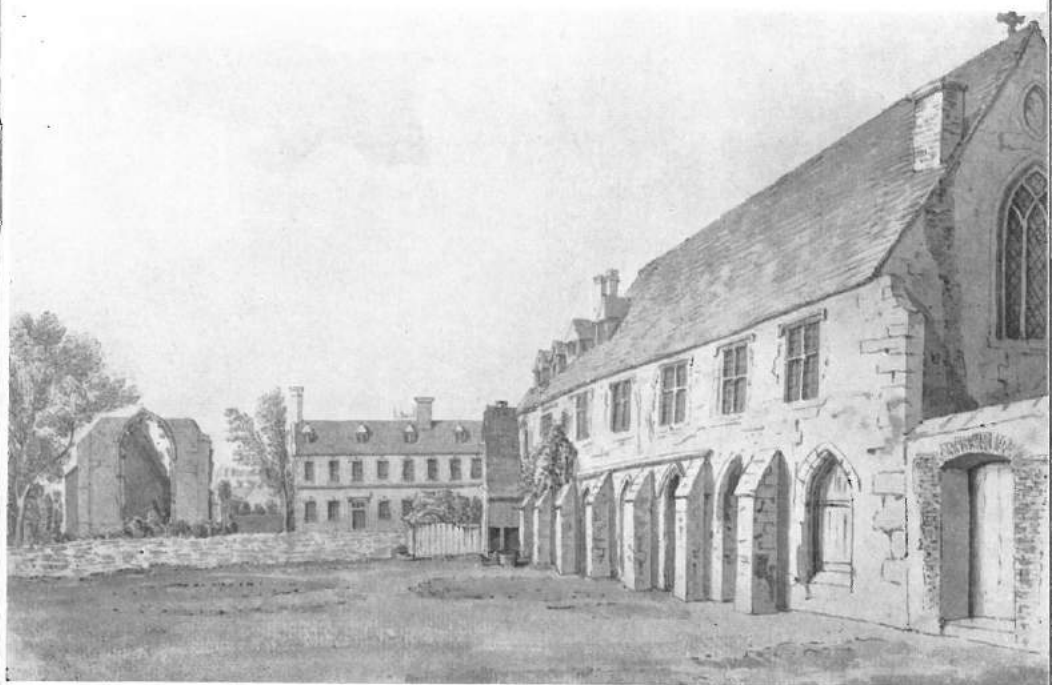


Greyfriars, Lincoln



GREYFRIARS, LINCOLN, FROM S.E., WITH RUINS OF OLD ST. SWITHIN'S CHURCH
ON LEFT. 1784

(From a water-colour drawing by S. H. Grimm in the British Museum)

THE CITY & COUNTY MUSEUM LINCOLN

AN ILLUSTRATED GUIDE TO THE BUILDING

PUBLISHED BY
THE CITY OF LINCOLN LIBRARIES, MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY COMMITTEE

Greyfriars, Lincoln

Introduction

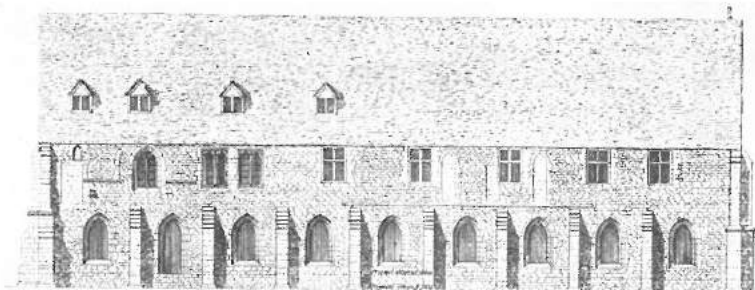
The building which houses the collection of the City and County Museum is itself of considerable interest and importance as it is the earliest surviving chapel of the Franciscan Order in England. The Franciscans, or Friars Minor, who take their name from their founder, S. Francis of Assisi, landed in England in 1224. As early as 1231 the citizens of Lincoln gave them a plot of land near the guildhall, then situated eastward of the site of the present guildhall which was built about the year 1500. From the terms of the gift it is clear that the friars had already been settled on an adjacent piece of property by William de Beningworth, the subdean. The early arrival of the Franciscans in Lincoln is quite naturally explained by the importance of the city in the middle ages as a commercial and ecclesiastical centre, but it is also possible that it owed something to Robert Grosseteste's connection with the cathedral as prebend of S. Margaret's, Leicester. Grosseteste was a great patron of the friars during his term as Vice-Chancellor of Oxford, and his favour must have been particularly helpful to the Lincoln house after his preferment to the see of Lincoln in 1235. The Franciscans seem to have been the first mendicants to reach Lincoln, although the Dominicans followed shortly afterwards at some date before 1238, and houses of the Carmelites, Augustinians and 'Friars of the Sack' were also eventually established in the city.

The site

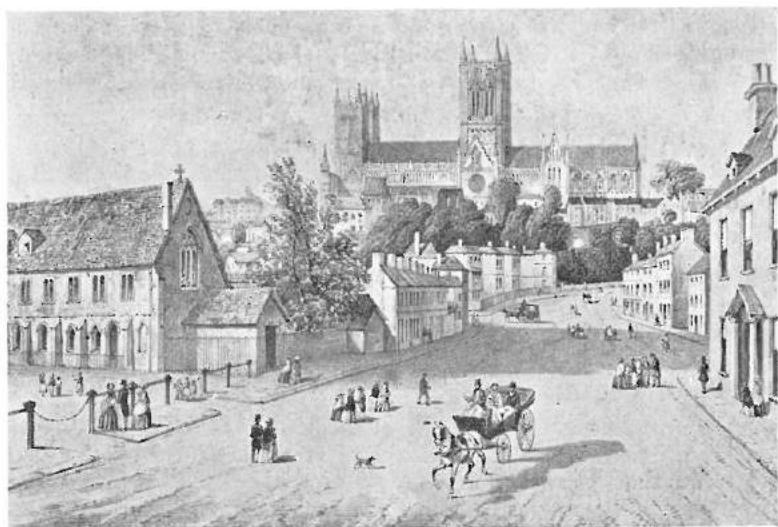
The site chosen by the Grey Friars (so called from the colour of their habit) for their house was bounded on the east and south by the city wall, which thus provided a convenient precinct wall on those sides. In 1237 the citizens gave their guildhall to the friars at the request of Henry III and by 1350 the friars possessed a plot of land some four acres in extent, bounded on the north and west by the present Silver Street and Free School Lane.

The first period

At some date in the first half of the 13th century, possibly even before the acquisition of the guildhall site in 1237, the friars began to build their chapel, commencing at the east end and working westwards. This was to be a long and rather narrow building (21 ft. 6 in.) and was lit by lancet windows, of which only one is now used. This is in the north wall, and was re-opened at the beginning of this century at the restoration of the building. In this wall the lancets were arranged in pairs, while at the east end there was a group of three of which the outer ones are still plainly visible: the centre lancet was enlarged a few years later and is still glazed. These may



A. GREYFRIARS, LINCOLN. SOUTH ELEVATION IN 1851
(From a drawing by J. S. Padley)



B. LINCOLN FROM BROADGATE, c. 1840, SHOWING THE
GREYFRIARS BUILDING IN THE FOREGROUND ON LEFT

be seen on the upper floor. The cloisters abutted the south wall and the windows on this side were shorter, since their sills were above the roof of the cloister walk. Traces of three of these, which were disposed singly, are to be seen on the exterior of the building above remaining parts of the supporting course of the cloister roof. The present windows of the upper floor replaced these windows later. The two doors leading into the cloisters were situated in the second bay from each end and have now disappeared.

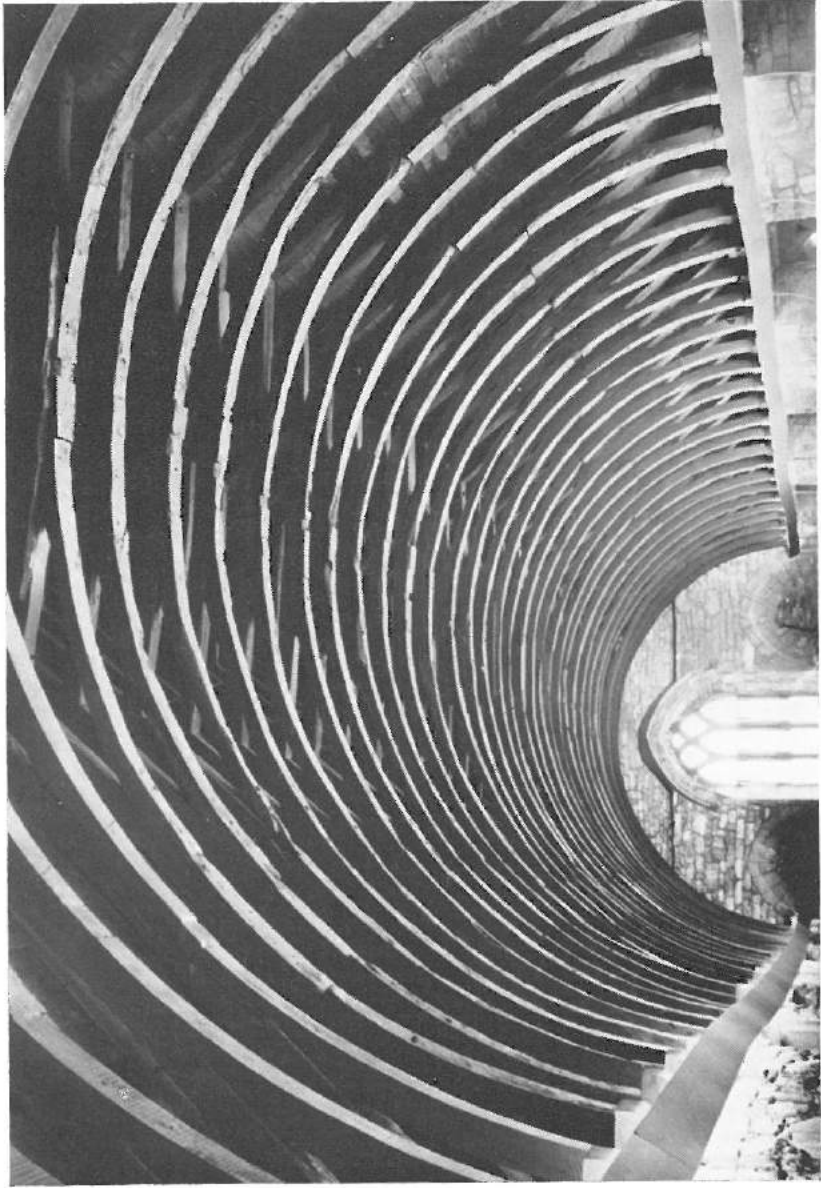
At 72 feet from the east end of the chapel is to be seen on the north side of the building the traces of a nave arcade. This never extended more than two bays to the west, and its first pillar may be seen to the left of the steps leading to the upper room. Also presumably belonging to this first period is the fragment of the arching over a pair of sedilia which was removed to provide access to the cloister. This may be seen on the ground floor in the south wall near the east end.

The second period

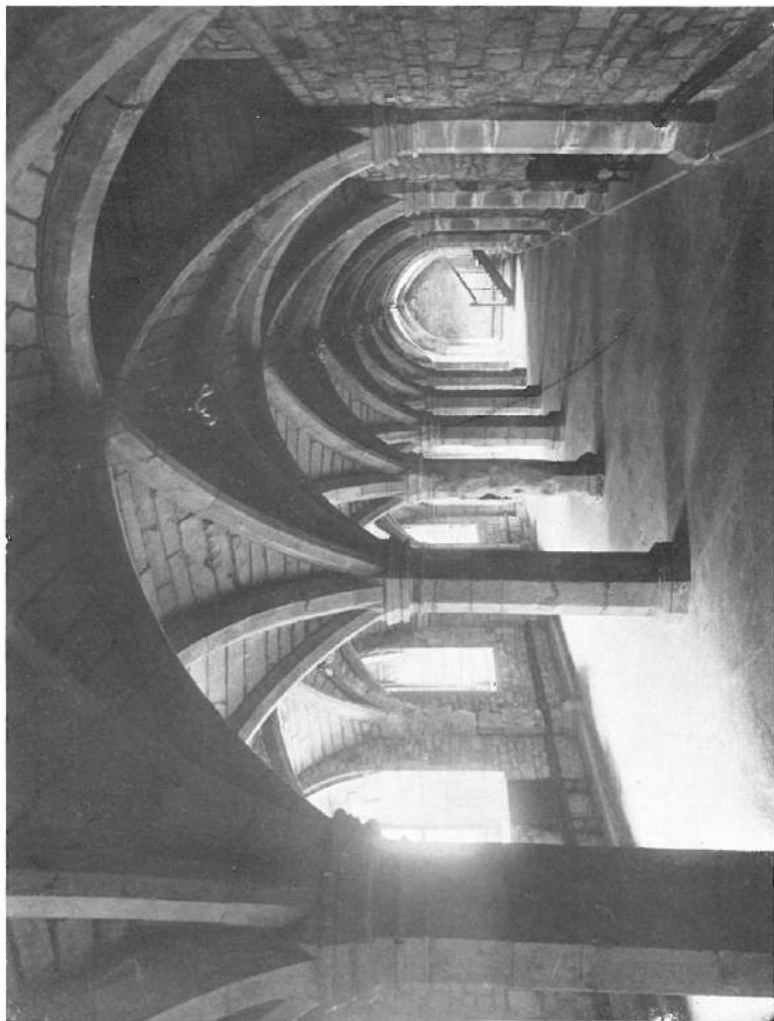
The building as it now stands contains, therefore, much of the work of the first period, but it does not express the original intentions of the builders, since of its 101 feet, only some 28 feet at the west end is nave. A building (the church of the Dominicans at Brecon) of comparable purpose and with a width only slightly greater than the Lincoln Greyfriars has a nave 60 feet longer, and it seems likely that for some reason the length here had to be curtailed: to compensate for this loss an undercroft was inserted which divided the building into two floors of which the upper was the chapel. The date of this change in plan is not known, but is probably to be placed early in the second half of the 13th century, perhaps about 1260, since the first chapel was still being built at the time and there is little difference between the style of the two periods.

When it was decided to limit the length to 101 feet a wall was erected at the west end and the short length of nave arcade was blocked up. Comparison of the column of the latter with the columns of the undercroft shows that the floor level was lowered by about two feet at this time. As their sills would be below the floor level of the upper room the lancets at the east end and in the north wall were all blocked up. A new east window was inserted for the chapel, and it is possible that another matched it at the west end, although there is no evidence for this. The south windows probably survived the change as their sills were much higher above the ground than those of the other windows of the same period.

Preceded by the above changes the undercroft was now built. Although it is not unusual to find the domestic buildings of friaries and other religious houses divided into upper and lower rooms, examples of this being applied to churches are very rare and apparently without parallel in this country. Consisting of nine bays



13TH CENTURY BARREL-ROOF OF THE UPPER ROOM OF GREYFRIARS,
AFTER REMOVAL OF SKYLIGHTS AND RESTORATION



GREYFRIARS, LINCOLN. UNDERCROFT LOOKING WEST
(after restoration)

with quadri-partite vaulting the undercroft is divided longitudinally by a row of eight octagonal columns of simple design and was lit by a row of plain pointed windows in the south wall. These may each have been divided into two lights by a central mullion. That access to the chapel was gained by an external stair is shown by the unbroken nature of the vaulting, and it is possible that the stair and door occupied similar positions to their modern successors. Another subsidiary door, now blocked, is also to be found in the north wall near the east end. Approximately opposite to it in the south wall is a fine double piscina of 13th century date.

The roof

The roof is a remarkable one, consisting largely of the original timbers of the 13th century. Throughout the greater part of its length the trusses are curved, but for a distance of a little over 28 feet at the west end there is a change in style to straight trusses. The point of transition coincides with the beginning of the nave arcade referred to above, and it is probable that it also marks the division between the quire and the nave of the second chapel since a wooden partition at this point survived until 1905. Apart from a wooden screen there was apparently no structural division between quire and nave in either period.

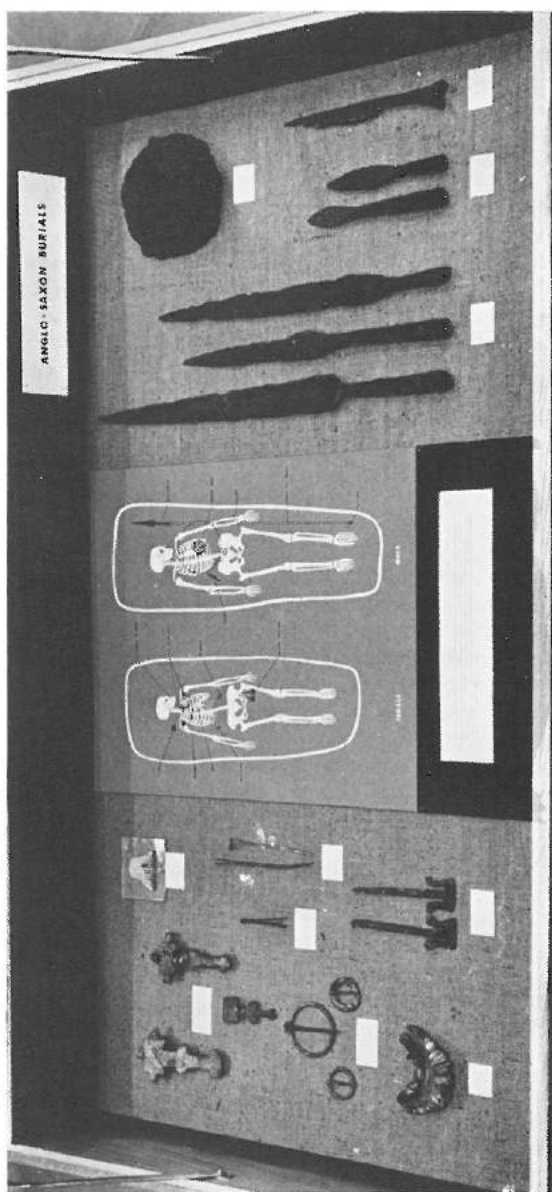
The cloisters and other buildings

The cloisters were on the south side of the chapel, and were probably about 78 feet square, which is similar to the size of the cloisters of other known friaries. The site of the cloisters remained open for a long time after their demolition and was used as a sheep market until the building of the modern S. Swithin's Church.

Other domestic buildings would have been attached to the house on the north side of the chapel. That they were extensive is shown by the popularity of the house as a meeting place for Provincial Chapters, not only of the Franciscans, who met here in 1288, 1293 and 1295, but also of the Premonstratensian Canons who met here on three occasions in the 15th century. The ground floor of the present building may have been used as the refectory.

Later history of the building

The modified building seems to have been finished about 15 years before 1275, when in the Great Inquest it was stated that the friars had planted their church and houses on the wall for a length of 20 perches fifteen years or more before. This date of about 1260 would agree with the date suggested for the east window on the grounds of its similarity to one in S. Mary-le-Wigford, but on the other hand leaves unexplained the consignments of timber brought from Sherwood Forest for the fabric of the church in 1268, 1280 and 1284 as recorded in the Lincoln Corporation Minutes.



ANGLO-SAXON LINCOLNSHIRE: TABLE-CASE DISPLAY IN MUSEUM-

Another period of building commenced in 1534, when the Warden of the Grey Friars was granted stone from the ruined churches of Holy Trinity at the Stairs and S. Augustine to repair his house, and in the following year he obtained timber from the roof of S. Bartholomew for the same purpose. Perhaps some of the stone was used for the conduit which the friars laid down in 1535, to bring water to their house from a spring in the fields to the east of the city near Monk's Abbey.

This building activity was brought to an end, however, by the suppression of the house in 1538 or early 1539. The site and its buildings were leased to William Monson of Ingleby, who seems to have converted the friary into his private residence. The fireplace in the upper room, which is of 16th century date, may belong to this period in the building's history. Monson eventually bought the property and it passed from him to his son Robert who in 1568 began to convert the chapel into a free school. In 1583 this and the rest of the property passed by bequest into the hands of the city, and the chapel has remained corporation property ever since. In 1587 and 1588 the city made gifts of stone from the site to various citizens and it is clear that in this period some at least of the lesser buildings of the site, probably already in decay, were being demolished.

The free school, later the Middle School, occupied only the upper floor of the building, and the undercroft had a much more chequered history. In 1612 it was serving as a house of correction, in 1624 as a wool store, and thereafter as a school of knitting and spinning until about 1830. From 1833 until 1862 it was a mechanic's institute and library: in the latter year the school took it over for additional classroom space. Upon the incorporation of the Middle School with the Grammar School (now Lincoln School) in 1900 the building was left untenanted, and it was decided to convert it into a museum. The conversion was accompanied by extensive repair and restoration which left the building substantially in its present state. The City and County Museum was formally opened in 1907.

The small annexe abutting the east end, shown in illustration B, page 2, was in use in the 18th century as a lock-up for offenders against the law. This was enlarged in the 19th century and subsequently used as the museum store until 1954 when it was adapted to accommodate the collection of arms and armour presented to the City by the late J. H. Smith, sometime Sheriff of the City of Lincoln.

*(Acknowledgment is made to the Royal Archaeological Institute for loan of blocks for all illustrations, excepting those on pages 4 and 7. For a fuller account of the building see *Archaeological Journal*, xcii (1935), pp. 42-63.)*