



PRIORY HOTEL

THE HISTORY OF THE PRIORY HOTEL

In 1238 both the Franciscan and the Dominican Friars endeavoured to establish themselves at Bury, but the legate Otho was at the Great Monastery at Bury and, being discouraged by him, the Dominicans left. The Monks ruled Bury and did not tolerate any interlopers, but the Franciscans obtained a Bull from Alexander IV and they entered Bury on 22 June 1257 and established themselves on a fann on the north side of the town.

The Monks, in spite of the Bull expelled them, and the friars appealed to Rome. The Pope wrote severely to the Convent enjoining the Primate and the Dean of Lincoln to take them to another homestead which had been granted them, on the west side of the town.

The Treasurer of Hereford Cathedral, as the commissary of the Archbishop and the Dean of Lincoln came to Bury and invested the Friars of their new premises at St Mary's Church where their meeting was being held.

The Monks drove out both the Friars and delegates from the church and the town. The Friars then laid their grievance at the foot of the Throne of Henry III and Henry's wife was instrumental in persuading the King to allow them into Bury, they were then established on the western side of the town.

In April 1258 after the death of Alexander IV, came Urban IV. He wished to pacify and heal the rift between the Monks and the Friars, with the result that the Friars had to pull down their homestead that they had built so that a reconciliation could occur between the Monks and the Friars. The Monks then granted the Friars a site beyond the North gate just outside the town's jurisdiction called Babwell. The name derived from the land on which it stood, being part of Babwell Fen and there they continued to work until the dissolution.

The land the Friars were given was much greater than the present site. On the Tollgate side, going down to the river which was then navigable, and stretching up to at least the Old Mailings. The river was important to them for fishing and as a water supply.

The Friars were called Greyfriars because of the colour of their habits and were in the Mendicant order and by 1300 had approximately 40 Friars living at the Friary. They were assigned to St Saviours Hospital which was at that time the best Hospital in town. It was founded in 1148 by Abbot Sampson and had 1 Warden, 6 clerks, 12 poor men and 12 poor women. Its situation was just across from the railway station and opposite St Thomas's Chapel where the remains may still be seen. In its hey-day it constituted with the Franciscans at Babwell, an impression enough to attract as a resident in 1446, the "Good Duke" Humphrey of Gloucester, brother of Henry VI. St Saviours was the best source on the landed endowments.

A Nun, Maude Carew better known as The Grey Lady, is said to have poisoned Humphrey, who died at St Saviour's in February 1447 and she poisoned herself in the process. It is said that her ghost is seen on the 24th or 25th of this month each year on the anniversary of her death at around 11p.m., as she ascends the wall of Fornham Priory now the Priory Hotel to make her way to St Saviour's.

The Babwell Friars were well liked by the townspeople and is proved by the number of bequests they received. They took the side of the people in many of the skirmishes against the Monks. They were not allowed to enter into Civic Affairs and could only enter the Borough with the Abbey's permission. The Friars had a general distaste for the rich and the privileged Benedictines.

In his will, Robert Bishop of Ely, left his body to be buried at Babwell Friary, he also left six silver spoons, a silver cup and his lesser Maser. Among other burials here were Sir Walter Trumpington and Dame Anne his wife, Nicholas Drury and Jane his wife and Margaret Payton.

The Grey Friars at Babwell, this religious house with its appurtenances was granted in May 1541 by Henry VIII to Anthony Harvey at a rental of 10/- (50 Pence), when the original part of the present building was constructed. It was still called the Friary and a part of the premises was used as the Tollgate. It is interesting to note that Bury suffered greatly from the Black Death.

The Palmer family in the 18th century refronted the building as it looks today and Alderman Robert Olle, who was Mayor of Bury carried out further extensive alterations in 1952. The outside bedrooms on the west side were added about fourteen years ago and those on the right were opened at Christmas 2000, together with the Terrace.

In 1976 it became an hotel and had seven bedrooms and a four poster bed in one of them and a fridge drinks cabinet in each. The charges then were £9/£10 for a single and £ 14/£15 for a double, Lunch was £3, and fresh eggs straight from their own chickens penned in the garden!!

In 1982 it was sold for £150,000 and lunch was £6.00 including VAT. In 1998 it was bought by Eagle Hotels Ltd. On 15 August 2002 the hotel became The Priory Hotel Limited.