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Bishop Gilbert of Hamar: A Norwich Cleric, Envoy and Administrator in Thirteenth-Century Norway

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Gilbertus Hamarensis (died 1287 and also known as Gilbertus Norvicensis), a largely overlooked medieval ecclesiastic, is shown to have had a remarkable career: archdeacon of Shetland; chaplain to Håkon IV of Norway; envoy of the Norwegian king to Alexander III of Scotland; bishop of the Norwegian diocese of Hamar; suffragan bishop in Norfolk; probable author of theological works; possible patron of scholars; and benefactor to Carmelite friaries. His trans-North Sea career is an example of the role that senior ecclesiastics in the 13th-century could play in international diplomacy, while contributions from archaeological, architectural and art-historical sources complement and contextualise the thin documentary record. An explanation is offered for the eclipse of his undoubted contemporary fame in Norwich.

Introduction

Francis Blomefield's[1] magisterial history of Norfolk in the east of England contains numerous snippets of information which, once alighted upon, often attract questioning interest. One such occurs in his discussion of the lost church and parish of St Crowch or Holy Cross in the city of Norwich. This church, known to have been in existence by 1157[2], was largely demolished in 1551 (its chancel was still standing in the 1830s when it was drawn: Fig. 1). Blomefield cites the precise date of 14 October for the demolition but he also notes:

> In this churchyard, Adam and Botild, father and mother of Bishop Gilbert, were interred, whose graves many pilgrims and other devout people used to visit, there

[1] 1705–1752. Antiquary and historian of Norfolk.

[2] Dodwell 1974, 35. The church stood south of St Andrew's Street, east of present-day Exchange Street.

> being an indulgence to all that came thither and prayed for them, of 300 days of pardon.[3]

Blomefield seems to have obtained his information from Thomas Tanner's early eighteenth-century index to the Norwich institution books.[4] Here a marginal note, in tiny writing under the heading 'S. Crucis', states:

> S. Crucis - in cuius cimiterio requiescunt Adam et Botild, pater et mater Gilberti Hamorensis episciopi, ubi sunt dies veniae CCC concessi omnibus pro eorum animabus devote supplicantibus. (NRO, DCN/REG 30, p. 9)

The source given underneath in the same hand is 'MS Dugd. Macro', the first part clearly a reference to the papers of William Dugdale (d. 1686) with 'Macro' implying that Tanner had in turn received his information from Cox Macro (1683–1767), a fellow antiquary who lived in Bury St Edmunds.[5]

The Tanner Index (and Blomefield's use of it) is, to date, the only reference known to Adam and Botild although, as will be seen, it is possibly significant that Botild's name was Scandinavian in origin; its Old Norse form of Bóthildr is first recorded in the eleventh century.[6] Their son, however, is more visible because of a footnote to Blomefield's short paragraph. The footnote, just three words but clearly derived from the Tanner index, reads 'Gilberti Episcopi Hamorensis' ('Gilbert, Bishop of Hamar'). Hamar is in Norway, north of Oslo, where the remains of a ruined cathedral still stand and Gilbertus Norvicensis (or Gilbert of Norwich) is recorded as bishop there between 1263 and 1275. How, therefore, did this Norwich man achieve such status and why was he so reverenced locally in Norwich that indulgences were granted to those who prayed for his parents? Examination of these questions leads to exploration of how clerics in general, with this one man as an example, could play wide-ranging rôles within the thirteenth-century North Sea world.

[3] Blomefield 1806, 299. The extraordinary length of the indulgence is discussed below.

[4] Thomas Tanner (1674–1735), Bishop of St Asaph and antiquary. He was active in Norwich between 1698 and 1731. DNB: https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-26963, accessed on 29 September 2020.

[5] NRO, DCN/REG 30, p.9. I am most grateful to Elizabeth Rutledge for suggesting that Tanner's Index be explored and to Carole Rawcliffe for very kindly accessing the material and transcribing it for me.

[6] Kruken 1995; see also https://www.nordicnames.de/wiki/Bóthildr#cite_note-nper-1. The name also occurs in Old Swedish.

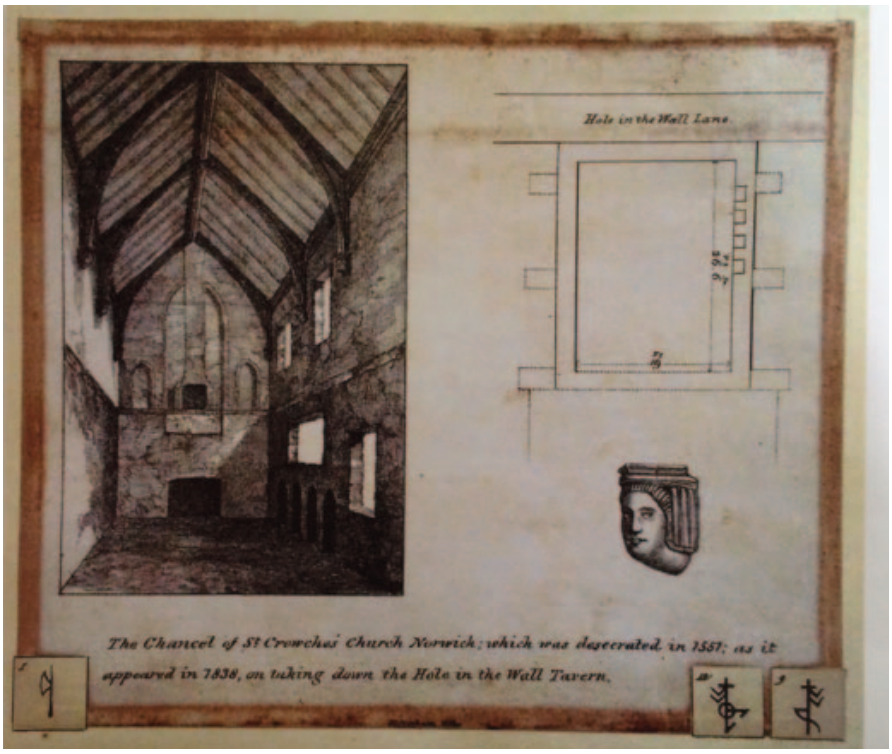

Fig. 1. The ruins of the chancel of St Crowch as exposed in the 1830s and drawn by Henry Ninham. Reproduced with permission of Norfolk Museums Service (Norwich Castle Museum & Art Gallery).

The date of Gilbert's birth is not known.[7] Even an approximation is difficult to estimate because his age at death is similarly unknown, although his death itself, in Norwich, is recorded in 1287. The earliest reference to his career dates from either in or before 1260 when he was appointed archdeacon of Shetland, a position that he probably held until confirmed in his bishopric in 1263 (Smith 2003; Watt 1969: 261). Rosenthal has suggested that the 'pre-episcopal' service of medieval clerics was, on

[7] Gilbert does not have an entry in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* nor in the Norwegian equivalent - the *Norsk biografisk leksikon*. However, he is listed in the *Biographical Index of the Middle Ages*, Wispelwey 2008: 430b.

average, some 15 to 20 years, dating from a person's late teens or early twenties (Rosenthal 1996: 135). A date of birth around 1220 to 1225 might therefore be a reasonable guess. His early education was presumably in Norwich, at either the almonry school in the cathedral or the episcopal grammar school which had been established by 1156 (Cattermole 1991: 6–22). It is also possible that one of the nascent friaries such as that of the Franciscans could have educated the boy: Norwich's Franciscan friary was founded in 1226 and may have soon established a school; 'the friars showed their interest in education as early as c. 1250 when they requested that one Friar Eustace de Normanville be appointed as their lecturer' (he declined, citing poor health and lack of experience; Rutledge 2007: 46b). Gilbert later showed great favour to the Carmelites but they did not establish a house in Norwich until 1256 (Ayers 2009: 107).

Gilbert's consecration as a priest may also have taken place in Norwich but, given his role in Shetland, it is possible that he also studied in Scandinavia. Shetland in the thirteenth century lay within the Archdiocese of Nidaros, now Trondheim.[8] The cathedral was established in the late eleventh century and raised to the status of the head of an archdiocese in 1151/2. There were numerous connections between the English and Norwegian churches; amongst these was a strong tradition of Anglo-Saxon influence on the early development of the Norwegian church, including the founding of monasteries, with the first bishop of Stavanger, one Rainald, probably being English (1135) as was Martin, the bishop of Bergen at the end of the twelfth century.[9] More broadly, the hand of masons from York has been identified in architectural fragments of around 1170 from Nidaros cathedral and architectural parallels have also been drawn between that cathedral, Lincoln Cathedral and Southwell Minster. Most intriguingly, given Gilbert's connections with Norwich, are the architectural links suggested between Norwich and Stavanger cathedrals (Bønløkke Missuno 2020; Bogdanski 2013: 1–30; Hohler 1964: 115). Traditionally the cathedral school at Trondheim was founded around the beginning of the twelfth century; should a young Gilbert have studied there, he might already have acquired some understanding of the local language through his mother.

The following exploration of Gilbert's life, and the North Sea context within

[8] Shetland itself had passed under the direct control of King Sverre Sigurdsson of Norway in 1195, see Crawford & Ballin Smith 1999: 14–15. As part of the diocese of Orkney, Shetland was placed under the Scottish archdiocese of St Andrew's in 1472 following the pawning of the Orkney and Sheltand islands by the Norwegian crown.

[9] Leach 1909, 558. The classic Norwegian text examining Anglo-Saxon influence on the early Norwegian church is Taranger 1890. Continuing English links in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries are visible from manuscript fragments studied recently by Gullick 2013.

which he operated, attempts to summarise the relatively sparse evidence for his apparent three-part career: as a royal servant in Norway; as an ecclesiastic; and as a theological thinker. Inevitably these three elements overlap and the assessment is hampered by the present writer's lack of an overview of Norwegian sources. Much of the work is drawn from texts in English and it is quite probable that significant Norwegian research has been overlooked. This is especially true for any comprehensive understanding of the development of the Norwegian church in the thirteenth century which it is not the intention of the present paper to address. Rather, the study seeks to draw together such information as is known of a poorly-documented bishop, provides a contextual appraisal of the milieu in which he operated across England, Scotland and Scandinavia, and also corrects in a small way misapprehensions concerning Gilbert himself.[10]

Career as a royal servant

The documentation for Gilbert is sparse (much of it in the 1260s is dependent upon the *Saga of Håkon Håkonsson*[11]) and, in consequence, reconstruction of his career is not straightforward. As noted above, he seems to have been Archdeacon of Shetland by 1260 in which year he is also recorded as being priest or chaplain to King Håkon IV of Norway. Håkon's saga notes that he became central to a dispute between the king and Einar, archbishop of Nidaros, concerning the appointment of a new bishop to Hamar.[12] The diocese here had been established in 1151 and one of the canons of Hamar, Lodin, was Einar's preferred candidate. The saga relates how the matter developed frostily and was eventually resolved during a visit by Håkon to Nidaros in July 1260, around the time of the feast of St Olaf:

[10] On this last point Gilbert is listed in Kolsrud's *Bispeliste* 1913. However, here he is specifically referred to as 'skotsk' ('Scottish'). It is an error repeated more recently in Opsahl & Sogner 2003: 113 where it is stated that "De eneste utenlandsfødte biskopene i Norge i denne perioden var skotten Gillibert på Hamar i 1260-tallet og muligens biskop Henrik av Stavanger rundt 1220" ('The only foreign-born bishops in Norway during this period were the Scotsman Gillibert at Hamar in the 1260s and possibly Bishop Henrik of Stavanger around 1220').

[11] Dasent 1894. Håkon Håkonsson, also known as Håkon IV (1204–1263) was proclaimed king of Norway in 1217. The saga was compiled shortly after the events narrated within it and seems to be based upon contemporary sources and witnesses.

[12] This was not the first such dispute at Hamar, an earlier one having taken place concerning the appointment of Gilbert's predecessor in the early 1250s. An unpublished assessment of both disputes in the context of the developing relationship of royal, archiepiscopal, episcopal chapter, and papal interests has been undertaken by Narikawa 2008 – https://www.duo.uio.no/handle/10852/26684, accessed on 5th July 2021.

> Then the kings [Haakon and his son Magnus] rowed into the town, and the archbishop made a fair procession to meet them, and kissed king Hacon. Sira[13] Lodin went from the archbishop's side and kissed king Hacon, but not very heartily. And when the kings had stayed a little while in the town they held a meeting with the archbishop about the choice of a bishop of Hammar [sic]. The archbishop would have no one to be bishop but Lodin, but king Hakon spoke against it flatly. And out of this thing matters turned to the greatest strife between them. And things went so far that king Hacon appealed against the archbishop to the pope, and the archbishop was most angry at that. And after that king Magnus[14] came between them, and others of their friends, and took part that they should make friends. Then Lodin too begged off being bishop when he knew the king's dislike to it. Then king Magnus brought about that they, the king and the archbishop, met. There were then present king Magnus and the bishop of the Southern Isles[15], and Gilbert, who was then king Hacon's priest, and had been archdeacon in Shetland. King Hacon would have him made bishop of Hammer [sic]. And that meeting ended so that the archbishop chose Gilbert to be bishop, but Lodin gave it up for his part. But because the matter had already been handed over to the pope, they sent Gilbert out to the pope. Then the king and the archbishop wrote letters by him that this was the will of both. And after that he went abroad to see the pope. (Dasent 1894: 302)

The necessity for a journey to and from Rome in order to achieve the blessing of the pope for his elevation perhaps explains why Gilbert only seems to have taken up his

[13] Sira' was a style for canons in thirteenth-century Norway. It was extended to priests in general in the fourteenth century (just as 'Sir' was used in England) and was eventually replaced by 'Herr'.

[14] 1238–1280. Proclaimed heir-apparent in 1257 and awarded the title of king by his father Håkon IV in the same year. Succeeded to the Norwegian throne in December 1263 and subsequently became known as Magnus the Law-Mender.

[15] The bishop of Sodor and Man. 'Sodor' derived from *Suthr-eyar* (the 'southern isles'), the original name of the Norse colony of Man, Peel and the Hebrides. A recent work mistakenly cites Gilbert as bishop in 1260 (Brégaint 2018: 325) instead of Richard, an Englishman who had been a canon of St Andrew's cathedral in Scotland. Abbot Gilbert of Rushen in Cumbria, another but different Englishman, was chosen as bishop in 1275 but was opposed by the king of Scotland and never took up his appointment (the Isle of Man had been acquired by Scotland in 1265). While 1275 is also the year that Gilbert Norvicensis stood down as Bishop of Hamar, it seems improbable that he was the man briefly favoured for the see of the Southern Isles.

episcopate in early 1263 when he was consecrated in Bergen cathedral on 4 March.[16] Even then, however, he had a more pressing secular commitment. Håkon was engaged in a dispute with Alexander III of Scotland[17] and had sailed with an expedition to Orkney and on to the Western Isles. Gilbert was appointed the joint head of a diplomatic mission from Håkon to Alexander, comprising a group of colourfully-named individuals: '... at their head the bishops Gilbert of Hamar, and Henry of the Orkneys, and Andrew Nicholas son and Andrew clubfoot, and Paul sour.' Grants of safe conduct were issued by the Scottish king (Neville and Simpson 2012, no. 223). The negotiations appeared to have been desultory:

> They found the king of Scots in the market town of Novar [New Ayr] and the king of Scots received them pretty well. But when they talked of peace the king gave it out that it was likely that he might make peace. But said that he would make up his mind, and then send men to the king of Norway with those offers which seemed good to him and his council. After that the messengers fared away ... (Dasent 1894: 322)

Håkon sought to bring matters to a head and there was a skirmish at the coast on 2 October, subsequently called the Battle of Largs, which probably inflicted few casualties on either side and was essentially a draw, 'an indecisive, brawling, messy encounter' (Magnusson 1990: 7). Håkon's fleet suffered storm damage the following day and he decided to retire to Orkney for the winter.

Gilbert presumably travelled with the Norwegian fleet to Kirkwall on Orkney. Here Håkon fell ill and, after lingering for some weeks, died in the bishop's palace adjacent to St Magnus' cathedral. Gilbert was in attendance, together with Thorgils, the bishop of Stavanger, and Henry, bishop of Orkney, although none of these three seems to have been with the king when he died. The death occurred 'just as midnight was passed' on 15 December. Håkon was attended by his liegemen Brynjolf, Erling, John and Rognvald as well as 'some serving men who had been most about the king

[16] The pope in 1260 was Alexander IV. He died in May 1261 and was succeeded by Urban IV in late August of the same year. For Gilbert's consecration, see Eubel 1913, i: 271 and DHGE 20, 1984: 31–32. Gilbert is mentioned as Bishop of Hamar in a papal letter dated 23 October 1263 - Diplomatarium Norvegicum vol. I no. 58 (https://archive.org/stream/diplomatariumno14langgoog/diplomatariumno14langgoog_djvu.txt accessed on 19 November 2020). Kolsrud 1913: 252–253 states that Gilbert was "vælges til Bp. efter Kongens Ønske" ('selected for Bp. at the King's Desire').

[17] 1241–1286. Succeeded to the Scottish throne as a minor in 1249.

in his sickness'. However, 'At once ... the bishops and clerks were sent for. And, as soon as they came they sang the mass for the dead.' (Dasent 1894: 330)

Gilbert may have stayed in Kirkwall for the interim burial of Håkon whose wish had been to be interred in Bergen. However, it is possible that he returned to Norway ahead of the body which was only removed from its temporary resting place in March 1264 'as soon as high-winter was over and the sea began to be smooth', since those given special care of ensuring the safe transfer of the king's body to the ship were Bishop Thorgils and liegeman Erling. It proved to be a hard crossing to Norway but, once at Bergen, the body was taken first to 'the summer hall'[18] and then to Christ's church for burial, accompanied by 'King Magnus ... both the queens,[19] the bishops, the clerks, henchmen, and all the townsfolk' (Dasent 1894: 331). It seems very probable that Gilbert was one of these bishops.

The dispute with the Scots was not over. In the spring of 1264 the new Norwegian king, Magnus the Law-Mender, sent Bishop Henry of Orkney and Askatin, his chancellor, to treat with Alexander III. It was not a successful mission, Alexander threatening to kill the envoys or put them into prison.[20] After some sword-rattling a further mission of clerics (brother Maurice and a friar named Sigurd together with a man called Hoskuld and 'Henry the Scot to serve them') was sent later that summer. This delegation was received 'somewhat better than the bishop and his companions' by Alexander who indicated that Magnus 'should send the summer after good messengers to Scotland, if his heart was set on making peace between the lands' (Dasent 1894: *Magnus Haakonsson's Saga*, 2).

It is indicative of the esteem in which Gilbert was held by the kings of Norway that it was he, together with the chancellor Askatin, who was entrusted with the peace mission in 1265. Lustig's analysis of the diplomacy which eventually led to a peace treaty explains the differing degrees of status accorded to envoys at this time. The two most important roles were those of *nuncius* and *procurator*. 'The *nuncius's* central function was delivering a message ... He had no independent voice, could exercise no discretion and could not commit his principal [in this case the king] to anything not previously discussed and agreed upon. The *nuncius* normally was given a letter of credence by the principal, stating that the *nuncius* ought to be received and his words believed'. In contrast, a 'procurator performed all the functions of a *nuncius* with the

[18] Probably the Håkonshall, built by Håkon and which still stands in Bergen. It has been suggested that the structure was inspired by Henry III's royal hall at Winchester (Steane 1993).

[19] Presumably Margaret Skulesdatter, widow of Håkon IV, and Ingeborg of Denmark, wife of Magnus the Law-Mender.

[20] Alexander is said to have claimed that the 'Norwegians had burned and plundered more than a third of Scotland' - Grohse 2017: 136 n11.

added advantage that he could exercise his own will and he could conclude agreements' (Lustig 1979: 40).

Gilbert and Askatin were probably recognised as procuratores with *plena potestas* ('full authority') to negotiate. They sailed south from Norway and landed in England at Lynn before proceeding overland to York where they remained 'awhile'.[21] This somewhat circuitous route may have been chosen to enable consultation with officials of the English king Henry III 'who had taken an active interest in the conflict between Norway and Scotland'.[22] After York it seems likely that they proceeded north via Wigtown in Dumfriesshire and Galloway where Patrick (or Peter) the mason received five marks (66s 8d) from the Scottish king to facilitate repairs to the castle *propter adventum Norwagensium* ('on account of the arrival of the Norwegians').[23] It was probably late summer before Gilbert and Askatin met Alexander III in Perth where their offer of the isles of Bute and Arran in return for recognition of those islands claimed by Norway (including Man, taken by the Scots the previous year) was rejected. 'The king scouted[24] the very idea of this; so the bishop [Gilbert 'of Hamere'], having heard the answer to his message, went off to his own country, and pointed out to his king that his trouble had been thrown away. He advised the king, however, to treat with the Scots'.[25]

As far as is known, Gilbert's return from Scotland ended his direct involvement in the diplomatic negotiations. His colleague Askatin was part of a renewed embassy to Alexander, together with Andres Nikolasson, a mission which eventually led to

[21] The delay in York may have been occasioned by the domestic situation there. 'In 1264-5 there were riots in which the abbey's men [St Mary's Abbey] were killed and its houses in Bootham and Marygate burned and plundered. The abbot was said to have paid £100 to have peace, and to have absented himself from his house for a year to prevent further trouble, and the archbishop put the city under interdict for a time' (VCH 1961: 39). Such unpropitious circumstances may well have impeded arrangements for the onward journey of two Norwegian envoys towards Scotland.

[22] Lustig 1979: 38. Henry's interests in the matter are summarised by Lustig on p. 50. It is highly unlikely that Gilbert and Askatin met Henry during their journey because the king was occupied in Gloucestershire, Hereford, Monmouth and at Kenilworth for much of 1265.

[23] Lustig 1979: 38 n5 - ref to Exchequer Rolls, i, 30. After a chequered history, the castle itself was subsequently demolished by Robert the Bruce in the early fourteenth century - https://canmore.org.uk/site/63343/wigtown-castle accessed on 20 July 2020.

[24] 'Scout' - to reject with scorn. From ON *skúta*, a taunt. OED.

[25] Skene 1872: 296. Lustig notes that the chronicler Fortun may have confused Gilbert with Askatin, and that it was actually Askatin who advised Magnus to continue treating with the Scots (1979: 56).

Fig. 2. Seal matrix of Finn Gautsson found near Ashwellthorpe, Norfolk. Drawing by Steven Ashley (Norfolk Historic Environment Service).

the Treaty of Perth between Norway and Scotland in 1266.[26] The copy of the treaty that was retained in Scotland was sealed by King Magnus, Peter bishop of Bergen, Torgils bishop of Stavanger, Gaut Jonsson of Mel, Brynjov Jonsson, Finn Gautsson, Andres Niklasson and Askatin (Fig. 2).[27] Gilbert is notable by his absence. Askatin represented Norway in negotiations leading to the Anglo-Norwegian Treaty of Winchester in 1269 and went on to become bishop of Bergen in 1270. He gave extreme unction to Magnus when the king was severely ill in 1272, and was an executor of Magnus's will in 1277. In contrast, Gilbert seems to disappear from royal service. As far as is known he did not take part in a dispute of 1273–1277 concerning ecclesiastical and secular jurisdiction between Magnus and Archbishop Jon of Nidaros, perhaps because he was in England (below).

[26] The treaty may primarily have been the work of two Englishmen: Reginald of Melrose, who perhaps journeyed back to Bergen with Gilbert and Askatin in 1265 before returning to Perth with Askatin the following year; and Askatin himself, who was described as 'anglus'. Together with that of Gilbert, the influence of English-born churchmen on Scots-Norwegian relations seems to have been considerable.

[27] Lustig 1979: 45. In the late 1990s the seal matrix used by Finn Gautsson to affix his seal to the treaty was found in a field near Ashwellthorpe in Norfolk - Geake et al. 1999: 355. Its loss suggests that, as with Gilbert's earlier mission, the Norwegians in 1266 also travelled via Norfolk in order to get from Norway to Scotland - see Ayers 2021 forthcoming.

Ecclesiastical career

Gilbert's role in the church is documented as sparsely as that in royal service. He is the third-known archdeacon of Shetland (after Andrew in 1215 and Nicholas in 1226) appointed, as has been seen, by 1260. As archdeacon his role was probably second only in importance to that of the bishop of Orkney in the northern isles. Both Orkney and Shetland were the property of the Norwegian crown and it is most likely that, as chaplain to Håkon IV, Gilbert owed his archdeaconry to the king.[28]

The subsequent elevation of Gilbert to the bishopric of Hamar, as noted above, was certainly effected at the insistence of the king. The reason for his appointment might well have been that he was the king's man. Håkon is known to have been in conflict with at least one of Gilbert's predecessors as bishop.[29] Recent archaeological research has suggested that rivalry between the Hamar bishop and the king even took physical form in the construction of defensible buildings. Freestanding towers, unusual in a thirteenth-century Norwegian context, were constructed both at Hamar within the episcopal precinct around 1250 and, slightly earlier, by Håkon at Mjøsakastellet. Hamar lies on the east side of Lake Mjøsa, Norway's largest lake, with Håkon's 'Mjøsa castle' on the tiny island of Steinsholmen in the lake some 29km away.[30] Similarities in form and detailing suggest that, notwithstanding possible evidence of rivalry, the same team of masons constructed both buildings (Reinfjord 2018: 149–170).

The town of Hamar was reputedly founded in the eleventh century but there is little evidence that it was ever a focus of commercial trade: 'Many inhabitants were engaged in non-agricultural occupations, but it is a stretch to say that there was a great diversity of crafts' (Gundersen 2015: 17). The settlement became a religious centre upon the foundation of the diocese in 1151/2 following the reorganisation of the Norwegian Church by the papal legate Nicholas Brakespere (another English cleric and subsequently Pope Adrian IV). The ecclesiastical establishment was staffed by canons and the cathedral church, dedicated to Christ, had an adjacent palace for the bishop as well as a school. The palace enceinte included the above-mentioned detached central tower, a hall, a south wing, and gate- and corner- towers. There were also several timber buildings for various practical functions such as cooking and forg-

[28] Professor Bjørn Bandlien, *pers. comm*., conjectures that Gilbert arrived in Norway some time in the 1250s and was established as a canon serving Håkon by 1260.

[29] Professor Eldbjørg Haug, *pers. comm*., suggests that the Hamar chapter had tried to obstruct the coronation of King Håkon (crowned by Cardinal William of Sabina 1247) and disputed the property rights of the Norwegian crown to some rich farms.

[30] The *Store Norske Leksikon* ('Large Norwegian Encyclopaedia') has 'Steinsborga' as an alternative name for the island which means 'stone castle' in Norwegian.

ing. The precinct was described in the Hamar Chronicle, which was probably compiled in the 1550s: it mentions the schoolyard, the school 'with beautiful chambers', and the easy walk to the bishop's jetty on the edge of the lake.[31] The precinct was also sketched and described from visible ruins by Gerhard Schøning in 1775 (Reinfjord 2018: 154). The palace was destroyed by Swedish soldiers during the Northern Seven Years War (1563–70) in 1567; the episcopal archive was burnt and the cathedral church also caught fire and was left in ruins.

Gilbert was the ninth known bishop of Hamar, the first having been Arnaldur who was previously the first bishop of Garðar on Greenland. Nothing is known of Gilbert's administration of the diocese nor of any attendance at Church councils (Askatin, as bishop of Bergen, attended a general council at Lyon in 1274, for instance; Leach 1909: 556). Gilbert seems to have been active from 1263 although no doubt his royal duties kept him away from Hamar at least until the end of 1265. Thereafter he may have devoted himself to his diocese and, in particular, to building work on Hamar cathedral. Archaeological excavations in the 1990s at the ruins of the cathedral prior to the construction of a large-scale permanent protective cover over the site suggest the completion of works in the crossing around the time of Gilbert's elevation in 1260 (Reed 2005: 47ff). It proved difficult to date building works in the second half of the thirteenth century but the remains of a brickwork floor in the aisles (bricks are thought to have been introduced to Norway c.1250[32]) suggest the possibility of slightly later refurbishment there.

The recent archaeological and architectural assessment of the ruins of the detached stone tower at the palace identified it as an exceptional monument, since no similar episcopal structure has been found in Scandinavia before 1300. During the century between 1250 and 1350 this nationally atypical practice of stone construction was apparently promoted by successive bishops of Hamar as 'active entrepreneurs' (Reinfjord 2018: 167). This period clearly includes the time of Gilbert's episcopacy and it seems probable that work on the residential enceinte, effectively initiated in stone with building of the detached tower before his arrival, was carried on by him along with the construction of other buildings within the precinct.[33]

[31] https://www.dokpro.uio.no/litteratur/hamarkroeniken/ accessed 3rd July 2020.

[32] A brickworks existed at Bakklandet, Trondheim by 1277 - Storemyr 1997: 107.

[33] As Gilbert's actual residence within his diocese is undocumented, the possibility must of course remain that he acted for much of the time through surrogates, such as his archdeacon.

Gilbert's tenure at Hamar is said by several authorities to have lasted until 1275.[34] He ceased to be bishop at an interesting time in relations between the Norwegian kingdom, as personified by King Magnus, and the Church. Magnus, suffixed 'the Law-Mender', was one of the first rulers in Europe to systematise a secular law code. It brought conflict with the Church because it identified crime as offence against the kingdom rather than against the rule of God. A draft presented to Pope Gregory X at the Council of Lyon in 1274 resulted in demands for concessions by the Church and a concordat was only reached in 1277. Even then clerical opposition continued, so much so that, in the 1280s, Gilbert's successor as bishop, Thorfinn, was exiled (and died at the monastery of Ter Doest in Flanders, outside Bruges).[35] It is possible that Gilbert, who was clearly Håkon's man but may not have had an equally close relationship with Håkon's son Magnus, either felt or was encouraged to feel that 1275 would be a good time to surrender his diocese.

Intellectual career

Another possible reason for Gilbert's resignation as bishop of Hamar may have been his burgeoning theological interests. He was reputedly the author of two works – *De nominibus Dei* and *De Animarum curatione*[36] which unfortunately, as Haye notes, 'were still extant in the early modern period, but today there is no trace of them'.[37] Should it ever be possible to know the contents of these texts, they might provide clues for either Gilbert's resignation or his forced removal from his bishopric. Notwithstanding, the titles alone offer suggestions about Gilbert's spirituality. *De nominibus Dei*, for example, was presumably a commentary on Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite's *De divinis nominibus* (see Luibheid 1987). The text *De Animarum*

[34] An early twentieth-century French biographical dictionary asserted that Gilbert's episcopate ended on the precise date of 4 March 1275 - Chevalier 1907: col. 875. There is no evidence for this date and Chevalier probably mistakenly copied the date of Gilbert's ordination as bishop - Richard Copsey, *pers. comm*..

[35] The 1277 Agreement of Tønsberg was witnessed by Thorfinn. He went into exile after the agreement was repudiated by Magnus, dying in Flanders, and was subsequently canonised - Farmer 2011: 423.

[36] Both works are listed in *Bibliotheca Carmelitana* 1752, i. col. 562; ii. col. 916 Vol. i: https://ia802305.us.archive.org/26/items/bub_gb_8WxLAAAAcAAJ/bub_gb_8WxLAAAcAAJ.pdf. Vol ii: https://ia802607.us.archive.org/1/items/bub_gb_Mm1LAAAAcAAJ/bub_gb_Mm1LAAAAcAAJ.pdf.

[37] 'Sie waren in der Frühen Neuzeit noch vorhanden, doch heute fehlt von ihnen jede Spur' - Haye 2016: 287.

curatione on the cure of souls would presumably have been intended for confessors and was thus a pastoral work, perhaps influenced by Gilbert's own experience.[38]

According to an eighteenth-century account by the Norwich antiquary John Kirkpatrick, Gilbert was reputed as 'a learned man, and the Mæcænas [patron] to one Peter Swanyngton …' (1845: 172). Kirkpatrick seems to have drawn on the printed works of John Bale (1495–1563), a Carmelite friar before the English Dissolution. Swanyington too was a Carmelite friar who had apparently joined Burnham Norton friary in north Norfolk as a young man. The Norfolk connection could have brought him into contact with Gilbert who, according to Bale, became his patron and may supported him financially at Oxford University where Swanyngton was the first to 'incept' in theology in the late 1290s[39] (a decade or so after Gilbert's death which renders Bale's account less credible).[40]

It seems clear nevertheless that Gilbert became closely associated with the Carmelite order. This interest must have originated in England as there were no Carmelite friaries in Norway. The Carmelites were relatively late arriving in Norwich (in 1256) so Gilbert most probably encountered them initially either at Cambridge (where the friary was founded in 1247) or at Burnham Norton itself. A precursor of what was to become the friary at Burnham was reputedly founded between 1242 and 1247 at a place called Bradmer, a now-lost location that is likely to have been near the north Norfolk coast as is Burnham. It is assumed that the Carmelites at Bradmer transferred to the Burnham site (where ruins and earthworks remain visible) in 1253.[41]

Upon giving up his bishopric in Norway in 1275, Gilbert seems to have returned to England and concerned himself with the Carmelites across Norfolk. He had been acting as a suffragan to the Bishop of Norwich from at least 1273 when the cartulary of the Carmelite house there recorded that, on 24 October of that year, 'Bishop Gilbert granted an indulgence of 40 days to all the faithful who visited the Carmelite Chapel in Lynn and devoutly recited an *Our Father and a Hail Mary*'. He granted a

[38] I am grateful to Carole Rawcliffe for these observations.

[39] Incept – 'To enter formally upon the office of a Master or Doctor in a university, and to be recognised as such by the Faculty' - OED.

[40] Copsey 2019: 234. Richard Copsey, pers. comm., notes that the claim that Gilbert was the patron for Swanyngton's further studies in Cambridge only occurs in Bale's later printed works, firstly in his *Summarium* printed in 1548 and then his *Catalogus* of 1557. It is not mentioned in Bale's surviving notebooks.

[41] Gilbert, whose presence is recorded in Great Yarmouth, Norwich and Lynn, clearly knew Norfolk well and his Carmelite links almost certainly included an association with Burnham. He issued an indulgence at Middleton, near Lynn, in October 1273, when he would have been within 25 miles (40km) of Burnham.

further indulgence, also of 40 days, on 2 August 1276 'to whoever was truly contrite and devoutly came and listened to the preaching of the Carmelites in Lynn'.[42]

Earlier, on 13 April 1276, an inquisition was ordered by the English crown with regard to a petition by the Carmelites 'to inhabit a void' in the Norfolk port of Great Yarmouth. The area was called 'Le Denne' and was therefore presumably a sandy area of the denes (a name still in local use).[43] It measured 500ft by 400ft (152m by 122m) and lay within the area of the North Quay and the Market Place.[44] Gilbert, still called bishop of Hamar, consecrated the delineated precinct on 13 January 1279/80.[45]

Gilbert himself probably either was or became a friar at Norwich (below).[46] It is tempting to speculate that he may have been involved in education work there. The Carmelite order in England was divided into four regions or 'distinctions'; the Norwich friary was the senior house of studies or *studium particularium* in the Norwich distinction.[47] The Carmelite school at Norwich in turn required a library. John Bale, who was educated at the friary, listed some 53 books as well as 12 writers associated with the friary but, unfortunately, none of the books listed is a work by Gilbert,[48] with the earliest on the list of writers dating from the third quarter of the fourteenth century.[49] Bale's list may include some books which were not in the library but the only catalogue of the books is that of John Leland when he visited the friary soon

[42] Copsey 2020, 48 quoting TNA, E 135/2/50, fo. 2, 17v–18. *The Handbook of British Chronology* (3rd edn) cites Gilbert as a suffragan 'c.1287' although this may relate to his death. The reference specifically cites Gilbert as bishop of Hamar (Norway) in the Norwich diocese - Fryde et al. 1986: 285.

[43] "Den and Strond" is used in a 1278 charter of Edward I for the denes and strand [foreshore] at Yarmouth. 'Denne' was in use as a variant in both 1598 and 1728 - OED. A recent assessment of the word 'dene' and its possible Dutch origin has been published in Briggs 2020: 323–326.

[44] VCH 1906: 437. The petition was for an inquisition *ad quod damnum*, that is to ascertain any damage or inconvenience that the intended development might cause.

[45] Fitzgerald-Lombard 1992: 82; Copsey 2020: 48 quoting Bodleian Libr., Oxford, MS Bodley 73, fo. 79.

[46] Kirkpatrick 1845: 172, where Kirkpatrick states that he 'took upon him the profession of a Carmelite, in the monastery of Brunham [Burnham]' but this may be an assumption based upon the fact that his presumed protégé Swanyngton was known to be a friar there.

[47] Copsey 2005, 256. The other three distinctions were London, Oxford and York.

[48] The books are listed by Kirkpatrick 1845: 178–180.

[49] Tanner 1984, 191 quoting John Bale (*Scriptorum illustrium maioris Brytannie catalogus* Basle 1557).

after the Dissolution, enumerating some 20 volumes, but this in turn was probably not a complete list (Humphreys 1990: 188–190).

Memorialisation

Gilbert died on 9 October 1287 and was buried in the Norwich Carmelite friary. His burial was listed by Bale who described him as a *frater* and had earlier called him *frater noster* when noting that Gilbert consecrated the site of the Carmelite house in Great Yarmouth. Copsey observes that there 'is no evidence in contemporary registers that Gilbert was a Carmelite' but concedes a 'tradition' that Gilbert joined the Order (Copsey 2020 - unpublished revised text). Bale's notebook records 'Frater Gilbertus de Norvico, Episcopus Hamensis (alias Hamerensis)',[50] his description being transcribed by the Norwich antiquary John Kirkpatrick[51], listing the *viri illustres qui sepeliunter in conventu Carmelitarum Norvici* (1845: 172). Blomefield similarly, and also following Bale, records the death of 'Brother Gilbert of Norwich' (iv 1806: 418).

Assuming that Bale was correct, his account nevertheless does not specify whether Gilbert was interred in the monastic cemetery or within the Carmelite church. Either location is possible although, as Rutledge points out, higher-ranking friars (of whom Gilbert was presumably one) tended to be buried in the choirs of Carmelite churches (Rutledge forthcoming). Recent archaeological and documentary research at the site of the now-lost friary (which was located north of the River Wensum east of Cowgate - present-day Whitefriars in Norwich) suggests that both the late thirteenth-century cemetery and the contemporary church were situated towards the northern end of the precinct (Clarke forthcoming, figs. 2.11 and 2.12).

While Gilbert's memory seems to have faded quickly in Norway (the Hamar Chronicle merely mentions him as the ninth bishop in a list of pre-Reformation holders of that office) it seems that he was memorialised elsewhere in northern Europe. A chance discovery by Richard Copsey in Krakow, Poland, suggests as much. This is a portrait of Gilbert, probably painted in the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century, and now in the Carmelite friary in Krakow (Fig. 3).[52] The collection of paint-

[50] Bodleian Libr., Ms. Bodley 73, fo. 213. Kolsrud 1913: 252–253 also records Gilbert's death and burial in Norwich ('Gilbert, *eps. Hammenis*, som 1273/74/76 opholdt sig i England og 9/10 1287 blev begraven i Karmeliterklostret i Norwich.' - 'Gilbert, *eps. Hammenis*, who in 1273/74/76 resided in England and 9/10 1287 was buried in the Carmelite monastery in Norwich') and cites *Non. Martii*; Isl. Ann. IV 134 f. V 193. X 483. Flb. III, 534. as his reference.

[51] 1687–1728. An early historian of Norwich, his works on monastic institutions, streets and lanes of the city were published in the nineteenth century.

[52] I am grateful to Andrew Moore for his assessment that the portrait is probably from an east European workshop of late seventeenth- to early eighteenth-century date. Richard Copsey

Fig. 3. Late 17th- or earlier 18th-century fictive portrait of Gilbert ('de Norvico', 'Norvicensis' or 'Hamarensis') now in the Carmelite Friary in Krakow, Poland. Photograph by kind permission of Richard Copsey.

is of the view that it is probable that the portrait had its origins in a collection of pictures of Carmelite bishops assembled for an unknown Carmelite house in Poland or Lithuania. The prior who commissioned the portraits could have merely copied their names from some publication, and neither he nor his community may have known much about the foreign Carmelite subjects in the images. Clare Haynes, *pers. comm.*, observes that such series of fictive portraits were common commissions by institutions from the sixteenth century onwards.

ings there consists of works salvaged from a number of Carmelite houses in Poland following depredations during the Communist period. Gilbert was depicted some 400 years after his death, if somewhat inaccurately. The painted caption beneath the portrait calls him Archbishop of Hamar (and thus depicts him erroneously wearing an archbishop's pallium) and also locates that see in England.

However, thirteenth-century memorialisation of Gilbert seems to have taken place in Norwich, the city of his birth and death, if Blomefield's account of the indulgences, given to the 'many pilgrims and other devout people' who visited the graves of his parents in the churchyard of St Crowch, is accurate. Copsey suggests that Gilbert himself granted the indulgence 'sometime after becoming a bishop' and perhaps after he left his Norwegian see.[53] The scale of the indulgence is certainly striking; '300 days of pardon' seems excessive especially as Innocent III, at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, had limited the authority of a bishop to the award of one year's indulgence at the dedication of a church and just 40 days on other occasions.[54]

A number of suggestions can be made for the length of the grant. An obvious one is a mistake by Thomas Tanner, perhaps mis-transcribing his information from Macro as '300' rather than '30'. However, this would presumably mean inadvertently writing 'XXX' as 'CCC' which seems unlikely. The lengthy total could be a conflation of a number of grants, also perhaps unlikely, or it could be an accumulation of grants from several bishops, possibly co-ordinated by Gilbert. The total of 300 days would 'fit for a collective grant from three cardinals, or three separate ones (cardinals were allowed 100 days each)' but, even if three such cardinals acted this way, evidence is probably 'beyond recovery'.[55] A further possibility is a papal grant but there is no known record of such a grant of indulgence to Norwich in the thirteenth century.[56]

Richard Copsey's view is that a grant by Gilbert himself after his return to Norfolk would have been perfectly possible when 'he could afford to be generous without creating a precedent' (Richard Copsey, *pers. comm.*). However, 'in theory it would need authorisation from the bishop of Norwich to be valid for anyone other than Gilbert's own spiritual subjects in Norway' (Robert Swanson, *pers. comm.*) It is impossible to know Gilbert's relationship with the bishops of Norwich in the 1270s and 1280s (Roger Scarning and William Middleton) but it can be noted that Scarning[57]

[53] Copsey 2020 – unpublished revised text, and Richard Copsey, *pers. comm.*

[54] https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07783a.htm accessed on 13 August 2020.

[55] Robert Swanson *pers. comm.* I am very grateful to Professor Swanson for this and the other suggested reasons for the length of the indulgence in this paragraph.

[56] Bliss 1893. I am grateful to Elizabeth Rutledge for drawing my attention to this work.

[57] Bishop of Norwich between 1266 and 1278.

was no stranger to actions which some might find irregular, notably his appropriation of the revenues of St Helen's church, Norwich to the cathedral priory in 1270 and his role in reorganising, against opposition, the Norwich parishes of St Mary-in-Marsh, St Ethelbert and St Cuthbert. He was assisted in the latter by his kinsman Thomas de Scarning, the archdeacon of Norwich, and by the priest of St Mary's, one Simon de Scarning.[58] Such a bishop with an awareness of the importance of family might have been well-placed to assist a generous filial grant by his suffragan bishop Gilbert, especially a grant benefiting a church in the possession of the cathedral priory and one where the chaplain was presented by the archdeacon (Blomefield 1806: 299). Notwithstanding, the detail about named family individuals associated with Gilbert suggests the possibility of a recorded tradition of veneration at their graves, perhaps evolving as a form of 'proxy memorialisation' of their son beyond prayers for his parents.

Concluding assessment

The sparse information available for Gilbertus Hamarensis nonetheless provides enough evidence to enable a glimpse of the polymathic nature of his activities – cleric, envoy, diocesan spiritual leader, administrator, and possibly a theologian and patron. These activities suggest a man of ability and perhaps explain how an individual from Norwich, an English provincial city, achieved the status of chaplain to the king of Norway. As suggested above, his attributes may easily have included language skills as well, to which no doubt he added diplomacy and tact. He also had the advantage of being able to read and write.

Gilbert lived at a time when such talented clerics were not only able to advance personally but were also valuable to men (and occasionally women) of power. He operated within a long-standing tradition; even before the Norman Conquest of England in 1066, 'We can hardly be surprised to find that Anglo-Saxon bishops played as vital a rôle in diplomacy as they did in royal administration generally … their position as leaders of the Christian Church made them ideal 'angels of peace', and their literacy was an additional bonus …' (Chaplais 2003: 35). It was a tradition that continued after the Conquest although clerical envoys were not necessarily always bishops, as in 1169 when one of the embassy sent by Henry II of England to Rome was the dean of Salisbury (Chaplais 2003: 48).

A good example of a versatile cleric is Gilbert's contemporary, the chronicler Matthew Paris, a monk at St Alban's Abbey. He, like Gilbert, was an emissary, in

[58] Scarning's machinations have recently been unravelled by Sandy Heslop to whom I am grateful for his unpublished text.

Matthew's case being invited to travel to Håkon IV's Norway in 1248 to reform the monastery on Nidarholm island near Trondheim and encourage observance of the Rule of St Benedict. Notice of his ability had preceded him as the monks specifically asked for Matthew. His name was known because, two years earlier at the request of Håkon, he had assisted the settlement in London of a dispute between certain moneylenders of Cahors in France and the abbey (Gramsden 1996: 315). Similarly, a generation later, a friar named Mauritius who was probably of Scottish origin acted for the Norwegian crown on diplomatic missions in Scotland (Myking 2017: 83). Towards the end of the thirteenth century, the Scottish cleric Weland of Stiklaw can be cited as a further example; he was a career churchman and royal administrator in both Scotland and Norway who served on embassies during a period of tripartite negotiations between Scotland, England and Norway in the 1290s. Weland acted on behalf of King Eric Magnusson of Norway; he 'progressed to be a pivotal figure in the world of cross-North Sea politics, and rose to become an important secular administrator, abandoning his church career altogether, for as far as is known he did not have any office in the Norwegian Church … [with] a central niche at the Norwegian court …' (Crawford 1990: 179).

Gilbert, Matthew, Mauritius and Weland alike illustrate the importance of educated English and Scottish clerics in the cultivation of trans-North Sea relationships in the 13th century. Gilbert's colleague Askatin, his fellow envoy to Alexander III, is another such example as there is an indication, noted above, that he too was an Englishman. Known to have undertaken a Norwegian royal mission to the German emperor Frederick II in 1260, he also negotiated on behalf of the Norwegian crown in Denmark in 1261, Scotland in 1264–66, England in 1269, and at a Nordic royal meeting by the Gotä river in Sweden in 1276.[59] All five of these men, together with other Englishmen such as Rainald, bishop of Stavanger, and Martin, bishop of Bergen (above), operated within a long tradition, one perhaps stretching back to the tenth century, when a Bishop Sigefridus, formerly a monk at Glastonbury Abbey, reputedly became *episcopus Norwegensis* (Abrams 1995: 218). In the late tenth century a clerical delegation of bishops and priests to Norway is recorded by the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, including a bishop called John, and some of Harald Hardrada's mid-eleventh-century bishops were said by Adam of Bremen to have been ordained in England (Abrams 1995: 221, 224–225).

While not all of these clerics would have pursued such varied careers as Gilbert or Askatin, the opportunities that they found for preferment in Norway testify to

[59] *Norsk biografisk leksikon* 1999–2005 - https://nbl.snl.no/Askatin accessed on 16th July 2020. He is also the earliest known holder in Norway of the title of 'Chancellor' - Opsahl & Sogner 2003: 93.

the ties between the British Isles and Scandinavia and provide a context for their activities. It is interesting, however, that Gilbert retired to England, unlike Askatin who seems to have remained in Norway (and perhaps died in office). It can perhaps be argued that, for all Askatin's fame as a bishop and envoy, his former colleague Gilbert had the more-rounded life and that, in retiring to what may have been an essentially academic life in England, he left a broader legacy. It was one apparently appreciated by the people of Norwich, being expressed by the veneration shown to the burial place of his parents.[60]

The duration of that veneration is unknown but perhaps the recent archaeological evidence offers a clue as to the 'memory loss' concerning Gilbert himself. The thirteenth-century friary church within which he was probably buried was entirely replaced on a new site in the fourteenth century as was the contemporary cemetery outside (Clarke forthcoming, figs. 2.11). The site of Gilbert's grave was therefore presumably lost. Those worshipping across the city in the churchyard of St Crowch and at the site of the graves of Adam and Botild would no longer also be able to see the church or graveyard in which their illustrious son was entombed. This lack of visual association could perhaps explain why a notable individual of Norwich ceased to make a mark on the minds of his fellow city-dwellers.

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[60] This reverence to a plot in the church of St Crowch argues for the interment of Gilbert himself in the choir of the Carmelite friary, a location within the precinct to which public access would not normally be granted.

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