

Eating, drinking AND carousing SINCE THE 13th century

With its origins dating back to 1239, and a long and turbulent history, Blackfriars is the cornerstone of Newcastle's medieval past.



BLACKFRIARS



THE BLACK FRIARS

Dominican friars were sent around the known world to establish their religious order and arrived in the UK in 1221 where they set about building friaries in major cities. They settled in Newcastle in 1239.

The friars adopted a life of poverty and were supported enthusiastically by the local people. The site where Blackfriars now stands was donated by three anonymous sisters and the first Mayor of Newcastle, Sir Peter Scot, who raised funds to build their first shelter. Offers of more land came in and they were soon established with money from local people and grants from King Henry III.

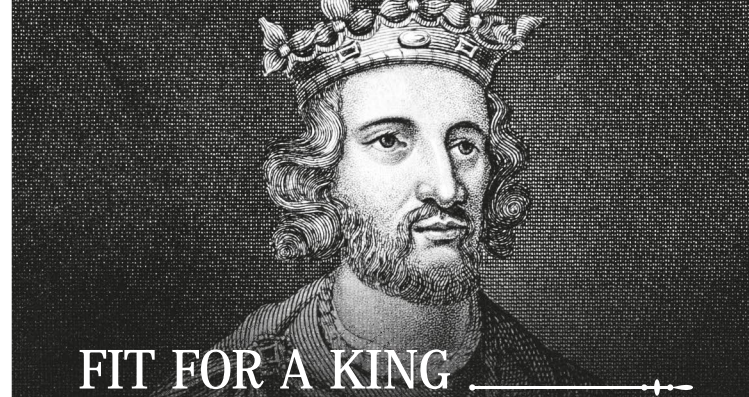
They wore white tunics and black cloaks, which gave rise to their name, Black Friars. They were also known as 'Shod friars' because they wore shoes.

The story goes that the Dominicans gave Newcastle United its idea of wearing black and white!

The friars lived and worked in relative harmony over the next 300 years. They kept themselves busy preaching and helping the needy and their extensive garden, which extended right up to the church, supplied the necessary herbs and potions for their infirmary.

Their meals would often include pottage, a thick soup of meat, vegetables, grain and herbs, and they were allocated up to eight pints of weak ale a day.

They had an extensive library, many of the books being written and illuminated by the friars themselves.



FIT FOR A KING

As there was no suitable accommodation for royalty in the city, King Henry III (reigned 1216-1272) spent a lot of time at the friary during his efforts to fight the Scots. A right rousing time is recorded at times where he made good the damage that was caused by his retinue.

In 1334, the friary was also the celebrated venue used by King Edward III (reigned 1327-1377) to receive royal Scot, Edward Balliol. The King is also recorded as staying at the friary on Christmas Day in 1335.



DISSOLUTION

King Henry VIII (reigned 1509-1547) had numerous disagreements with the Pope and during the Reformation, he removed control of the English church to himself. One result was that Henry ordered that all monasteries and friaries should be closed and their wealth confiscated. This ruthless programme started in 1536 and the Dominicans had to leave.

The church was completely stripped and fell into disrepair. You can see the remains of the church within the grounds of Blackfriars.



CRAFTS GUILDS

In 1552, the buildings were purchased by the Mayor and Burgesses of the town and they were granted to the most ancient 'trades and mysteries' – the bakers, butchers, brewers, cordwainers, fullers, dyers, saddlers, skinnners, glovers, smiths, tanners and tailors. The Crafts Guilds preserved the friary over the next four centuries and parts of the buildings were also used as almshouses to help families in need.



DECLINE & RESTORATION

Blackfriars suffered a period of significant decline from the mid-1900s. Much of the roof and ceiling fell down, leaving just the outer walls and gable ends still standing.

Newcastle City Council restored the buildings throughout the 1970s, and in 1980, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother visited Blackfriars to unveil a commemorative plaque marking the restoration of the complex.

TODAY.

In 2001, a lease for the former refectory was granted by Newcastle City Council to Andy and Sam Hook who have transformed it to become one of the most recognised restaurants in Newcastle.

The 85-seat restaurant is believed to be the oldest purpose-built dining room in the UK and has won many awards including Taste of England, thanks to its local, seasonal and gutsy menu.

Over the years the team has renovated other buildings at the friary including the former guest hall where medieval kings were entertained. The Banquet Hall can now be hired for private parties, corporate events, weddings and medieval banquets.

Above the restaurant is a large Cookery School which hosts hundreds of cookery classes every year from bread making to children's cookery, as well as a Tasting Room where guests can enjoy wine, beer, whisky and gin tastings. The former dormitory used by the friars is also a meeting room.



Blackfriars

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History tours are available at Blackfriars upon request.

For more information about Blackfriars' rich heritage, please contact info@blackfriarsrestaurant.co.uk



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