

## AN INTRODUCTION TO THE RELIGIOUS HOUSES OF CUMBRIA

In Furness, (Lancashire north of the sands), no religious house arose in the poor and remote districts which in the twelfth century became the county of Lancaster, until nearly thirty years after the Norman Conquest.

Of the three Cistercian houses Furness was the earliest, having been founded at Tulketh near Preston in 1124, and removed to Furness in 1127; There were two houses of Austin Canons; the priory of Conishead was founded (at first as a hospital) before 1181, the priory of Cartmel about 1190. Furness and Cartmel, exercised feudal lordship over wide tracts of country. Furness naturally resented the foundation of Conishead so close to itself, and on land under its own lordship, but the quarrel was soon composed.

In Cumberland, within a comparatively small area, six monastic foundations carried on their work with varying success for almost four centuries. Four of these houses were close to the border, and suffered much during the long period of hostility between the two kingdoms. The priories of Carlisle and Lanercost, separated only by some 10 miles, were of the Augustinian order; the abbeys of Holmcultram and Calder, between which there seems to have been little communication, were of the Cistercian; and the priories of Wetheral and St. Bees were cells of the great Benedictine abbey of St. Mary, York

Detailed accounts of all the monastic houses in the former counties of Cumberland and Lancashire appeared in the introductory volumes of the original Victoria County Histories of the two counties, published in 1905 and 1908 respectively. These can be accessed below. No volume for Westmorland was published.

[Houses of Austin Canons: The Priory of Carlisle](#)

[Houses of Austin canons: The priory of Lanercost](#)

[Houses of Austin canons: The priory of Cartmel](#)

[Houses of Austin canons: The priory of Conishead](#)

[Houses of Cistercian monks: The abbey of Holmcultram](#)

[Houses of Cistercian monks: The abbey of Calder](#)

[Houses of Benedictine monks: The priory of St Bees](#)

[Houses of Benedictine monks: The priory of Wetheral](#)

[Houses of Benedictine nuns: The nunnery of Armathwaite](#)

[Houses of Benedictine nuns: The nunnery of Seton or Lekeley](#)

[The friaries: Carlisle, Penrith and Appleby](#)

[Hospitals: St Nicholas, Carlisle](#)

[Hospitals: St Sepulchre, Carlisle](#)

[Hospitals: Wigton, Bewcastle, Caldbeck and Keswick](#)

[Colleges: Greystoke](#)

[Colleges: Kirkoswald](#)

Monks: [Dacre Abbey](#)

*founded* before 731;*destroyed* c.875 by Vikings; *refounded* before 926;  
Parish Church of St Andrew *built* to the south of the site.

An [article in Wikipedia](#) gives a schedule of places, including possible sites in Westmoreland with some elements of their history and with extensive source references.

Gilbertine Canons: [Ravenstonedale Priory](#)

*founded* before c.1200;*dissolved* 1539(?); [Parish Church of St Oswald](#)  
*built* immediately to the south of the site

Premonstratensian Canons: [Shap Abbey](#)

*daughter* of Cockersand;(community *founded* at Preston Patrick before 1192(?)); *transferred* 1201 (1199), *built* (during the reign of Henry II) by Thomas Fitz Gospatrick; *dissolved* 1540; *granted* to Thomas Lord Wharton 1544/5

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