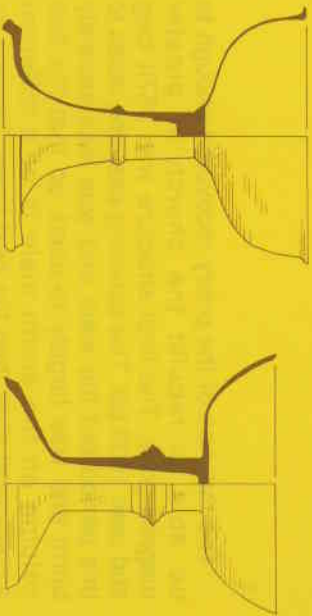


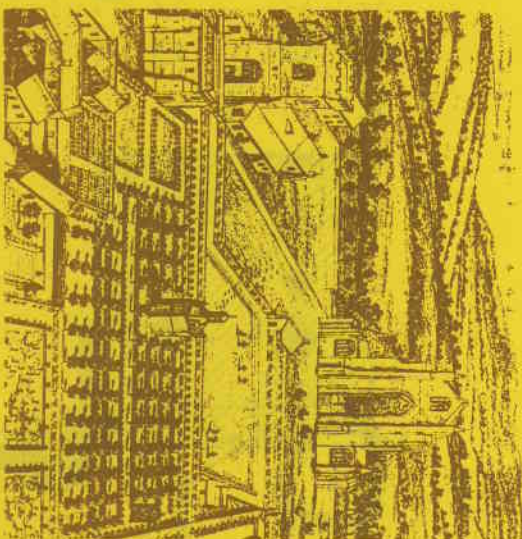
Rock crystal pendant

The reconstruction of a major medieval church would take several generations and the task was not completed until the end of the fourteenth century. The cloister was probably also rebuilt at this time, but the financial strain exhausted the priory and no major re-constructions were attempted.

Little is known of the other buildings of the priory which were to the south of the church. The dovecot was added in the sixteenth century. At the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1540, Gisborough Priory had two gatehouses and a large guest house. It was the fourth richest in Yorkshire and the Prior kept a "most pompous house" upon which depended 500 households.



Pewter Chalices from the priest burials



Old Gisborough Hall and Priory in 1708

In 1550 the priory grounds were sold to Thomas Chaloner, who incorporated the standing stonework into ornamental gardens for his new mansion on Bow Street, since demolished. The magnificent east window was left as a romantic ruin.

If you would like further information please contact:



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GISBOROUGH PRIORY



Augustinian Canons

In 1119 A.D. Robert de Brus founded and lavishly endowed a priory for Augustinian canons at Gisborough. This monastery became one of the most powerful in Yorkshire and dominated the life and fortune of both the town and the surrounding countryside throughout the Middle Ages.

In 1985 and 86, Cleveland County Archaeology Section excavated the west end of the nave as part of a programme of consolidation and repair of the whole monument funded by English Heritage.

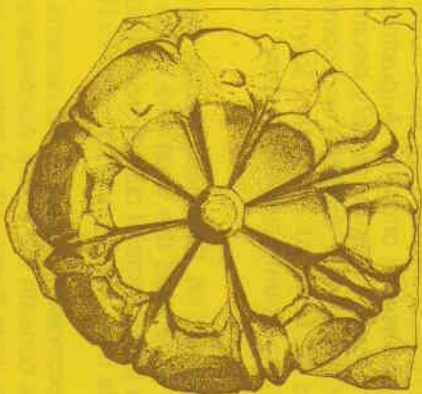
The excavations revealed the remains of Saxon buildings beneath the Priory. Accompanying these buildings were fragments of pottery, a coin and a glass bead. The buildings had been abandoned and the site was ploughed.

The Norman Church was narrower and shorter than its successors and the only part visible today is the gatehouse with arches for both pedestrian and wheeled traffic.

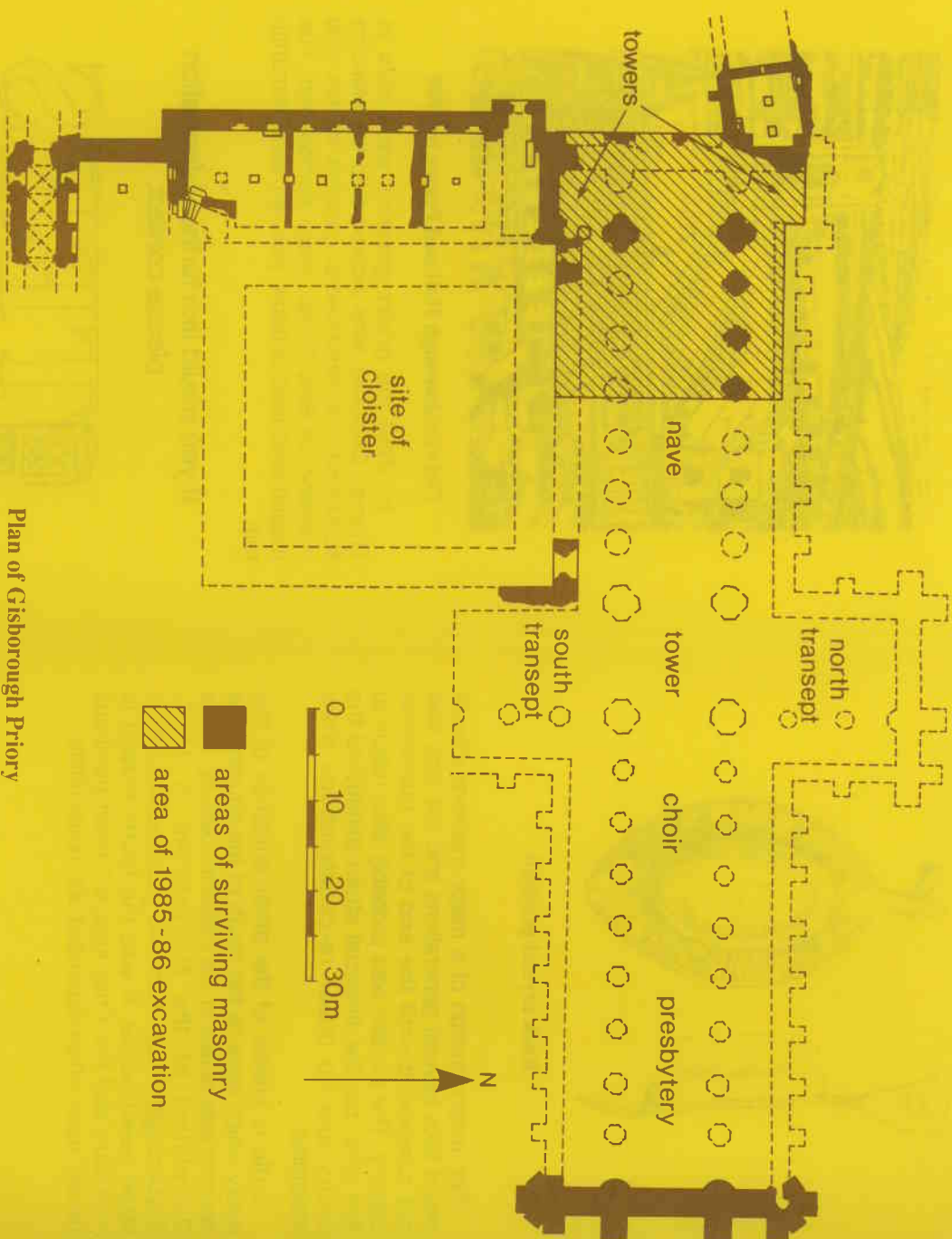
Around 1200 AD, the priory was able to rebuild the church on a much larger scale. The west end had twin towers flanking a large double doorway. The aisles were floored with coloured tiles in geometric designs while the columns of the arcade stood on sandstone paving. The north aisle was divided into a series of small alcoves or private chapels and these often contained burials.

A number of burials were found and included at least two priests, buried in stone coffins with carved lids and accompanied by a chalice and patten. There was also a bell-founding pit at the west end of the nave. This would allow the bell to be cast on site and hoisted out of the mould straight up into the belfry.

A stone lined well, 22ft deep may have been built to safeguard the water supply during the Scottish Wars when the Prior was given permission to build a defensive wall around the monastery. The priory also served as a refuge for Augustinians from the northern houses at this time.



Carved stone from the Priory



Plan of Gisborough Priory

Disaster overtook the community on the 16th of May 1286 AD when the church was completely destroyed by fire. Walter Hemmingford, a canon at the monastery, has left an account of the accident which was caused by a workman "of wicked disposition" who was repairing the roof lead. The fire consumed all of the priory's books, plate and vestments. Red scorch marks from the blaze can be seen on the paving between the pillars.

The fortunes of the priory recovered enough to be able to rebuild the church in greater magnificence. The final structure was 367ft long and over 100ft tall. The surviving east end dates to this period but the west end was less severely burnt and was largely re-used, so that the first column on the south aisle is of a different architectural style than the next three. Designs for the decorative columns were scratched into the surface of the paving.