

The Pre-Reformation Sites of the Oxford Blackfriars

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I. THE FIRST SITE

THE Friars Preachers or Dominicans,¹ commonly known in England towards the end of the Middle Ages as Black Friars,² came to Oxford on August 15, 1221, five years after the solemn confirmation of the Order by Pope Honorius III. The details of their coming are best given in the words of Nicholas Trivet, a Dominican chronicler of the early fourteenth century :

' At the second general chapter of the Order of Friars Preachers which was held at Bologna under the blessed Dominic, there were sent into England Friars Preachers to the number of thirteen, having as their Prior, Friar Gilbert of Fresney. In the company of the venerable Father, Lord Peter des Roches, Bishop of Winchester, they reached Canterbury. After they had presented themselves to Lord Stephen, the Archbishop, and after he had understood that they were *preachers*, he immediately ordered Gilbert to preach before him in a certain church where he was himself that day to have preached. The prelate was so edified by the friar's sermon that henceforth during his episcopate he favoured and promoted the Order and its work. Leaving Canterbury, the friars came to London on the feast of St. Lawrence, and finally reached Oxford on the feast of the Assumption of the Glorious Virgin, to whose honour they built their oratory. They

¹The present paper is concerned chiefly with the topographical details of the Oxford sites of the Dominicans. It has been read by Dr. H. E. Salter to whom I am indebted for a number of valuable suggestions and several points of helpful information. Dr. A. G. Little, 'The House of Black Friars,' *V. C. H. Oxon.*, II, 107-122, thoroughly presents the history of the priory from the foundation to its dissolution.

²Walter Gumbley, O.P., 'On the Name Blackfriars,' *Blackfriars*, I (1920-1921), 54-55 : 'The Dominican habit consists of a long tunic or gown of white wool over which is worn a long scapular and a hood or capuce of the same colour and material. The Rule enjoins that, outside his convent, the friar should wear the cappa, the name given to a long black cloak, together with a hood, also of black. Thus to the outsider the Friar-Preacher would appear robed in black. From this fact arose the name Blackfriar.'

W. A. HINNEBUSCH

held the schools that are now called St. Edward's, and settled in that parish for some time, but finding that they had no room for expanding, they removed to another site given them by the King, where, outside the city walls, they now dwell.¹

Trivet's statement that the first site of the Dominicans was in St. Edward's parish needs some modification, since it is known that some of the property was in St. Aldate's. The site lay approximately south of the present Town Hall.² Its main portion has been definitely located as bordering on St. Aldate's Street roughly between the present Blue Boar Lane and Jury Lane, a mediaeval street which ran almost due east and west about 50 ft. above where the northern wall of Christ Church stands. This part of the property measured 231 ft. in length from St. Aldate's and was 132 ft. in width.³ At its eastern end it crossed the boundary between the parishes of St. Aldate and St. Edward. In St. Aldate's parish the friars also held the tenements that had belonged to Isward, Swenechild, and Eylwyne Cusse, probably situated to the north of the above property.⁴ Within St. Edward's parish they held a plot of ground situated next to the house of Hugh the Cordwainer,⁵ and a rent of 5s. 10d. which was purchased from Peter son of Torald.⁶ In 1233 the friars bought for 100s. of silver from Thomas son of Thomas son of Edwin a section of land in St. Edward's parish. This holding seems to have been situated opposite the main portion of the area, south of Jury

¹ *Annales Sex Regum Angliae*, ed. T. Hog (London, 1845), p. 209; from the translation of B. Jarrett, O.P., *The English Dominicans, the Foundation*, (Catholic Truth Society pamphlet, 1921), p. 2.

² The location of the site is indicated in *The Cartulary of the Monastery of St. Frideswide at Oxford*, ed. Wigram (O.H.S. xxviii), I, 224: '... de quadam placea que quondam fuit Fratrum Predicatorum in Iudaismo in Oxon'; and p. 142: '... unam aream in parvo Iudaismo iacentem, que quondam fuit Fratribus predicatoribus...'. The phrases 'in Iudaismo' and 'in parvo Iudaismo' refer to Jury Lane. Anthony Wood, *City of Oxford*, ed. A. Clark (O.H.S. xvii), II, 313, 326, states that the site was given by the King, and that Isabel de Bolbec, Countess of Oxford, greatly assisted the friars in obtaining it. He seems to be misled here by the later benefactions of the Countess when the friars moved to their second site. C. F. R. Palmer, O.P., 'The Black-Friars of Oxford,' *The Reliquary*, xxiii (1883), 145 ff., says the Abbot of Oseney and the Canons of St. Frideswide enabled the friars to make their settlement in Oxford. But the only substantiation of this assertion is the fact that some of the Dominican property was held of St. Frideswide's, *Cart.*, I, 205. A. Wood, *The History and Antiquities of the University of Oxford*, ed. J. Gutch (Oxford, 1792), I, 192, writes that when Henry III came to Oxford at Christmas 1221, he showed much favour toward the friars, encouraging them to persevere in their foundation, and that the nobles accompanying Henry also demonstrated much interest in the friars. However, this is merely an assumption drawn from Henry's visit. M. Paris, *Chronica Majora*, ed. H. R. Luard (R.S., 1876), III, 60.

³ *Cart. S. Frid.*, I, 223. The measurements are given in perches: 'a via regia usque parochiam S. Edwardi, xiiii perticas, et viii perticas in latitudine.' H. E. Salter, *Map of Medieval Oxford* (Oxford, 1934), pl. 4.

⁴ *Cart. S. Frid.*, I, 204-205.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

⁶ *A Cartulary of the Abbey of Oseney*, ed. H. E. Salter (O.H.S. LXXXIX), I, 365, no. 422.

BLACKFRIARS PRIORY, OXFORD



FIG. 13

MAP SHOWING THE FIRST SITE OF BLACKFRIARS PRIORY
IN OXFORD.

Scale : 1 inch = 165 feet (approx.).

*Based on the 2 1/2" Ordnance Survey Map (1880) with
the sanction of the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office.*

Lane.¹ The acquisition of this piece of land, only three years before the friars took the first steps to transfer to a new site, doubtless indicates an attempt on their part to enlarge their property.

On their site the friars constructed a small oratory dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary.² It appears to have extended from east to west across the boundaries of the two parishes, though its principal part was evidently in the parish of St. Aldate. Most likely the structure bordered Jury Lane, with an entrance toward St. Aldate's Street. A document of 1228 speaks of their oratory 'within the limits of St. Aldate's parish,'³ while an agreement of the friars in 1233 with the Abbey of Oseney mentions 'the eastern part of our oratory in the parish of St. Edward's.'⁴ This eastern end of the oratory seems to have been added sometime after 1228.

It was their attempt to make this enlargement that brought the friars into conflict with the canons of St. Frideswide's.⁵ This quarrel probably began soon after the Dominicans came to Oxford. Apparently they had established their oratory without seeking the permission of the canons, who held the church of St. Aldate and regarded the action of the friars as a violation of their privileges and parochial rights. They forbade the celebration of divine services in the new oratory and took the case to Pope Honorius III. On their part, the friars most likely ignored the complaint of the canons and kept their oratory open to the public. Subject only to the Pope and their own superiors and equally endowed with a well-authenticated body of privileges, they undoubtedly felt fully justified in considering this command invalid.⁶ Clearly the dispute could

¹ At A on map. *The Oxford Deeds of Balliol College*, ed. H. E. Salter (O.H.S. LXIV), pp. 101-102, and cf. n. 2, p. 101. Some property was likewise given to the friars by Richard the Miller (probably the same who befriended the Franciscans in 1225, A. G. Little, *The Grey Friars in Oxford*, (O.H.S. XX), p. 3). The fact that the deed is found among charters of St. Aldate's parish (*Cart. S. Frid.*, I, 221) where Richard held other properties makes it likely that the plot was given to the Dominicans as an addition to their original holdings. The *Cartulary*, *loc. cit.*, dates the charter c. 1270, and A. G. Little, 'The House of Black Friars,' *V.C.H. Oxon.*, II, 115, fixes the date c. 1262; but these dates are undoubtedly too late, since the friars had left their first site many years before. The stipulation of Richard the Miller that a lamp should be kept burning in the friars' church of St. Nicholas offers some difficulty since Trivet, *op. cit.*, p. 209, records that the oratory was dedicated to the Blessed Virgin. However, St. Nicholas may have been a secondary patron.

² Trivet, *Annales*, p. 209; *Cart. S. Frid.*, I, 205.

³ *Cart. S. Frid.*, I, 205.

⁴ *Cart. Oseney*, I, 364.

⁵ *Cart. S. Frid.*, *loc. cit.*

⁶ Throughout the thirteenth century there was constant friction between the Mendicants and the older clergy. The relations of the two groups were not clearly defined until the statesmanlike settlement of Boniface VIII in the Bull *Supra Cathedram* (1300). Even after this date there were frequent occasions of conflict and ill-feeling: A. G. Little, *Studies in English Franciscan History* (Manchester, 1917), chapt. III, 'Privilege, Relation of the Friars to Monks and Parish Priests'; *id.*, 'The Mendicant Orders,' in *Medieval England* (ed. H. W. C. Davis, Oxford, 1924).

The rights and privileges of the Dominicans had their origin in three Bulls issued at the time of the Order's confirmation. The first (Dec. 22, 1216) extended pontifical protection to the possessions and observances of the priory of the Order at Toulouse (*Bullarium Ordinis Praedicatorum*,

(Note continued at foot of opposite page).

BLACKFRIARS PRIORY, OXFORD

only be settled by the adjustment of conflicting rights and privileges. But at Rome the case was decided in favour of the Dominicans and Honorius III commanded the canons to permit them to celebrate in their oratory and to establish a cemetery for their own members. Moreover he sent letters to the Bishop of Lincoln bidding him induce the canons to grant the requisite authorization, or, in the event of their refusal, to give the permission himself. Nevertheless the canons remained obstinate and apparently the Bishop of Lincoln did nothing about it; so the Dominicans, in 1227, appealed to Gregory IX, seeking authority to enlarge their oratory, to celebrate divine services, and to establish a cemetery. The Pope, 'not wishing the friars to be impeded any further by these difficulties since they profit greatly by dwelling in Oxford, especially because the study of theology flourishes there,' commanded the canons to grant the desired permissions. He sent a letter to Alexander Stavensby, Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, charging him to see that the papal order was carried out. The canons now came to terms and the Abbot of Oseney, the Archdeacon of Worcester, and Master Silvester, rector of the church of St. Michael in Oxford, were chosen to arbitrate the case. On August 16, 1228, an agreement was made. The Dominicans were given the right to maintain their oratory; as a *quid pro quo* they gave to the Priory 40s., because it lost the possibility of escheat in the case of the houses owned by the Friars, belonging to the fee of St. Frideswide's. If they moved from the site the friars were to do nothing with the property that would be prejudicial to the canons. Parishioners of St. Aldate's were not to be admitted to the offertory, and if by chance anyone of them voluntarily made an offering in the oratory the gift was to be reserved for the parish church.¹ A cemetery could be opened, but only for friars and familiars who had served them for at least a year. Only two middle-sized bells were to be hung in the oratory. Finally, if any benefactor wished to give land for the enlargement of the house,

¹ This is possibly an indication that the friars had won the favour of the populace, who perhaps found the services in the Dominican chapel more attractive than those in the parish church.

ed. T. Ripoll and A. Bremond (Rome, 1729), 1, 2). The second (Dec. 22, 1216) confirmed the order and took it and its rights and properties under the protection and government of the Holy See ('Confirmamus ordinem tuum . . . et ipsum ordinem eiusque possessiones et iura sub nostra gubernatione suscipimus,' *B.O.P.*, 1, 4). The third Bull (Jan. 21, 1217) addressed to the brethren, adopted them as special sons of the Holy See ('Nos . . . intendentes vos tanquam speciales filios favorabiliter confovere,' *B.O.P.*, 1, 4). The phrase 'speciales filios' was used in a technical sense implying exemption from episcopal authority. These Bulls placed the Order under the immediate jurisdiction of the Holy See and released it from all authority but that of the Pope and its own superiors. They were thus interpreted by St. Dominic, who, within the year after their issuance, dispersed his friars to Paris and Spain contrary to the advice and wishes of the Archbishop of Narbonne and the Bishop of Toulouse, who, but for these Bulls, would have been his ecclesiastical superiors. *Acta Canonizationis S. Dominici*, in *Monumenta Ordinis Praedicatorum Historica*, XVI, 143.

W. A. HINNEBUSCH

oratory, or churchyard of the friars, the Bishop of Coventry was to decide the amount of indemnity due to the canons.¹

A dispute with Oseney Abbey in 1233 is less interesting than that with St. Frideswide's, but the documents drawn up in its settlement contain further details about the buildings of the friars. These were probably immediately west of Eagle Hall and perhaps of St. Edward Hall,² though in view of the inexact information concerning the extent of the friars' property and the meagre references to their buildings it is impossible to be very definite about their location. The trouble with the Abbey concerned a building belonging to the canons of Oseney lying to the east of the friars' chapel. The dispute arose from the desire of the Dominicans to place a gutter from their chapel on the wall of this building. Some damage seems to have been feared by the Abbey, and the disagreement was only brought to an end when the Dominican Prior promised to see that no harm would be done to Oseney's building either from the gutter or from a building which the friars had built to the north.³ In confirmation of the Prior's agreement Peter son of Thorald, Mayor, and three citizens, Robert Oen, Henry son of Henry son of Simeon, and Philip the Miller, obliged themselves at their own risk to see that the property of the Abbey would not be damaged.⁴

Two texts taken from these documents, when read in conjunction, indicate that the schools of the friars lay to the north-east of, and perhaps parallel to, their chapel, since we know that the building belonging to Oseney lay to its east.⁵

Thus the friars state :

' . . . nos et successores nostri conservabimus eos [Oseney] indemnes et predictum edificium eorum in perpetuum, quantum ad illam guttariam et quantum ad edificium quod edificavimus ex aquilonari parte prefati solarii proximo adherens eidem solarario . . . ' ⁶

In the second document we read :

' . . . quod cum . . . verteretur controversia super quadam guttaria facienda super murum eorundem canonicorum, qui est de solarario eorum

¹ *Cart. S. Frid.*, I, 205-207. This document is the basis of the above section dealing with the quarrel. A search of the registers of Honorius III and Gregory IX fails to reveal the original of any of the letters or petitions mentioned. It is interesting to note that in 1219-1220 the Dominicans of Paris met similar opposition from the chapter of Notre-Dame, and the settlement was more unfavourable toward the friars than that reached with the canons of St. Frideswide : cf. *Chartularium universitatis parisiensis*, ed. H. Denifle and E. Chatelain (Paris, 1889), I, 93, 94, 96 ; M. Chapotin, *Histoire des Dominicains de la Province de France* (Rouen, 1898), p. 19 ; E. Bernard, *Les Dominicains dans l'Université de Paris* (Paris, 1883), pp. 53-54.

² *Cart. Oseney*, I, 364. ³ *Loc. cit.* ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 365.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 364 : 'super quadam guttaria facienda super murum suum qui est de solarario eorum, consistente ex orientali parte oratorii nostri . . .'

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 364.

BLACKFRIARS PRIORY, OXFORD

proximo adherente scole dictorum fratrum in parochia S. Edwardi Oxon., nos ad pacificandam illam controversiam obligavimus . . . nos . . . quod si fratres predicti defecerint in conservacione indemnitatis . . . quantum ad prefatum guttariam et . . . edificium eorundem fratrum proximo adhaerens prefato solario . . .¹

The structure built by the friars close to the northern part of the Abbey's solar seems to be identical with the school of the friars, also standing close to the solar.² This identification receives some substantiation from the record of two grants of timber, one of which was given specifically for the schools, made to the friars in the previous May.³ Perhaps the school building was in course of completion at that time. An allusion, c. 1265, in the *Cartulary of St. Frideswide* to the 'great school' (magna scola) standing on the former area of the Dominicans intimates that the building was of some size.⁴

In stating that the Dominican schools were known as the schools of St. Edward previous writers appear to have been in error.⁵ A careful reading of two passages in Trivet seems to indicate that this name was only used after the Dominicans gave up their schools within the walls and moved to their new site. In one text Trivet does intimate that the schools were called St. Edward's even in the time of the friars. In speaking of Robert Bacon he writes: ' . . . magister Robertus Bacon, qui Oxoniis regens in theologia, Praedicatorum ordinem est ingressus. Post ingressum vero lectiones suas in scholis sancti Edwardi per plures continuavit annos; . . .'⁶ This passage would be conclusive were it not for his account of the arrival and settlement of the Dominicans in Oxford. He notes the establishment of the oratory and continues: ' et habebant scholas illas, quae nunc sancti Edwardi dicuntur, in cujus parochia locum acceperant, in quo tempore aliquo morabantur.'⁷ The implication here is that the schools only became known as the schools of St. Edward after the Dominicans gave up their first site and opened their new priory and schools outside the southern walls of the town. If the name had been attached to the schools during the tenure of the friars, the ' nunc ' would be superfluous.⁸ In this passage Trivet is speaking

¹ *Cart. Oseney*, 1, 365.

² *Ibid.*, p. 364, where the oratory and the schools are identified. The deeds, however, do not seem to admit this interpretation.

³ *Close Rolls* 1231-1234, p. 218; *Calendar of Liberate Rolls* 1226-1240, p. 215.

⁴ *Cart. S. Frid.*, 1, 223.

⁵ Except A. G. Little, *V.C.H. Oxon.*, II, 107, who states that they were ' afterwards known as the schools of St. Edward.'

⁶ Trivet, *Annales*, p. 229. ⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 209.

⁸ It has been suggested that ' tunc ' may be a better reading than ' nunc.' However, Hog's edition, though at times faulty, is evidently correct in the present instance since both Oxford MSS. of Trivet unmistakably give the reading ' nunc,' *Queen's Coll. MS.* 304, fo. 105va and *Merton Coll. MS.* 256, fo. 62r.

ex professo of the site and location of the friars, and we can expect that topographical details will be more accurate than where he is recording biographical details of Robert Bacon's life. He undoubtedly slipped into an anachronism when he says that Bacon 'continued his lectures in the schools of St. Edward.'

The Dominican schools were probably opened soon after the friars came to Oxford. Legally each Dominican priory was also a school, as even the earliest Constitutions of the Order prescribed that no priory should be constituted without a lecturer in theology.¹ In view of the importance attached to the Oxford foundation by St. Dominic and the General Chapter of 1221, it seems reasonable to assume that a doctor was among the first thirteen Dominicans to arrive there.² As far as we know, Oxford was the first priory of the Order to start out with a full membership. All previous foundations on the Continent appear to have been made by a handful of friars, and only gradually to have attained the Constitutional number of twelve.³ The first band sent to England, as we have seen, numbered thirteen, and it seems certain that they came with explicit orders from St. Dominic and the General Chapter to establish a priory in Oxford. Otherwise it is difficult to understand why they did not take advantage of Stephen Langton's friendly reception and establish themselves at Canterbury. The opportunity of a London foundation was also passed over and the group moved directly to Oxford.⁴ Presumably a priory, in its legal sense, was set up immediately accommodation was secured, and the doctor began lectures in theology to the younger friars of the group.⁵ In conformity with the practice

¹ 'Conventus citra numerum duodenarium et sine licentia generalis capituli et sine priore et doctore non mittatur,' 'Die Constitutionen des Predigerordens von Jahre 1228,' ed. H. Denifle in *Archiv für Literatur und Kirchengeschichte des Mittelalters* (Berlin, 1885), 1, 221; cf. P. Mandonnet, O.P., *Saint Dominique, L'Idée, L'Homme et L'Oeuvre*, ed. M. H. Vicaire et R. Ladner, O.P. (Paris, 1937), II, 203-221, where it is established conclusively that the Dominican Constitutions date from 1216-1220, and not 1228 as indicated by Denifle.

² Trivet, *Annales*, p. 209.

³ For example, in 1217 St. Dominic sent four to Spain, seven to Paris, left two at Prouille and three at Toulouse: he himself set off for Bologna and Rome (Jordan of Saxony, 'Libellus de principiis ordinis praedicatorum,' ed. H. Scheeben in *Mommenta Ordinis Praedicatorum Historica*, XVI, pp. 48-50). In 1219 two friars were sent to Sweden ('Historia Ordinis Praedicatorum in Dania 1216-1246,' ed. J. Langebek and P. F. Suhm in *Scriptores Rerum Danicarum Medii Aevi*, v, 500). In June 1221 five friars set out for Hungary (H. C. Scheeben, *Der Heilige Dominikus* (Freiburg im B., 1927), p. 359). Apparently in the same year St. Dominic sent two friars to Denmark (*Historia O. P. Dania*, p. 501).

⁴ This is in marked contrast to the action of the first band of Franciscans which landed in England on September 9, 1224. Of these nine friars, five remained at Canterbury and four set out for London. Two of the latter then continued on to Oxford. *Tractatus Fr. Thomae de Eccleston de adventu Fratrum Minorum in Angliam*, ed. A. G. Little (Paris, 1909), pp. 3-8, 11-13, 226.

⁵ This doctor was not necessarily a master, and would need no licence from any authority outside the Order. It is possible that the Dominicans got their first master in or shortly after 1227. In that year Robert Bacon, who held a moiety of the church of Lower Heyford Oxfordshire, resigned his living presumably to enter the Order. He was a regent at the time, and continued

(Note continued at foot of opposite page).

BLACKFRIARS PRIORY, OXFORD

of the Order the school must have been thrown open to outside students as soon as it could be effectively organized.¹

Nothing is known of the other Dominican buildings within the city. The first notice of any construction being done is from 1223, two years after the arrival of the friars, when the Abbot of Westminster gave them forty rafters.² On June 12, 1229, they received a royal grant of timber for their dwelling.³ This may have been intended for the enlargement of the oratory for which authorization had been granted by St. Frideswide's the preceding August. Probably no very elaborate buildings were raised by the friars on their first site. It must have been realized very soon that it would be better to move elsewhere to get sufficient grounds for an adequate priory. As early as 1228, as we have seen, a stipulation was embodied in the agreement with St. Frideswide's that in case the site were abandoned nothing should be done with the properties prejudicial to the canons.⁴ Possibly this is an indication that the desirability of a new site was realized even then by the friars. By 1236 the decision to transfer the priory seems to have been reached. They began to sell their land, beginning with that purchased about three years before from Thomas son of Thomas son of Edwin.⁵ When the first site was finally abandoned the remainder of the property was sold to various parties and was eventually acquired by St. Frideswide's.⁶

¹ On this point see Mandonnet, *Saint Dominique*, II, 96-98. St. Richard Wych, Bishop of Chichester, for example, studied with the Dominicans at Orleans, *Acta Sanctorum Aprilis*, I, 279. One of the complaints of the Dominicans against the University in 1311 was that the secular masters prevented scholars from attending the schools of the friars, cf. 'Friars Preachers v. the University,' in *Collectanea*, II (O.H.S. xvi), p. 220: 'Item comminationibus et persuasionibus occultis aduertunt clerum et populum ne in domo fratrum audiant uerbum dei aut accedant ad scolas fratrum pro quibuscunque actibus scolasticis exercendis. Vnde quia scolares ad scolas fratrum accedere non permittunt nec fratres audiuntur in scolis aliorum in graue detrimentum studij theologie, studium istud totaliter perijt quoad fratres, quod per eos solet plurimum promoueri.'

² *Rotuli Litterarum Clausarum* (Rec. Com.), I, 575a.

³ *Close Rolls 1227-1231*, p. 191.

⁴ *Cart. S. Frid.*, I, 206.

⁵ *Oxford Balliol Deeds*, pp. 102-103.

⁶ *Cart. S. Frid.*, I, 142, 204-205, 216, 223-224; cf. *Cart. Oseney* I, 364.

his lectures in the Dominican schools until his death. (*Rotuli Hugonis de Welles Episcopi Lincolnensis*, ed. W. P. W. Phillimore (Cant. and York Soc.), I, 170, II, 25; Trivet, *op. cit.*, p. 229). Bacon was certainly a member of the Order by 1233, as he preached a sermon before the King in that year (M. Paris, *Chronica Majora*, ed. H. R. Luard (R.S.), III, 244). Richard Fishacre was the first Dominican to incept under him (Trivet, *loc. cit.*).

The Dominicans may have had a master before Bacon joined them, since it is possible that Alard, their provincial in 1235 (Robert Grosseteste, *Epistolae*, ed. H. R. Luard (R.S.), pp. 59-61), is to be identified with Master Alard who was Rector Scholarum at the University in 1210 (*Snape's Formulary and Other Records*, ed. H. E. Salter (O.H.S. LXXX), pp. 318-319). His promotion to the provincialate bespeaks a man with administrative ability (cf. *Close Rolls 1234-1237*, p. 356), in keeping with what we know of the career of Master Alard, Rector Scholarum.

II. THE SECOND SITE

It was perhaps with some regret that the friars gave up their home within the walls which offered so many opportunities for work among the people¹ and moved to their new site outside South Gate. But in the suburb there was plenty of room to build a large priory, and the new neighbourhood was quieter and more conducive to study. This point was emphasized by the friars during their quarrel with the University early in the next century when new statutes transferred the 'Examinatory Sermons' of the bachelors of theology and the theological Vespers—the disputations on the eve of inception—from the halls of the Dominicans and Franciscans, where it had been the custom to hold them, to the University church. It was an obvious advantage, they claimed, to conduct disputations in their priory where the peace and quiet of the suburbs was in strong contrast to the noise and bustle of the town.²

The new site, situated on an island south of Littlegate St. and west of St. Aldate's, was acquired mainly through the benefactions of Isabel de Bolbec, Countess of Oxford, and of Walter Mauclerc, Bishop of Carlisle.³ Isabel de Bolbec gave the friars a messuage and some meadow-land which she had purchased from Stephen son of Simeon in 1238.⁴ From Mauclerc they received twelve acres of meadow and a double mill, which he had secured from Henry son of Peter. Subsequently Henry's son, also named Henry, confirmed the grant and released the friars from a rent of 17s. 9d.⁵ In 1269 Ranulf the tailor and Agnes, his wife, probably the daughter of the latter Henry, recognized the right of the friars to the property and quit-claimed it to them. In return the

¹ This is hardly the place to discuss Dominican work among the Jews of Oxford, though doubtless from the first they aimed at converting the Jews and checking Judaizing tendencies. There is little historical evidence for this, but it may be useful to indicate several facts which show the work of friar Robert Bacon, O.P. in this regard. In 1236 the constable of Exeter was directed to send a boy, who was said to have been kidnapped by the Jews of Exeter because of his conversion, to Oxford to the custody of friar Robert Bacon. (*Close Rolls* 1234-1237, p. 383). In Jan. 1242 the sheriff of Oxford was ordered to pay a sum of money to two converts in the charge of the same friar. (*Cal. Lib. R.* 1240-1245, p. 99). In 1245 the sheriff was commanded to place a lapsed Jew in custody. He was to learn the name of the man from Robert Bacon. (*Close Rolls* 1242-1247, p. 298).

² H. Rashdall, *The Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages*, ed. F. M. Powicke and A. B. Emden (Oxford, 1936), III, 70; *idem*, 'The Friars Preachers v. the University,' in *Collectanea*, II, ed. M. Burrows (O.H.S. XVI), pp. 218, 226.

³ Trivet, *Annales*, p. 209, states that the King gave the new site, but this is undoubtedly a reference to royal confirmation of the gifts of Mauclerc and Isabel de Bolbec.

⁴ *Oxford Balliol Deeds*, p. 204; *Collectanea*, IV (O.H.S. XLVII), 8; *Rot. Hum.*, II, 789; *Calendar of the Charter Rolls*, I, 237. Part of this property (*Ox. Balliol Deeds*, *loc. cit.*), and probably other parts of the friars' holdings originally lay in the parish of St. Michael's, south; the rest of the property was originally in St. Ebbe's. The whole precinct of the friars became extra-parochial in virtue of its acquisition by them.

⁵ *Collectanea*, IV, 8; *The Feet of Fines for Oxfordshire 1195-1291*, ed. H. E. Salter (O.R.S. 1930), p. 198; *Rot. Hum.* (Rec. Com.), II, 789; *Cal. Pat. R.* 1334-1338, p. 236; *Ibid.* 1436-1441, p. 50.

BLACKFRIARS PRIORY, OXFORD

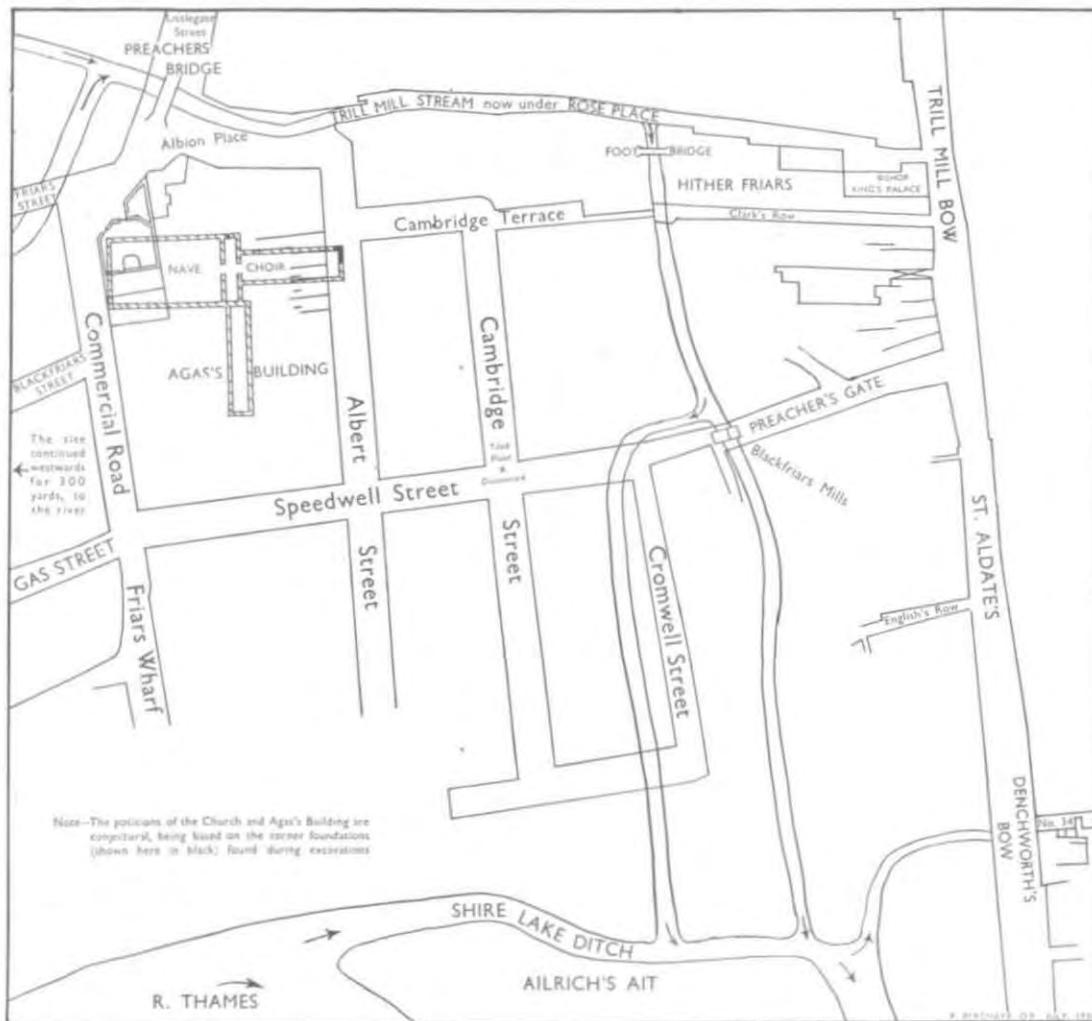


FIG. 14

MAP SHOWING THE SECOND SITE OF BLACKFRIARS PRIORY
IN OXFORD.

Scale : 1 inch = 165 feet (approx.).

*Based on the 1/250,000 Ordnance Survey Map (1880) with
the sanction of the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office.*

W. A. HINNEBUSCH

prior admitted them and the heirs of Agnes as partakers in all the benefits and prayers of the priory church in perpetuity.¹ In 1256 the friars obtained an additional plot of ground by the gift of William de Bruer.² In 1352 Durand of Bugwell bequeathed, to take effect after the death of his wife, his estate in a messuage in Grandpont through which was the access to their house.³ Richard White, a citizen of Oxford, left by will in 1358 the reversion of his tenement in St. Michael in the South Gate parish to the Dominicans after the decease of his wife.⁴ In 1447 the prior leased for a term of five years Spicer's Eyt and the fourth part of Erlyche's Eyt, two pieces of land lying south of their property in the Thames, from John Hyde of Oxford.⁵ William Hope, in 1511, bequeathed to the friars two houses which he had recently bought from Thomas Law of Witney.⁶

From the Patent Rolls, recording the confirmation of Mauclerc's grant to the Dominicans, we can derive some idea of the topography of the friars' precinct. The meadow land given by him, about twelve acres, lay at the western side of the holdings. Presumably Isabel de Bolbec gave the eastern part of the land, except for the mills and a small island situated at the south-eastern corner of the property, which were part of Mauclerc's gift.⁷ The estate bequeathed by Durand of Bugwell, and probably the estates given by Richard White, and William de Bruer abutted on St. Aldate's. The situation of the houses given by William Hope is unknown.

Presumably the friars began to build on their site about 1236. A grant of timber received from William Longspee in that year may indicate that the work was already in progress.⁸ The next year the King gave them two oaks to make a barge, evidently for use at their new site.⁹ The church and monastic quarters of the priory seem to have been under construction simultaneously. The work went steadily forward and the friars were able to take possession of their new home on November 1, 1245, though it was not until the following Feast of the Assumption, August 15, 1246, the twenty-fifth anniversary of their arrival in Oxford, that they celebrated divine services for the first time in their new church.¹⁰ This

¹ *Feet of Fines Oxfordshire*, p. 198.

² *Cal. Pat. R.* 1247-1258, p. 494.

³ *Liber Albus Civitatis Oxoniensis*, ed. W. P. Ellis with introduction by H. E. Salter (Oxford, 1909), p. 52, no. 146. This seems to be the same property which was held of the friars in the thirteenth century by Wm. le Deveneys, *Rot. Hun.* (Rec. Com.), II, 789.

⁴ *Lib. Alb.*, p. 54, no. 152; *V.C.H. Oxon.*, II, 115.

⁵ Wood, *City of Oxford*, I, 452-453, 462; H. Hurst, *Oxford Topography* (O.H.S. xxxix), pp. 29-30.

⁶ *V.C.H., Oxon.*, II, 119, citing P. C. C. Holder, qu. 6.

⁷ *Rot. Pat.* 10 Edw. III, pt. i, m. 34 (C. F. R. Palmer, *Transcripts*, IV, B, 437, preserved at St. Dominic's Priory, London).

⁸ *Close Rolls 1234-1237*, p. 254.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 462.

¹⁰ *Annales Monastici (Wykes)*, ed. H. R. Luard (R. S., 1869), IV, 94-95.

BLACKFRIARS PRIORY, OXFORD

may refer to the first public celebration there, though perhaps in the interval till the new church was placed in use the old oratory may have been retained.

Undoubtedly one of the chief means of paying for the new buildings was the money realized from the sale of the old property, but the royal bounty also came to the assistance of the friars. In 1241 the King turned over to them for the church fifteen marks levied by the itinerant justices on the Countess of Oxford. Other grants of money are recorded in 1240 and 1246.¹ But the King manifested his interest chiefly by supplying building material from the royal forests.² Isabel de Bolbec evidently aided greatly in the construction of the church since she is accredited as its foundress.³

The priory, presumably, was not altogether completed when the friars took possession. A sum of three marks was given toward the church in 1246, and timber was supplied by the King on two more occasions. By 1251, however, the main part of the house must have been finished, for then we find a royal grant of ten pounds for building the cloisters—a part of the house that could be left until last.⁴ Probably for some years the task of decorating and furnishing the buildings was carried on.⁵ In 1258 and 1261 grants of timber are recorded for making the studies, a combination desk and book-case provided for each student-friar.⁶ By 1269 they had already seen enough use to need repairs, and a grant of timber was received. Six years before this (1263) one of the buildings had been burned, and the King aided in the restoration.⁷ Tables were needed and other renovations had to be made in 1277. Thirteen years later the choir stalls needed repair. Each time King Edward supplied the necessary materials.⁸

The priory was supplied with water brought by a conduit across the King's meadows from a spring in Hinksey. In 1285 Edward I authorized the friars to

¹ *Close Rolls* 1237-1242, p. 296.

² *Cal. Lib. R.* 1240-1245, p. 254; *ibid.* 1245-1251, p. 28; *Liberate Roll* 35 Hen. III, m. 13 (Rolls cited according to the membrane are not yet printed). Timber grants: *Cal. Lib. R.* 1226-1240, p. 404; *ibid.* 1240-1245, p. 122, 219; *ibid.* 1245-1251, pp. 134, 157, 167; *Close Rolls* 1237-1242, pp. 342-343, 415 (*Cal. Lib. R.* 1240-1245, p. 305). Between 1231 and 1300 at least forty-two grants of fire-wood are recorded for the Oxford priory.

³ M. Paris, *Chron. Maj.*, IV, 406.

⁴ *Liberate Roll*, 35 Hen. III, m. 13.

⁵ In 1252 the King paid 18s. for a silk cloth which he had given to the priory some time previously, *Liberate Roll* 36 Hen. III, m. 5.

⁶ Little, *Grey Friars*, p. 55, n. 3; *Close Rolls*, 53 Hen. III, m. 6; *Liberate Rolls* 45 Hen. III, m. 6. We find reference to these studies in *Munimenta Academica*, ed. H. Anstey (R.S., 1868), p. 515: 'unum lecturnum, videlicet, cum cistula et cum quattuor tabulis antiquis superpositis' and p. 545: 'unum studium, pretium tres solidi.' The Dominican General Chapter of 1289, *Acta Capitulum Generalium O.P. (M.O.P.H.)* III, 1, 252-253, ordered: 'Iniungimus prioribus universis, quod cellas in quibus sunt lecti taliter ordinent et disponant, quod katedra, lectus et pulpitus clare a transeuntibus videantur . . .'

⁷ *Close Rolls* 53 Hen. III, m. 6; *Close Rolls* 1261-1264, p. 316.

⁸ *Cal. Close R.* 1272-1279, p. 372; *ibid.* 1279-1288, p. 3; *ibid.* 1288-1296, p. 211.

dig in the meadows for its repair any time this should be necessary.¹ Dr. London, who suppressed the house in 1538, mentions the conduit in his report to Cromwell: 'They have a fair conduit and it runneth freshly.'²

In seeking to determine the extent of the Blackfriars' site it seems best to draw upon the writings of two Oxford antiquarians, Leonard Hutten (d. 1632) and Anthony Wood, who wrote at a time when Blackfriars was still a living memory. Their testimony will be substantiated by evidence drawn from other sources. Leonard Hutten writes:

'The Friers of St. Dominick's Order . . . had a fairer Colledge and Church here in Oxford, in that place which is to this daie called *the Black Friers*, haveing Grand poole [St. Aldate's] on the East side, the Gray Friers on the West, the River of Thames on the South, the Water of Trillmilbo,³ and the Brewers lane on the North.'⁴

The northern boundary is more accurately given in another passage:

'Comeing, therefore, out of Grandpoole, the first lane Westward is that which is called Brewers Streete, and hath noething memorable in it, but onely that it leadeth towards the Preaching Friers over the Streame on the left, . . .'⁵

This stream was the Trillmill, which came down diagonally from the neighbourhood of Oxford Castle to the foot of Littlegate Street. From thence it flowed almost due east crossing St. Aldate's by means of an arch called Trillmill bow.⁶ This formed the northern boundary of the island site from Albion Place eastwards. The remainder of the northern boundary from Albion Place westwards was another small stream which ran parallel to the present Friars Street and joined the Trillmill approximately where Littlegate Street runs into Albion Place.⁷ This is the boundary given by Hutten as the western, since some of the Franciscan property seems to have been immediately on its opposite bank.⁸

¹ *Cal. Pat. R.* 1281-1292, p. 165. For confirmations of this right cf. *V.C.H. Oxon.*, II, 111.

² *Letters and Papers of Henry VIII*, XIII, i, 1342.

³ In Hutten's time and later 'Trillmill bow,' though referring properly to the arch by which the Trillmill crossed St. Aldate's, was used to designate the Trillmill stream itself: cf. *Properties of the City of Oxford*, ed. H. E. Salter (O.H.S. LXXXIII), p. 107, note of the editor.

⁴ Leonard Hutten, 'Antiquities of Oxford,' in *Elizabethan Oxford*, ed. C. Plummer (O.H.S. VIII), p. 75.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

⁶ Trillmill stream was built over c. 1258. Rose Place is the stream roofed over.

⁷ The description of the meadow land given to the friars by Mauclerc confirms this boundary, *Pat. Roll*, 10 Edw. III, pt. i, m. 34: '. . . et de toto prato cum omnibus pertinenciis quod jacet juxta terram eorundem fratrum versus occidentem et eidem terre eorum junctum est ex uno latere, ex aliis autem lateribus pertingit usque ad aquam undique . . .'

⁸ Little, *Grey Friars*, p. 16 text and n. 3; Salter, *Map of Med. Oxford*, pl. 4. This boundary is more properly the north-western.

BLACKFRIARS PRIORY, OXFORD

Some thirty years after Hutten, Anthony Wood also described the Blackfriars site :

' . . . they seated themselves (by the king's appointment) in the suburbs, in an isle opposite to Little South Gate and in the parish of St. Ebbs having the street Grandpont with a small streame on the east side of it (from whence was a faire gate with an entrance or lane to this their covent), and King's Street *alias* Slaying Lane [Brewer St.] on the north, and on the south side the river Isis, . . .'¹

From this text we may be misled into believing that Brewer Street formed the northern boundary, and Fletcher and Palmer so interpreted it.² Two further selections from Wood, however, make it clear that the Trillmill was the true boundary. In speaking of Preachers Mill he states :

' Black Fryers' Mills, . . . Somtimes standing (as I guesse) on the streame running by their habitation, and particularly (as I guess) on that part of Trill which lyes betweene them on the south side and Lumbard Lane [Brewer St.] on the north and between them on the west side and Grandpont Street on the east side.'³

In another place he writes :

' From hence [Littlegate St.] wee passe to Preachers' Bridge, which leadeth over Trill-mill Streame from the said Little South Gate or Water Gate to the place where once the faire structure of the Black or Preaching Fryers once stood . . . After our arrivall over the said bridg wee enter into an isle ; . . .'⁴

Apart from these texts there is other evidence to show that the whole of the Dominican property lay to the south of Trillmill Stream. On November 29, 1576, Mr. Barksdale, who owned the site of Blackfriars, leased from the city ' the banke of the south side of the river of Trylmyll bowe, from Little Gate bridge unto the next arch beneath, so much thereof as is now firm ground.'⁵ In 1588 he leased another section of void ground between the Trillmill and the Blackfriars. When his executors paid rent on these properties in 1606 they are described as a ' bank on the south side of Trill Mill bow.'⁶ This is a clear

¹ Wood, *City of Oxford*, II, 328.

² W. G. D. Fletcher, *The Black Friars of Oxford* (Oxford, 1882), p. 5 ; C. F. R. Palmer, O.P., ' The Friar-Preachers, or Blackfriars, of Oxford,' in *The Reliquary*, XXIII (1883), 217.

³ Wood, *City of Oxford*, I, 404-405.

⁴ *Ibid.*, I, 309.

⁵ *Selections from the Records of the City of Oxford*, ed. W. H. Turner (Oxford, 1880), p. 388.

⁶ *Oxford City Properties*, pp. 107-108. Dr. Salter notes that this void land was formed by the recession of the level of the Trillmill waters when Blackfriars and Trill mill were pulled down, and that the Barksdale lease extended from Littlegate Bridge to the arch by which Speedwell St. crossed the small stream to the west of St. Aldate's. As already indicated ' Trillmill bow ' is used of the whole stream.

W. A. HINNEBUSCH

indication of the position of the Blackfriar site. Besides this, it was impossible for Brewer Street to form the northern boundary, since there was a range of properties between it and the Trillmill extending from Littlegate Street to St. Aldate's. All, except those on St. Aldate's, faced north and south. The holders of a large number of these properties can be identified,¹ and it cannot be shown definitely that any of them were in the possession of the Dominicans. Possibly the messuage that accompanied the meadow land given by Isabel de Bolbec was in this group of tenements.² The meadows given by Mauclerc and Isabel de Bolbec were below Trillmill stream.

The eastern boundary of the Dominican site appears to have been co-terminous with a branch of the Trillmill that flowed parallel to St. Aldate's about 200 ft. to the west. This line is marked at present by the ward boundary.³ The main portion of the property could not have extended any farther to the east, since tenements in the possession of other parties ran back from St. Aldate's to this stream.⁴ For example, in 1434 John Edgecumb acquired a garden lying on the western side of St. Aldate's between a garden already in his possession on the east and a stream of water flowing between the house of the Friars Preachers and the said garden on the west.⁵ In 1548 John Bolte of Woodeaton in Oxfordshire sold to John Barton of Oxford a tenement situated outside South Gate, lying between a tenement of All Souls College on the north and another tenement called Littlemore Hall on the south.⁶ Its eastern boundary abutted on St. Aldate's while its western end reached a stream of water running between

¹ Salter, *Map of Med. Oxford*, pl. 4. In St. Ebbe's parish, c. 1220-1333: *A Cartulary of the Hospital of St. John the Baptist*, ed. H. E. Salter (O.H.S. LXVIII), II, 237-242; c. 1328-1369: *Cart. S. Frid.*, I, 234-235, 237-239; c. 1330-1479, *Lib. Alb. Civ. Ox.*, nos. 9, 87, 107, 115, 207, 243. In St. Michael's parish, c. 1268: *Cart. Oseney*, II, 170; c. 1358 onwards: *Balliol Deeds*, p. 197 ff; c. 1349-1497: *Lib. Alb.*, nos. 101, 107, 229, 257, 284. Bordering St. Aldate's, c. 1377, 1389: *Lib. Alb.*, nos. 59, 65, 162, 184; *Oxford City Properties*, pp. 364-370; Hurst, *Oxford Topog.*, pp. 42-43.

² *Oxford Balliol Deeds*, p. 204; *Cal. Pat. R. 1247-1258*, p. 494; *Lib. Alb. Civ. Ox.*, p. 52, no. 146, p. 54, no. 156. The property of De Bruer, described as 'quamdam aream,' may possibly have been below the Trillmill forming part of the friars' island.

³ *Ordnance Survey Map of Oxford*, scale 1:500 (1880). In Wood, *City of Oxford*, II, 328, the description of the eastern boundary is somewhat ambiguous, but clearly admits of our interpretation: 'an isle . . . having the street Grandpont with a small streame on the east side of it.' Fletcher, *op. cit.*, p. 5, erroneously interpreted this to mean the small stream which ran parallel to St. Aldate's on the east.

⁴ H. E. Salter, *Medieval Oxford* (O.H.S. vol. c), p. 14; Hurst, *Oxford Topog.*, pp. 35-37. Notices of properties on the western side of St. Aldate's below Trillmill Stream: *Cart. S. John*, II, 190, 238; *Cart. S. Frid.*, I, 158-159, II, 165, 189, 304; *Cart. Oseney*, II, 166-169, 173-175, 182-185; *The Cartulary of the Abbey of Eynsham*, ed. H. E. Salter (O.H.S. LI), II, 246, 249, 253; *Lib. Alb. Civ. Ox.*, nos. 4, 36, 80, 102, 146, 217, 241, 267, 299, 351; Wood, *City of Oxford*, I, 296-304.

⁵ Hurst, *Oxford Topog.*, p. 37.

⁶ Littlemore Hall is No. 82, St. Aldate's.

BLACKFRIARS PRIORY, OXFORD

' the ground or wall lately called Blacke Fryers towards the west ' and land belonging to the said messuage.¹

The southern and western boundaries² of the friars' property were formed by the main stream of the Thames, though at its eastern end where it crossed St. Aldate's it differed considerably from its present course. Instead of the main stream cutting off toward the south-east, as at present, at a point approximately south of Albert Street, a small channel only turned to the south-east while the main course continued directly eastward until within 50 yards of St. Aldate's. Here the main channel crossed St. Aldate's toward the south-east, while another small stream continued eastwards and crossed St. Aldate's by Denchworth's Bow (marked today by No. 34, St. Aldate's). The friars' property seems to have been bounded by the northern arm each time the stream divided.³ The southern boundary is indicated in a charter dating from the time of Henry VI, which sets out the limits of the liberty of the town of Oxford. They are described as 'running under an arch called "Dencheworthesbowe," and thus along the Thames, between the friars preachers who are within the said town, and a meadow called "Erlicheseyt" and the meadow of the abbey of Abingdon, which meadows are without the said liberty.'⁴ Another confirmation is found in a notice from 1305: ' . . . Edmund of London, a cleric, was found dead in the water of the Thames which runs between the close of the Friars Preachers and the meadow which is called East Ham.'⁵

The southern part of the property seems to have been low and marshy and to have suffered repeatedly from the waters of the Thames. In 1304 Edward I gave the Dominicans licence to quarry 100 ft. of stone at Charlegrave by Wheatley in Shotover Forest for repairing their buildings which at times suffered from floods.⁶ In 1323 they were again authorized to use the quarry by Edward II.⁷ Finally in 1367 the King granted the friars a strip of land 20 ft. in breadth along the southern part of their property for the purpose of defending the house, probably by embankments, from the incursions of the Thames.⁸ It was to be

¹ *Lib. Alb. Civ. Ox.*, p. 109, no. 351.

² The only evidence for the western boundary is the statement in Wood, *City of Oxford*, II, 328, that the Blackfriars site was an island.

³ Hurst, *Oxford Topog.*, p. 21.

⁴ *Calendar of the Charters and Rolls in the Bodleian Library*, ed. W. H. Turner and H. O. Coxe, 1878, pp. 311-312. The original French version is printed in *Oxford City Documents*, J. E. Thorold Rogers (O.H.S. XVIII), p. 300.

⁵ Wood, *City of Oxford*, I, 456 (Twyne MS., IV, 85). The southern boundary is also recorded in *Cart. Oseney*, II, 181, which gives the location of a weir 'ex parte australi clausi eorundem prioris et conventus [O.P.]'

⁶ *Cal. Pat. R.* 1301-1307, pp. 237-238; *V. C. H. Oxon.*, II, 111.

⁷ *Cal. Pat. R.* 1321-1324, p. 270.

⁸ Wood, *City of Oxford*, II, 316-317 (*Rot. claus.* 41 Edw. III). This document seems to have since been lost.

reckoned from the ground of their dwelling toward the middle of the stream.¹ Later, when the mayor and bailiffs protested that this grant infringed their rights the King replied that navigation was not impeded and the land was necessary to prevent the buildings of the friars from being destroyed.² The western part of the property may have suffered in the same manner, as it appears from a letter of Dr. John London to Thomas Cromwell on July 8, 1538, that the western section of the island was intersected by various small streams. He writes: 'The Black Friars hath in their backside likewise divers islands well-wooded and containeth in length a great ground.'³

On the Thames, the southern boundary of the friars' property, Osenev Abbey possessed a weir, known as Aldwere, about 200-300 ft. above Folly Bridge. Evidently, when the friars took possession of their site, it occupied a different position causing them some inconvenience. The Abbey was willing to move it to some other part of the river, and after an inquisition (1257) Henry III granted licence for its removal to a location where it would cause no harm to the friars. He commended the Abbey for its compliance in the matter and urged that the weir be moved as soon as possible.⁴

The double mill,⁵ included in Walter Mauclerc's gift to the friars, was situated on the Trillmill west of St. Aldate's.⁶ The approach to the mill was by a lane, approximately identical with the eastern end of Speedwell Street.⁷ Wood calls it 'Preacher's Lane:'. . . on the south side of Littlemore Hall, is a lane, called Preacher's Lane, because it sometimes lead from Grandpont Street over Trill-mill Streame to the structure of the Preaching Fryers.'⁸

Part, at least, of the Blackfriars' site, probably that set aside for the use of the community and containing the priory buildings, was surrounded by a precinct wall. The earliest mention of the wall is from the time shortly after the dissolution of the house. In 1548 a tenement on St. Aldate's 'abuts on the river running between the ground or wall lately called "le Blake Fryers."⁹ Several particulars concerning the gates also give indirect evidence for the existence of the wall. In 1279 William le Deveneys held for life from the

¹ *Cal. Close R.* 1374-1376, p. 388.

² *Ibid.*, p. 508.

³ *Letters and Papers of Henry VIII*, XIII, i, 1342.

⁴ *Cal. Pat. R.* 1247-1258, p. 606. In 1449 Aldwere was leased to the Dominicans for ninety-nine years: *Cart. Osenev*, II, 178, 181-182, and cf. *ibid.*, VI, 227.

⁵ Salter, *Medieval Oxford*, pp. 14-15.

⁶ The identity of the remains discovered at the western end of Rose Place c. 1858, when Trillmill was covered over, is not known. Hurst, *op. cit.*, p. 33, states that they were Blackfriars mill or a sluice belonging to it. However, he is in error, since we have no evidence for a mill on that part of the stream.

⁷ Cf. *Cart. Osenev*, II, 173-176.

⁸ Wood, *City of Oxford*, I, 302; also mentioned *ibid.*, pp. 300, 304-305.

⁹ *Lib. Alb. Civ. Ox.*, no. 351.

BLACKFRIARS PRIORY, OXFORD

Dominicans, for the service of opening and shutting their gate, a tenement worth half a mark a year.¹ This tenement was situated on St. Aldate's just south of Trillmill bow (the corner of Rose Place). An entrance by the house of le Deveneys, presumably only a footpath, led into the precinct at this point. When Durand of Bugwell (1352) gave his estate in a message in St. Aldate's to the friars, its boundaries are given as the tenement of William Spalding on the south and the gate of the Preaching Friars on the north.² Wood mentions an entrance to the precinct at the end of the lane leading to Blackfriars mill 'called also "the Black Fryers' Gate," which at sometimes was shut but at the dissolution of that house was pulled downe and the way made common to the streame running thereby.'³ The main entry to the priory precinct, however, was probably by a gate that pierced the northern wall opposite Littlegate Street. Our only record of this gate is embodied in an unsavoury notice in the View of Frankpledge, May 16, 1508: 'Item that Thomas Brown at the blacke fryers' gate, Tho. Leke (vi d.) John Leke (vi d.) casteth dunge in Tryllmyllbowe.'⁴

The approach to this gate was by a stone bridge, supported by a stone column underneath, that spanned Trillmill stream. Wood speaks of it in describing the south suburbs:

'From hence [Littlegate Street] wee passe to Preachers' Bridge, which leadeth over Trill-mill Streame from the said Little South Gate or Water Gate to the place where once the faire structure of the Black or Preaching Fryers once stood. It seems to have bin built (I meane the bridge) by those Fryers within a few years after their foundation at this place.'⁵

In 1278 complaint was lodged that the bridge hindered the course of the stream 4 ft. in depth and 5 ft. in breadth.⁶ Seven years later, the charge, apparently first made in 1274, was renewed that the bridge obstructed the King's mills and flooded his meadows owing to the column beneath it.⁷ After an enquiry made by the justices it was ruled that no damage was done, and the King gave licence to hold the bridge as before.⁸ In 1241 the prior had been accused of enclosing a road in the suburb.⁹ In 1247 the Dominicans and

¹ *Rot. Hund.*, II, 789; *Collectanea*, IV, 46.

² *Lib. Alb. Civ. Ox.*, no. 146. There is some evidence that Spalding held No. 84, St. Aldate's. The estate of Bugwell was perhaps identical with that held by le Deveneys in the previous century.

³ Wood, *City of Oxford*, I, 302.

⁴ Salter, *Medieval Oxford*, App. C, p. 151. Similar instances of the nuisance mentioned above are cited in the same place, pp. 148, 150, 151; for example, p. 148, '[juratores] item dicunt quod omnes illi qui manent et habent exitum super ripam Trillemyll iactant fimum in rivulum predictum ob quod cursus aque obstupatur et obstruitur ad grave nocumentum.'

⁵ Wood, *City of Oxford*, I, 309, and cf. *ibid.* pp. 251, 432.

⁶ *Collectanea*, IV, 8.

⁷ *Rot. Hund.*, II, 35; *Oxford City Documents*, p. 205. It is said that the arch of the bridge can still be seen in the tunnel of Trillmill stream.

⁸ *Ox. City Doc.*, p. 207; *Cal. Pat. R.* 1281-1292, p. 165.

⁹ *V.C.H. Oxon.*, II, 109.

W. A. HINNEBUSCH

Franciscans were charged with making dykes and walls and enclosing a part of the Thames.¹

III. THE BUILDINGS OF BLACKFRIARS

The Buildings of the Dominican priory, as is clear from the texts of Hutten and Wood cited in the preceding section, were situated in the northern half of the property in the area below Littlegate Street roughly marked out by Albion Place, Cambridge Street, Speedwell Street, and Commercial Road. Contemporary notices referring to Little South Gate point to this location of the monastic buildings. In 1268 a message is described as 'outside the gate which leads toward the church of the Friars Preachers.'² An allusion is made, in 1330, to 'the Little Gate which leads to the Preaching Friars.'³

Owing to the complete disappearance of any trace of these buildings it is impossible to say anything very definite concerning their arrangement and architecture. The church, as will be shown, extended from east to west and flanked the northern side of the cloister quadrangle. The other buildings probably followed the conventional arrangement of monastic buildings, though the Mendicants frequently deviated from this plan when the exigencies of their site demanded a different orientation. Probably at Oxford the dormitory occupied the upper storey of the eastern range of buildings. The chapter house, if it occupied the normal position, projected at right angles from the ground floor of this range. At the point where it joined the main wing it continued inwards, taking up a portion of the ground floor and opening on the cloister alley. The refectory was probably in the southern wing, while the western range may have housed the lecture halls and library.⁴ It is quite probable, judging from the size of the Oxford Dominican community that the priory possessed a second and smaller quadrangle around which we might have found the infirmary, kitchens, workshops, and perhaps a subsidiary dormitory.

When the priory church was finished, c. 1246, undoubtedly it did not represent all the features of the distinctive style of English Mendicant church

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

² *Cart. Oseney*, II, 170.

³ *Lib. Alb. Civ. Ox.*, no. 12.

⁴ Consultation of J. Leland, *Commentarii de Scriptoribus Britannicis* (Oxford, 1709), I, 330 (De Nicolao Gorhamo), and *Twyne MS.* xviii, 504, shows that Wood, *City of Oxford*, II, 405, n. 6, citing Twyne, is not quite accurate in stating 'The Dominicans Librariye also was loaden with dust and filth.' Leland (from whom Twyne borrowed) writes: 'Ego tamen conterraneum meum (Nicholas Gorham) suae restituam audacter patriae, atque ejus breviter perstringam vitam, adjutus inscriptione libelli cujusdam ab eodem editi, qui mihi excutienti bibliothecae pulverem Dominicanae ad Isis Vadum opportune se obtulit.' Even the best regulated libraries have their dusty corners.

BLACKFRIARS PRIORY, OXFORD

architecture that attained its full development about 1300.¹ But we can expect that by means of alterations and additions made from time to time the Oxford church eventually approximated to the usual form of the English Mendicant church.

The English friars developed a type of architecture for their churches that was distinctive and well suited to their needs and purposes. The church was made up of two rectangles, a large aisled nave, and an aisle-less, square-ended choir with a belfry between. The walls supporting the belfry were carried down to the ground between choir and nave and were only pierced by a narrow opening at their bases, so that the sight of the choir-stalls was practically shut off from the nave and only a limited view permitted of the altar at the far end of the choir. The oblong space formed by these supporting walls was known as the 'Walking Place,' and was the usual position of the main entrance to the church. The belfry was ordinarily a square tower surmounted by a symmetrical octagonal lantern. The nave of friar churches was characterized by ample floor space and windows of generous proportions. Slender piers, only large enough for structural stability, permitted an almost uninterrupted view of the preacher and gave the church an air of grace and lightness.

The Oxford Dominican church extended from east to west about 150 ft. below Trillmill stream. The will of Sir Peter Bessels, proved in 1426, by which he bequeathed £120 to the Dominicans to make six windows in the northern aisle of their church, proves the east and west orientation and informs us that there were six bays in the north aisle.² In comparison with the nave of the Dominican church in London, with seven bays and measuring 114 ft., we can presume that the Oxford nave measured about 100 ft. The choir and 'Walking Place' probably took up another 90 or 100 ft.³ so that the whole length of nave and choir was probably 200 ft. Other evidence, such as a section of stone wall, skulls, coffins, and various relics dug up from time to time, enable us to locate the church between Albert Street and Commercial Road just below the point

¹ A competent discussion of English Mendicant architecture will be found in A. W. Clapham, 'The Friars as Builders,' ch. xv of *Some Famous Buildings and Their Story* (Westminster, 1913). A useful summary introduces an article by the same author, 'The Architectural Remains of the Mendicant Orders in Wales,' in *Archaeological Journal*, LXXXIV (1927). Cf. A. R. Martin, *Franciscan Architecture in England* (Manchester, 1937), Introduction.

² *V.C.H. Oxon.*, II, 119. Wood, *City of Oxford*, II, 323, records that Bessels built the northern aisle. Wood apparently had other evidence for the east-west extension of the church. In a note, *loc. cit.*, he remarks: 'A vault under ground (in some part of this decayed place) whether for a cellar or charnell-hous I know not.' The editor notes that the part in brackets is substituted for 'at the west end of the church.'

³ London Blackfriars' church measured 220×66 ft., the choir was 35 ft. in width. Whitefriars' measured 260×80 ft., width of choir 35 ft.; Austin Friars' 285×83 ft.; Franciscans, 300×89 ft.; Martin, *Franciscan Architecture*, p. 23 n. 6, p. 192. The Oxford Franciscan church measured 237×60 ft.; choir, 102×30 ft., nave, 135×60 ft. (including northern aisle); Little, *Grey Friars*, p. 24.

W. A. HINNEBUSCH

where Cambridge Terrace runs into Albert Street.¹ Thus, about 1870 when the main drainage of Albert Street was installed, a thick stone wall was unearthened running north and south along the middle of the street, in the section between Cambridge Terrace and Speedwell Street. At its northern end, near No. 40, Albert Street, the wall turned off toward the west. Meanwhile, on the western side of the main portion of this wall, somewhere between No. 36 and No. 40, Albert Street, a leaden coffin was discovered with its foot touching or partly imbedded in the wall.² When the house at No. 40 was built about 1845, a row of four stone coffins was found in the excavation for the cellar.³ Also many skulls and bones have been dug up in Albert Street west of the wall, in Cambridge Terrace, Albion Place, and in Commercial Road.⁴ In digging the foundations for the Baptist Chapel in Commercial Road, at the beginning of the last century, some stone coffins, running east and west, were unearthened. Mr Frederick King writes in a letter in April, 1894: 'I well remember this [the chapel] being built, and when the foundations were dug seeing several stone coffins and broken portions of some others. . . .' Hurst remarks that the plan accompanying the letter showed two coffins on the north-west quarter of the chapel, and other fragments on the north-east quarter.⁵ Another stone coffin was discovered in Albert Street in a line with the Baptist Chapel, about 40 yds. toward the east.⁶

The position of the first coffin within the angle of the walls, and the proximity of coffins to the north and east and as far west as Commercial Road suggest that the wall fragments unearthened were the northern and eastern walls of the priory church.⁷ Evidently the cemetery lay to its north and east. Palmer supposes that the coffins in Commercial Road represent the cemetery of the

¹ I have been informed that several years ago a tile, now in the possession of the Oxford Gas Co., was unearthened, presumably, at the junction of Speedwell St. and Cambridge St.; the workmen reported that there was a complete tiled floor at that spot. Dr. Salter has suggested that this was probably the floor of the Chapter House. If this is so, it would necessitate the location of the main cloister, and hence of the church, about 50 yds. eastwards and somewhat more to the south than indicated on our plan. An alternative explanation, however, is that the flooring represents the remains of a group of buildings apart from the main cloister, perhaps the prior's lodgings or the guest house. An arrangement similar to this existed at the Dominican priory at Brecon where two halls, probably the guest house and infirmary, still stand separate from the main cloister, 170 ft. south from the nave. See A. W. Clapham, 'The Architectural Remains of the Mendicant Orders in Wales,' in *Archaeological Journal*, LXXXIV (1927), 94-95.

² Fletcher, *Black Friars in Oxford*, p. 14; Palmer, 'The Friars Preachers of Oxford,' in *The Reliquary*, XXIII (1882-1883), 218-219. Unfortunately neither of these authors gives any plans or measurements.

³ Fletcher, *loc. cit.*

⁴ Fletcher and Palmer, *loc. cit.*

⁵ Hurst, *Oxford Topog.*, p. 34.

⁶ *Loc. cit.*

⁷ The remains of the walls dug up in Albert Street may represent the north-east angle of the north aisle of the nave. However, the length of wall parallel to Albert Street between No. 36 and No. 40, seemingly about 25-30 ft. in length, appears too long for the return wall of an aisle.

BLACKFRIARS PRIORY, OXFORD

friars.¹ This may well be true, since Leland records that Richard Fishacre, a Dominican Master who died in 1248, was buried 'near the western wall of the church.'²

The consecration of the church was carried out by Richard Gravesend, Bishop of Lincoln, on June 15, 1262, the feast of Sts. Vitus and Modestus.³ It was placed under the patronage of the Blessed Virgin Mary, as is apparent from a document of 1269 referring to it as 'the church of St. Mary without the south gate.'⁴ Confirmation of this is had from the seal of the convent, which bore a figure of the Blessed Virgin seated on a throne with the Infant Jesus in her arms and a kneeling figure at her feet.⁵

Within the church, presumably in the opening between the choir and nave, was a rood-loft with figures of the Blessed Mother and St. John. At the Dissolution it was taken down and transferred to the church of St. Mary Magdalen.⁶ There is notice of an altar dedicated to St. Peter Martyr, the first martyr-saint of the Order, and in 1514, William Dewre, Irish Principal of Bull Hall, desired to be buried before the image of St. Patrick.⁷ There is no complete burial list extant for the Oxford Dominicans, but during the three centuries of its existence many of the nobility and others were buried in the church and choir. A few of the early burials may be mentioned by way of example. Isabel de Bolbec, foundress of the priory, was buried there in 1245.⁸ In 1260 William, son of William de Fortibus, third Earl of Albemarle, was interred in the church.⁹ Bishop Walter Mauclerc, who became a friar shortly before his death, Friar Robert Bacon, and Friar Richard Fishacre were buried at Blackfriars in 1248.¹⁰ Some idea of the numbers entombed there, however, may be obtained from Anthony Wood :

' Besides these have been many more (too numerous now to be recited) that have been buried here. Which since the dissolution of this house and plucking downe of the church, hath been made apparent, as 'tis also to this day, by the often digging up of stone coffins wherein have been persons

¹ 'Black Friars of Oxford,' in *The Reliquary*, xxiii, 219.

² Leland, *Collectanea* (ed. Oxford, 1715), iv, 59 : 'juxta orientalem murum ecclesiae.'

³ *Bodley MS.* 712, fol. 362.

⁴ *Feet of Fines for Oxfordshire*, p. 198. The stipulation of Richard the Miller, *Cart. S. Frid.*, i, 221, that a light should be kept burning in the friars' church of St. Nicholas before the altar of St. Mary, probably refers to the church in the Jewry. Or perhaps St. Nicholas was a secondary patron of the new church.

⁵ *V.C.H. Oxon.*, ii, 122 ; Palmer, *op. cit.*, 148, 213 ; Fletcher, *op. cit.*, pp. 24-25.

⁶ Wood, *City of Oxford*, ii, 341, n. 5 : Church-wardens' accounts : ' . . . item, paid for taking downe of a rode at the Black Fryers with Mary and John and the carriage of them from the said Fryers to our church, 20d.'

⁷ *V.C.H. Oxon.* ii, 119 ; Wood, *City of Oxford*, ii, 340.

⁸ M. Paris, *Chron. Maj.*, iv, 406. ⁹ Dugdale, *Baronage*, i, 64.

¹⁰ M. Paris, *Chron. Maj.*, v, 16 ; Wood, *City of Oxford*, ii, 322-323.

with little chalices or cups in their hands, rings on their fingers, and medalls about their necks, with some remnants of parchment-writing (having seales hanging to them) sometimes found lying by them. The hearts also of severall have been found closed in lead, about the bigness of a man's head.¹

We know little more concerning the buildings of the priory. A low rambling wing that appears to be of one storey is pictured on the Oxford map of Agas, drawn about 1575.² It extended from north to south about half way between Trillmill and the Thames. If it is a representation of one of the Dominican buildings, its position suggests the eastern cloister range. The chapter house is mentioned in a will of 1349.³ The choir and dormitory were rebuilt in 1500 through the generosity of Richard Hasting (Lord Willoughby) and Lady Joan, his wife, who gave the 'prior and covent cc marks of good golde, hit to be employed towards and for the making and belding of their Qweer and Dorter there . . .'⁴ The mention of the anchorite, 'a well disposed man,' in Dr. London's report to Cromwell, indicates that an anker-house stood in the priory grounds, probably in the cemetery just below Preacher's Bridge, so that its inmate might have an opportunity of drawing on the generosity of callers at the church.⁵

As a House of Studies, the Oxford priory was necessarily of fairly large proportions. An indication of this is had in the letter of Dr. London, already cited. Speaking of the Blackfriars he writes: 'Their choir was lately newly builded and greatly covered with lead. It is likewise a big house, and all covered with slate saving the choir.'⁶ From the outset the priory was the *Studium* of the English Province, and after the General Chapter of 1261 when it was raised to the rank of a *Studium Generale*, students came from all the provinces of the Order to swell the number of friars.⁷ The community seems to have numbered normally about ninety friars, and of the English Province only the London house could rival this number. As a royal pension Oxford

¹ Wood, *City of Oxford*, II, 323. Wood gives burial lists, *ibid.*, pp. 322-323, 340. More complete lists are given by Palmer, *op. cit.*, p. 158, and Fletcher, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

² *Old Plans of Oxford* (Agas, Hollar, and Loggan), (O.H.S. xxxviii), Agas map, plate III. He mistakenly designates the Blackfriar site as 'Graie Friars.'

³ *Lib. Alb. Civ. Ox.*, no. 101.

⁴ *Cart. Hosp. S. John*, II, 456-457.

⁵ *Letters and Papers of Henry VIII*, XIII, i, 1342; Palmer, *Transcripts*, IV, B, 116.

⁶ *Letters and Papers Hen. VIII*, *loc. cit.*

⁷ *Acta Capitulorum Generalium* (M.O.P.H. III), I, 110. The first attempt to make Oxford a *Studium Generale* dates from the chapter of 1246 (*Acta*, I, 35, 38, 41), but the English Province did nothing about it until the 1261 Chapter adopted strenuous measures: cf. B. Jarrett, *The English Dominicans* (London, 1921), p. 66. Each province had the right to send two friars to the Oxford *Studium Generale*: *Acta*, *loc. cit.* In 1300 the Order numbered thirteen provinces; in 1358, eighteen; in 1573, twenty-nine, A. M. Walz, *Compendium Historiae Ordinis Praedicatorum* (Rome, 1930), pp. 247, 422.

BLACKFRIARS PRIORY, OXFORD

drew a yearly allowance of fifty marks, while the stipend for Cambridge was only twenty-five.¹ In 1305 Oxford had ninety-six friars, two years later Cambridge counted only sixty-one,² while York had sixty.³ From several gifts for food, ordinarily made at the rate of 4d. a day for each friar,⁴ it is possible to arrive at some idea of the size of the Oxford community at different times. On December 21, 1276, Edward I allowed 20s. for food on St. Thomas's day. In June, 70s. 4½d. this time for three days.⁵ Consequently there were sixty friars in the house shortly before Christmas in 1276, and seventy in June. In November 1305 a grant of £4 16s. for three days indicates that ninety-six religious were present at the priory. Ninety were in the house in 1317.⁶ Toward the end of the century (1377) an alms of William of Wykeham, at the rate of 1s. for each friar, shows that only seventy Dominicans were stationed at Oxford. This fall in numbers may have been caused by the internal difficulties disturbing the priory at the time. In the same year the Austin Friars had forty-nine, the Carmelites fifty-seven, and the Franciscans one-hundred-and-three.⁷

Today all trace of mediaeval Oxford Blackfriars has disappeared, and nothing remains to mark the site except three modern streets that perpetuate the name, Blackfriars Road, Friars Street, and Friars Wharf.⁸ The demolition of the priory began as soon as the house was dissolved in 1538. An idea of the method

¹ *Cal. Pat. R.* 1461-1467, p. 286, mentions Henry III as the originator of the Oxford grant: cf. *Enactments in Parliament Concerning Oxford and Cambridge*, ed. L. L. Shadwell (O.H.S. LVIII), pp. 51, 58, 71; *Collectanea*, III, ed. M. Burrows (O.H.S. XXXII), p. 155. The annual pension of the Oxford Franciscans was also fifty marks: Little, *Grey Friars*, pp. 97-98.

² Walter Gumbley, O.P., *The Cambridge Dominicans* (Oxford, 1938), p. 7. Sixty was the normal number for Cambridge. There were 57 in 1277; 75 in 1289; 59 in 1297; 55 in 1325; 61 in 1328.

³ L. M. Goldthorp, 'The Franciscans and Dominicans in Yorkshire,' in *The Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, XXXII (1935), 372.

⁴ On this point see A. G. Little, *Grey Friars in Oxford*, p. 44, n. 1, and *V.C.H. Oxon.*, II, 111.

⁵ Palmer, 'Black-Friars of Oxford,' in *The Reliquary*, XXIII, 153. ⁶ Palmer, *op. cit.*, p. 153.

⁷ A. G. Little, *Studies in English Franciscan History* (Manchester, 1917), pp. 71-72, from Bursar's Roll of New College, Oxford. For a description of the internal difficulties at Blackfriars at this time cf. *V.C.H. Oxon.*, II, 115-117.

⁸ It is stated occasionally that the 'Old Palace' at the corner of Rose Place and St. Aldate's was the guest house of the priory. However, it was built at a later date. It includes two houses; the western was owned and perhaps built by John Barksdale, who held the property c. 1595 (*Oxford City Properties*, p. 107), the eastern part was built in 1628 by Thomas Smith. Oliver Smith the elder, who purchased the property of Thomas Barksdale in 1621, uses 'Hither Friars' as the name of Barksdale's house. For a short architectural description of the house, which is usually known as Bishop King's Palace, see *Old Houses in Oxford* (O.A. and H. S., 1914), by H. E. Salter and F. E. Howard.

The house in Albion Place at the north-east corner of the Baptist Chapel, formerly known as Priory House, has at times been pointed out as the porter's lodge of the priory. Fletcher, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-24, however, mentions that the date 1647 was carved over the doorway inside the porch. Possibly materials from the priory entered into its construction.

The bishops of Lincoln appear to have had a house on the property of the Dominicans. *Mun. Acad.*, p. 725: 'Dominus Lincolniae episcopus, in loco mansionis suae apud fratres Praedicatorum in Oxonia . . .'; cf. *V.C.H. Oxon.*, II, 110.

W. A. HINNEBUSCH

and of the destruction wrought by the visitors who received the surrender of the priory can best be estimated from the words of Dr. London. Speaking of the Warwick Dominicans he says :

' There I defaced the church windows and the cells of the dorter, as I did in every place, saving in Bedford and Salisbury, where were few buyers. I pullyd down no House thoroughly at none of the Friars, but so defaced them as they should not lightly be made Friaries again.'¹

In Oxford, the citizens surpassed the zeal of Dr. London, who urges in a letter to Thomas Thacker, 1539, that the effects of the Oxford houses be sold at once ' as the people make waste in the friars' houses.'² This is reflected in the accounts of St. Giles's parish of 1539 : ' Item, for ale fetched to the Blackfriars, 2d.' and ' Item for the house at the Blackfriars, 20s. 4d.'³ After 1541 when the buildings were leased, and 1544 when they were purchased, by William Freer they and the church were pulled down and the materials sold.⁴ About 1557 when Sir Thomas Pope founded Trinity College, he purchased some of the stones of the priory and used them to erect the wall which separated the College gardens and St. John's.⁵ The building materials of the priory were so carefully salvaged that c. 1661 Anthony Wood could write :

' After our arrivall over the said bridg [Preacher's Bridge] wee enter into an isle ; now and for divers years since a peice of ground desolate and naked, and yeilding nothing not soe much as one stone to give testimony to the world that soe famous a place as the college of the Dominicans of Oxon was there once standing.'⁶

¹ C. F. R. Palmer, 'The Black-Friars of Warwick,' in *Transactions of the Birmingham and Midland Institute*, 1880, p. 20.

² *Letters and Papers Hen. VIII*, xiv, i, 3. ³ *V.C.H. Oxon.*, II, 121.

⁴ *Letters and Papers Hen. VIII*, xix, ii, 166 (82) ; Wood, *City of Oxford*, II, 325, and I, 156. When leased to William Freer in 1541 the property consisted of the site of the priory with houses, gardens, etc., a close or wood on the east of the church and priory containing three acres, a little grove at the back containing six acres, a tenement with gardens at Blackfriars gate : *L. and P. Hen. VIII*, xvi, 1500 (195).

⁵ *V.C.H. Oxon.*, II, 121 ; Fletcher, *op. cit.*, p. 23. ⁶ Wood, *City of Oxford*, I, 309.