

BROTHERS MINOR: LANCASHIRE'S LOST FRANCISCANS

INVESTIGATIONS AT PRESTON FRIARY, 1991 AND 2007

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Front cover: Preston, on Henry Teesdale's publication of Hennet's *Map of Lancashire* 1830 (with permission from Digital Archives Association); line illustration of Brunel Court tiles
Rear Cover: Excavating the north-west corner of the chapel (top); one of the medieval graves within the chapel (middle); the site facing south-east, with the external graves in the foreground and the chapel behind (bottom)

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Abbreviations

AMS	Accelerator Mass Spectrometry
CO	Cribra Orbitalia
CPR	Crude Prevalence Rate
f	Forma: intraspecific rank in plants below variety, the smallest taxonomic category
LA	Lancashire Archives
OA	Osteoarthritis
OS	Ordnance Survey
Perthes' disease	Legg-Calve-Perthes' disease
PRN	Primary Record Number within the Lancashire Historic Environment Record
SD	Spondylosis deformans
SN	Schmorl's nodes
TPR	True Prevalence Rate

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Summary

Preston, the administrative centre of modern Lancashire, was one of the most important medieval boroughs in the north-west of England. Increasing prosperity during the nineteenth century, however, meant that most of its early heritage was lost to redevelopment and, to date, it has yielded little archaeological evidence of its medieval past. However, in 1991 and 2007, development-led excavations just to the north-west of the historic town centre revealed significant medieval remains. Although badly damaged by later development, these included the foundations of a substantial stone building with evidence for several internal features. Evidence from associated finds, including painted window glass and line-impressed floor tiles, suggested that it was ecclesiastical in origin. The western part of the building was the best preserved, and excavation showed it to have accommodated at least four rows of east/west-aligned burials; several more were identified immediately outside the building, and two groups of cut features further to the east and west are probably the remnants of other graves, hinting at an extensive cemetery to the north of the building.

Analysis, funded by English Heritage (now Historic England), has allowed these truncated and fragmentary remains to be identified as the last remnant of Preston's Franciscan friary, which was founded on the outskirts of Preston in c 1260, and remained in use until it was closed in 1539, during the Dissolution of the Monasteries by Henry VIII. If the building was part of the friary church, then it is likely that the burials are those of wealthy patrons, who had been interred in a side chapel or transept, appended to its north side. This work has also allowed other, less coherent, structural evidence, identified in 1991, to be interpreted as elements of the church, parts of the cloister or claustral ranges, or perhaps service buildings, lying to the south, thus permitting the full size of the friary precinct to be better understood.

The well-preserved nature of many of the burials provided an unusual opportunity for scientific analysis, including radiocarbon dating of the human remains, dendrochronological dating of the coffins, and osteological analysis of the skeletons. Drawn together, these individual strands provided a rich picture of the lives and appearance of the friars and their patron families, throughout the life of the Friary.

Although no physical remains could be associated with the south range, cartographic and documentary evidence strongly suggest that, after the dissolution of the Friary, parts of it remained in use, first as a private house belonging to the Breres family, later (from c 1680 to 1789) used as a 'house of correction'. Much altered, it survived into the mid-nineteenth century, serving finally as part of the Canal Foundry, before being demolished, when its site was effectively lost.

Résumé

Preston, l'actuel centre administratif de la région du Lancashire moderne, était l'une des villes la plus importante du nord-ouest de l'Angleterre à l'époque médiévale. La prospérité croissante au XIX^e siècle eut toutefois pour conséquence la perte de la majeure partie de son patrimoine primitif au profit du réaménagement et, à ce jour, elle n'a apporté que peu de preuves archéologiques de son passé médiéval. Cependant, en 1991 et 2007, des fouilles menées lors de l'aménagement d'une aire située juste au nord-ouest du centre-ville historique, ont révélé d'importants vestiges médiévaux. Bien que gravement endommagés par les développements ultérieurs, ceux-ci comprenaient les fondations d'un important bâtiment en pierre ainsi que plusieurs éléments de décoration internes distincts. Ces éléments décoratifs proviennent de découvertes associées, comprenant des vitraux et des carreaux de sol imprimés, provenant probablement d'un bâtiment ecclésiastique. La partie ouest du bâtiment était la mieux conservée et les fouilles ont montré qu'elle avait hébergé au moins quatre rangées de sépultures alignées est / ouest ; plusieurs autres ont été identifiées immédiatement à l'extérieur du bâtiment, et deux groupes de vestiges archéologiques creusés en profondeur plus à l'est et à l'ouest sont vraisemblablement les restes de sépultures, suggérant un vaste cimetière au nord du bâtiment.

L'étude, financée par English Heritage (actuelle Historic England), a permis à ces restes tronqués et fragmentaires d'être identifiés comme le dernier vestige du couvent franciscain de Preston. Le couvent a été fondé à la périphérie de Preston en 1260, et est resté en usage jusqu'à ce qu'il soit fermé en 1539, lors de la dissolution des monastères par Henri VIII. Si le bâtiment faisait partie de l'église du couvent, il est probable que les sépultures soient celles de riches patrons, qui avaient été enterrés dans une chapelle latérale ou un transept, annexé à son côté nord. Ces travaux ont également permis d'interpréter d'autres éléments structurels moins cohérents, identifiés en 1991, comme des éléments de l'église, des parties du cloître ou des rangées claustrales, ou peut-être des bâtiments de service, situés au sud, ce qui permet de mieux comprendre le quartier du couvent.

La bonne conservation de bon nombre des sépultures a fourni une opportunité inhabituelle pour l'analyse scientifique, notamment la datation au radiocarbone des restes humains, la datation dendrochronologique des cercueils et l'analyse ostéologique des squelettes. L'ensemble de ces différents résultats ont fourni une image riche du quotidien et de l'apparence des moines, ainsi que de leurs familles patronnesses, au sein de la vie du couvent.

Malgré qu'aucun vestige physique ne puisse être associé à la partie sud, des preuves cartographiques et des preuves documentaires suggèrent fortement que, après la dissolution du couvent, certaines parties de celui-ci sont restées en usage, d'abord comme maison privée appartenant à la famille Breres, puis, plus tard (de 1666 à 1789) utilisée comme une «maison de correction». Bien qu'ayant subi d'importantes altérations, elle a néanmoins survécu jusqu'au milieu du XIX^{ème} siècle, devenant finalement partie intégrante de la fonderie du Canal, avant d'être démolie, lorsque son site a été effectivement abandonné.

Zusammenfassung

Die Stadt Preston, die heute der Verwaltungssitz der modernen Grafschaft Lancashire ist, war im Mittelalter eine der wichtigsten Stadtgemeinden in Nordwestengland. Im Verlaufe des 19. Jahrhunderts und mit zunehmendem industriellen Wohlstand verlor die Stadt jedoch fast all ihr mittelalterliches Erbe durch rigorosen Um- oder Neubau. Das führte letztendlich dazu, dass es bisher kaum archäologische Funde aus Prestons mittelalterlicher Stadtgeschichte gab. Das änderte sich mit den kommerziell durchgeführten Grabungsarbeiten in den Jahren 1991 und 2007, die wichtige Hinweise auf Prestons mittelalterlichen Stadtkern zu Tage brachten. Obwohl die architektonischen Überreste durch spätere Neubauten stark beschädigt worden waren, konnten die Archäologen die Fundamente eines beträchtlichen Steingebäudes nachweisen, welches außerdem Hinweise auf interne Mauern und andere Baumerkmale aufzeigte. Unter seinen Kleinfunden befanden sich Buntglasscherben und ornamentierte mittelalterliche Bodenfliesen, die auf eine kirchliche Nutzung des Gebäudes hinwiesen. Der westliche Teil des Gebäudes war am besten erhalten und die Grabungen ergaben, dass dieser Teil mindestens vier Reihen von Ost-West ausgerichteten Gräbern enthielt; weitere Gräber konnten direkt auf der anderen, der Aussen-, Seite des Gebäudes nachgewiesen werden. Zwei Gruppen von sehr tiefliegenden Schnitten östlich und westlich waren wahrscheinlich Überreste weiterer Gräber, welche auf das Vorhandensein eines ausgedehnten Friedhofes nördlich des Gebäudes deuteten.

Durch eine Analyse, die durch English Heritage (heute Historic England) gefördert wurde, konnten die Steinfundamente und diese durch moderne Bauarbeiten gestörten Befunde als die letzten Überreste von Prestons Franziskaner-Kloster identifiziert werden, welches in einem Außenbezirk Prestons in den Jahren um AD1260 gegründet und bis zu seiner Schliessung AD1539 im Rahmen der Klosterauflösungen unter Heinrich VIII von Mönchen bewohnt und genutzt worden war. Falls die gegrabenen Fundamente Teil der Klosterkirche waren, dann ist es sehr wahrscheinlich dass es sich bei den Gräbern im Inneren um diejenigen reicher Schirmherren und Geldspender handelte, welche in einer der sich an der Nordseite anschließenden Seitenkapelle oder dem Transept beerdigt worden waren. Die modernen Untersuchungen haben bei der Identifizierung und Deutung der Funde von 1991 enorm geholfen, und erlauben uns heute, die Fundamente als Teil der Kirche, des Kreuzgangs, des Claustrums, oder aber als Gebäude der Bediensteten zu verstehen, da sie südlich des Hauptgebäudes lagen. Durch die Analysen kann nun die Größe und Ausrichtung der gesamten Klosteranlage besser verstanden werden.

Viele der Bestattungen waren sehr gut erhalten und boten die seltene Gelegenheit, weitere wissenschaftliche Untersuchung durchzuführen, unter anderem die C14 Datierung der menschlichen Überreste, dendrochronologische Untersuchungen der Särge und Knochenanalysen der Skelette. Zusammengenommen ergaben all diese Analysen ein ungewöhnlich klares Bild vom Leben und Aussehen sowohl der hier lebenden Mönche als auch der Familien ihrer Gönner und Schutzherren durch die Jahrhunderte hinweg, in denen das Kloster Bestand hatte.

Obwohl keine Bauelemente der südlichen Klosteranlage geborgen werden konnten, wissen wir aus mittelalterlichen Urkunden und Landkarten, dass nach der Auflösung des Klosters ein Teil der Anlage weiterbenutzt wurde, erst als Privathaus der Familie Breres und später (von AD1680-1789) als „Bewährungshaus“ (engl. „House of Correction“, nach den Armutsgesetzen Elizabeths I von AD1601). Obwohl durch viele Umbauten verändert, überlebte das Gebäude bis in die Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts, als letztes als Gießerei am Kanal („Canal Foundry“ auf alten Karten), bevor es vollkommen demoliert wurde und die restlichen Überbleibsel der Klosterfundamente dem Erdboden gleichgemacht wurden.

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Many people contributed to the project, which was undertaken in three distinct stages. The first, the evaluation and watching brief undertaken in 1991 in association with the construction of the A59 Ringway, was undertaken by Patrick Tostevin, Deirdre Winstanley, and Peter Iles, all formerly of the Lancaster University Archaeological Unit (now Oxford Archaeology (OA) North). Those works were funded by Lancashire County Council.

The watching brief and subsequent rescue excavation, carried out by OA North at Brunel Court in 2007, was undertaken on behalf of BPS Developments, and particular gratitude is offered to Eric and David Mahoney. The excavation was directed by Richard Lee, with assistance from Alexander Beben, Caroline Bulcock, Vickie Bullock, Steve Clarke, Pascal Eloy, Joanne Hawkins, Pip Haworth, and Caroline Raynor.

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Extracts from the maps of Kuerden (Fig 5), Lang and Porter (Figs 2, 30), Lieutenant-General Carpenter and Major-General Wills (Fig 6), Shakeshaft, Baines, Myers (Fig 7), and the Ordnance Survey maps of 1849 (Figs 7, 34), and 1893 (Fig 4) were accessed from, and are used with the permission of, Lancashire Archives, Preston. Neil Spurr, of Digital Archives Association (<https://digitalarchives.co.uk>), kindly gave us permission to use an extract of Henry Teesdale's publication of Hennessey's *Map of Lancashire* 1830 for the cover image. Bill Shannon kindly provided the extract from the Buck Brothers' *Southern Prospect of Preston* (Pl 2), and Plate 15 was reproduced from Fishwick's *The History of the Parish of Preston in Amounderness in the County of Lancashire* (1900).



Figure 1: The location of the excavations (Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2017))

1

INTRODUCTION

Development in Preston in 1991 and 2007 provided a rare opportunity to investigate part of the medieval town that hitherto had not been subject to any substantial archaeological investigation. Both projects offered an opportunity to examine the putative site of Preston's Franciscan friary, the last vestiges of which had been destroyed in the nineteenth century, in the course of the construction of the Lancaster Canal and later railway. Both interventions were prompted by development: in 1991 by the creation of the A59 Ringway (Tostevin and Iles 1992), and in 2007 by the erection of an hotel, in what is now Brunel Court.

Location

Preston, a medieval town, and a city since 2002, has long been one of the most important settlements in Lancashire, and is now the administrative centre of the modern county (Fig 1). Its historic centre overlooks the north bank of the River Ribble, which, rising at Ribbleshead in North Yorkshire, flows into the Irish Sea at Lytham, some 12 miles (19.3 km) to the west of Preston. The city stands within one of the river's lowest meanders, being, together with Penwortham on the south bank, at the lowest bridging point on the natural main communication corridor along the western edge of the Pennines (Clemesha 1912, 1-2; Lancashire County Council (LCC) and Egerton Lea 2006). These

two settlements lie close to the upper limit of tidal influence, and, immediately to their west, the Ribble estuary opens out, separating the coastal wetlands of south-west Lancashire from those of the Fylde, to the north (Middleton *et al* 2013; 1995).

Most of the lower Ribble Valley lies on Permian and Triassic sandstone (Old and New Red Sandstone; British Geological Survey (BGS) 1979; 2008), overlain by boulder clays and glacial moraine, and masked, in the Ribble Valley, by alluvium. Preston itself occupies a low plateau of glacial sand and gravel (Clemesha 1912; Lawes Agricultural Trust 1983). The city is now within a generally mixed agricultural landscape, with the fertile Lancashire Plain to the north, stretching *c* 20 miles (32.2 km), as far as Lancaster. The Fylde, to the north-west of Preston, is today a low-lying, and generally flat, agricultural landscape, although as late as the eighteenth century it was largely wetland (Middleton *et al* 1995). Small-scale drainage of the area had begun in the Middle Ages, growing considerably in scope from the eighteenth century onwards, and ultimately the Fylde peatlands became some of the better arable land in the region (Cunliffe Shaw 1956, 296) or served as rich pasture.

The putative site of Preston's Franciscan friary (centred on NGR SD 5310 2990) forms a discrete area within the town (Pl 1), bounded to the east and west by Ladywell Street and the railway respectively, to the south by the



Plate 1: Aerial view of modern Preston, with Fishergate/Church Street and Friargate (in white), Marsh Lane and Ladywell Street (in blue), and the excavation area (in orange) highlighted (Imagery © 2017 Google; Map data © 2017 Google)