St Robert in his time

A report from the academic workshop held in Knaresborough on the 14th July 2018 as part of the 800th anniversary celebrations of the death of St Robert

The material in this document reflects contributions made to the academic workshop on 14th July as outlined below:

Hazel Blair, Doctoral researcher, University of Lausanne: *'The Many Lives of St Robert of Knaresborough'.*

Hazel led an interactive session in which she talked about different versions of Robert's story and some of their most interesting features, including a short 'medieval manuscripts exercise'.

Dr Ruth Salter, Lecturer in History, University of Reading: *'St Robert in Context: Holy Healing in the High Middle Ages'.*

In her talk Ruth addressed points relating to posthumous miracles and those who sought out miraculous cures during the 12th and 13th Centuries. She talked about Robert and considered the broader topic of miraculous cure-seeking and pilgrimage at this time, including the types of primary materials available to us today.

Dr Laura Slater, Fulford Junior Research Fellow, Somerville College, University of Oxford: *'St Robert and the Holy Land'.*

Laura discussed how the devotional lives of hermits and recluses such as St Robert connected with the Holy Land in the Middle Ages. She explored the particular dangers, attractions of and alternatives to pilgrimage to the city of Jerusalem, she suggested that St Robert may have recreated some of the Christian holy places in his own chapel at Knaresborough.

Prof Lindy Grant, University of Reading: *'St Robert's contemporaries: charismatic preachers and hermits around 1200'*

In the years around 1200, many people were worried that the end of the world, the Apocalypse, was very close. Partly because of this, there was a rash of charismatic preachers and hermits, like St Robert, across Europe. Lindy talked about some of the more colourful of them, including Sts John de Matha and Felix of Valois, the founders of the Trinitarian Order for the Redemption of Captives. The Trinitarian Priory at Knaresborough was an important member of this order, and was the site of the burial of St Robert's body and the focus of pilgrimage to St Robert's shrine.

The Many Lives of St Robert of Knaresborough

A blog by Hazel Blair, Doctoral Researcher, University of Lausanne

The word 'medieval' is often used pejoratively, synonymised with 'the Dark Ages' to denote a simple, long-ago era of cultural and intellectual backwardness and extreme violence. But what we now call 'the Middle Ages' or 'the medieval period' lasted for over 1,000 years; from – roughly – the break-up of the Roman Empire in the 5th century, to the birth of Henry VIII at the end of the 15th. And this historical millennium was one of immense creativity and diverse literary output.

Despite the ravages of time, numerous medieval chronicles, letters, poems, and prose narratives survive in a variety of now-forgotten languages, preserved in the leaves of hand-made medieval manuscript books held in air-tight conditions in libraries across the world.

Saints, stories, and saints' lives

My session at *St Robert in His Time*, titled 'Celebrating Saints in the Middle Ages: Robert of Knaresborough in Medieval Manuscripts', was about medieval stories – stories about St Robert of Knaresborough (*c*. 1160-1218).

Over the course of the hour, we examined one genre of medieval writing: narratives written to celebrate the holy deeds and miracles of individual saints – texts known as "saints' lives", or, more formally, "hagiographies" (from the ancient Greek *hágios*, meaning 'holy', and -*graphia*, 'writing').

Hagiography was one of the most popular literary genres of the Middle Ages, the earliest 'lives' being those of the early Christian martyrs (such as St Polycarp) who were persecuted and killed for their faith during Christianity's first few centuries. The dead bodies of these defenders of Christ were thought to be imbued with miraculous powers and were carefully guarded and cared for by other Christians.

As Christianity became better established, new saints were celebrated by the Christian faithful: holy men and women whose way of living was considered virtuous and devout in the extreme. Among the earliest of these non-martyred saints were 'the desert fathers': monks and hermits spent their time there in extreme poverty, starving themselves, harming their own flesh, wearing uncomfortable clothing, and depriving themselves of sleep. Through the practice of this self-inflicted suffering for God, called 'asceticism', these early Christians,

through their lives of severe simplicity, were thought to have reached a higher spiritual state, having become closer to God in their imitation of Christ's suffering.

One of the most famous of these ascetic saints, was the 4th-century desert father St Anthony of Egypt. When he was just 18, Anthony was in church and heard a reading from the Gospel of Matthew where Jesus says: 'If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have the treasures of heaven'. Anthony's wealthy parents died around the time he heard these words, and upon inheriting their money and property he decided to follow Jesus's advice, selling the family's lands and donating the money he made to the poor. Anthony then fled society, and started living in the desert, spending whole nights in prayer and fasting.

'The Literature of Sanctity'

Stories of extreme Christian virtue like Anthony's remained popular all through the Middle Ages, and the text describing Antony's life was one of the best-known literary works in the whole of the medieval Christian world. It was continuously retold over the centuries and would have been talked about in churches during Robert's lifetime.

Robert himself, one of his hagiographers reports, was a keen consumer of this 'literature of sanctity' (a phrase coined by medieval historian Robert Bartlett). According to one early Latin prose text, while educating his companion Ivo, 'Robert set before him many examples from (the lives of) the saints'. The same text also states that Robert was fond of visiting churches and monasteries, where tales of saintly asceticism would not have been hard to come by.

It certainly seems as though Robert's own way of life was modelled upon the lifestyles of the early Christian hermits, and, when you spot them, the parallels between the lives of Anthony in the 4th century and Robert 800 years later, are really quite striking.

Like Anthony, who left all his worldly possessions and the society he was once part of, Robert left his family in York and went out in search of a life of solitude, so he could devote himself to God. Like Anthony who shut himself up in the side of a mountain, Robert lived in a cave. Like Anthony, Robert ate a diet of bread and water and other simple things, and like Anthony Robert slept on the ground. Just as Anthony fought against demons in his cave, demons who deviously tried to distract him from his prayers, so too did Robert. And, like Anthony and many other saints, Robert had supernatural healing powers; he was so

spiritually pure that he was able to channel God's grace so that it might reach and positively impact others.

Although Robert lived almost 800 years *after* Anthony, the same length of time that separates Robert from us today, key aspects of Robert's holiness and his way of life as a hermit were inspired by and part of a long tradition of Christian sanctity based around self-deprivation and a rejection of the world as a way to develop spiritually.

St Robert of Knaresborough: the medieval stories

So, Robert was a consumer of saints' lives, but he himself was also a subject of hagiographical writing. His holy life of ascetic solitude and care for the poor inspired no fewer than four hagiographers to put pen to parchment to celebrate his sanctity in the years following his death in 1218. Still surviving are two lives of Robert in Latin prose (both composed in the 13th century), one in Middle English rhyming couplets (composed in the late 14th or early 15th century), and one in Latin verse (currently undated).

Each of these narratives tell the story of Robert's life. But each was authored by a different person at a different stage in medieval history, and although all the hagiographies share lots of similarities in what they tell us about Robert, they also differ markedly from one another; each is a unique literary creation with its own individual emphases and literary style.

For the purposes of my session, we focused on three of these medieval texts: the two Latin prose lives and Middle English poetical life. Selected excerpts from each were provided in translation and distributed to the audience, who were divided into three groups.

Together, we discussed how the earliest text detailing Robert's life portrays Knaresborough, rather inauthentically, as 'a place of horror and vast solitude'. Audience members pointed out that there was a castle and thriving town at Knaresborough in the Middle Ages, and that this was a rather unusual phrase to pick to describe the area.

Reading this early life of Robert alongside some other medieval texts using similar phrases, however, we discussed Tom Licence's suggestion that this text may have been composed by a member of the Cistercian Order, perhaps from the nearby monastery of Fountains (the Cistercians were founded in France in 1098 but had houses throughout medieval Europe). One of the key aspects of medieval Cistercian monasteries was that they were built far from the madding crowd, away from towns and cities. A narrative detailing the foundation of one of earliest Cistercian houses at Clairvaux, near Dijon in France, for example, describes the

monastery being built in ‘a place of horror and vast solitude’ and the same phrase can be found in lots of medieval Cistercian writing.

Once we’d recognised the phrase as a ‘Cistercian slogan’, rather than a literal description of Knaresborough, we were able to discuss the possibility that the text was trying to imply a spiritual connection between St Robert and the Cistercian Order, by choosing very specific Cistercian language to portray his sanctity.

We then turned to a discussion of the second 13th-century Latin life of Robert, the *Life of St Robert by Knaresborough*. This text, as Joshua Easterling has emphasised, was critical in successfully establishing Robert as patron saint of Knaresborough Priory, which was run by the Trinitarians. The Order of the Holy Trinity for the Redemption of Captives was founded in 1198, and, like the Cistercians, they started in France and later spread throughout Europe. Their founding purpose was to ransom Christians taken captive in the Holy Land during the crusades, but they were also an Order dedicated to living in poverty and to helping the poor.

For the excerpts distributed among the audience, I picked those parts of the narrative that emphasised Robert's devotion to the Trinity, and those parts where the hagiographer referred to him as 'our patron'. We discussed how these aspects of the text implied spiritual connection between Robert and the Trinitarians at Knaresborough. We also talked about how this text sought to distance Robert from the Cistercians, by including an episode in which monks from Fountains Abbey attempted to steal Robert’s holy corpse against the saint’s will.

It was, and still is, of course a huge spiritual honour to host the holy remains of a saint. The caretakers of such remains – the saint’s relics – had to make sure the powerful bodies of the saintly dead were treated respectfully and solemnly remembered. It was also the shrine-keeper’s duty to manage the crowds of pilgrims who would come to visit the holy tomb. And on a practical level, a flourishing shrine could also bring income to a church or monastery, money that could be spent in accordance with the institution’s Christian commitments. Cistercian-Trinitarian competition over Robert’s body, legacy, and cult, then, might account for the existence of two similar, but subtly distinct Latin prose versions of Robert’s life from the 13th century.

The Fountains monks, the early Trinitarian life tells us, went home empty handed and Robert was buried in his riverside cave-chapel in Knaresborough. Around a century later, however, the Trinitarian Order produced a new text about St Robert, around the late 14th or early 15th centuries. And this time, the text was in English.

Written as a poem, in alliterative rhyming couplets, the Middle English life of St Robert is one of many saints' legends that was translated into the English vernacular in the late medieval period. Using language that casts Robert's sanctity in heroic, knightly terms, we discussed how this later text flirts with the genre of medieval romance, telling Robert's life story as if it were a medieval adventure tale about the quest of a chivalrous knight (I discussed the connections between this text and the genre of romance in much more detail at the 2018 Medieval Insular Romance Conference in Cardiff).

In the Middle English text, Robert is listed alongside heroes of secular literature, favourably compared with battle-hardened warriors such as 'Arthur, Hector, and Achilles.' Instead of rescuing a lady, slaying a monster and living happily ever after, however, Robert helps the poor, defeats the devil, and offers his soul to God so that he might live in eternal bliss by Christ's side. Robert is still the hermit we all know and love, but through clever use of language and metaphor, the author of the Middle English version of his life makes Robert into a 'holy hero': a hero who always chooses the spiritual over the mundane, who reaches his goal of eternal divine bliss after many setbacks and tribulations.

Conclusion

This session was about getting to know Robert better. Not just as a medieval saint but also as a powerful figure who inspired medieval men to write about him, a holy man who prompted his devotees to share his life story across space and time. It is important to recognise the work of the medieval hagiographers who recorded and preserved Robert's sanctity in literary form – without them we wouldn't know very much at all.

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Hazel's research on the cult of St Robert of Knaresborough is funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation as part of a larger project on northern sanctity at the University of

Lausanne, titled 'Region and Nation in Late Medieval Devotion to Northern English Saints.' This project is led by Professor Denis Renevey with Professor Christiania Whitehead as Senior Researcher. Hazel's thesis is titled 'The Cult of St Robert of Knaresborough and the Trinitarian Order in Medieval England'. For more information about Hazel's thesis, the wider research project, and the research team, please visit: https://wp.unil.ch/regionandnation/. For more of Hazel's reflections on St Robert in His Time, see the SNSF project blog, here.

Further reading

Bartlett, Robert, *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things?* (Princeton, 2013)

Bottomley, Frank (trans.), *St Robert of Knaresborough* (Ilkley, 1993)

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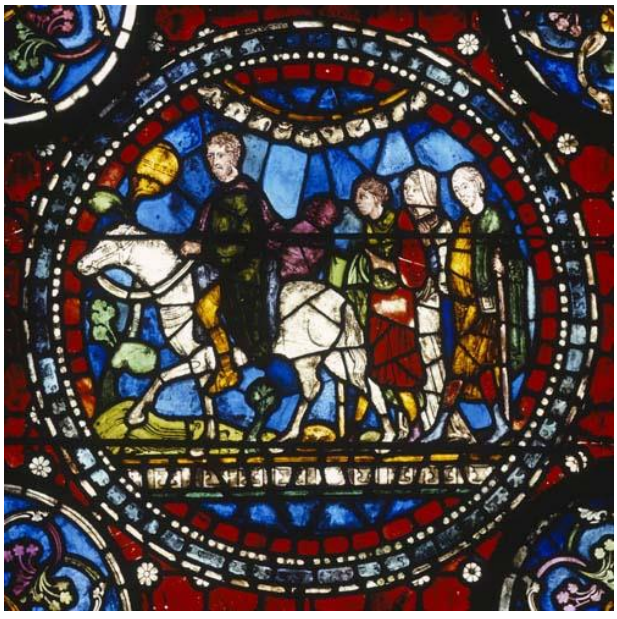
St Robert of Knaresborough in Context: Holy Healing in the High Middle Ages

by Dr Ruth J. Salter

Saints cults were an integral part of medieval Christianity. Through their connections to God and their continued presence on Earth (through relics, shrines and tombs), saints were believed to be capable of crossing the threshold between the terrestrial and celestial worlds. This transitory nature allowed saints to act as intercessors between the faithful and God and thus, through the saints, the miraculous could be manifest.

While there was a great variety in the types of saints – from the big, universal saints to those more locally celebrated – and although cult popularity could wax and wane over time, at the heart of all these cults was the connection made (via the saints) between the mundane, earthly world and the divine. St Robert of Knaresborough, then, was part of a broad pantheon of saintly figures who populated the medieval world and to whom devotional journeys, or pilgrimages, were made.



Stained glass depicting pilgrims making their way to St Thomas Becket's shrine at Canterbury Cathedral (13th century with 19th century restorations), Sonia Halliday Photo Library

Through his life, Robert's actions had shown him to be a deeply pious man and, on his death, this led to his being recognised as a saint. Robert became a figure of great importance, particularly to those who resided in or close to Knaresborough; and his tomb and hermit's cave became a pilgrimage destination. However, although we know a little of Robert the hermit of Knaresborough, and his establishment of the hermitage on the outskirts of Knaresborough, much less is known about the cult that developed following his death in 1218. One small feature we do know of though is that among the pilgrims who came to his tomb were those who sought out miraculous healing.

The later, fifteenth-century work *The Metrical Life of St Robert of Knaresborough*, written in Middle English, provides a reference to the various miraculous cures that St Robert was believed to have performed for the devoted cure-seekers who sought his aid:

> All þat was seke [*sick*] and to hym sought,
> Be þat thai yode, þaim ayled noght.
> Crased and crooked [*infirm and disabled*], bath deiff and dome [*deaf and dumb/mute*],
> War cured þat to hys tombe wald comme.
> Þe halt [*haltering/limping*] was heled, the lame [*lame*] was lyght,
> Blyned and bysen [*blind and blind/purblind*] hadde þair sight,
> Men of menbirs þat war mayned [*limbs maimed by war*]
> Was saued full sound when þai wer sayned;
> Obcessed off fend [*possessed by demons*] he gart them flytte,
> Wytles and wod [*witless and mad*] won in þair wytt;
> Lunatykes [*lunatics*] and frenesyse [*frenzied*]
> Thrugh hys might ware mayd full wyse;
> Baran [*barren*] bare hir childe belyffe
> And some ware rased fra ded [*raised from dead*] to lyffe
> And, to conclude þaim all in fere,
> All þat hurtt [*all that hurt*] hadde any here,
> Or any sekenes [*any sickness*], all were saued
> Thayr hele because þai of him craued.
> *The Metrical Life of St Robert of Knaresborough*, lines 971-88

The *Metrical Life* does not give us accounts of individual cure-seeking experiences, but it does record a diverse range of afflictions cured through the hermit's saintly merits. What we can see from this vast range of ailments is that St Robert was not a 'specialist', rather he was seen to be able to assist with anything and everything that came his way. Likewise, *Metrical Life* emphasised that all levels of society respected and revered Robert. 'Mane and wyff of all degree, Pore and rych… [and] men of religyone' [*Metrical Life*, lines 960-62] were present at his funeral, and a similar range of people would likely have made a pilgrimage to St Robert's shrine. These features place Robert's posthumous cult on par with other high-medieval cult centres in England known for holy healing.

Among the cures recorded in for other contemporary saints' cults, various forms of paralysis, blindness and sickness tend to be well represented. These are three health complaints are not only three of the most impressive healing miracles to be able to perform (due to their life-changing or life-saving nature), but they can be seen as having a clear resemblance to the types of miraculous cure attributed to Christ's own miracle working, as recorded within the Gospels. Being 'Christ-like' in their abilities and thus the miracles that they performed, was key to any saint and their posthumous holy healing.

Rood Screen panel showing William of Norwich (d. 1144), V&A Collections

All three of these afflictions would also have greatly impacted upon the individual's life. In the case of sicknesses, the severity of their illness is often recorded as having brought them close to death. In the cases paralysis and blindness, their impairment (depending on the severity) could leave them being dependant on the support of friends and family. Support from family and friends might also have been necessary for the cure-seeking pilgrimage. Other contemporary sources often record the presence of such support, particularly in the case of vulnerable individuals such as children:

> Huelina of Rochesburch, whose heels adhered to her back by natural deformity, was brought by her father to the holy martyr's tomb in a wheeled vehicle of the kind called a litter... On the same day a boy named Baldwin, from the province of Lincoln, was brought by his father to Norwich, also in a litter with wheels: the sinews of his feet and legs from the knees downwards were wasted and deprived him of the power of walking. However, when forced to move himself, he crept along on his knees, leaning on hand-trestles. Both these persons, being brought at the same time to the holy martyr's tomb, were restored to health by the intervention of his merits.
>
> *The Life and Miracles of St William of Norwich*, 7.xvi

Both Huelina and Baldwin were severely affected by their paralysis, and it is clear that their parents (represented in both cases by the participation of their fathers) were concerned by this and cared for their children. Among those who visited St Robert's shrine there were undoubtedly similar incidents of individuals arriving with friends or family for guides and supporters. After all travel, even over a short distance could prove difficult for the less mobile, or those whose sight was impaired, so family or friends, or aids such as crutches or trestles (a sort of small, hand held crutch) might be employed to assist.

In the account of Huelina and Baldwin's successful cure-seeking, focus is placed quite firmly on emphasising the extent of their afflictions prior to their cure. However, other accounts were more attentive to the way in which the cure itself was brought about.

> [There was] a certain boy at Norwich, son of Aluric, belonging to the tailor's shop of the monastery, who was afflicted with a severe and horrible swelling of the throat and jaws, so that he presented a shocking appearance to all beholders. And since the character of his disease altogether excluded the hope of a cure, he came to the glorious martyr's sepulchre led there by his

> mother, and we [the author] seeing him in his dreadful malady had compassion upon him, and we gave him to drink the dust scraped from the slab of the sepulchre mixed in holy water. But as the sacred draught gradually descended into his bowels, the power of divine grace followed close upon it. For immediately on taking the draught the sick lad felt a lessening of his pain, and in a short time he got well of his tumour, and no mark whatever of the swelling remained in him anywhere.
>
> *The Life and Miracles of St William of Norwich*, 3.xxxii

Aluric's son was not alone in having benefited from the healing powers of this concoction at St William's tomb (and some experienced a much more dramatic reaction to drinking this antidote). This practice of ingesting water that had come into contact with a saint's relic can be seen at other high-medieval shrines. Water that had bathed the relic of the hand of the apostolic St James at Reading Abbey was recorded as a cure for illness, and even aided difficult labour in one account. At Robert's shrine, we get yet another product of this tangible and transportable nature. The tomb, according the prolific medieval author Matthew Paris, produced and oil which had medicinal properties. These properties, like the waters of St James and St William, were gained through contact with the holy body or tomb of St Robert.

Pilgrim badge of St Thomas Becket (d. 1170), Wikimedia

Much like the badges which pilgrims could purchase, the waters, oils, and even dust from the tombs might be taken home by pilgrims and cure-seekers who visited the saints' shrines for

use at a later date. Alternatively, they might be taken away to someone unable to travel themselves due to the severity of their affliction.

In thinking therefore, about St Robert's posthumous cult and the miracles attributed to him, we must not forget St Robert, like many of his saintly contemporaries, would have been a beacon of hope for those who were desperate for a return to health (or the return to health of a loved one). Those who came to his tomb and shrine in devotion and with prayers for his intercession must have hoped that he would hear their prayers and act to ensure their return to good health. For some these prayers would be answered with holy healing, and they would have returned home telling their story to those they met and passing on the news of the powers of St Robert, perhaps in turn encouraging others to come to his shrine and seek his aid.

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Primary materials referenced (in order of appearance)

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Thomas of Monmouth, *The Life and Miracles of St William of Norwich*, edited and translated by A. Jessop and M.R. James (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1896) via Archive.org [quoted sections can be found on pp. 162-3, 275].

Matthew Paris, *Chronica Maiora*, vol. 3, edited by H.R. Luard (London: Longman & Co., 1876) via Archive.org [quoted section can be found on p. 521].

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St Robert and the Holy Land

by Dr Laura Slater

St Robert (c. 1160-1218) was born when the Christian holy places of Jerusalem were at their most accessible to the men and women of medieval Europe. He will have been a young man when the cataclysmic shock of the loss of Jerusalem to Saladin at the Battle of Hattin occurred in 1187. Prompting the third, fourth and fifth crusades, few at the time would have believed that the city would never be recovered by battle.

Lots of medieval people regularly went on pilgrimage in the hope of saintly aid and miraculous cures. But going to Jerusalem and visiting the tomb of Christ at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and then praying at other renowned holy places such as the Church of the Nativity at Bethlehem, bathing in the River Jordan and visiting the Sea of Galilee was a journey with special status. Jerusalem was the super pilgrimage, the ultimate trip abroad, the journey that would redeem all your sins. The murderers of Thomas Becket were sentenced by the pope to travel to Jerusalem and spend fourteen years fighting with the Templars, for example. But while lots of people wanted to visit the Holy Land, the trip was tremendously expensive, difficult and dangerous. Only a lucky few could even make the attempt.

So monumental replica Jerusalem sites were built across Europe: recreations of the holy places that allowed you to make a virtual or 'imagined pilgrimage' to medieval Palestine. In my talk, I suggested that St Robert, like many in the north of England in the later twelfth century, created one of these 'Jerusalem translations' in his hermitage at Knaresborough. Hermits were

dedicated to spiritual battle with the devil and the elimination of all sin. For this reason, quite a few travelled to Jerusalem at some stage of their lives. The ancient caves and tomb chambers found across the Mount of Olives were full of both Frankish and Orthodox monks and hermits.

St Robert never made it to the 'real' earthly Jerusalem, but the chapel built at Knaresborough by his brother Walter was dedicated to the Holy Cross, recalling the site of the Passion. The rest of Robert's hermitage may have echoed the site of Christ's Temptations in the Wilderness, Jabal Quruntul or Mount Quarantayne near Jericho. When St Robert died, he was buried in a previously unused sarcophagus, echoing the unused tomb of Christ described in Luke 23:53 and John 19:41. The practice again suggests St Robert's likeness to Christ- and by recalling the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, it again brings Jerusalem to Knaresborough. The friars of the Holy Trinity who safeguarded his later cult belonged to an order dedicated to ransoming Christian captives from the Holy Land. Bringing the people and places of Jerusalem 'home' was a constant concern for medieval European Christians.

Dr Laura Slater, Somerville College, Oxford

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St Robert's contemporaries: charismatic preachers and hermits around 1200

by Prof Lindy Grant, University of Reading

Searching for the apostolic life in the Middle Ages followed patterns that are reflected in the life of St Robert. Attempts to imitate the life of Christ, his early disciples and the early Saints typically followed a mix that included living communally, with no possessions and chastely alongside embracing an ascetic life far from worldly distraction, often in 'desert places'.

The monastic life was one route to imitating Christ and the Apostles. They often started as a small group of hermits but grew into larger establishments, accruing great wealth. Western monasticism was given institutional form with the Rule of St Benedict of Monte Cassino around 500AD. Whilst new movements within monasticism would arise from time to time to challenge some of the accoutrements of such growth and prosperity they too often succumbed to the same fate over time. The Cistercians were one such group, led by St Bernard of Clairvaux (c.1090-1153), with Fountains Abbey being of this order.

An example of such developments around the time of St Robert of Knaresborough can be seen with his namesake, Robert of Arbrissel. In the late 11th Century, at Fontevraud in the Loire Valley, Robert lived in a group of hermits in the forest. They attracted a group of hermits, prostitutes and pious women, is criticised by his local bishop but founds an Abbey in 1099 that become a great nunnery attracting the highest level of patronage.

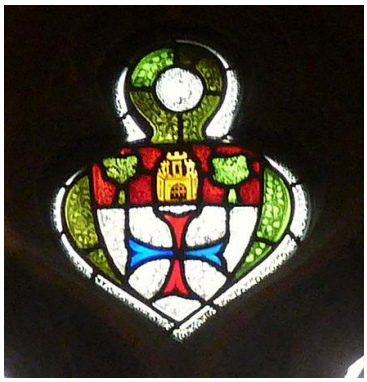
Around the time of St Robert of Knaresborough even the 'reformed' monasteries had become bloated, giving rise to a new approach, the mendicant order of Dominicans and Franciscans following the teachings of St Dominic (1170-1221) and St Francis of Assisi (1181-1226) respectively. The rise of these itinerant preachers came amidst the rise of heresy within the Church and apocalyptic fears for the end of the world. The fall of Jerusalem in 1187, a major defeat of Christian armies in Spain in 1195 and prophecies that the year 1200 would mark the end of the world were all 'in the air'.

Joachim of Fiore (1135-1202) was one such preacher. He was from Calabria, Southern Italy and went on pilgrimage to Holy Land, after which he became a hermit, and then a Cistercian monk and abbot. He writes a commentary on the Book of Revelation in which he outlined 3 Eras of History: The Old Testament (Father); The New Testament (Son); then Era of Holy

Spirit, after the reign of Antichrist. He sees fall of Jerusalem as sign of last times, Saladin as Antichrist and prophesied that the era of Holy Spirit may arrive 1260. He was very influential, for example Richard the Lionheart talks to him on the way to 3rd Crusade in 1189.

Other examples of such preachers included Fulk of Neuilly (d.1202) and Marie of Oignies (1177-1213), and, as noted above, Francis of Assisi (1181-1226). St Francis was the son of an Italian merchant who turned away from worldly things to embrace 'Lady Poverty'. He formed a group of hermits in the wilds, rejected property and lived by begging. The Franciscan Friars (brothers) were institutionalised by Pop Innocent III in 1210 as a mendicant order (i.e. they lived by begging). They were not monks in that they did not enclose themselves away from society but lived within it to help reform it.

Of particular relevance to the story of St Robert are The Trinitarians, or the order for the Redemption of Captives, set up by Pope Innocent III in 1198 in the context of Crusades. They often ran hospitals and pilgrim hospices, with one of the most important Trinitarian Houses in Europe being established in Knaresborough by 1252. The Trinitarians had taken possession of St Robert's body by 1252 and established his shrine and controlled pilgrimage to the saint.



The roots of the Trinitarians can be found in 1193 when St John de Matha had a vision of two captives: 'one black and ill-formed, the other scrawny and pale'. The 'Redemption of captives of all peoples' therefore became part of the order name because all peoples may become Christian, and a sign of the End of Time will be the conversion of all good people, throughout the world. The order was institutionalised by Pope Innocent III in 1198 with rule, which anticipated the rules for mendicant orders, including, for example that religious brothers were not allowed beards, but the lay brothers are; Trinitarians can only use asses, not horses; 1/3rd of their income was to be devoted to the redemption of captives; and all churches should be simple in design and dedicated to the Holy Trinity.

The Trinitarians in Britain were often called Robertins because of importance of Knaresborough and its pilgrimage. The second and third masters were British: John the Englishman (1214-17) and William the Scot (1218-22). Thirteen British foundations followed beginning in Aberdeen in1211 through to Oxford in 1286. Knaresborough Priory was founded by 1252 under the patronage of Richard of Cornwall (1209-1272), younger son

of King John and brother of Henry III. He had important connections at the French court and ransoms the French barons captured on Crusade in 1240.