

LLANTHONY SECUNDA TOUR – Rose McDowall

MEETING POINT: Panorama panel by canal side gate.

INTRODUCTION:

- Welcome to the Augustinian Llanthony Secunda Priory, a scheduled monument covering about 5 acres and containing 6 grade I listed structures –of medieval date and one grade II Victorian farmhouse. Until recently all medieval buildings were on Historic England at Risk register but since restoration now off the register.
- Its current position hidden amongst the industrial landscape of Gloucester belies its national and local historical importance. In its height it was a social and economic force to rival that of St Peters Abbey (now cathedral)
- The tour today will cover some of the extensive history of the Priory over the centuries and look at the buildings on site. It will take about an hour.

EXTENT OF PROPERTY:

The original site stood about half a mile from the city and covered about 50 acres, called the Hyde. Try to imagine it without the canal. It stretched from what is now the end of the docks- up to the city /castle walls, over past the Quays shopping centre to Bristol Rd to the east; Llanthony Rd- the bypass to the west and the southern boundary along St Annes Way – although there were properties and fields beyond this.

Where we are standing (by the panorama) is in the outer precinct of the Priory

The outer Precinct contained the service buildings needed by a self-contained medieval community including storage, lay buildings, and guest accommodation. The Inner Precinct would contain religious buildings, church, cloisters, and chapter house. At Llanthony none of these remain, it is thought

they would have been to the north under the previous railway sidings and the new college.

CHURCH AND CLAUSTRAL BUILDINGS INFORMATION

- Unfortunately, nothing remains of these structures today. (Picture: Norman Pillars found in 1830's)
- The original church built within 16 months from stone quarried from Painswick and shipped via artificial canal/waterways and tracks.
- Consecrated as Llanthony St Mary in 1137.
- Rebuilt more ornately in 1275 and had 4 towers by 1301 when it was destroyed by fire. Rebuilt after this. (picture from map)
- 1495-1513 rebuilt again very ornately- to rival St **Peters**.
- Cloisters thought to be 65 metres long with fan tracery- would have been a Chapter House, dormitory, necessarium or reredorter, refectory, kitchens, scriptorium /library.
- We know the canons had a large library, some 80 books from this are still together in collection at Lambeth House including by Prior Clement of Llanthony
- Dissolution, civil war and industrial development mean nothing remains.

Run through the panorama board

Move to Tithe Barn

Before looking at the barn a little about the origins

ORIGINS:

So why Llanthony Secunda? the origins date back to the early 1100's @ 1108.

- Walter of Gloucester gave up his post as the Sheriff of Gloucestershire and Constable of Gloucester Castle, and went to live in tranquillity at the recently founded Augustinian Priory at Llanthony nr Abergavenny. It had been founded by a friend of his Hugh De Laci. His son Miles of Gloucester later 1st Earl of Hereford took over his roles in Gloucester.
- All was well until 1136 when Llanthony priory came under sustained attacks from Welsh rebels.

- The canons fled to the protection of the Bishop of Hereford a previous prior of Llanthony Prima. Miles of Gloucester gave them endowments of land south of the castle in Gloucester to build a new religious house, in which they could wait in safety until able to return to the mother house in Wales. The 50 acres of land was called the Hide, also endowed churches St Owen and St Kyneburg with all its prebends plus hay from meadow, mill at Quedgely. Also made later endowments.
- Although pleading poverty on arrival the canons may have brought some wealth with them as within 16 months they had built a church house and by late 12 century the priory was described as ‘a noble house in a place so beautiful and peaceful, provided with fine buildings, fruitful vines, set about handsomely with pleasure gardens and orchards.’
- The priory in Gloucester was the daughter house and so was named Llanthony Secunda or Llanthony Juxta Gloucester, with the mother house becoming Llanthony Prima.
- Original plan was for the canons to return to Wales. However, the success of Secunda in ‘finance safety prosperity and convenience’ led to the canons remaining in Gloucester, against the wishes of the Bishop and Pope. Eventually after about 50 years Prima was repopulated with the older and weaker canons from Secunda. Giraldus Cambrensis a contemporary cleric praised those canons who returned to the mother house but lambasted those who stayed in the Gloucester house which had odiously and enviously supplanted its own mother.

- However, by 1205 dispensation was given by Pope Innocent III for a prior in both houses, thus separating them; the wealth and properties were divided.
- It was not until 1481 that the two houses were reunited when Henry Dene was allowed to purchase Llanthony prima, thus Secunda became the main house.

ABOUT THE CANONS.

Black Canons, or Canons regular.

- Called so because of their black habit.
- An order established in mid-11th century, live by the rule of St Augustine of Hippo (canon) and share wealth & property in common; obedience; appointment of labour, fraternal charity, prayer in common, fasting and abstinence in proportion to strength, care of the sick, reading during meals.
- Distinct from monks who live a cloistered contemplative life, who rarely minister outside of the monastery, eg the Benedictines.
- They are priests; and as such not bound to his house but was free to have outside responsibilities such as to have a parish, running schools, hospitals and alms houses.
- Here in Gloucester the canons were in fact huge landowners, owning numerous properties in the city, but also in many places around the country including large estates in Ireland. By the dissolution the 6th largest and 10th richest in the country.
- Privilege of providing schooling for the city by Charter of Henry II 1152.
- Hospitals London Rd

- Corrodies- established for female relatives of canons and retiring servants of benefactors.
- Alms and benefactions and hospitality of more later.

TITHE BARN

- The impressive tithe barn was at its height in the 15th Century. These are 15thC early 16th C remains
- Called tithe barn as a tenth of income paid to priory and stored here. Also used by the Priory for meetings and holding courts. Tithes abolished in 1936. Manors of Hemstead, Quedgely and Haresfield were storing grain in the 1450's.
- 10 bays with 2 threshing floors; each had a south porch and rear double doorway.
- Rises from a limestone ashlar plinth with only the south walls and porches being faced with ashlar. Ashlar is cut or worked stone.
- Remainder is lias rubblestone.
- Gable ends were coped with a level cornice around the building
- Inner walls show some early medieval brick infill.
- Note the narrow-slit windows, large hinges and putlog holes.
- Would have had a timber roof – maybe using 450 mainly oak trees, possibly topped with Cotswold stone tiles.
- Thought to have become roofless in 18th century: there are reports that during the Civil War in the 1643 Siege General Ruthven fired canon from the Great Barn – return fire from the barbican in the city hill may have damaged the building as contemporary reporting says blast '**made the stones of the wall fly about their ears**'.

- It is thought that the origins of the nursery rhyme Humpty Dumpty dates from the civil war and refers to a canon used by the Royalists based here at Llanthony. A large canon was brought over from Holland and was mounted somewhere on the Llanthony site. Unfortunately, on its first firing it misfired and was rendered useless. Another theory for the name Humpty Dumpty is that it is named after the very portly MP for the city. This is disputed with some stories being related to siege engine (although this is said to have been made up by an Oxford scholar). Other cities also claim the story, such as Colchester.

Move to outer courtyard by plane tree.

OUTER COURT: We are now in the outer court of the outer precinct: this area is bounded by medieval walls and entered by the gatehouse.

- a variety of activities would have taken place. In many priories would have kept a home farm, with cattle pigs, chickens etc, also extensive gardens.
- A range of buildings along the north wall probably medieval and agricultural, or maybe for housing servants or corrodians.
- Corrodians -usually female 'pensioners' who lived at the priory. Usually well off, often relatives of the canons or benefactors (ie. Sybil de Neufmarche), they paid or were sponsored for accommodation and food for their lifetime. Payment was either cash or donation of property to the priory.
- Canons would have had lay servants to help with the work of the priory and to support the canons.

- In the 13th century there were 40 priors and 80 servants.
- In the 13th century in response to benefactors (Thomas De Rocheford & Monchefni) bequest provided bread, potage and ale to one thousand poor people twice a year.
- There is a Victorian cobbled surface under the grass and remains of a cottage in corner of site. Pond is Victorian cattle pond

ROYAL VISITORS

- 1241 Henry III held court.
- Eleanor of Provence 1277-widow of Henry III staying at castle: wrote for permission to walk in gardens, granted by prior a special bridge had to be built.
- Edward II 1327 overnight stay on way to Berkley Castle.
- 1378 John of Gaunt, Richard II uncle – to attend parliament in Gloucester stable boy murdered, culprit caught tried and hanged at Llanthony.
- 1381 Thomas Woodstock Earl of Buckingham stayed during Peasants Revolt with 200 armed retainers.
- Henry VII stayed at least twice 1500 1501 – great friend of Prior Henry Dean

Depending on time could use these stories.

- A wealthy priory but over the centuries fortunes fluctuated due to disasters internecine disputes and economic reasons/
- 1301 lost church to fire only the bare walls remained.
- 1349 bubonic plague killed 19 of the 37 canons. These were the wisest who understood the Priory and rents due. Many years before they were able to reassert ownership of some properties. Whole country affected.
- Prior Cheriton ruled 24 years and restored fortunes.
- Mid 1400's disputes between priors Hayward and Schoyer. Hayward ex- prior popular with Gloucester citizens, hired a gang of ruffians to unseat his unpopular successor Schoyer. Schoyer defended himself with bodyguards so violently the canons fled to Hanley Castle for protection. Schoyer prevailed on them to return with promises but put them in prison on their return. When they escaped Schoyer fled with the priory treasures.
- Prior Henry Dene restored fortunes once more.

Move to the West Gate

WEST GATEHOUSE – late 15th C

- These remains are all that is left of the main entrance into the priory, there would have been other gateways in the north and south walls.
- Built 1494-1500 for Prior Henry Dene who was responsible for much of the renovation of the Priory.
- Pedestrian and vehicular access. Gatehouse was 2 storeys high; there would have been a small room housing a porter, with window and wooden shutter. Historical accounts of there being a large cross on top.
- On street side, although now very weathered are
 - the royal coats of arms Henry VII ;
 - the coats of arm of the Bohun family – benefactors
 - the arms of the Bishop of Bangor 3 choughs. - Henry Dene.
- Adjoining walls are crenelated-15th-16th C bricks. South of the gateway is a wayside cross picked out in blue/black and red brick reminding the traveller to seek Gods blessing on his journey.
- Llanthony Rd used to be a raised trackway with the river and marshes beyond.
- **Henry Dene** was probably the most distinguished prior of Llanthony. Became prior in 1460 and initiated improvements in the priory. He also began to amass offices and lands, he was Bishop of Bangor and Salisbury; Chancellor of Ireland, a member of the Kings Council.
- In 1501 following visit from Henry VII, he was offered the Archbishopric of Canterbury and left the priory. It is said that a carving of head in St Mary De Crypt is that of Henry Dene. He officiated at the marriage of Catherine of Aragon and Arthur. Died in 1502 a poor man, buried in Westminster Abbey

Move to Brick Range

Mention cart shed 17th C

BRICK RANGE – early 16th C formerly known as the Great Stables.

Between 2017 and 2018 full renovation and conservation undertaken. Vegetation removed, floors consolidated, original stone and brickwork conserved.

The whole building reroofed

- Current building is attributed to 1520's probably commissioned by Prior Richard Hart.
- Remains of a 2-storey brick range with stone dressing and reused elements of earlier masonry including fireplaces and windows. It was the south side of a huge L shaped block of which the range between the inner and outer courts is the northern extension. Wall on West side of L extension is possibly single storey or brick ground floor with timber upper.
- It represents one of the earliest uses of brick in Gloucestershire to survive, with techniques not found elsewhere in the county.
- Handmade brick from Worcestershire (shipped down river?), on stone plinth – at least 3 courses. Probably on the site of an earlier range. Recent archaeology found remains of an oven just outside the current walls.
- Original level would have been 1.2 M below current level (see steps down to doorway)
- Series of small stone framed windows on two levels. The upper ones with Tudor4 centred heads with indented spandrels. The larger windows were inserted in the 17th C when building was used for agricultural purposes.
- No windows in south wall. This fits with its use as a stable block (similar to Dunster Castle). Referred to as the great stables on some documents
Big enough to house 17 horses.

- Prior Hart was ambitious and liked pomp – he was anxious to have an adequate train of horses, including one for his music master John Hogges so he could ride with him.
- Inside the building if possible, see beam holes, hay rack and chases in the wall. Possibly walled off as a coach house.
- Note also new roof on original wall plate: roof tiles sourced from France to match the Medieval Range: acoustic interior roof panels from Sweden.
- By the early 20th C fallen into disuse then used by British Rail to house lorries and buses, then became a scrap yard and vehicle breakers yard. Full of contaminated materials that had to be removed.
- Map of canal and railways useful to show industrial setting.

Back to some history.

DISSOLUTION OF MONASTERIES.

- 1538 Henry VIII dissolved the monasteries. At this time Llanthony was the 6th largest and 10th richest Augustinian priory in the country. Owned 97 churches and 51 fine manors in England Wales and Ireland
- One of the first foundations to cede.
- Prior Hart received an allowance of £100 per annum and the canons received smaller pensions.
- Dissolution also caused social and economic problems as it removed education, social and medical facilities from the community.

START OF AGRICULTURAL PERIOD OF PRIORY.

- Estate sold to escheator Arthur Porter for £723 – steward of the priory, he was JP and later became MP for Gloucester.
- Lived in house likely formed from the church bell tower and cloister buildings. The church apart from the nave was demolished, the nave became a parish church. Porter family responsible for providing a curate.

- Three generations of the Porters 'lived splendidly 'at the Priory until 1630 when the estate passed by marriage to the Scudamore family of Holme Lacy. (1st Viscount Lord Scudamore of Sligo married Elizabeth Porter).
- Eventually ownership passed to the Duke of Norfolk.
- The Scudamores probably did not reside at Llanthony but kept an interest in the orchards and estate.
- Much damage was done to Llanthony during the Civil War; trees were felled and buildings damaged.
- Following Civil War the remaining priory buildings fell into ruin and much was buried or recycled. (Stone in Frampton on Severn Wool Barn, tiles in cathedral)
- Scudamores divided the estate and leased the land out, became known as Llanthony Abbey Farm.
- By 1633 Scudamore had leased parts of the estate- for example the outer yard, middle gatehouse, oxhouse and orchard to Edward Spencer Yeoman.
- 1790 Gloucester and Berkley canal cut through the Priory precinct with a cutting 14 feet deep the spoil was heaped to form banks. Large stones were found but not recorded.
- 12 stone coffins were unearthed, but for "convenient demolition" they were hurled directly into the Severn, some of these would have been chancellors of England. They may well have been those of the De Bohun benefactors as Miles, the founder his wife Sybil, sons and daughters were all interred at Llanthony.
- During the 1840's – most damage seems to have been done during the construction of a large dock in Sizes Meadow, formerly Llanthony Orchard by the Gloucester and Dean Railway Co. The dock was never used instead

a railway yard and new quay were built, widening the canal and further truncating the site.

SCUDAMORES DURING CIVIL WAR

- 1643 Scudamore, a Royalist supporter was captured it is thought collecting armaments from an arsenal at Hereford.
- The Town Clerk of Gloucester (Parliamentarian) ordered the demolition of the tower of the church to deny Royalists a vantage point as a siege looked imminent.
- General Ruthven set up camp at Llanthony as previously discussed.
- Scudamore in prison in London got to know of the damage and petitioned parliament 'taken the lead, pulled down the corners and cut down many trees' No reply from Parliament,
- Lady Scudamore wrote again and received reply from Waller 'I am assured nothing about the house hath been defaced only the tower and old chapel'. This was a little misleading as by demolishing these 2 corners of the house had come down and without lead on the roof the house was inundated with water. The trees were cut down by both sides!
- Scudamore was in prison for around 4 years. He lost 30,000 pounds, fined over 2,000 pounds before he was set free. Returned to Holme Lacey and leased out the Llanthony estate.

Move to outside Victorian range.

VICTORIAN FARMHOUSE-built in Tudor Gothic style c1870-1880. It is attributed to architect PC Hardwicke (the younger). It incorporates possible remains of the north wall of a gatehouse of the former 14th C range of buildings between the inner and outer courts. Red brick with blue headers and limestone ashlar dressings. It was commissioned by the tenant farmer.

Restored in the 1980's to be the City Archaeological Dep. – but never used.

It now houses the Llanthony Secunda Priory Trust office services and utilities.

Point out

- Lozenge design in bricks – copied from the precinct wall Llanthony Rd.
- Ogee headed doorway- elaborate drip molds
- Original sash windows
- Fry – carved on entrance – Eddie Fry Strongman, Gloucester's Pocket Rocket lived here.

MEDIEVAL RANGE- 15th C

- These are the remains of a range between the inner and outer courts of the outer precinct.
- Historical work shows that this is a fragment of a much larger range that extended north for more than twice the length of the present structure and southwards slightly less than that.
- Formerly a range of about 30 bays (48m long) of which 6 in the centre remain at full height: the southern end now is built over by the farmhouse. The remains of the northern extent is outlined by the remaining stones of the ashlar plinth.
- The southern section appears to have been lost by the 18th C and the northern section demolished c.1870, when the new north gable wall inserted.
- Original medieval range was constructed as a single storey of coursed lias rubblestone. It reached its present form by the late 15th C when the close studded timber framed upper storey was added to the masonry ground floor. Originally would have had wattle and daub infill. Latter replaced by brick noggin, but now restored to lath and plaster. The building is limewashed as it would have been originally. (No Victorian black and white!).

- Time periods of stone base Phase 1. 13th-14th C

Phase 2. 15th -16th C

Above the rubble walls is an ashlar cornice note all the stones are different sizes, this is below the sole plate on which the timber frame sits.

- The windows are all of different time periods, late 14th and early 16th C mullion windows. Also 18th and 19th C alterations.
- Note the
 - Iron tethering ring 17th C
 - Width of door
 - Old nails in situ

If have access to the inside of the building then can go in: information room is usually open during the week, worth checking with Llanthony re access.

- Uncertain of original use of these buildings, but by the dissolution they had been converted for agricultural use, for horses, oxen and grain.
- The upper storey is high status so could have been used for distinguished visitors or senior member of the priory.
- The beams are elm – note the doughty elm – they are subject to catastrophic failure, Example by internal door into Victorian farmhouse.
- Large brick fireplace is 19th C- Mr Powell used to burn tyres and telegraph poles when he lived at Llanthony.
- Upstairs there are six remaining bays, there would have been a chamber at the south end, it may have communicated with the chamber over the gatehouse. It was separated from the northern bays by a closed truss, these bays were windowless so possibly for storage.
- Note the high roof arched braces with two rows of wind braces bays two and three the highest status.

- All the windows are new- difficult to know where the original windows would have been .
- Note the saw marks on the timber. Anecdote of the origins of the saying top dog and underdog.
- Lath marks
- Stud partitions
- Size of chimney breast
- Charred timbers from fire when this was used as a lodging house, thought to have been started by someone smoking in bed. Story told by locals who played in grounds as children: pond is bottomless, so warned not to play there. When fire broke out the fire brigade put hoses into pond , drained in a few minutes ; so definitely has a bottom.

The Lady Margaret Hall (named after Margaret De Bohun daughter of Miles the original benefactor) and Henry Dene Hall can be hired for events , the acoustics are very good.

Llanthony Secunda Trust are planning to have a historical resource : there is so much more history to Llanthony than is possible to cover in this short tour, see information room for timeline and slides of some of the historical documents.

End tour

If have time can relate last anecdote relating to founder Miles.

Miles original benefactor was interred at priory, he died in a hunting accident. After an argument with the Abbey, who put a stop to the planned internment saying that as Miles was living in the parish (Castle) it was their right to perform the burial; after much posturing body offered to the Abbey but they declined to accept. Miles had been excommunicated by Bishop of Hereford so even the Priory did not wish to say mass for him!

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