period that Fr. Henry Lytherland was vicar at Belton, North Lincolnshire, Augustine Webster was the Prior of the nearby Monastery. Augustine was asked by government officials, and had refused, to take the oath of allegiance agreeing to, and proclaiming the king's position as the new head of the English church.

On a visit to the London Charterhouse Augustine Webster was arrested with others and imprisoned on the orders of Thomas Cromwell. When questioned on the royal supremacy they declared, they could neither assent nor so believe. For this crime Augustine Webster and four others were hanged, beheaded and quartered at Tyburn on May 4, 1534. The above picture shows the three monks and two priests leaving their imprisonment at the Tower of London enroute to their executions

Henry VIII was responsible for the English Church breaking away from the authority of Rome after the Pope excommunicated him in 1533 because of the king's marriage to Anne Boleyn. Henry had requested an annulment of his previous marriage to Catherine of Aragon, but the Pope refused to grant it. By 1536, Henry had broken with Rome, seized the Church's assets and declared the Church of England, as the established church, with himself as its head. The Act of Supremacy of 1534 confirmed the king's status as having supremacy over the church and required the nobility to swear an oath recognising his supremacy. This Act declared that King Henry was

"the only supreme head on earth of the Church in England"

and that the English Crown shall enjoy

"all honours, dignities, preeminences, jurisdictions, privileges, authorities, immunities, profits, and commodities to the said dignity."



QUEEN CATHERINE

King Henry VIII married Queen Catherine of Aragon and then later sought an annulment of that marriage from the Pope who refused. Henry later married Anne Boleyn and then appointed himself head of the English church. Queen Catherine was held under house arrest by the king and it was whilst imprisoned at Buckden Manor that Friars from Newark visited the Queen. The visit of the Newark Friars greatly annoyed the king who then issued instruction for their arrest

Law prohibited any allegiance to the Pope and declared such to be treason. However, at that time the Church in Newark, as in the rest of the country, was a flourishing and popular institution and the enforced change of the Reformation was the work of a small minority, who won favour and wealth for their support of the King.

In 1534 Papal authority over religious houses was transferred under English law to the Crown. 'Visitors' were dispatched to the various religious Orders with authority to examine those within the Orders concerning their obedience to Henry VIII and to take an inventory of their goods before removing them.

Sir John Markham was a prominent Newark citizen and it seems that he profited greatly by supporting the policy of the King in his breach with Rome and in his attack on the monastic institutions. It is recorded that on 2nd March 1542 after the Observants had been removed from Newark that their friary was leased to Sir John Markham. It was Sir John Markham who had sent a letter to Cromwell accusing Father Lytherland, Newark's parish priest, of speaking against the king in a sermon at the parish church. For this act Father Lytherland was later sent to York on charges of treason.

Sir John Markham was also one of those who 'visited' the Carthusian Priory at Beauvale (near Eastwood, 30 miles from Newark) to "take the value" of the priory. During the questioning of the monks, one William Trafford replied,

"I firmly believe that the Pope of Rome is superior head of the Church Catholic"

and when asked whether he would abide by his words, he replied, "Usque ad mortem" (until death). Moreover, he wrote his words down and Sir John Markham carried the paper away and placed the monk in safe custody.

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE MONASTRIES

The government's intent was to wipe the monasteries from the face of the landscape; the official instruction was:

"to pull down to the ground all the walls of the churches, stepulls, cloysters, fraterys, dorters, chapter housys",

so that even the memory of them would be eradicated. The speed with which the 1,000 -year-old monastic system fell apart was astonishing. An Act of Parliament dissolving the monasteries was passed in 1536, and by 1540 virtually all the 800 abbeys, monasteries and convents had disappeared. In many cases their disappearance was literally physical. The vast abbey of Glastonbury, for example, which was bigger than the town itself, disappeared in its entirety, except for the abbot's kitchen and some ruined walls.

The wealth of the greater monasteries, in particular those of popular shrines, such as Becket's at Canterbury and Swithin's in Winchester, automatically found its way into the Royal Exchequer. The beautiful buildings and their associated lands were sold off for a song, usually to the King's friends and to

those who had assisted in the dissolution of the monasteries. The buildings were then either demolished for the sake of their materials or transformed into a nobleman's home.

The following is an abbreviated account of the surrender of the Cistercian house of Roche Abbey near Maltby, 30 miles from Newark, by someone who was a boy at the time and whose uncle witnessed what happened. He describes how the government officials deliberately came upon it 'suddenly.' The abbot and officers of the house were assembled and asked to hand over the keys; an inventory was taken of all their goods both within doors and without. After that the abbot and inmates, with 'not little grief', were sent away and the plunder began.

"For the church was the first thing that was spoiled; then the abbot's lodging, the dormitory and refectory, with the cloister and all the buildings around, within the abbey walls. For nothing was spared except the ox-houses and swinecoates and other such houses or offices that stood outside the walls – these had greater favour shown to them than the church itself.....It would have pitied any heart to see the tearing up of the lead, the plucking up of boards and throwing down of the rafters. And when the lead was torn off and cast down into the church and the tombs in the church were all broken and all things of value were spoiled, plucked away or utterly defaced, those who cast the lead into fadders plucked up all the seats in the choir where the monks sat when they said service. These seats were like the seats in minsters (i.e. the beautiful oak carved misericords), they were burned and the lead melted, although there was plenty of wood nearby, for the abbey stood among the woods and the rocks of stone."

Today the ruins of Roche Abbey are certainly worth a visit. The Abbey was founded in 1147 and the church was completed before the end of the 12th century. Only the east end stands to its full height, however these parts of the building together with the monastic ruin are of immense interest and considerable beauty.



ROCHE ABBEY

Close to Newark and once a thriving Monastic community serving the local community

What is so extraordinary about this destruction of a thousand years of English art and architecture is that those who carried out the work seemed to lack any sense that they were destroying things of untold beauty and craftsmanship. The suppression of every house was seen on strictly business terms. Jewels, plate or vestments of quality were confiscated and sent to London. The remaining contents, or rather what was left after the locals had made off with what they could, were disposed of in local sales.

It seems that in Newark there was not a great deal to rob from the friars but for the church and house in which they worshipped a chalice, lead from the roofs and a bell weighing 500 pounds and a couple of statues. A missive sent to Thomas Cromwell in March 1539 by a Richard Ingworth who had been charged with suppressing the Houses in Newark, Boston, Grimsby and Lincoln reads,

“They were all poor, in some places not so much left as the debts three pounds or more, so that the King will have nothing but the lead (from the roofs) and 12 score fothers, 24 bells and a chalice of six or ten ounces in every house.”

A small statue of St Francis of Assisi was safely removed and can now be seen sitting several feet up on the chancel screen in front of the altar of St Giles Church Balderton, near Newark.



STATUE OF ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI

Removed from the Observant Friars House in Appleton Gate at the time of the dissolution of the monasteries and now standing above the altar screen in St Giles Church Balderton.

It is unbelievable that despite its long history, having probably been made in the 15th century, that a decision was recently made to paint the statue gold!

In August (probably 1538) one Chapuys, wrote to his master Cromwell,

“of the seven houses of Observants, four have been already emptied of Friars, because they refuse to swear to the statutes made against the Pope.”

It has been estimated that about 376 smaller monastic houses such as the Observants of Newark were suppressed by the Act of 1536 and about 645 larger houses by the Act of 1539. The proceeds of the suppression were vested in the Court of Augmentations set up by the Act of 1536 and ultimately in the Exchequer and one estimate put them worth at 150,000 pounds although other estimates put them at a higher figure in money values of that period. The value of silver delivered to the King’s Jewel House is unknown but it was said to be enormous.



THE NEWARK FRIAR

Once the House of the Newark Observant Friars

The Crown was the principle gainer with the dissolution, although certain monastic lands were bestowed on well-known nobles and others who had supported the King’s cause. As mentioned previously Sir John Markham of Newark profited greatly by supporting the King’s policy and after the Observants had been removed from Newark the friary fell into his hands. Others mention previously who had acted to suppress The Lincolnshire Rising and the Pilgrimage Grace were also to benefit. The Earl of Shrewsbury

had acted through his agents as steward for at least six monasteries prior to the dissolution and was therefore in the know and able to get in on the ground floor when the monastic lands became available. The Duke of Norfolk and the Duke of Suffolk also involved in the suppression those who had protested for maintaining the old-faith profited by their association with the King and his cause and gained much monastic property and land.

The Dissolution produced a vast amount of suffering; one third of the land of England was then transferred and let at higher rents with the result that the cost of living rose; a great loss resulted to art and higher education; no such changes had been known for generations and charity was much reduced and consequently the number of poor increased.

NEWARK OBSERVANT FRIARS STAND AGAINST THE KING

It is said that no other religious order resisted Henry VIII with greater fearlessness and pertinacity than the Observants. The Newark Observant Friars were, in the tradition of Greenwich and Richmond, loyal to Queen Catherine whom Henry VIII had cast off as his lawful wife.

In July 1533 Catherine was moved by the king from Ampthill in Bedfordshire to Buckden in Huntingdonshire. While there she was visited by two Newark Observants, Hugh Payne and Thomas Hayfield, and Cromwell on learning of this visit immediately ordered their arrest.



BUCKDEN MANOR

It was at Buckden Manor in Huntingdonshire that the Newark Friars visited Queen Catherine

The two friars fled from Newark when danger became imminent. A Dr. Hilsey who had been employed in 'visiting' the friars to obtain from them an 'oath of obedience' to the King' was sent in pursuit of them. Following them through Bristol, Somerset, Devon and Cornwall, he came up with them at last at Cardiff, where they were seized and cast into prison. In sending them to London to undergo examination by Thomas Cromwell and his officials, Hilsey wrote,

"you shall perceive more of their crafty fashion. In all places where they came they persuaded the people to hold to the Bishop of Rome, calling him a Pope and saying that they will die in his cause, and never forsake him while they live."

They were flung into prison from which subsequently they wrote to Henry VIII to "beg his compassion, being in great pain and misery." Hugh Payne died in the Marshalsea Gaol. Brother Hayfield's fate is uncertain but he probably fared no better.

For another of the Newark Friars, an entry in some accounts of the year 1538 reads,

"40 shillings paid to Richard Lucas for bringing one Bonaventure, a Friar of Newark"

Lucas was a Newark man. Poor Bonaventure can be traced into a royal dungeon. He can hardly be other than Brother Bonaventure Roo, who with Br. Thomas Packington, Br. John Tuit and Br. Richard Carter,

"Suffered very much in prison, from hence they were released by the Kings command."

But the hardships they had borne in their confinement had such an effect on their health that three of them were said to have died shortly after their release. It appears however that Br Bonaventure Roo OFM on release from prison may have escaped to Belgium where he died in 1573 (according to an account given by the Franciscans of Canterbury).

It is recorded that a Newark Friar said in the Church, that such books (that is the new book publications issued by Cromwell), were heresies, and that if the king and his council and the Archbishop of Canterbury did what had been agreed by parliament, and contrary to the holy Pope of Rome and the whole Church, then it was heresy. It is recorded that a Scottish friar also said,

"My brethren, if an angel from heaven will show you another way to live than that your fathers lived before you, believe him not. There was a wise men before this day as there is nowadays, and wiser."

John Forest, a former member of the Newark House and one of the Observant Superiors, was imprisoned in 1534 for speaking out against the king, but two years later he was at liberty in the London House of Grey Friars. As a warden at Greenwich, he took a leading part in the opposition to Henry's divorce and was also a Confessor to Catherine of Aragon. Brother Forest was considered by Bishop Latimer and others to be one of the most learned men of his time. In spite of this, for his opposition to the king he met a dreadful death and was burned at Smithfield, London on 22nd May 1538 over a wooden religious image, which had been dragged from North Wales.

FATHER HENRY LYTHERLAND

The head of every parish in pre-Reformation days was the priest; he may have held the title of rector or vicar. After a school education, a student preparing for reception of Holy Orders continued and completed his study at the universities. The ordinary course was lengthy. Grammar, which included Latin and literature with rhetoric and logic, occupied four years. The student was then admitted a Bachelor. In the case of a clerical student this was followed by seven years training before the Bachelors degree in Theology was bestowed.



THE CHAPTER HOUSE AT LINCOLN CATHEDRAL

Oxford University educated Father Henry Lytherland held an important position at Lincoln Cathedral whilst Parish Priest at Newark. Regular meetings were held in the Chapter House with Fr Henry present, with the Dean, other Canons and the Bishop. In the Chapter House the written response from the king to the demands of the Lincolnshire rebels was read aloud causing considerable unrest

A chronological list of priests and vicars is displayed in the parish church. Father Henry Lytherland, in 1532, was the last Catholic Priest to serve at Newark Parish Church. Father Lytherland spoke out against the Reformation and against Henry VIII's insistence on adopting the title of 'the Supreme Head of the Church of England.' For this crime and that of Father Henry's alleged participation in the Pilgrimage of Grace, Fr. Lytherland was taken to York and executed in 1538.



LINCOLN CATHEDRAL

circa 1540

It was whilst serving Lincoln Cathedral that Fr. Henry Lytherland was appointed as Parish Priest to Newark by the Gilbertine Order of St Catherine's Monastery Lincoln in 1532. The building with its conical roof on the right of the above picture is the Chapter House. On the left of the cathedral can be seen a cluster of houses. Father Henry held resident there whilst serving as Legal Adviser and later as the Treasurer of the cathedral

It is recorded Fr Lytherland preached in Newark church on Quinquagesima Sunday 1534 (50 days before Easter) that;

“no man should suffer his servant or apprentice to have any of these books against the Pope, nor yet any man himself should have them”

and he claimed that there were;

“23 books abroad in this country, that the least of them was enough to make an heretic”

Highly derogatory sermons against the royal supremacy were preached from the Newark pulpit, despite the likelihood that such a sermon would significantly reduce the preacher's life expectancy.

Every bishop, abbot and parish priest had been required to preach against the usurpations of the Papacy, and to proclaim king Henry as the Supreme Head of the Church in England. Those who set themselves against the Reformation at that time, did so knowing that it was at their peril. Cromwell, Henry VIII's astute and active minister, had ready means of ascertaining and punishing their default.

“His agents were everywhere, and the most secret conversations were reported to him.”

As in most towns, parties were sharply divided, but the king's actions were being upheld by two Newark locals, William Philipotts and Sir John Markham. As nominee of the Gilbertines, Fr Lytherland adhered to the cause of the Pope. Fr Lytherland's proceedings were closely watched by Philipotts who wrote;

“ Please yt your honorable lordship to be advised that whereas there was a comysson directed unto me (William Philipotts) the 10th day of February (1537) from our sovereign lord the king's grace and his most honourable council as concerning preaching the true word of God declaring the usurped power of the bishop of Rome and also setting forth the king's grace to be worthely and by just title the supreme head of this Church of England next imediately to God. The truth is sine that day, hitherto neither the vicar his curate nor no other for them made no sermon, neither preached anything at all but only the accustomed bidding of the bedes, From Newark upon Trent the 26th day of March”

Following his letter came one from Sir John Markham. This time Fr Lytherland had preached a sermon but not of the required kind. Sir John Markham states that Fr Lytherland's mind was, “cankered and corrupt.”

“Right honourable and my singulre good lord (begins Sir John Markham to Cromwell) whereas of late one maister Lytherland vicar of Newark uppon Trent made a sermon in the churche their, this bearer (amougst others being present, who I note to a man of good knowledge favouring the truth) made report to me of the same and for that the matter appeared to rise from a cankered and corrupt mind and that the said vicar hath been a man ever noted of that sort

Among the State Papers is a document entitled, “Theis be the sayinges of Mr. Letherland, Vicar of Neuarke,” in which the writer complains that the Vicar had openly in the Church said, referring to Henry VIII, that he was no Christian man and reviled him with “many powde wordes.” As a result, certain of the people had challenged the writer saying,

“that it were alms to burne me, yt alms to put my daggre in me yf that I would speke anythyng agaynste the Vicar and the ffreres.”

It seems therefore, this writer had been warned not to speak against Fr Lytherland or the friars, who supported the Pope as Head of the Church. The writer says that the vicar had told the friars that they could speak against, “these books,” and he charged all his parishioners that they should use no such books unless they had his counsel or that of the friars themselves. The

friars on Ladyday (25th March) said openly in the Church that they were heresies, and the king's grace never knew of them.

A document is endorsed, "The Vicar of Newark extolleth the Pope." Another memorandum of the period declares that he (meaning Fr Lytherland) was in Yorkshire with the rebels, and at a town in the Isle called Crowle, and that Lytherland had said he had men well harnessed at his own cost. The result of all these reports and complaints against Fr Lytherland's conduct was that Fr Lytherland was seized, and arraigned (accused) with others at York. In 1538, we find 40 shillings paid to Richard Lucas for bringing Bonaventure, a friar of Newark and 100 shillings paid to John Horseley for,

"sure conveyance of one Miller, late called Lancaster and also the Vicar of Newark, unto York and there to be arraigne."

At York in July 1538, charges were brought against the Vicar of Newark, Henry Lytherland, and a monk named Moreby (from Fountains Abbey). There is brief reference to the trial in State Papers, from which it appears that the pair were convicted of high treason and sentenced to death. Robert Holgate, Bishop of Landaff, writes that Chr. Eysttoyft, of Marheloind, Yorks, and Mr Candsche, priest, of Lincolnshire, gave evidence against Fr Lytherland. This was in July 1538 and the Vicar and two others were shortly afterwards executed for high treason.



TROOPS LEAD A CATHOLIC PRIEST TO HIS EXECUTION

The high treason charge brought against Fr Henry Lytherland was for his sermons preached in Newark Parish Church against the king, for support of the Pope and his teachings, and for his part played in the 'Pilgrimage of Grace' but what part this was, we cannot be sure (or indeed whether he actually participated). Given however, his senior position at Lincoln

Cathedral, Fr Lytherland would have undoubtedly witnessed the uprising at Lincoln, that preceded the Pilgrimage of Grace. He would have seen the great numbers assembling to protest at the Lincoln Cathedral and may have drafted the written petition that was sent to the king, using his experience, developed during his time as the legal advisor to the bishop and the diocese of Lincolnshire.

THE LINCOLNSHIRE RISING

The 'Lincolnshire Rising' was a rebellion of Roman Catholics against the establishment of the Church of England by Henry VIII and the dissolution of the monasteries. It began at St. James Church, Louth, after evensong on October 1, 1536, shortly after the closure of Louth Abbey, and quickly gained support in Horncastle, Caistor and other nearby towns.

The people of Louth had witnessed the sale of monastic ornaments, vestments and other effects and 37 other religious monastic houses in Lincolnshire had fallen under the first act of the suppression. Receipts within six months from the sale of monastic houses, furniture, lead from their roofs, bells and animal stock had amounted to 7,484 pounds. Many a family had also been affected and aged monks and nuns turned out of what had been their lifelong home.

With support from local gentry, a rebel force, whose size has been estimated at up to 40,000 (with today's population this would be estimated at 500,000), marched on Lincoln, and by October 6 had occupied Lincoln Cathedral, demanding the freedom to continue as practising Catholics and protection for the treasures of Lincolnshire churches. They sent their demands in a petition to the King requesting his pardon, the keeping of Holy Days, that suppressed monastic houses might be reopened and that Cromwell with others be dismissed.



LINCOLN CATHEDRAL

Magnificent and beautiful & the gathering place for the Lincolnshire Rising of 1536

The Earl of Shrewsbury warned the King that the rebels were expected to arrive at Newark and that he intended to be in Nottingham with all the forces that he might command. Food stuffs were taken to Newark so as to support the King's troops and Newark Castle was fortified with guns.

The rebellion was effectively ended on October 10, 1536, when King Henry sent word for the occupiers to disperse or face the forces of the Duke of Suffolk, which had already been mobilised. By October 14 few rebels were left in Lincoln. Following the rising, Thomas Kendall, the vicar of Louth and its spiritual leader, was captured and executed, as were most of the other local ringleaders. However, the Lincolnshire Rising almost immediately inspired the more widespread Pilgrimage of Grace. This movement began on 13 October 1536, and at this point the term 'Pilgrimage of Grace' was used.

THE PILGRIMAGE OF GRACE

Robert Aske, a London barrister from a Richmondshire family, and a band of 9,000 followers entered and occupied York. There Aske arranged for expelled monks and nuns to return to their religious houses. King Henry's tenants in the these houses were driven out and Catholic observance resumed.

The Duke of Norfolk took control of Newark and the Castle where the King wrote to him.

“It is very necessary to have the passages so kept as to cause the rebels to remain on the other side of the water” meaning the river Trent.

Norfolk moved north from Newark to Doncaster with 8,000 men.. The Duke of Suffork also visited Newark and the King wrote urging him to fortify the town and passages there and on the Kings instructions the bridges across the Trent at Newark and Nottingham were secured.

A report was written referring to the concerns of low waters of the river Trent at Holme Village and elsewhere close to Newark, that might allow the rebels on horses to cross. It was also reported “if the rebels come we should lose ourselves and the King’s artillery if we trusted to the fords”(meaning the low water of the Trent near Newark).

It is said the Gilbertines Monastic Order were implicated with the Lincolnshire Rising and then later with the Pilgrimage of Grace. The Parish Priest of Newark Father Lytherlande appointed to Newark by the Gilbertines naturally voiced his uneasy at the Kings actions by that time his own Order had served for some four hundred years. It is reported that the monastic Orders of Augustinians, Cistercians and Carthusians had donated money for the cause and that the Gilbertine Priory at Watton was used as a meeting place with the full knowlede of the Gilbertine community. Father Lytherlande was later accused of having been in Yorkshire with the rebels and that he had men well harnessed at his own cost.



THE FIVE WOUNDS OF CHRIST

The above design was painted onto banners and carried during the Pilgrimage of Grace

The success of the rising was so great that the royal leaders opened negotiations with the insurgents at Doncaster, where Aske had assembled between 30,000 and 40,000 men. The Pilgrims had begged that the faith should be maintained, that the ancient liberties of the church be kept safe, requesting unpopular statutes be repealed, some expelled from government and noble blood returned to the Kings Council. Finally they demanded Cromwell, Richard Riche and the heretic bishops be banished. King Henry authorised Norfolk to promise a general pardon, and that a Parliament was to be held at York within a year. Aske then dismissed his followers, trusting in the king's promises wanting a peaceful solution. It is said had a battle taken place at Doncaster the Kings men would have been easily defeated as they were greatly outnumbered.

These promises were not kept, and following the king's failure to keep his word, in January 1537, a new rising took place in Cumberland and Westmoreland, under Sir Francis Bigod from the East Riding of Yorkshire. Faced with another challenge to his authority, the king arrested Aske and several of the other leaders, including Lord Darcy, Sir Robert Constable, Sir John Bulmer, Sir Thomas Percy, and others, who were all convicted of treason and executed. Aske was hung in chains from the walls of a castle as a warning to other would-be rebels. Sir Robert Constable and the abbots of Fountains and Jervaulx were executed in July 1537. Lord Hussey was found guilty as an accomplice in the insurrection of Lincolnshire and was executed at Lincoln. The loss of the leaders enabled the Duke of Norfolk to quell the

rising, and martial law was imposed upon the rebellious regions, finally quelling the insurgency.

LOST TREASURES OF NEWARK

In the niche over the south porch of the Parish Church (overlooking the market place), is a statue of a very beautiful Virgin and Child. At the time of the Reformation, many, if not all, statues of the Saints and the Virgin Mary were destroyed, so it is pleasing to see, 'Our Lady' still seated in a position of honour. There are however, more than 25 empty niches on the exterior of the church and 10 within and we can only imagine what artistic and religious treasures they may once have held.

As we have mentioned, the Archbishop of York had ordered, as far back as 1250, that every parish should provide

“the principal image in the chancel of the saint to which the church is dedicated.”

There would have been an image of St Laurence, to the repair of whose altar 20 shillings was left in 1466. The image of the Virgin Mary is mentioned in his will by John Burton, Vicar of Newark in 1475.

“I will that certain jewels, rosaries, rings, gems, crucifixes and other jewels (jocalia), remain for ever for adorning of the image of the Blessed Mary Virgin and of her son, in the Chapel beyond the south folding doors of the aforesaid church, in honour of God, the blessed Mary Virgin, and of all saints, and in perpetual memory of me, the aforesaid John”

A prominent feature in the south transept was the Altar of the Holy Trinity, towards which in 1466 William Boston was a contributor in his will. He also bequeathed an image of the Blessed Virgin. Each of the Guilds would also have had images of their patron saints.

There were 16 altars beside the high altar. These included the altars of the Holy Trinity (in the South Transept), Our Lady (North side of the church), Jesus, Corpus Christi, St Lawrence, St Nicholas, St Katerine, St James, St Peter, St Stephen. What treasures would have been swept away when these altars were abolished, we can only imagine! An Italian, writing about 1500, said the riches of the English are:

“displayed in the church treasures, for there is not a parish church in the Kingdom, so mean as not to possess crucifix, candlesticks, censers, patens and cups of silver.”

Russell Chamberlin in his book "The English Parish Church" wrote,

“Again a concept that had endured since the very earliest days, the concept of a sacred area, ‘holy of holies’ was destroyed. The high altar itself came in for a furious attack: the very idea of an ‘altar’ with its connotations of sacrifice was repugnant. In its place came the ‘communion table’ – a plain construction of wood, and this was to be brought into the nave. The massive stone slab of the altar was dragged out of the chancel and other side altars dismantled: in St Stephen’s Walbrook it took five labourers working three days to remove all the altars. Mostly they were sold for a few pence, sometimes to be broken up, sometimes used as paving slabs..... The ‘superstitious’ images having been whitewashed over (and so, ironically, preserved for prosperity), texts taken from Holy Scriptures were inscribed in their place and stained glass windows with their ‘blasphemous’ images of Christ and the Apostles were smashed as a matter of course.”

In Newark between 1538 and 1548, the first work of destruction was carried out. All saintly images and paintings were removed. Pictures on the church walls of the so-called 'feigned' miracles were destroyed together with statues, altars and the chantries. There remains only two chantries (early 16th century), erected either side of the altar by members of eminent local families. As these were not dedicated to any particular saint they survived the destruction.

The stained glass windows (with any saintly images), which once filled the windows of the church were either destroyed or removed and sold. It is said that these windows were of great richness and beauty. There was a window to Thomas a Becket, as it is recorded,

“glaess wyndow in the church of Newerke of Thomas Bekket wasse taken downe at the laste affore crystenmes” (1538 or 1539).

Rich benefactors had delighted in adorning the beautiful edifice with the best that the artist could produce. In 1506, Sir Thomas Tempest of Bracewell made this bequest

“I wyll xiiis.iiiid be gyffyn to to ye make of one glasse wyndow in the chapell of Saynt Saveyour in Newark.” It is also recorded “In the windows of the north aisle were painted the history of the New Testament and that the great east window had a history of Joseph.”

The Tudor period witnessed more destruction of what would now be categorised as English heritage than in any other period in our nation’s history. During this time the interior and the exterior of the English Parish Church changed beyond recognition, as images, some of them hundreds of

years old, were systematically removed and destroyed, including; paintings, books, vestments, statues, altars and beautiful stained glass windows.

The story of destruction was rounded off with a final act of sheer greed. In 1551 the government decreed that all the remaining wealth in the churches in the form of gold or silver plate, vestments and church furniture should be surrendered to the Crown.

Any of the art treasures that once adorned the English Church and which had survived the Reformation's ravages, faced a second wave of destruction from the iconoclast. In 1641 in another violent swing, parliament passed an Act ordering the destruction of "all scandalous pictures." Foremost among those destroyers was a certain William Dowsing, who kept a journal and recorded among others, his day's work at Ufford.

"We brake down 30 superstitious pictures and gave direction to take down 37 more and 40 cherubin to be taken down of wood and the chancel levelled. There was a picture of Christ on the Cross and God the father above: and left 37 pictures to be taken down and 6 superstitious inscriptions in brass."

Just a few miles from Newark at Grantham Visitors sent by the Crown attended the Parish church of St Wulframs in 1559 such Visitors would have also in their duties inspected at Newark Parish Church. The Visitors at Grantham were charged with witnessing that imagery had been broken down and sold and it is recorded;

"the rood Mary and John and all other idols, pictures, Mass books, legend books and all other papistical books and sermons were openly burned at the Cross called the Market Cross...the vestments, copes, albs, tunics and all other such baggages were defaced and openly sold by the general consent of the whole corporation, and the money employed to setting up desks in the church and the making of a decent communion table (wooden)...a silver and copper shire called St Waulframs was sold...."

Throughout the country there was a systematic destruction of thousands of beautiful books at the time when new prayer books were introduced under Edward VI replacing their medieval predecessors most of which had been painstakingly hand created by the monastic orders over the previous centuries. It was the monasteries that had provided the country with the great seats of learning and consequent they had associated libraries. Each page of illuminated text may have taken days to produce and when completed these pages were then carefully placed together and then exquisitely bound. The destruction however extended beyond the monasteries, churches and schools and into private homes as efforts were made to eliminate all evidence of catholic forms of worship and devotion down to the smallest missal or prayer book owned by the ordinary citizen. Even more than the imagery of

the statues, wooden and stone carvings, paintings and shrines, these books embodied the Catholic way of thought that was to be wiped out by the order of the state. The manuscripts and books housed in Cathedral and Minster priories suffered the same fate. Worcester for example had 600 volumes at the time of the dissolution and of these only six found their way into the Royal Libraries. The Austin Friars at York had libraries of 646 volumes of which only three have ever been traced.



SHRINE TO OUR LADY AT HOLY TRINITY NEWARK

Built in 2006 in honour of Our Lady and in memory of Father Henry Lytherland, the Newark Observant Friars, and the many monasteries that once filled England

WALKING FROM NEWARK ON PILGRIMAGE

In the will of William Boston of Newark made on the feast day of St. Benedict 1466, twenty five shillings was left for a Priest to make a pilgrimage to Bridlington, Walsingham, Canterbury and Hayles. Money and property were also bequeathed by William for the altar and repair of the book of St. Laurence and for almshouses situated in Appleton Gate.



REMAINS OF THE FORMER ABBEY AT WALSINGHAM AND SHRINE TO OUR LADY

Pilgrimages were often made in those days to the many sites in England and across Europe. Walking by foot from Newark to the popular Walsingham would have taken the Pilgrim on a well trodden route which might have passed Sleaford, Boston via the many wayside chapels which provided for the Pilgrims devotion and one such a chapel would have been found at Kings Lynn, the Chapel of Our Lady of Red Mount. Village churches would have been stopped at in places such as Beckingham and Brant Broughton so that a days walking might cover the distance between several of these villages where the locals would have welcomed their visitors. On reaching Walsingham many places were to be found for rest and replenishment, near the Priory stood the Inn 'Le Beere' in the nearby Friday market were 'The Crownyd Lion' the 'White Horse' and close by the 'Moone and Starr' and the 'Sarassyns Hede.' There was also the 'Swan and Bull' the 'Ram' and the 'Angel now wasted' there were also other Inns. One might wonder that this was ample accommodation for a small Norfolk village but it reflects the immense number of visitors to a place referred to as England's Nazareth. On

the road between the city of Norwich and Walsingham at a place called Billington was built a hospital with a chapel that was dedicated the St. Paul and St. Thomas it was so designed for the reception of thirteen poor travellers as they passed to the Shrine of Our Lady, before A.D. 1224. This hospital was structured with a Master and Chaplains and thirteen beds were provided for every night. From London the chief road which Pilgrims followed was named the Palmers Way and from the north folk would stop at the Shrine of our Lady at Jesmond if they crossed the river Tyne. On the road Pilgrims generally found shelter and accommodation for the night in the guesthouses of monasteries or convents and the guesthouse of the Augustinian Priory at West Acre close to Walsingham was built especially large to cater for the many Pilgrims.

Two of the Newark Friars Hugh Payne and Thomas Hayfield visited Queen Catherine of Aragon whilst she was in confinement at Buckden in Huntingdonshire and for this they were later imprisoned where subsequently Hugh Payne died. It was Queen Catherine the first wife of Henry VIII who had a great devotion to Our Lady of Walsingham. In a letter from the Queen to Henry whilst the King was in France the Queen wrote of a great victory won at Flodden Field where the English had defeated the invading Scots . She concluded in her letter praying for her husbands safe return.

“for which cause I am going to Our Lady of Walsingham, that I promised so long ago to see” dated September 1513.

In her will, Queen Catherine made a special bequest

“that personage go to Our Ladye of Walsingham in pilgrimage and in going by the way dole 20 nobles”