

MARTON PRIORY AND MOXBY NUNNERY.

BY BARRY FEWSTER, NOVEMBER 2009.

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INTRODUCTION.

Marton Priory was a small Augustinian priory situated about ten miles to the north of York on the B1363 road from York to Helmsley. Today it is a scheduled monument. This work is my attempt to record its history, archaeology and what remains of it today, both on the site of the priory and elsewhere.

Acknowledgements for the sources of information are given where appropriate in the main body of this document. Each source of text information is provided separately for two reasons. One, because of some conflicting information, it's not possible to provide definitive details. And two, because of the wide range of sources it enables the reader to easily select a particular source and use it for his or her further study or a visit to a particular location. Each source of information has been quoted word for word, apart from adding words to make a complete sentence when only part of a sentence has been used. Minor irregularities have not been corrected so that I haven't introduced any unnecessary confusion. Anything without an acknowledgement is my work.

All of the monasteries and religious houses in England and Wales were dissolved between 1536 and 1539; the smaller ones such as Marton Priory and Moxby Nunnery were dissolved in 1536. Those with an annual income of £200 or less were the first to be dissolved.

Moxby Nunnery is mentioned in this work for the sake of completeness, but none of its remains are visible from land to which the public has access. Therefore, so as not to trespass and not to encourage trespass, I have limited this document to a history of the nunnery, a detailed map showing its earthwork features and an aerial photograph of the site.

NOTES ON SAINT AUGUSTINE AND THE AUGUSTINIAN RULE.

Kirkham Priory guide book, English Heritage.

Saint Augustine was a fifth century bishop of Hippo whose writings formed the basis for the Augustinian rule. This Augustine is not to be confused with the Augustine that was sent to Kent to reintroduce Christianity to England. The members of an Augustinian foundation were priests rather than monks and they were known as canons and some of them served as priests in parish churches. Because the canons wore dyed black habits, they were often known as 'black canons' or 'black monks'.

The first house of the order in England was that at Saint Botolph's Priory in Colchester, Essex founded in 1100. Some others within the boundaries of Yorkshire were at Bridlington founded in 1113; Nostell founded in 1114; Gisborough (you will see that the name of the town is spelt differently, Guisborough) founded in about 1119 and Kirkham founded in 1122.

THE HISTORY OF MARTON PRIORY.

The Victoria history of the counties of England.

The priory of Marton was founded, as a double house of Augustinian canons and nuns, by Bertram de Bulmer, who lived at the end of the reign of Stephen and the beginning of that of Henry II. The nuns did not remain there long, but moved to Molveby (or Moxby, as it is now called, a mile and a half from Marton) and there formed an independent establishment on land given them by Henry II. Henry de Nevill, grandson of the founder, confirmed his ancestor's grant of the vill of Marton with its church and other gifts of land by Richard de Runtcliffe and Roger de Punchardune. Henry Nevill further gave to the canons of St. Mary of Marton his manor of Woodhouse, except two bovates of land in Appletreewick, which he intended to give to the nuns of Monkton.

From some unknown donor the canons obtained the church of Sheriff Hutton, and in 1322 Archbishop Melton ordained a vicarage in the church, ordering, inter alia, that the canons were to payout of its revenues the large annual sum of 20 marks to the abbey of St. Mary, York. The canons had also the church of Sutton, in which Archbishop Walter Gray ordained a vicarage in 1227.

The priory of Marton was in financial straits in 1280, when Archbishop Wickwane directed that a complete statement of the temporalities of the house should be compiled for the Prior of Warter and Roger the archbishop's chaplain, who were to report to the archbishop. The prior was to retain the name and office, as such, under his vow of obedience till the archbishop ordered otherwise. On 2 August the archbishop accepted the resignation of Walter, the prior, on account of age and decrepitude, and 'ad quietam tuam et augmentum contemplacionis,' and on the same date wrote to R. de Nevill, the patron, that on account of the poverty of the priory he was promoting Brother Gregory de Lesset as prior, and in the formal letter to Gregory de Lesset, canon of Newburgh, appointing him Prior of Marton, dated 4 August, the appointment is said to be made with the consent of the patron and of all the canons of the house. A concurrent letter was sent to the Prior and convent of Newburgh, asking that Gregory de Lesset might be released from the office of sub-prior of that house, and allowed to go as prior to Marton. The archbishop, on 11 August, made a public declaration that he had only made this appointment under the pressure of necessity, and that his action was not to be to the prejudice in future of the priory or its patron. A few months later (on 13 December 1281) the archbishop wrote to the prior and convent that, having beheld with paternal pity the almost irreparable ruin to which they and their house had been brought by their wantonness and demerits, he had appointed Thomas, Archdeacon of Cleveland, to carry into effect the ordinances made for the house as a result of a recent visitation. Subsequently he commanded the prior and convent to send certain of their less useful brethren to religious houses in which holy religion waxed more strongly. He had also sent the Prior of Newburgh to their house, and, according to the prior's arrangement, the archbishop directed that the canons were to send Brothers John de Esyngwald and Laurence to other religious houses, to be named by the archbishop. In a letter to the Prior and convent of Newburgh the archbishop referred to the reformation of the monastery of Marton. He had learnt that its temporalities had almost come to an end; religious honesty was undone, the observance of the rule was shamelessly banished, and troubled businesses had taken the place of pious zeal. He saw how honest and pleasing to God was the behaviour of the congregation of Newburgh, and on that account he ordered them to send certain wise and honest of their number to Marton, at the nomination of the prior of that house, to the assistance and relief of Marton. No doubt Gregory de Lesset, so recently sub-prior of Newburgh, wished, to be strengthened in his work of reformation at Marton by the help of some of his late brethren at Newburgh.

Laurence, one of the two canons of Marton who were to be sent away, must have been exceptionally troublesome, for the archbishop, addressing on 5 August 1283 the Priors of Nostell and Newburgh, presidents of the general chapter of canons regular in the province of York, stated that at the visitation of Marton the congregation of his brethren there could not submit to his reprobate and perverse behaviour among them, and that the prior had no safe place there in which to shut him up, especially as no iron bolt could resist him, but he loosened it as he would, and got

out. The archbishop asked them to find some safe place of detention, that he might undergo salutary penance.

In 1286 Gregory de Lesset left Marton and returned to Newburgh. During his rule at Marton he seems to have obtained from that house a manor in Craven, and Archbishop Romanus ordered that this was to be restored to Marton, and that Gregory was to give up the writings he had about it to the Prior of Marton. If, however, he had contracted any reasonable debts on account of it, the Prior of Marton was to answer for them, and satisfy the creditors. The Prior and convent of Marton were to pay to Newburgh, as long as Gregory lived, a yearly sum of 40s and half of this the Prior of Newburgh, at his discretion, was to give as a solace to Gregory, and the other half was to be for the general use of Newburgh. If, however, Marton had secretly or openly sustained any kind of charge by Gregory's action, then the whole sum was to go to the house of Newburgh, but this only if he were properly convicted or confessed. These directions were conveyed to Marton and Newburgh by similar letters, *mutatis mutandis*, dated 11 October 1286. There is no record of the election of Gregory de Lesset's successor, but his name transpires a year later, when, on 27 October 1287, the archbishop issued a mandate to the sub-prior and convent of Marton to elect a prior in succession to Brother John de Wylton, resigned. Their choice fell on William de Bulmer, the sub-prior, but the archbishop quashed the election '*non vicio persone sed forme*,' and eventually appointed John de Lund, canon of Bolton. Although no fault was then found with William de Bulmer, he got into serious trouble at a later period, but in what way is not said. In 1308 Archbishop Greenfield sent him to Drax, to undergo a specified penance, and Marton was to pay 4 marks annually for his maintenance there. In 1314 Archbishop Greenfield held a visitation of Marton, and issued injunctions of a general character, almost identical with others sent to Newburgh at the same time. The archbishop had, however, to deal with some serious cases of immorality. Alan de Shirburn, one of the canons, had confessed to incontinence with Joan daughter of Walter de Cartwright, and Juliana wife of William 'le Mazun' of York, living in Bootham, and with Maud Bunde of Stillington. The archbishop enjoined the following penance: he was to keep convent in cloister, quire, dormitory and refectory continuously, unless sick or otherwise legitimately prevented. He was not to go outside the precincts of the monastery, or the outer door, except in honest company and with the licence of the president. He was to hold no office in the monastery, without special licence. Every day he was to say a nocturn of the psalter. Each Wednesday and Friday he was to say the seven penitential psalms with the litany, humbly and devoutly prostrated before the altar of the Blessed Virgin, and on those days he was to fast on bread, ale, and vegetables. Once a week, at least, he was to confess his sins humbly and devoutly. He was not to speak to any woman, without the licence of the president, who was to hear what was said. The prior was to tell Brother Stephen of this, and make him a copy of the penance, and also notify the archbishop how Alan de Shirburn performed what was enjoined him. Brother Stephen, who was to have a copy of the penance, was Stephen de Langetoft, another canon, who had owned at the visitation to the vice of incontinence with Alice de Hareworth, dwelling at Marton, and with Agnes de Hoby. He was to perform the same penance as Alan de Shirburn.

Another misdoer was Brother Roger de Scameston, a conversus of the house, who confessed to misconduct of the same kind with Ellen de Westmorland living at Brandsby, with Beatrix del Calgarth wife of John de Ferlington, Eda Genne of Marton, Maud Scot of Menersley, and Beatrix Baa, relict of Robert le Bakester of Stillington. The penance imposed on him was that every Wednesday he was to fast on bread, ale, and vegetables, and every Friday on bread and water and in no manner whatever was to go outside the precincts of the monastery. Every Wednesday and Friday he was to receive a discipline from the president. Every day before the altar of the Blessed Virgin, fasting, he was to say, fifty times, the Lord's prayer with the Salutation of the Blessed Mary, humbly and devoutly. Once a week, at least, he was to confess his sins. He was not to speak to any woman, nor was he to be placed in any office until the archbishop saw fit to deal otherwise with him.

On 16 June 1304 Archbishop Corbridge issued a commission to William de Wirkesall to go to Marton and correct faults discovered at a recent visitation, but there is nothing said as to what was amiss.

Archbishop Melton notified the house on 5 May 1318 of his intention to visit it, and on 15 June the prior, Simon de Branby, resigned. The sub-prior and canons elected no other as their prior than Alan de Shirburn, who had so grievously misbehaved only four years before. The archbishop quashed the election on the ground of irregularity, and appointed a canon of Bridlington, Henry de Melkingthorp, and at the same time commissioned Roger de Heslington, official of the court of York, and John de Hemingburgh, dean of Christianity, to correct the faults disclosed at the visitation. A few days later (27 July) the archbishop wrote to the Prior of Bridlington to send Robert de Scarborough and Stephen de Snayth, two of his canons, as he had appointed them sub-prior and cellarer, respectively, of Marton, in order to correct the abuses of that house. The Prior of Bridlington was to take John de Maltby and Stephen de Langetoft from Marton. All points to continued disorder and misrule at Marton, and Melton was not the man to treat lightly such a condition of affairs. Henry de Melkingthorp resigned in 1321, and the canons elected Robert de Tickhill, one of their number, to succeed him. This election the archbishop also quashed, but appointed Robert de Tickhill *jure devoluto*, provision being made for Melkingthorp. The following year, however, witnessed the dispersion of the canons of Marton *propter destructionem Scotorum*. In a letter of 3 November 1322 to the Prior and convent of Bridlington, the archbishop related that owing to the recent hostile incursion of the Scots the monastery of Marton was devastated, its animals and property despoiled, its villages, manors, and estates, as it were, devoured by fire, so much so, that it could not support the college of canons serving God there. He therefore sent to Bridlington Brothers Alan de Shirburn and John de Soureby. At the same time similar letters were sent to Warter for Simon de Branby, to Drax for William de Craven, to Thurgarton for John de Malteby, to Shelford for Stephen de Langetoft, and to Newstead in Shirwood for Ingram de Semer, canons of Marton. This accounts for seven of the members, and apparently the prior, sub-prior, and cellarer, who are not named, continued at or near the spot, for on 18 November the archbishop granted licence *quibusdam canonicis dicte domus de Marton* to remain in a suitable and honest place, and to say mass and divine offices, in places legitimately set apart for that purpose. No doubt they remained in order to superintend the reconstruction of their house, and the repairing of the mischief done by the Scots.

On 17 July 1351 William de Wakefield, one of the canons professed in the house, was found guilty of divers crimes, excesses, and errors which are not named. He was then, according to the rules of the order, imprisoned, and Archbishop Zouch ordered that he was to be deprived of any office he held in the house, and care was to be taken lest his crimes did harm to others. He was not to receive or send letters, and other restrictions were placed upon him.

The prior and canons seem to have been ready to lend a willing ear quite at the last to the royal commissioners, and quit their habit voluntarily, before they were compelled to do so. According to the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* the clear annual revenue was £151 5s 4d. In 1527 it was returned as £131 16s 6d.

In the account of Laurence Beckwith for a year from Michaelmas 1535, the receipts from Marton amount to £219 5s 8d, and Thomas Godson, the late prior, is named as being rector of Sheriff Hutton. This was evidently a sinecure appointment, as Richard Moreton is elsewhere spoken of as receiving £10 as perpetual vicar of Sheriff Hutton. Two of the canons, George Burgh and George Sutton, had bought cattle from the monastery before the suppression, and 'Mr.' George Davy, whom Thomas Godson had succeeded as prior in 1531, was still alive. He had, on his resignation, received under the common seal of the house a yearly pension for life of £13 6s 8d by equal portions on the feasts of St. Martin and Pentecost at the altar of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the conventual church, between the hours of ten o'clock and noon. The house was formally 'suppressed' on 19 May 1536, when Thomas Godson was paid £25 13s 4d for his expenses with his

servants in London from 2 March to 4 May, with certain legal charges, and his expenses going and returning. George Sutton, one of the canons, received £4 for riding to London, at the order of the visitors, stopping there, and returning. Eight canons, pro vadiis, received 20s each from 1 March to 4 May. There were thirty-seven servants then in the employment of the house. The house was finally surrendered by the prior and fifteen canons on 9 February 1535-6, and on 3 March 1535-6 Thomas Barton delivered to Cromwell a letter from the Prior of Marton. If the prior left the place, Barton wished to have it, as the house was near where he was born, and his ancestors were benefactors to it. It was well wooded and not worth less than £200.

Priors of Marton.

Herniseus, occurs before 1181. Henry, occurs 1203, 1227. Richard, occurs 1235. Simon, occurs 1238. John, occurs 1252. Walter, resigned 1280. Gregory de Lesset (sub-prior of Newburgh), appointed 1280, resigned 1286. John de Wylton, elected 1286, resigned October 1287. John de Lund, appointed 1287. Alan de Morton, confirmed December 1304. Simon de Brandby, succ. 1307, resigned 1318. Henry de Melkingthorp, appointed 1318, resigned 1321. Robert de Tickhill, succ. 1321. William de Craven, confirmed 1340, died 1344. Hugh de Rickhall, 1344, died 1349. John de Thresk, 1349, resigned 1357. Robert, occurs 1369. William, occurs 1370, Easter 1371. Robert de Hoton, occurs Trinity 1371, 1388. Robert de Stillington, occurs 1403. John de Goldsborough, occurs 1436. Robert Cave, resigned 1443. Henry Rayne, confirmed 1443. Christopher Latoner, confirmed 1506. John Caterik, confirmed 1519. George Davy, resigned 1531. Thomas Godson, confirmed 7 June 1531 (last prior).

The history of Easingwold and the Forest of Galtres, Geoffrey C. Cowling.

The King's gifts of timber from Galtres Forest for building purposes were very numerous. They included gifts of four oaks to the keeper of Topcliffe Bridge for repairs because it had been broken and ten oaks to the Prior of Marton Priory for building his church in December 1227.

In 1281 John de Esyngwald (who may or may not actually have been from Easingwold) had to be removed from Marton Priory for indiscipline.

The Prior of Marton was licensed to assart 40 acres of wood in the forest in 1291. License was required to enclose or assart land in the forest and enclosure or assarting without such license was contrary to the law of the forest.

Sheriff Hutton parish church guide book.

In 1281 the church at Sheriff Hutton was appropriated to the Augustinian priory at Marton and the church remained under the Priory until the dissolution.

The first known person to be appointed as vicar after 1281 at Sheriff Hutton church by the Prior of Marton was Dominus William de Garton.

The church at Sheriff Hutton was endowed with two oxgangs of land when it was given to the Priory of Marton.

Bertram de Bulmer was the High Sheriff of Yorkshire in 1140 and again in 1154.

Bulmer parish church guide book.

The Bulmer family appears to have acquired the manor at the start of the 12th century and held it until 1537 when Sir John Bulmer and his wife, Lady Margaret were found guilty of treason and executed for their part in the pilgrimage of grace. He was hung, drawn and quartered, she, despite her rank was burnt at the stake.

Stillington year 2000 millennium handbook.

In 1307, a neighbour Ralph de Neville seized some of the prior's cattle on the King's highway. Apparently he had no difficulty in driving them out of the county into the liberty of the bishopric of Durham. In all probability this would have been to the neighbouring Parish of Crayke, which then was under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Durham. Not long after that, he struck one of the canons, but for some reason he was absolved from excommunication that should have been his punishment.

By 1531, Marton Priory premises were already in a bad condition. A visitation by the Dean and Chapter of York recorded that the priory was impoverished and the infirmary was in ruins. It also made reference to the Prior's card playing and dicing; remaining playing all night and losing 20 to 40 marks a night.

An account of the priory made between 1535 and 1536 reported it as having houses, buildings, dovecotes, orchards, gardens, meadows, pastures, fallow and arable closes, woodland, a watermill and five fishponds.

NMR monument report.

Marton Priory was a double house of Augustinian canons and Benedictine nuns founded by 1154 within the area covered by the Forest of Galtres. It became an Augustinian monastery in 1167, when the nuns were moved to Moxby. Both were dissolved in 1536. In the period of 1280 to 1283 it was described as being impoverished and misruled, and two canons were sent to other houses. It was ravaged by the Scots in 1322.

The priory of Saint Mary the Virgin was founded about 1154 as a double monastery of Augustinian canons and Benedictine nuns by Bertram de Bulmer of Sheriff Hutton Castle. The nuns moved to Moxby before 1167 but seem to have adopted the Augustinian rule after 1310. At the dissolution in 1536 there were 15 canons besides the Prior and 37 servants at the priory.

Various Internet sources.

In 1227 the king ordered Henry de Nevill to see that the Prior of Marton had twelve oaks in the forest of Galtres for building his church.

The last prior was Thomas Godson, who, with fifteen canons, surrendered the priory in 1536. Their gross income was £183 2s 4d, which after certain payments, left a net sum of £151 5s 4d. The site was granted to the Archbishop of York in exchange for other lands.

The priory seems to have been willingly surrendered by its last prior, Thomas Godson, in 1536. Its gross value amounted to only £183 2s 4d. In the previous year Thomas Barton of Whenby had asked Cromwell that if the prior should leave the monastery he might have it. This request met with no response. The priory remained for some years in the possession of the Crown, during which time its revenues were devoted to the payment of the garrison at Berwick. In 1543 it was granted to Edward Archbishop of York. The grant was repeated to his successors who continued to hold the manor.

A water mill was probably among the possessions of the priory from a very early date. Two were included in the grant of the site made to the Archbishop of York in 1543.

MAP OF THE LOCATION OF MARTON PRIORY (OS GRID REF SE 58, 69).



(Ordnance Survey)

As can be seen from the above map, most of the earthworks are visible from the road. The remaining earthworks and sculptured fragments on the actual site are on privately owned land that is not open to the public. The B1363 road from York to Helmsley is shown on the map in red to the left of the priory remains. It ran past its gates between the road and the river Foss. The road immediately in the front of the farm is a single-track lane unsuitable for vehicles. Note that the village of Marton-in-the-Forest is on the Stillington to Farlington road, OS grid ref 60, 68.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDS ON THE SITE.

NMR monument report.

(SE 58526978) Lead coffin with skeleton was found in 1852. A lead coffin, 4 ft long was found at a depth of 3 ft, when draining in the spring of 1852. The skeleton, apparently of a female, had the skull missing.

(SE 58456952) Human remains were found in 1892. Two skeletons and a square block of wood were embedded in a solid mass of rock met with during excavations for drains and foundations in the autumn of 1892. The skeletons were replaced except for a skull and two thighbones, believed to be in the Masonic Hall, West Hartlepool.

(SE 58376948) Site of Marton Priory.

CURRENT REMAINS ON THE SITE.

NMR monument report.

Earthworks of water management connected to fish farming remain including fishponds, reservoir and a watermill. Extensive earthworks mark the site of Marton Priory. The modern farm incorporates sculptured fragments including two crowned shields with the initials IHC. In the front wall, a large stone has a large well-carved angel corbel bearing an inscribed scroll. The angel's scroll is inscribed 'laudo nomen...'

The priory earthworks include fishponds at SE 58366946. Apparently, these were formed within the original course of the River Foss, which was then diverted to the other side of the road to follow its present route.

Earthworks comprise the fragmentary remains of a precinct feature in the form of a substantial bank in the south, and a moat on the north and west sides. On the latter side the moat also probably served as a feed for a series of fishponds. In addition a well-defined scarp delineates the raised 'D' shaped area occupied by the priory itself. There is also a partially ditched building platform at SE 58546944 and a system of banks enclosing ridge and furrow at SE 58456964.



(Aerial photograph, Infoterra Ltd)

The earthworks associated with the fishponds can be clearly seen in the lower left part of the photograph. The other earthworks are not quite so well defined, but can be seen in the upper part of the photograph.



View of earthworks.



View of earthworks.



Shield on the front of the current farmhouse.



Angel on the front of the current farmhouse.



Head on the front of the current farmhouse.



Head on the front of the current farmhouse.

CURRENT REMAINS ELSEWHERE.

Nikolaus Pevsner.

The parish church of Saint Mary in the village of Marton. The chancel arch is early Norman, un-moulded and depressed, and the big brown cobble walls on the north side go with that date. Otherwise the church is perpendicular. Above the doorway an angel under a canopy. The nave west and east walls and the chancel east wall have stepped gables, and a half gable of the same kind rises on the West Side to the tower. That is clearly 16th century, and it has been suggested, of after the dissolution of Marton Priory, from which the stone shields and the initials IHC may come which are now inside the tower and on the east gable of the chancel.

John Betjeman.

The astonishing exterior, with its crow-stepped gables, is due to rebuilding, probably in 1540, using ashlar and worked stone from the Priory near by. The north wall, built of river stones, retains its 12th century form.

Marton parish church.

At the base of the chancel step is a piece of 'Frosterley marble'. This was much used in churches for decorative effect from the 12th to 19th centuries. It was found in the Wear Valley County Durham and is famously used in Durham Cathedral. It is possible that the piece in Saint Mary's came from Marton Priory.

Stillington year 2000 millennium handbook.

The present church of Saint Mary's at Marton in the Forest owes much of its form to the 12th Century, when an Augustinian priory was established about a mile away. The current building is mainly in the Perpendicular Gothic style and incorporates stone from the former priory. The carved stone bearing the initials IHC outside at the East end, a carved stone of an angel beneath a canopy outside above the entrance door and a further carved stone bearing the initials IHC inside above the entrance door also probably came from the priory.



Exterior view of Saint Mary's.



Detail of angel above the entrance door.



Detail of Marton church east outside.



Detail of Marton church tower inside. Note the different style of crown on the top of the shield.



Detail of Marton church chancel step.

Terrington parish church guide book.

The parish church at Terrington contains three bells, the oldest of which, the tenor bell, dates from 1450 and is inscribed in Latin 'pray for the soul of Robert the Prior' this is probably Robert Cave, who was the Prior of Marton until he resigned in 1443. Marton Priory is known to have held land at Terrington.

THE HISTORY OF MOXBY NUNNERY.

The Victoria history of the counties of England.

The nunnery of Molveby, or Moxby, to use the modern form of the name, originated in the foundation by Bertram de Bulmer of a double monastery for canons and nuns of the Augustinian order at Marton, either at the end of the reign of Stephen, or the beginning of that of Henry II. The canons and nuns did not long continue under the same roof, and Henry II gave the adjacent territory of Moxby to the nuns, whither they removed before 1167. The nuns continued to follow the Augustinian rule, and their house and chapel were under the invocation of St. John the Evangelist.

The nuns obtained the church of Whenby, which was formally appropriated to them by Archbishop Wickwane in 1283.

On 16 March 1267-8 Archbishop Giffard directed the Prior of Newburgh to visit the prioress and nuns. Archbishop Wickwane in like manner commissioned Magr. Thomas de Grimeston, his clerk, to visit the nunnery in December 1281. On 14 December 1289 Archbishop Romanus appointed William, vicar of Thirkleby, as master of the nuns of Molveby, and on 8 May 1294 he committed the custody of the nunnery to Master Adam Irnepurse, vicar of Bossall.

The next we hear is that Sabina de Apelgarth, one of the nuns, had apostatised. Robert Pickering, acting as vicar general of Archbishop Greenfield, wrote on 24 April 1310 to the prioress and convent instructing them to receive her back, as she was returning in a state of penitence.

On Tuesday before the feast of St. Nicholas 1310 Euphemia the prioress, feeling no longer capable of ruling the house, resigned, and on 12 December, Alice de Barton, a nun of the house, was elected prioress.

As a result of a visitation in 1314, Archbishop Greenfield ordered that before the feast of All Saints each year a full account of the income and expenditure should be made. No nuns in good health were to be in the infirmary, while the sick were to be tended as their illnesses needed and means allowed.

No corrodies, etc, were to be granted, or boarders or girls over twelve taken without special licence. In a subsequent letter of 12 August the archbishop appointed Brothers Benedict de Malton and Thomas de Hustwayt, Friars minors, confessors to the nuns. Archbishop Melton held a visitation of the house on 5 May 1318, and the next day sent a decretum to the nuns. No fresh debts were to be incurred, especially large ones, without the consent of the wiser portion of the convent and the archbishop's special licence. As to the bread and ale called "levedemete," which the Friars minors were accustomed to receive from the house, if it was owed to them, it was to be given as due; if not, it was not to be given without the will of the president.

Nuns who ought to keep convent were to do so. They were to enter and leave the dormitory together. The cloister doors were to be well kept by day, and locked in good time at night, the prioress or sub-prioress having secure charge of the keys. The nuns were not to go out of the precincts of the monastery often, and were not at any time to wander about the woods, nor eat or gossip with brothers or other seculars.

The prioress was to take her meals in the refectory, and be more frequently in the convent than she had been, unless sickness hindered her. She was to have a nun of honest conversation associated with her, within and outside the monastery, and a waiting-maid. She was to conduct herself piously, without offensive rancour, nor was she to follow her own will, but to make use of the counsel of her sisters.

Nuns and other circumspect servants and guardians were to be appointed in granges and offices, for the benefit of the house. Relatives were not to visit the nuns for a longer period than two days. Until the archbishop directed otherwise, Sabina de Apelgarth was to be removed from all offices she held, to keep convent continuously, at divine service, and not to go out of the monastery on any account. No one convicted of incontinence, or de lapsu carnis, was to remain in office.

In 1322 came the dispersion of the nuns, owing to the raid of the Scots. On 17 November Sabina de Apelgarth and Margaret de Neusom were sent by the archbishop to Nun Monkton, Alice de Barton, the prioress, to Swine, Joan de Barton and Joan de Toucotes to Nun Appleton, Agnes de

Ampleford and Agnes de Jarkesmill to Nunkeeling, and Joan de Brotherton and Joan Blaunkfront to Hampole.

The dispersion cannot have lasted long, for on 24 January 1325 Joan de Barton appeared before the archbishop, and for certain lawful reasons resigned. The reason for resignation is apparent from a penance enjoined upon her for having been guilty *super lapsu carnis* with the chaplain, Laurence de Systeford. The details of the penance imposed upon her, as to fasting and prayers, are in accordance with what was usual in these cases. She was to be shut up in a room by herself, and on no account to go outside the convent precincts for a year, and not to wear the black veil. The penance is dated 3 September 1325.

A visitation held in March 1327-8 resulted in a series of injunctions to the nuns. As the house was heavily in debt, corrodies, pensions, etc, were not to be granted without the archbishop's special licence. Some of the necessary buildings were ruinous and unroofed especially the bake-house, brew-house, etc. These were to be repaired as soon as possible.

The nuns for the future were to wear mantles, tunics, and other garments, according to the statutes of the rule.

Sabina de Apelgarth, for 'certain reasons,' until the archbishop ordered otherwise, was to be removed from all office and administration in the house, she was to keep convent in divine service, at fit times and places, and not to go outside the doors, nor was she to send or receive letters, etc. Joan Blaunkfront's penance was relaxed.

This decretum was followed on 26 March by the confirmation of a new prioress (Joan de Toucotes) in place of Sabina de Apelgarth, whose misconduct had led to her removal from office by the archbishop.

On 16 January 1423 Alice Dautry, who had been prioress for twenty-six years, resigned owing to feebleness of body, and Joan Lassels was unanimously elected her successor *per modum inspiracionis Spiritus Sancti* by Emma de Holdernesse, sub-prioress, Alice Goldesburgh, Alice Dautry, Margaret Grene, Agnes Hancotes, Alice Moreton, Agnes Butteler, and Margaret Skipton, nuns of the house.

The house was supervised by the commissioners on 28 May 1536 and suppressed on 4 August following. There were then eight sisters, and Elizabeth Warde, one of the nuns, held a corrody granted her by the prioress and convent for life. The commissioners gave her 66s 8d, for which sum she released all claim she had in the corrody. She was *impotens et surda*, and in consideration of her poverty and feebleness the money was paid over to a certain honest man, who then and there pledged his faith to take care of Elizabeth Warde for life.

Among other payments made was that of 4d to two men for the carriage of the evidences of the late priory to the house of a certain 'Magister Moyses.'

In 1527 the clear annual value of the house was returned at £33 15s. According to the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* it was just £26 21s 10d.

On 24 July 1475 Robert Shirwyn, pewterer, of York, bequeathed to Katherine his sister, a nun of Moxby, 6s 8d; and to the house of the nuns 'in vasis electris' to the value of 10s.

Prioresses of Moxby.

Euphemia, occurs 1304-5, resigned 1310. Alice de Barton, confirmed 1310, occurs 1322. Joan de Barton, resigned 1324. Sabina de Apelgarth succeeded, resigned 1328. Joan de Toucotes, confirmed 1328. Elizabeth Nevill, died 1397. Alice Dautry, confirmed 31 Jan. 1397-8, resigned 1423. Joan Lassels, confirmed 1423-4. Alice Moreton, died 1465. Margaret Skipton, elected 1465. Agnes de Tute, confirmed 1475. Philippa Jennyson, confirmed 1530-1, last prioress.

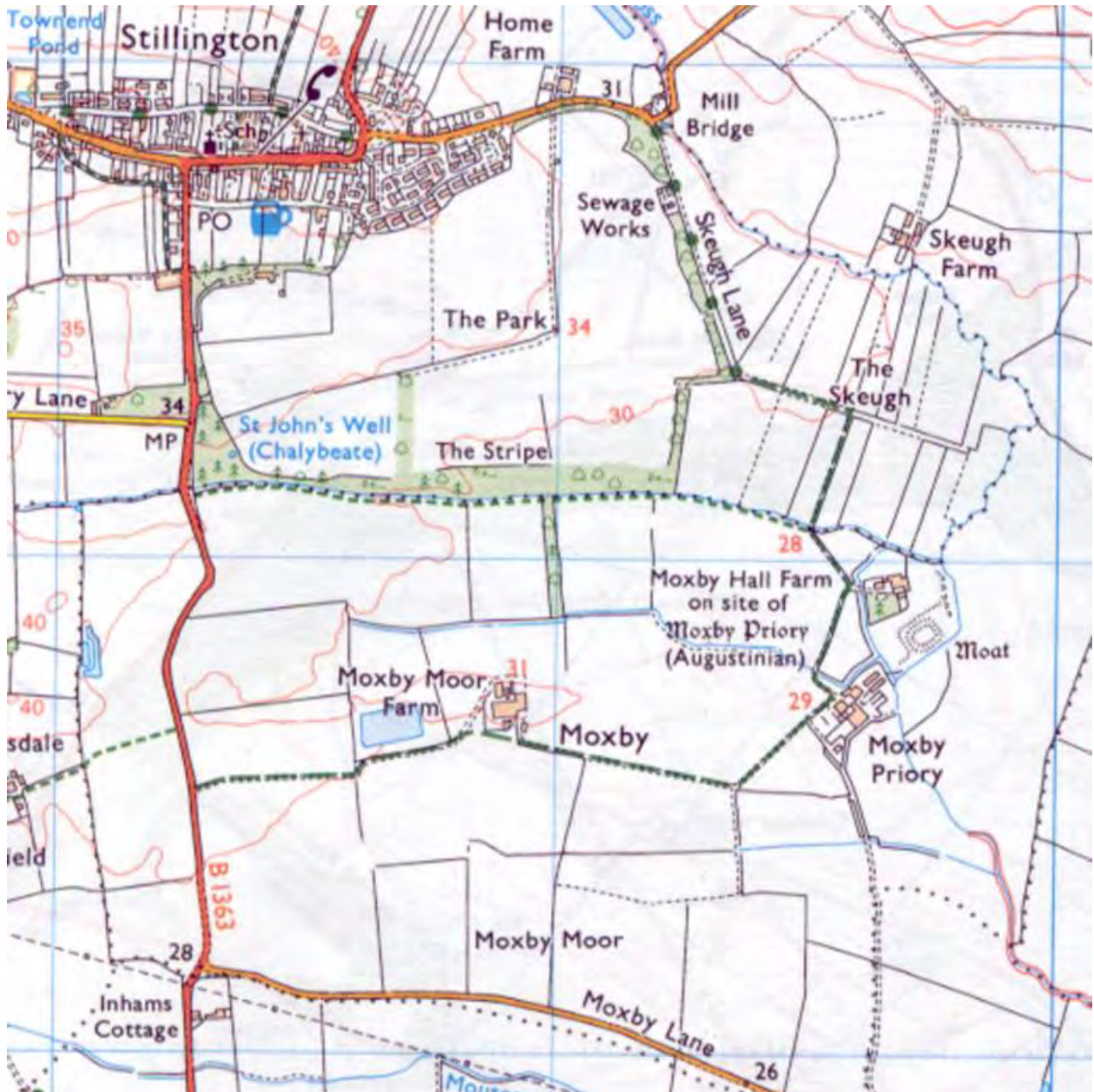
The history of Easingwold and the Forest of Galtres, Geoffrey C. Cowling.

In 1304 licence was granted for Giles of Merkesden to enclose with a small dike and a low hedge an assart called 'Baystan' within the forest, containing 15 acres, which he had purchased from Moxby Nunnery. He was also given leave to build houses on it.

Various Internet sources.

The nunnery continued to flourish till the dissolution of lesser monasteries in 1536, when it was surrendered by Philippa Jennyson, the last prioress, and nine nuns who formed the community. The yearly revenues for the convent were valued at £32 6s 2d. The convent stood near the River Foss, on which the nuns had a mill, and after the suppression it was converted into a family mansion.

MAP OF THE LOCATION OF MOXBY NUNNERY (OS GRID REF SE 59, 66).



(Ordnance Survey)

As can be seen from the above map, all of the remains are on privately owned land that is not open to the public.

CURRENT REMAINS ON THE SITE.



(Aerial photograph, Infoterra Ltd)

The earthworks associated with the moats can be seen in the upper right hand corner of the photograph. Unfortunately they are very indistinct now.

A MAP OF THE MANOUR

OF
Wolxby in the
County of Lin. Part of the Estate of

Rich^d Thompson Esq^r

Surveyed by
Joseph Simpson
A.D. 1754.



Part of Stubby Lordship

Part of Furlington Lordship

Part of Stillington Lordship

Part of Marton Lordship

Wolxby Moor
A R P
112. 1. 37

Wolxby Scuff
A R P
49. 2. 27

Part of Sutton Lordship

Part of Sutton Lordship

Part of Marton Lordship

Explanation.

Each acre is here taken in square
perches which stands in every
Case of his Term

	A	R	P
1. John North Garth	0	1	12
1. Orchard	0	0	26
2. Tho: Hill Orchard	1	0	10
3. Appleton Orchard	0	0	30
4. Little Raven Hall			
5. Long Car			

This Survey contains 579. 1. 27

