

## Tunnels and Treasure

The Priory at Bridlington had indeed had a long and splendid past; in literature, more especially in historical literature its name had been honourably distinguished. But from the evidences of Henry's commissioners we are compelled to consider it fallen from its high estate. What we are given to consider is a great Monastery in decline, in debt, with its buildings untended, even the church itself in "farre decaye". Because of the scarcity of documents for those years we shall never really know the full truth behind this situation. What we do see is a great Augustinian Monastic establishment stripped and plundered of its "treasures" by various agencies both governmental and civilian.

How did the magnificent Priory woodwork come to be split up into various churches in the North of England? Who was it that decided that it had to be spared? Was it spirited out of the Monastery in the period between Norfolk going and Pollard coming to Bridlington?

Was the shrine of St. John really demolished or was it removed section by section in the hope that someday it could be reassembled? Did they think that the dissolution was going to be soon over and things restored to normal, "A flash in the pan"? Even Norfolk reported to Cromwell that "Saynt John shrine.....the people will be desirous to have it". Pollard mentioned that he had "gotten much more silver and golde" in the church than Norfolk.

But did Pollard get all that there was? Did he miss some as well, was some of it hidden from him also?



This bench end from the Priory has ended up in Leake church. The carving shows it is dedicated to John Hampton, Prior in 1519. Google "Leake Church" for

In this framework of dissolution must somewhere be the answers to questions we pose. From time to time during modern building development in the surrounding area various remains of the Priory buildings have been uncovered. On Church Green during the late Victorian period, vaulted cellars were found in the vicinity of the row of cottages. Within the cellar it was reported that a "treasure box" had been found, but unfortunately we are not told of the contents. Cellars were also unearthed in the 1870's on the North Eastern side of the Bayle and were found to contain supports for barrels or casks. Because of the lack of plans and documentation regarding the monastery, many things must still be waiting to be discovered.

Also there has been for many years a standing tradition of a tunnel from the Priory to the harbour. Various sightings of this have been noted, one when Queensgate was being constructed, another when the cafe opposite what was Lloyds Hospital was being modernised, contractors broke through into the tunnel. A reported description of this "tunnel" was of a brick lined conduit which was dry. There is also reported a perusal of a similar passageway, early the last century, near to the Priory, somewhere outside the churchyard at the East end near the car service centre on Sewerby Rd. Apparently the brave explorers went as far as possible until their candles went out, they then beat a hasty retreat! In the 1950's Eric Mellor recited the tradition of a buried gold crucifix "Man sized" hidden by the Augustinian Canons to prevent its desecration by the Kings commissioners, this folk tale has been related many times since. There is never "smoke without fire". After all, it has been noted in the report of the dissolution that Pollard the Kings Commissioner at the dissolution was most indignant at the amount of theft of artefacts from the Monastery between the Duke of Norfolk leaving and himself arriving, a matter of two months.

Maybe the tradition is true that the great man sized "rood", that hung at the crossing and was made of gold, is still hidden? So if you are digging your garden and your spade comes into contact with something large and gold coloured, don't forget to let me know.....!

From notes by Bro John Walker