

Clay, Rotha Mary., The Hermits and Anchorites of England. Methuen & Co. London, 1914.

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III. CAVE DWELLERS

Far from men in the wilderness . . . enclosed in a cave . . . deep down in the grey rock.—*Life of Edward the Confessor.*

The solitary dwelt not only in desert or mountain, but in dens and caves. It seems natural to associate him with hidden haunts in deep valleys of riverside crags.

Hollowed out at the base of the Cratcliff rocks, near Stanton-in-Peak, is a cave, small and bare indeed, but perhaps the most impressive of our hermitages. There dwelt a solitary whose name has not been recorded, but graven in the rocky wall is a lasting memorial of his faith. In a recess at the eastern end is a simple, striking rood (Plate XXXI). The crockets on the cross suggest the budding foliage of the tree of life. The features are defaced, but the sacred figure is boldly executed. A manuscript Rule of hermits, dating from the fourteenth century (probably contemporary with this sculpture), says : “Let it suffice thee to have on thine altar an image of the Saviour hanging upon the cross, which represents to thee His passion which thou shalt imitate, inviting thee with outspread arms to Himself”.¹

In the same county, near Repton, is the cave-pierced rock called Anchor Church (Plate IX), which from its name is believed to have sheltered an “anker”[anchorite].² It has been suggested that this was the abode of the hermit mentioned by John of Tynemouth, who used to visit Modwen, the legendary lady of Burton (chapter I.). The tradition of his name and dwelling-place has been preserved in a fragment of an early printed book :—

“[One] tyme dwelled an holy heremyte, whose name was
[Ha]rdulche in a place named Bredon. He herde tell

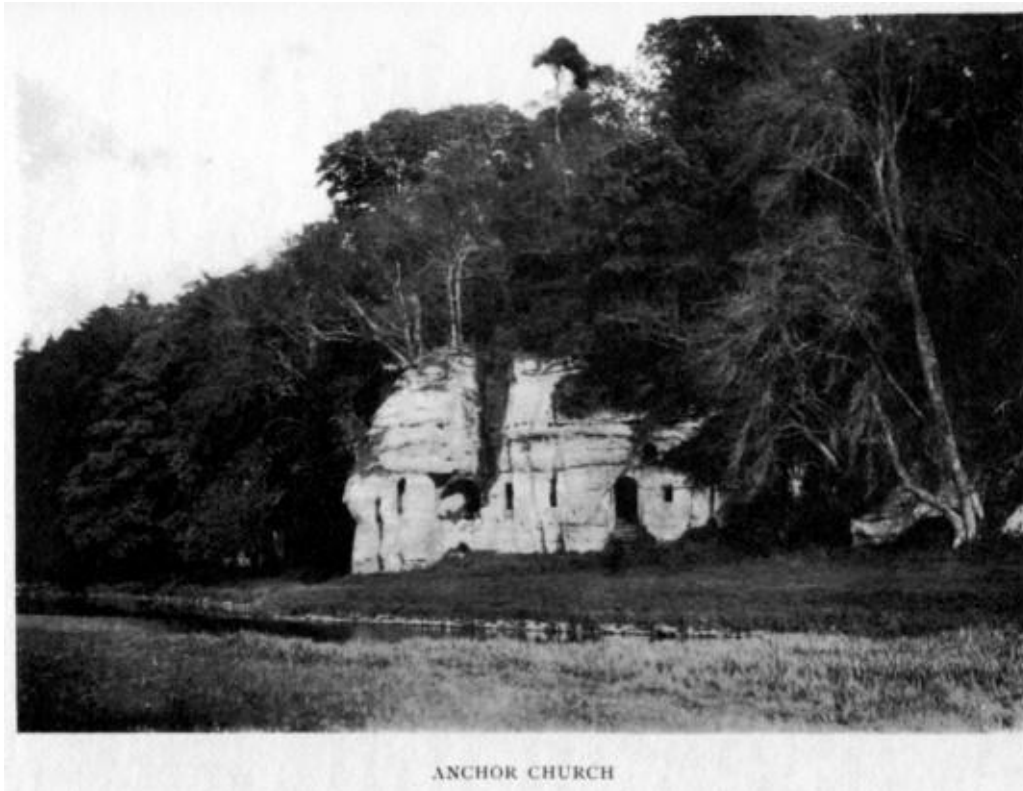


Plate IX : Anchor Church

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[of Mod]wen's holy lyuyng and wente oft to her and bare
[boke]s of holy sayntes lyues. On the daye this holy man
[left h]is boke at home, and therfore she made great
[wailing] and sayd, Father why bringest thou not they booke
[like a]s thou were wonte to do. Madame he sayde I
[haue] forgotten. That tyme saynt Hardulche had a celle in
[a c]lyffe a lytell frome trent."³ [31]

Then St. Modwen sent two of her maidens in a boat to his hermitage to fetch the book. A tempest arouse and overturned the boat, but (needless to relate) they were rescued by the miraculous intervention of their mistress. Anchor Church is, it is true, some miles from Breedon-on-the-Hill (where the church is dedicated to St. Mary and St. Hardulph), but in those remote times the parish of Breedon, or the lands of its monastery, may have extended to Trent. Probably the original hermitage—if such it was—consisted of “church” and cell. There are now four chambers in a semicircle, one of which commands a view of the Trent valley. The river no longer runs beneath the rock, but a pool indicates its former course.

There was perhaps no hermitage which possessed a more beautiful

situation than that of Guy's Cliffe, near Warwick. This rugged precipice, washed by the Avon, is clad in living green. Leland saw in this spot—with its mossy caverns, clear springs, and flowery fields—a place of more than ordinary beauty. Its silence was only broken by “the river rollynge with a praty noyse over the stones”.

In the time of King Athelstan—so the story goes—this cliff became the retreat of Guy of Warwick. Returning from pilgrimage, the famous warrior arrived at Warwick, and received an alms from Felicia his wife, who failed to recognize him in his pilgrims' weeds. He then carried out his resolve to retire into a cave not far distant from this lady's castle :—

“He repaired to an heremite that resided amongst the shady woods hard by, desiring . . . to receive some spiritual comfort, where he

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abode with that holy man till his death, and . . . succeeded him in that Cell . . . and continued for the space of two years after ; adding also, that when she came, she should find him lying dead in the Chapel, before the Altar ; and moreover, that when XV dayes after she her self should depart this life. She came accordingly, and brought with her the Bishop and others, and did honourably interre [his body][sic] in that heremitage.”

This romantic tale, derived from Gerard of Cornwall, is recorded in the chronicle of Hyde Abbey, under the date 927.⁴

The hermit's cave (Plate X) is small, narrow, and almond-shaped. It is about 14½ feet long, and barely 5 feet at its widest point. The rudely-hewn entrance, being 5 feet above the floor, is more like a window than a door. Opposite this opening is a panel in the rocky wall, bearing an obliterated inscription. According to an ingenious, but doubtful, reading, it is rendered : *Remove, O Christ, from thy servant this weight—Guthi.*⁵ If this were a genuine record of some recluse's prayer, it would add a living interest to the cell, but the semi-ruvic characters are regarded with suspicion by scholars.

Guy's cave and Guy's well are mentioned by Leland. “Men shew a cave there in a rok hard on Avon ripe, where they say that he used to slepe. Men also yet showe fayr springs in a faire medow thereby, where they say that Erle Guido was wont to drinke.” The well, reached by a path along the riverside, is in an arched recess. Richard Beauchamp “enclosyd the silver welles in the medow with pure whit slike stone like marble”. The carved slab in which the twin-basins are scooped, is time-worn and overgrown with creeping liverwort, but a never-failing spring bubbles out of the rock into the well.

Early in the thirteenth century Brother Wiger, canon of Oseney, took up his abode in the hermitage, having determined, with the consent of his abbot, to lead the solitary life at the place called Gibbecliff.⁶ Gilbert, described in an ordination list (1238) as the hermit “of Warwick,” may have dwelt

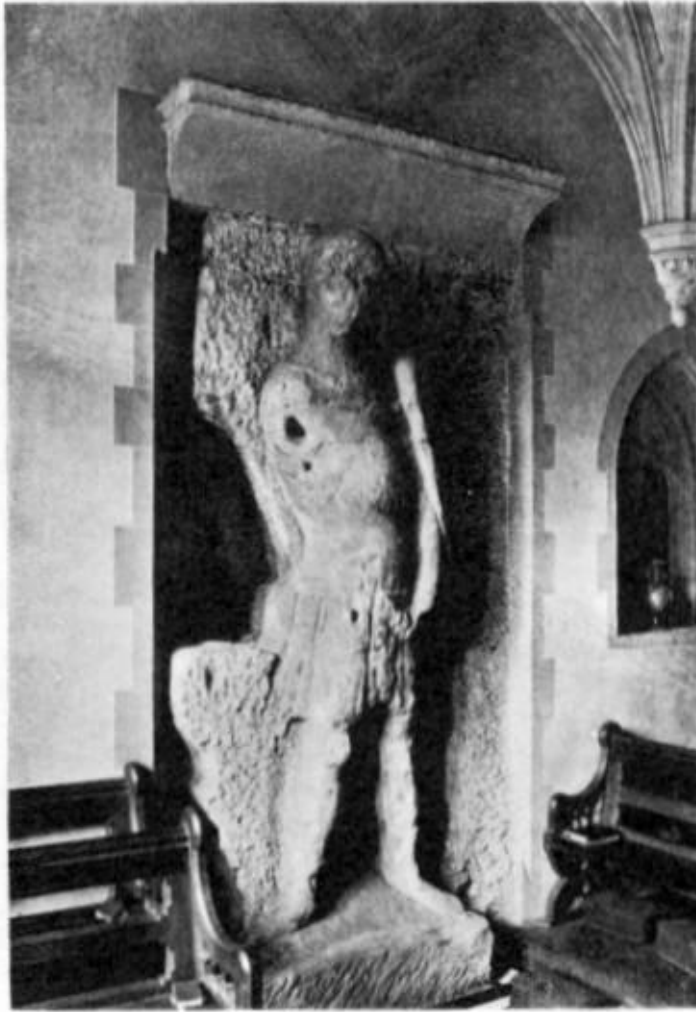
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HERMIT'S CAVE, GUY'S CLIFFE

Plate X : Hermit's Cave, Guy's Cliff

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GUY'S STATUE

Plate XI: Guy's Statue



THE CLOISTERS
GUY'S CLIFFE

Plate XI: The Cloisters, Guy's Cliff

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here. The names of Thomas de Lewes, Robert Maudith, and John Burry also occur as hermits of Gibbecliff.

At one time the cell was under the care of the priory at Warwick, but the earl, recovering the patronage, converted it into a chantry. In the Rows Roll, Richard Beauchamp is represented bearing the chapel in his right hand and the young king in his left. He was the kinsman and guardian of Henry VI (see p. 155) in the first year of whose reign he obtained license to found a perpetual chantry in the chapel called Gibbecliff, wherein two priests should perform divine service for the souls of the king and of the founders. He did so "that God would send him heir male," prompted thereto by the prophetic visions of an anchoress at York :—

"He did hyt by the styrryng of a holy anchoras namyd dam [Dame] Em Rawghtone dwelling at all hallows in the northe strete of york and for hyt to her apperyd our lady vii tymes in on yer and seyde that in tyme to cum . . . hyt should be a gracious place to seke to for eny dises or gref and on of Seynt Gyes Eyris shuld bryng hys Reliks a geyn to the same place."⁷

William Worcester notes in his *Itinerary* that Richard Beauchamp caused a fair house to be made for the priests called hermits, and Leland mentions "a praty howse of stone for the cantuary prists by the chapel". It is uncertain to which of the rock-hewn dwellings the travellers refer. The lofty hall with pillars and arches, surrounded by an ambulatory, is known as the cloisters⁸ (Plate XI). There is a range of cells in both upper and lower cliffs. Some of them have small square-headed windows and other signs of habitation.

The "right goodly chapell of St. Mary Magdalene" is still in use, after careful restoration in 1875. The ancient door is massive, carved and iron bound. A huge oak chest has been preserved. Within the chapel, cut in the rock, is a gigantic statue of Sir Guy ; it is about 9 feet high and represents him as warrior, the victor over Colbrand the Dane. Shakespeare doubtless had this figure in his mind when he writes: "I am not Samson, nor Sir Guy, nor Colbrand, to mow them

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down before me". It appears to date from the early part of the thirteenth century, although according to Leland it was Earl Richard who set up there "an ymage great lyke a giant". Richard Beauchamp held his famous ancestor in especial honour. Like Guy he went on pilgrimage, and like Guy did deeds of prowess. Richard Neville, "the king-maker," purposed "to have woltyd and butracyd [buttressed] sir Guys caue [cave] for falling downe of the hangyng rok . . . and to let peynt Sir Gyes Image [statue]." His further scheme to enlarge the chantry as an almshouse was never carried out, owing, probably, to the Wars of the Roses.

Fuller, after describing the charms of Guy's Cliff, adds :—

“Many hermits . . . being sequestred from the world, retreated hither. Some will say it is too gaudy a place for that purpose, as having more of a paradise then wilderness therein But seeing hermits deny themselves the company of men, let them be allowed to converse with the rarities of nature.”

The hermitage near Bridgnorth (Plate XII) is said to date from the tenth century, and the rock of Athelardston, in the royal forest of Morf, was, by the tradition preserved by Leland, the habitation of a brother of Athelstan. Nothing authentic is known before the fourteenth century, when the Crown nominated several persons. A Patent Roll entry sets fourth that :—

“Whereas Roger de Burghton, chaplain, inflamed with the fervour of devotion, has arranged to take the habit of a hermit, and has made instant supplication to the king to grant him for life the hermitage at Atherlaston on the high road by Bruggenorth now void, wherein to dwell, that he may pray for the king, queen Philippa and their children ; the king has granted his petition.”

Athelardston, now Hermitage hill, is near the top of the sandstone ridge above the Severn valley. The rock consisted of four chambers, a small door opens into the largest cave, about 33 feet long, including the chapel (Plate XII), which is the most complete part remaining. A passage and flight of steps lead to the upper cave, which, like the lower side cave, is now roofless, the soft stone having crumbled away.⁹

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THE HERMITAGE, BRIDGNORTH

Plate XII : The Hermitage, Bridgnorth

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THE CHAPEL, BRIDGNORTH HERMITAGE

Plate XIII : The Chapel, Bridgnorth Hermitage

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for example, those at Redstone, Blackstone, and Southstone. That of Redstone (Plate XXII), near Stourport, contained a chapel with an altar and several chambers, all hewn in the rock. Over the altar there was formerly a wall-painting which depicted an archbishop saying Mass, and above it an inscription declaring some indulgence to those who frequented this place with devotion. Those who trafficked on Severn used to make offerings of their commodities to the hermit as they passed. Some suppose that Layamon dwelt here when compiling his translation of Wace's *Brut*. "It apparethe the Hermittes weare buryed heere, althoughe the stone hardly yeeldethe a grave."

In some unknown cave in the neighbourhood of Evesham dwelt one of the most influential recluses of the west. "On the slope of a wood, enclosed in a cave, deep down in the grey rock," Wulsi lived in seclusion through the troublous reigns of Cnut, Edward the Confessor, Harold, William the Conqueror, and William Rufus. He was brought up in Worcestershire, but became a Benedictine monk at Crowland. He was unskilled in literary pursuits, and could neither sing in the choir, nor cater in the market ; but he felt that he had a vocation for the contemplative life. He therefore sought to become an anchorite, that he might pray unceasingly for the whole community and for himself. A few years passed peacefully, but upon Cnut's death there was an upheaval in the kingdom. A multitude of men, women, and children took refuge at Crowland, and they "everlastingly" disturbed the whole monastery. But more than all, they distracted Wulsi ; for day and night they consulted him, crowding to the doors of his humble cell as though it were some royal palace. The din made Wulsi weary of this life, and he had not time for devotion. Worn out, and fearing lest, while people called him holy, he should fall into utter desperation and rush headlong into depths of wickedness, he at length, by the advice of the prior, sought tranquility at Evesham, and there in a cavern and in the chapel of St. Kenelm hard by, he served God in all holiness of life.¹⁰

Some years later, a vision was vouchsafed to the hermit.¹¹

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One night, after much prayer and meditation, the Apostle Peter, bright and beautiful, appeared saying :—

"Fear not, brother ; I am Peter, who keep the keys of Heaven. Tell Edward the king that his prayer is accomplished ; of all his sins he has pardon, and absolution from his vow . . . on the condition that to me he make a house, where he may have a convent of monks. . . . At London is the spot marked out, two leagues from the city, at Thorney, where is a church, ancient and low . . . towards the west on the Thames. I myself will consecrate the spot with my hands. . . . Whatever I have here said to you, clearly put it in writing."

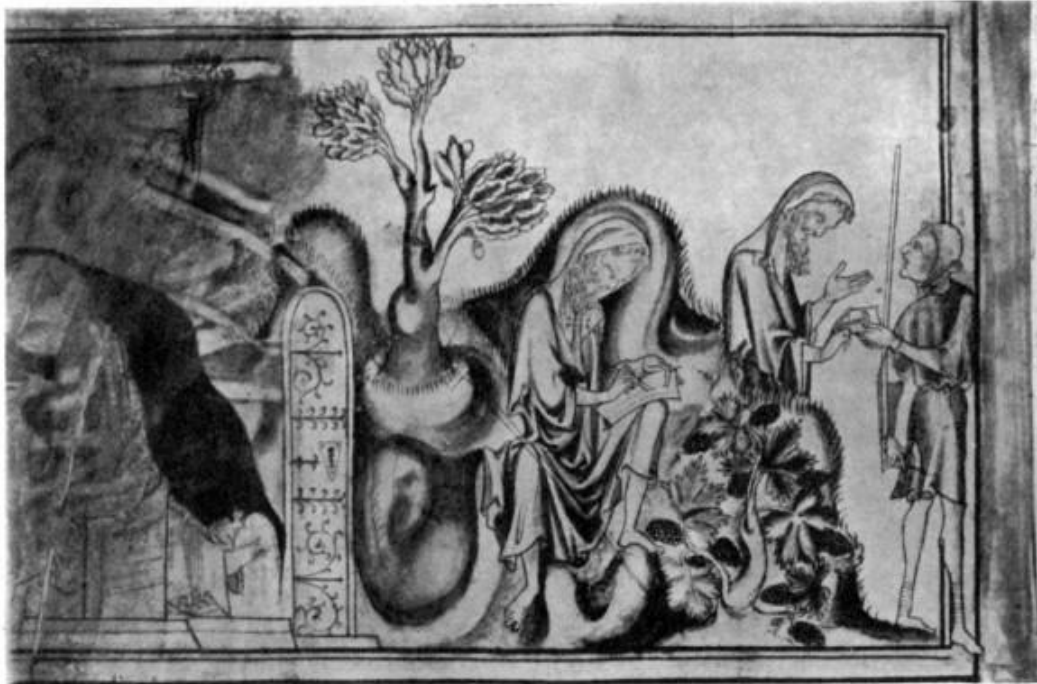
Wulsi delayed not. In the morning he wrote it on parchment, and caused it to be carried as from St. Peter to the king (Plate XIV). The writing and receiving of the roll are well depicted in the thirteenth-century manuscript.¹² Meanwhile the messengers (who had gone to obtain a release from the king's vow to go on pilgrimage) returned from Rome, and since the two messages agreed, the Divine will seemed clear : "For the one comes from the east, and the other from the west . . . hence every one is assured of it, because no tidings could have reached the recluse, who was very far away in the country of Worcester, far from men in the wilderness."

After living in seclusion for seventy-five years Wulsi died, and was buried at Evesham. The shrine of "St. Wlsin" was one of the treasures of that abbey.

The solitary life was embraced by persons of every estate, not only by the

noble lord of Warwick and the high-born monk of Worcester, but by a baker of Derby and a citizen of York. The narrative concerning the pious townsman of Derby—"not a tale, but a circumstance which most certainly happened"—is recorded by Thomas de Musca.¹³ The baker was a Godfearing man, intent on good works, "being in a measure another Cornelius". Whatever food and clothing he could procure during the week beyond what was needful for his family he would bring on Saturday to St. Mary's church, for distribution amongst the poor. At length, yielding to a call

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ST. WULSI, THE HERMIT-SEER

Plate XIV : St. Wulsi, The Hermit-Seer

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which seemed unmistakable, he exchanged social life for solitude, commerce for contemplation, prosperity for privation.

“It happened that on a certain day in autumn when he had given himself up to repose at noon, there appeared to him in his dreams the Blessed Virgin Mary, saying : “Thy alms are acceptable before my Son and me. But now if thou wilt be perfect, leave all that thou hast and go to Depedale and there thou shalt serve my Son and me in solitude.”

Awakening, he straightway left all that he possessed. Ignorant of the place

for which he was bound, he turned eastwards, and in passing through a village, heard a woman bidding a maiden drive the cattle into Depedale ; he followed forthwith.

“He found that the place was a marsh, exceeding dreadful, and far distant from every habitation of man. And turning himself to the south-east of the place, under the side of the mountain, he cut out for himself in the rock a very small dwelling, and an altar turned to the south which has been preserved to this day, and there, by day and night, he served God in hunger and thirst, and cold and nakedness.”

Now Ralph Fitz Geremund was hunting one day in his woods of Ockbrook. He caught sight of smoke ascending from the cave, and was indignant that anyone had dared to make himself a habitation. But seeing the miserable case of the man of God who was clad in rags and skins, the baron was smitten to the heart, and granted him the place, giving him also for his support the tithe of the mill of Burgh. Lacking water, the hermit wandered about near his abode until he found a spring, beside which he made a hut and built an oratory in honour of God and the Blessed Virgin. In almost unendurable solitude the hermit of Dale steadfastly carried out his resolve, until at length, “having finished the struggle of his life laudably in the service of God, he passed happily from the prison of his body to the Lord”.

Dale hermitage (Plate XV) is situated in a steep wooded hillside above the dale and its ruined abbey. The rock is overhung with beeches which seem to be embedded in the sandstone. The cave is about 20 feet long, 9 feet wide, and 9 feet high. Possibly it was originally of two compartments. It has a doorway and two other openings. The

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walls are much defaced, but there is a niche to the west. In an orchard at the foot of the hill a spring which never runs dry is still called “the hermit’s well.”

Robert of Knaresborough was a citizen of York. According to a fourteenth-century chronicle, his surname was Koke. Leland calls him “one Robert Flowr, sunne to one Robert Flowr, that had beene 2 tymes Mair of York”. Other authorities give his father’s name as Touke or Tok Flour, and his mother’s as Onnuryte, Simunina, or Sunniva.¹⁴ The pious youth became a lay brother of Newminster in Northumberland, but after a few months he sought stricter seclusion. Being doubtless well acquainted with Knaresborough (only eighteen miles from his home), he determined to join a certain knight, rich and famous, who, having fled from the lion-like wrath of Richard I, was living apart from men on the banks of the Nidd. The two men dwelt together in a cave ; but, after the king’s death, the fugitive warrior returned to the world :—

Langir lyked hym noght that lyffe
Bott als a wreche wentt to hys wyffe,

leaving the “soldier of Christ” alone.

The young solitary was befriended by a virtuous matron named Helena, who gave him the chapel of St. Hilda at Rudfarlington in Knaresborough forest.¹⁵ There he abode for a while, but when thieves broke into his hermitage, he moved on to Spofforth. Then, fearing lest the crowds which followed him should move him to vainglory, he accepted the invitation of the monks of Holy Trinity, York, to join some of their number at Hedley. The young zealot, clad in an old white garment, who would eat nought but barley bread and vegetable broth, was not a comfortable companion, and Robert, regarding his fellows as “fals and fekyll,” returned to St. Hilda’s. The noble dame was passing glad to see him, and provided a barn and other buildings for his use. William de Stuteville, Constable of Knaresborough, passing by, saw

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Plate XV : Dale Hermitage

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the dwelling, and when he heard that one Robert, a devoted servant of God, lived there, he cried : “This is a hypocrite and a companion of thieves!” and bade his men “dyng doune hys byggynges”. The homeless hermit took his book and fared through the forest to Knaresborough :—

To a chapel of syntt Gyle
Byfor whare he had wouned a whyll
That bygged was in tha buskes with in
A lytell holett : he hyed hym in.

But again the lord of Knaresborough went a-hunting, and when he was smoke rising from the hut, he swore that he would turn out the tenant. That night there “appered thre men blacker than Ynd,” who roused him [William] from his restless sleep. Two of them harrowed his sides with burning pikes, whilst the third, of huge stature, brandished two iron maces at his bedside : “Take one of these weapons and defend thy neck, for the wrongs with which thou spitest the man of God”. William cried for mercy and promised to amend his deeds, whereupon the vision vanished. Early in the morning the terrified tyrant hastened to the cell, and humbly sought pardon :—

Roberd forgaff and William kissed
And blythely with hys hand hym blyssed.

The penitent baron then bestowed upon Robert all the land between the rock and Grimbold Kyrkstane, besides horses and cattle.

William de Stuteville was succeeded by Brian de Lisle, who regarded the hermit as his faithful friend. It was he who besought King John to visit Robert (see p. 153). This visit resulted in the further endowment of the cell. John bade Robert ask what he willed, but he relied that he had enough, and needed no earthly thing. When Ive found that alms for the poor had not been asked, he persuaded his master to follow the king, from whom he received the grant of a carucate of land. This land was appropriated to the use of the poor, and Robert refused to pay tithe for it to the rector, to whom he indignantly granted “crysts cursyng” for his covetousness. Robert was “to pore men profytable”. He gathered alms for the needy, fed them at his door, and sheltered them in his cave. The complaint made by the angry baron that the

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hermit was a receiver of thieves had some truth in it. In the rhyming life, Robert speaks of the corn [grain] required for “my cayteyffes in my cave”. His favourite form of charity was to redeem men from prison :—

To begge an brynge pore men of baile,
This was hys purose principale

St. Robert died on the 24, September, 1218.¹⁶ He had been a benefactor to many, and great was the grief of the mourners. As he had foretold on his death-bed, the monks of Fountains sought to bear away his body, but Ive carried out his master’s wish to be buried in the chapel of the Holy Cross, where he had himself prepared a rock-hewn grave.

I wyll be doluen whar so I deghe
Beried my body thare sall ytt be
Wyth outen end here wyll I rest
Here my wounyng chese I fyrste
Here wyll I leynd here wyll I ly
In this place perpetuely.

The chroniclers call St. Robert's first hermitage "the chapel of St. Giles," describing it as a dwelling under the rock formed by winding branches over stakes in front of a cave. They relate how his brother Walter, who was mayor of York, thought this cavern and wattled hut no fitting habitation for him, and suggested that he should join some community. Robert replied : "This is my resting-place for ever : here will I dwell, for I have chosen it"—an answer which recalls the antiphon sung when a recluse was about to enter his life-long retreat. Walter therefore sent workmen from the city who laid the foundations of a chapel in honour of the Holy Cross, built of hewn stone. Evidently this chapel adjoined the cave, and replaced the humble oratory of St. Giles.

St. Robert's Cave is about a mile below the castle. On the north bank of the river is a low cliff about 20 feet in height. The descent is made by a narrow flight of steps, which ends in an uneven platform of rock about 40 feet in length of two levels, the upper one being the floor of the chapel, with traces of an altar at the eastern end (Plate XVI). Before the altar-steps is the tomb, deeply cut in the rock,

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CAVE AND TOMB OF ST. ROBERT, KNARESBOROUGH

PLATE XVI : Cave and Tomb of St. Robert, Knaresborough

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which had a groove for a slab to cover it.¹⁷ A mossy lichen-covered wall on the south shows the extent of the original building. On the north of the chapel (which now has a natural roof of beech and trailing greenery) is the picturesque ivy-clad cliff of a warm yellow and red tint. A low doorway gives access to the cave.¹⁸

After Robert's death, the cell was claimed as Crown property. A writ was issued (1219) to the Constable of Knaresborough to cause "our hermitage" to be given into the custody of Master Alexander de Dorset. The original grant was afterwards confirmed to Brother Ive, hermit of Holy Cross (1227).¹⁹ The chapel became a place of pilgrimage, and many miracles of healing were wrought there, especially about twenty years after the saint's death. "The same year (1238) shone forth the fame of St. Robert the hermit at Knaresborough, from whose tomb medicinal oil was brought forth abundantly." Matthew Paris, naming in 1250 the chief personages of the last half-century, mentions in particular St. Edmund of Pontigny, St. Robert of Knaresborough, and St. Elizabeth of Hungary.²⁰ The new priory (or "House of St. Robert") was granted to the Trinitarian Friars, and it was fitting that the "Order of the Holy Trinity for the Redemption of Captives" should become successors of the saint two had delighted in releasing men from prison.

The name Holy Cross or Holy Rood was superseded by that of the hermit. In 1257 Richard, Earl of Cornwall, confirmed to the Order the chapel of St. Robert. In the following century, letters of

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protection whilst collecting alms were granted by Edward III to a follower of the saint who was also his namesake and fellow-citizen, "Brother Robert of York, hermit of the chapel of St. Robert".

Henceforth St. Robert was "the peerless patrone of this place". Other chapels were built and dedicated to his memory. Nothing is known of the history of the chapel now called "St. Robert's," in the crag below the castle. The tiny building contains an altar (Plate XVII), piscine, niche, and seat, all carved out of the rock.²¹ Near the entrance is a figure with a drawn sword, the origin and meaning of which are alike unknown (Plate XVII). Leland alludes but briefly to this place : "A litle beneth March-Bridge . . . I saw an old Chapelle yn a Rok hewen owte of the mayne stone". There is no ground for believing that it was ever the habitation of St. Robert.

The rock hewn cells of Pontefract and of Bristol will be described in chapter VI. The history of St. Vincent's hermitage, Clifton (Plate XIX), is obscure. William Worcester describes it as situated in the dangerous rock called Ghyston Cliff. He speaks of "the hermitage with the church," and again of "the hermitage and chapel". The "hall" and "kitchen" must refer to the caverns, but it is possible that the chapel stood on a projecting ledge of limestone, now fallen. An Episcopal brief relating to it is preserved as a memorandum in the Episcopal register of Ely (1492). An indulgence is offered to such as should assist and relive Thomas Dene, warden of the chapel of St. Mary and St. Vincent, and should visit the chapel by way of pilgrimage or contribute to its preservation or the maintenances of lights and ornaments.²² The word "preservation" seems to suggest that the oratory had been constructed, not merely hewn out of the rock. Some support is given to this theory by the fact that an encaustic tile [a 6" yellow and brown floor tile, esp. 13th century] and the fragment of a small Gothic window have been found. It is evident that the chapel was the chief feature of the place. It was a landmark, for Worcester records the

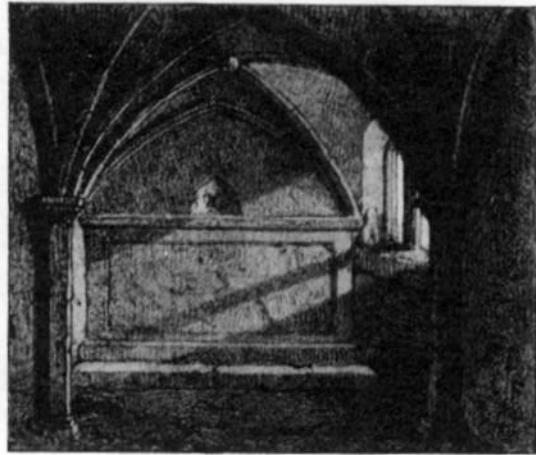
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ST. ROBERT'S CHAPEL, KNARESBOROUGH

Plate XVII : St. Robert's Chapel, Knaresborough

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WARKWORTH HERMITAGE

Plate XVIII : Warkworth Hermitage

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height from the chapel to the summit of the lofty cliff, and down to the water below. Measurements would hardly have been given to him in this form had the chapel been out of sight. Worcester was struck with its perilous position but even this steep wall was by no means inaccessible, and the indulgence, dated within twelve years of the famous traveller's visit in 1480, shows that Thomas Dene expected his chapel to be the resort of the faithful.

Warkworth hermitage (Plate XXXVII), overhung by trees, with its well defined architectural features, is a striking contrast to the rude caverns in the bare and precipitous rocks of the Avon gorge. It is pictured thus in the ballad *The Hermit of Warkworth* :—

Then scoop'd within the solid rock,
Three sacred vaults he shows ;
The chief a chapel, neatly arch'd,

On branching columns rose.

Up to the altar's ample breadth
Two easy steps ascend ;
And near, a glimmering solemn light
Two well-wrought windows lend.²³

The hermitage is approached from the riverside by a flight of steps (Plate XVIII). The chapel of the Holy Trinity is reached through a tiny vestibule, in which is a rood [wooden cross]. The chapel (about 20 feet long and 7½ feet high) is of three bays (see ground plan, Fig. 4). It contains an altar, piscina (A), quatrefoil window (H), and hagioscope [peephole between rooms with a view of the main altar] (J). These, with the shafts and capitals and the ribs of the roof are graven in the rock. In a recess to the south-east is a recumbent effigy, apparently that of a female, and above it a figure of a knight—monuments which suggested Bishop Percy's romantic ballad. The west wall is pierced with four lancet windows, beyond which is a small chamber, now open at the west end, having a window looking south upon the river. A long narrow chamber adjoins the principal chapel on the north and communicates with it by a doorway and by a fine Decorated window (Fig. 5). At the eastern end there is a small roughly-hewn oratory (C) containing traces of an altar, stoup (B), aumbry [cupboard] (D), and a hagioscope commanding [a view of] the altar in the adjoining chapel.

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Probably this narrow chamber was the original cell, entered from the west (I) by stone steps, some of which remain. It

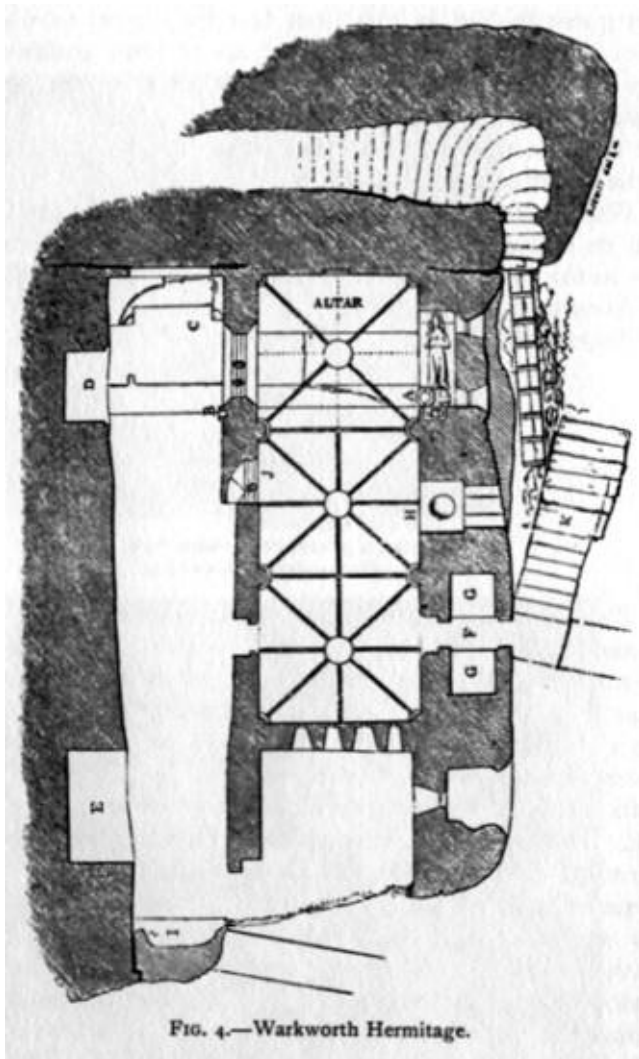


FIG. 4.—Warkworth Hermitage.

Illustration: Fig 4.—Warkworth Hermitage.

was perhaps the inmate's living room, and the recess (E) may have held a bed.

There are considerable remains of a later building erected at the south-west corner. These are probably the hall and

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kitchen mentioned in Stockdale's Survey of the Lands of the Percies (1586) :—

“There hath been in the said parke one house hewen and wrought in a cragg or rock of stone, called the Harmitage, having in the same a hall, kitchen, chamber, and chapell, with a little orchard and garden adjoining the same ; in which house hath been kept in times past an heremity or priest to doe and celebrate divine service.”

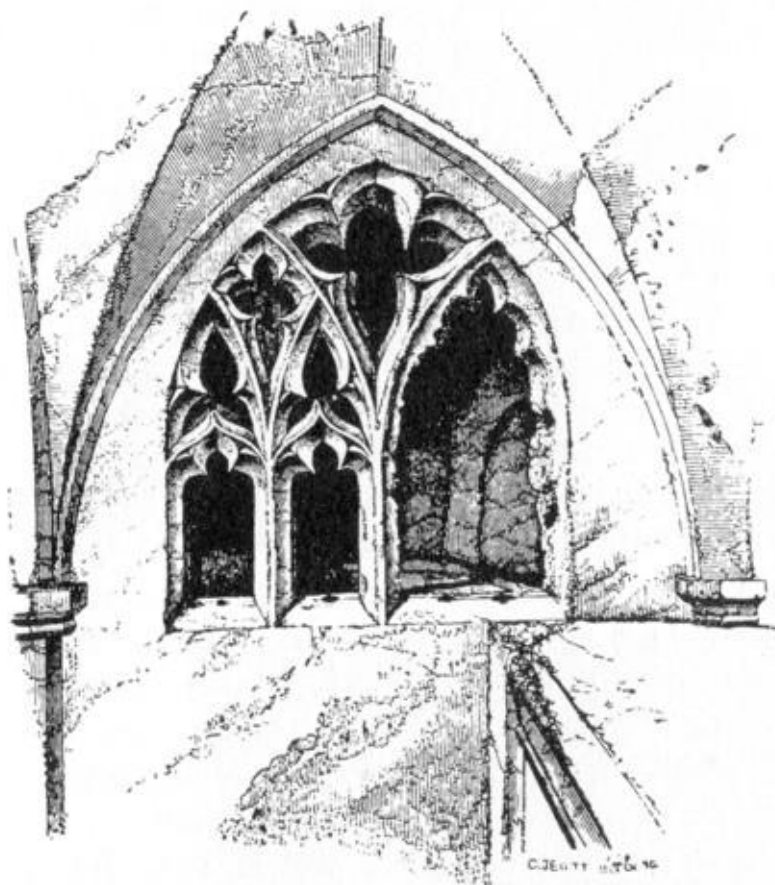


FIG. 5.—Window in Warkworth Hermitage.

Illustration: Fig 5.—Window in Warkworth Hermitage.

The garden above is reached by winding steps. The holes in a rock near by may be traces of a lean-to byre. The hermit was allowed pasturage for horses and cattle, and received twenty marks a year and twenty loads of firewood. Once a week he might net salmon, for he had the right to “one draught of fishe every Sondaie in the yere, to be drawn fornenst the said armytage, called the Trynete draught”. The hermit’s well is still shown.

Nothing is known of the foundation of Warkworth hermitage. The occupants were sometimes called “chaplains of the

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chantry” ; but in 1515 Edward Slegg is described as “hermit in the chapel of Holy Trinity”. In 1531 Henry, Earl of Northumberland, in consideration of the services of his chaplain Sir George Lancastre, appointed him to “myn armytage bilded in a rock of stone within my parke of Warkworth,” whilst he on his part should pray for the good estate of certain persons (see p. 190).

There was a dwelling not far from the church at Sneinton near Nottingham, excavated, probably in the low sandstone cliff by the Trent. A rental of 1544 notes : “There is a house under the ground in a rock of stone that some

time was called Hermitage” ; and again (1591) : “the Ermitage of Sneynton being a house cut out of rock and payeth yearly 2*s.*”. A later deed mentions “Hermitage Close on the top of the rock of the hermitage near Sneinton church”. It is not unlikely that some of the Rock Holes in Nottingham Park were occupied by hermits. Two monks used to minister in the chapel of St. Mary of the Rock under the castle.

There is a subterranean oratory cut in the chalk at Royston, the walls of which are carved with rude figures—a Crucifixion, St. Katharine, and St. Christopher. At Oxton, near Exeter, there is a “hermit’s cell” cut in the red rock. The chamber has a Gothic doorway, a lancet window, a niche, a ledge round the walls, and a kneeling-place with a cross carved above it. Other caverns remain which may have been the abode of recluses, although documentary evidence is wanting. On the banks of the Eamont, near Brougham, are the chambers hewn in the rock, mentioned by Leland ; and above the Eden at Wetheral are “St. Constantine’s Safeguards”. Another cave-dwelling is the “Holy Austin Rock” at Kinver Edge in Staffordshire. The “Hermit’s Hole” is shown in the midst of Culver Cliff in the Isle of Wight. Tradition says that the caves on the seashore at Buxsted and Hastings were once used as hermitages. A separate chapter must, however, now be devoted to some of the sea-coast solitaries.

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HERMITAGE IN GHYSTON CLIFF, CLIFTON



HERMITAGE IN GHYSTON CLIFF, CLIFTON

Plate

XIX:

Hermitage in Ghyson Cliff, Clifton.

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Footnotes ~

1. Camb. Univ. MS., VI, 17. f. 74 *b*, 75.
2. Compare Anchor Church House, Crowland, Nichols, *Leicestershire*, IV, Pt. I, p. 2.
3. Sir Matthew Joyce's pamphlet on "St. Hardulph" contains a facsimile of the page of black letter bound as a flyleaf into a volume of Lord Kenyon's library.

- [3. The square brackets in this poem are Clay's. *As part of her holy living, Modwen turned often to her simple book of the lives of the saints.* Also: lyuynge = living ; boke= book ; lyues = lives ; lytell = little.]
4. *Liber de Hyda* (Rolls, 45) 122-3 ; Dugd., *Warwickshire*, I. 273, 275 ; see also *Romance of Guy of Warwick* (E. E. Text S., 1875), 302-7.
 5. R. Carr, 1870, "Anglo-Saxon Epigraph" (Warwick Museum).
 6. B.M. Cotton. Vitell. E., xv., 186. per Rev. H. Salter.
 7. *Rows Roll*, ed. 1845, sect. 50 (John Rows was chantry priest at Guy's Cliffe ; he was aged in 1491. His *Vetustates Clivi Guidonici* perished by fire.) Dame Emma was instrumental in the appointment of Richard Beauchamp as Regent, see chapter XII.
 8. Dimensions 32 x 28 ft., or excluding ambulatory 23 x 12½ ft.
 9. Hubert Smith, *Shropshire Arch. Trans.* I.
 10. Peter of Blois, Continuation of Ingulph's Chron., ed Riley, 252-5.
 11. Fleete, *Hist. of Westminster* (ed. J. A. Robinson), 45, 46, from *Aelred's Life of St. Edward* (R. Twysden, Hist. Angl. Script. x., col. 382.)
 12. *La Estoire de S. Aedward*, Camb. Univ. MS. Ee. 59. See *Lives of Edward* (Rolls, 3), p.8 ; Kemble, *Cod. Dip.* IV. 175.
 13. Trans. by Mr. W. H. St. J. Hope.
 14. *Lanercost Chr.* (Bannatyne Club, 1839), 25-7 ; *Metrical Life* (Roxburghe Club) ; N. Roscarrock's *Life*, Camb. Univ. MS. C.Add. 3041, 377-9b.
 15. R. Stodley, Vita, B.M. Harl., 3775 f. 76 ; "ubi quondam uilla grandis que Rothferlington vocatur". Rudfarlington, once a large township, is now a farm. A field towards Crimble Beck is called Chapel Garth.
 16. 8 kal. Octobris, 1218, *Chr. Lanercost*, 25. The *Dict. Nat. Biog.* gives c. 1235, but Chart. R. 1227 grants land of Brother Robert "formerly hermit there" to Ive.
 17. The grave measures 6 ft. 5 in. and is from 14-21 in. broad ; at the bottom is a hole 15 x 6 in.
 18. The cave is 16 ft. 8 in. from east to west, and is about 8 ft. at its widest ; it is 5 ft. 10 in. high. At the N.E. corner is a recess 3 ft. 9 in. long. It is also known as "Eugene Aram's Cave," from the tragedy rendered famous by Lord Lytton and by Hood.
 19. The metrical Life affirms that Ive gave the place to Coverham Abbey by charter.
 20. *Chr. Maj.* (Rolls, 57) III. 521 ; iv. 378 ; 195.
 21. The chapel is not more than 12 ft. long, including a miniature apse about 3 ft. in which the altar stands ; it is 8 ft. wide. In the centre of the floor is a shallow cavity, 17 x 11 in.
 22. Reg. Alcock, f. 79-83.
 23. Percy, *Reliques*, III. 310.

-end chapter three-