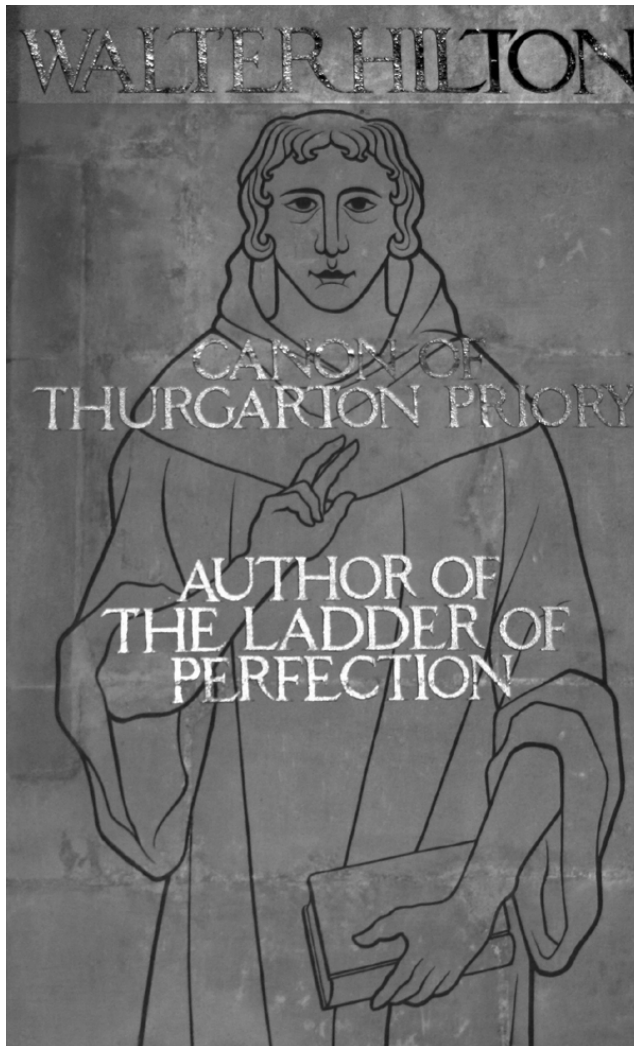


Walter Hilton

Walter Hilton, the best known of the canons who lived at Thurgarton, was born around 1330. He appears to have been educated at Cambridge; evidence of a knowledge of Canon Law suggest that he may well have made a study of this discipline. He was ordained and tried the life of a hermit, but found it to be unsuitable, possibly because of his very practical frame of mind. Instead he joined the Augustinian order, and came to live at the priory at Thurgarton. Hilton is best known for writing *The Ladder of Perfection*, which makes an important contribution to the development of the mystical tradition. There is a homeliness about the book, which makes a surprisingly fresh and vigorous approach to the life of prayer and to spirituality. Walter Hilton died in 1396 on 24th March; a memorial to him created on the 600th anniversary of his death can be seen on one of the church pillars, this was designed by Art Historian Tom Errington.



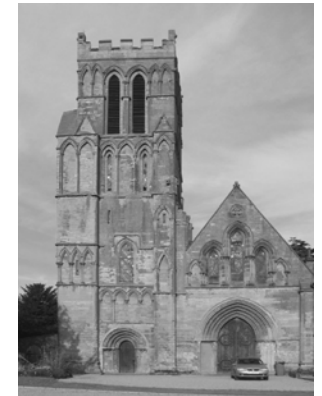
Welcome to the Priory Church of St Peter Thurgarton

The Domesday entry for Thurgarton records a priest and church and there is evidence of a late Anglo-Saxon /early Norman church site at Castle Hill, 250m south of the present church.

After 1066, William the Conqueror granted the ancient 'vill' of Thurgarton to Walter d'Ayncourt. Walter's second son Ralph is credited with having founded Thurgarton Priory around 1140. It was built as a priory for the Regular Canons of the Augustinian Order (later known as the Black Canons, a reference to the colour of their habits). The Priory was dedicated to "God and St. Peter".

In addition to the church, the priory buildings accommodated as many as 60 members of the community plus their prior. The house that now adjoins the south side of the church, and takes the place of one of its towers, retains the west cloister's undercroft as its cellar and so there is still some evidence for the form of the medieval priory.

The Dissolution of the monasteries under Henry VIII resulted in the eviction of the monks in 1538. The Priory buildings were given to William Cooper, and remained in the Cooper family until 1825. The surrounding land was given to Trinity College, Cambridge, who retain the



responsibility of providing a parish priest. The Coopers dismantled most of the church and claustral buildings to build a Tudor mansion. The priory church continued as the parish church but as a much smaller building which retained only the north-west tower and the west end of the nave with a lowered roof. In 1777 the Tudor house was replaced by the brick Georgian mansion one can see today.

In 1825 the Milward family bought the Cooper estate and in 1853 Richard Milward commissioned the Nottingham architect, T C Hine, to restore the church to its present form, incorporating some of the ancient building.



The University of
Nottingham

The information in this leaflet is taken from comprehensive historical research, which may be found in full at <http://southwellchurches.history.nottingham.ac.uk>

Many thanks to Ellis & Linda Morgan and Dr Jenny Alexander for their research.





9 The Tower

The church originally had a second tower on the south, of which only one buttress remains, and it therefore belongs to the group of twin-towered facades built in the area during the Romanesque period.

According to a Close Roll of 1228, several grants of oaks from Sherwood Forest were made by the crown for use in the fabric of the church at Thurgarton. This suggests that building had reached the stage where massive beams were required for the roofing and belfry. The tower contains a spiral staircase giving access to the bell-ringers' chamber and the main clock mechanism, and in the old days the triforium and clerestory. Outside, the south wall of the tower reveals that the springing from the roof of the original nave was from 4 to 5 metres higher than that of the existing 19th century roof.

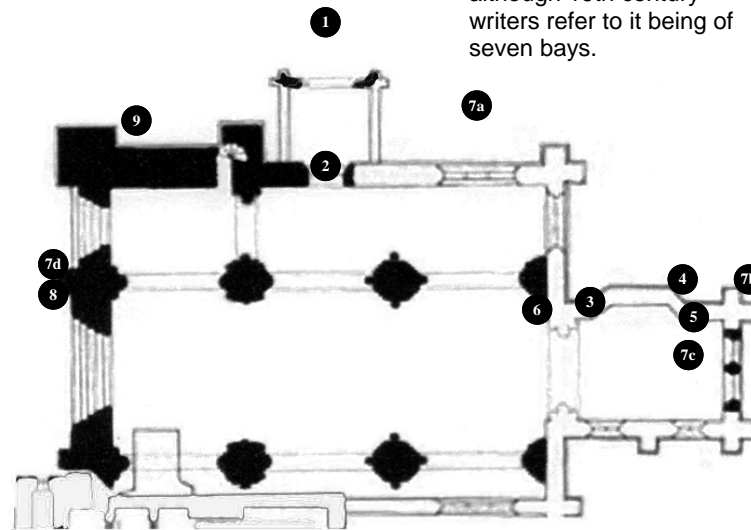


8 The Great West Door

Whilst the door itself dates only from the 19th century, the surrounding stonework is of a much earlier period. The dog-tooth work surrounding the little west door, which is of the same age, is considered to be a fine example of the Early English Period. The ground level in front of the west wall has risen over the last 400 years; there was originally a flight of steps leading downwards from the west door to the outside.

7 Glass

There are four stained glass windows all dating from 1870 to 1880. The window in the north aisle depicts the Miracle of the Loaves and Fishes. The east window depicts four scenes from the Life of St. Peter. Immediately to the right of the altar in the south wall of the chancel is a window depicting Christ receiving the Children on the left and The Good Shepherd on the right. The fourth window sits high up above the west doors. It depicts Jesus the Saviour of Mankind flanked on the left by St James the Greater and on the left by St John the Evangelist.



1 The North Door

The stonework is probably original though the porch extension was added during the Milward restoration.

2 The Nave

Only three bays of the medieval nave arcades survive; there are three identical pairs of arcade piers, arranged on either side of the nave; each is of a slightly different design. There is no firm evidence left of the length of the original nave, although 19th century writers refer to it being of seven bays.

3 The Stone Coffins

Next to the pulpit is a stone coffin, hand carved, of Ancaster stone; a further coffin lies outside the church. These were found in an archaeological dig on Castle Hill, just south of the Priory. The site contained a small early Norman church overlying an earlier late Anglo-Saxon church and burial ground. Several skeletons from these excavations were reinterred in St Peter's churchyard.



4 The Altar

The medieval altar of Ancaster stone sits on six 19th century stone pillars. It measures 8ft by 4 ft and bears several consecration crosses. After the Dissolution of the monasteries in the 16th century, the altar was dismantled, and it was only when the present building was being restored in the 19th century that the altar stone was found and recovered from a nearby well.

5 Misericord Triple Seat

Near the altar stands the triple misericord, typical of the furniture of the priory in late monastic times. It is constructed to form a two level seat, a sitting level and another level (the front edge when raised) which allowed the occupant to take the weight off his legs whilst apparently standing.



6 The Pulpit and the Lectern

These do not have the long history of the altar, being a part of the restoration by Mr Richard Milward (1846). The pulpit was designed to be in keeping with the architecture and scope of the original priory. The lectern is also mid-Victorian.