

6. Worksop Priory Gatehouse

Grade I listed building (on the 38th list for Bassetlaw district dated 1-4-85)

Large C14 2-storey ^{stone} gatehouse of an Augustinian priory founded 1103, & re-founded c1140. Sited 90m south of priory church in line with the west end. The cloisters were on the north side of the church, but all the monastic buildings & the east end of the great church were swept away in 1539. The gatehouse is a rare survival "the town's most precious possession" (Mee), "broad & stately" (Pevsner).

The south-facing front of the gatehouse is c.16m wide x 14m deep, & a 7m wide passage runs through the centre with a gateway at the mid-point of 2 stone arched openings, one large with double doors for vehicles, one small for pedestrians. Exactly above the passage & the same width is a splendid upper hall 4.6m high, the full depth of the building, its moulded floor joists on elaborately moulded cross-beams supported by a decorative display of

wall-posts, curved braces in 2 directions, & carved stone corbels (one a female head) with elaborately carved, bell-shaped, oak corbel capitals. The hall has large mullion & transome windows with reticulated tracery & shouldered headed lights, a ^{wide} wall fireplace with massive moulded lintel & hood, & an external staircase on the north side.

The front of the gatehouse has canopied niches, 3 of them still containing figures and a highly decorated stone porch leading to a shrine chapel with a richly carved, cusped tierceron vault with decorative bosses.

No satisfactory account of the building & no measured drawings seem to exist. There are a number of theories as to the date or dates of the building & the tree-ring dating is a particularly valuable piece of evidence. The suggestion that the gatehouse was built ~~when~~ when the priory received permission from the Archbishop of York to fell 200 oaks in the forest of Rorumwood (Sherwood) on 7 May 1314 is contradicted by the dates of 1332 & 1359 for the timbers in the passageway, and I imagine that only a few trees would be needed for the construction of the gatehouse.

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19-4-96