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## VANISHED CHURCHES OF HUNTINGDON

### Town Had 16 In Mediæval Times

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In the early fourteenth century a traveller approaching Huntingdon by the Stukeley-road would see a great number of church towers and spires extending from the junction of St. Peter's-road as far as the Old Bridge over the River Ouse. In the distance, towards Hartford, a massive and stately church, much larger than the rest, stood out—a conspicuous object against the landscape. Towards Brampton another, though less magnificent pile, was clearly visible.

To-day a very different vista meets the traveller's eye. Of all these fine buildings only the towers of two churches are to be seen—of most of the others scarcely the least trace remains—and the modern tower and spire of Trinity Church dominates the landscape.

The question is often asked, Where did all these ancient churches stand? But before going into this it may be as well to give a list of all the religious foundations our XIVth century traveller would have seen. These were:

**Three Monasteries,  
Three Hospitals,  
Two dependent Chapels, and  
Sixteen Parish Churches.**

#### ALMOST UNIQUE.

There can hardly have been another town in England which contained so many ecclesiastical buildings, in such a small space, for Huntingdon occupies practically the same area now as it did in 1330. It shares with such large towns as London, Norwich, Ipswich, Cambridge and Colchester the distinction of having a disproportionate number of parish churches. Many towns of much greater size than Huntingdon (such as Maidstone) only had one or two churches.

As so little of the mediæval work in Huntingdon has survived down to the XXth century, it is interesting to try to identify the sites of these destroyed—but not altogether forgotten—buildings.

The "massive and stately church" our traveller would have seen towards Hartford was the **Priory of St. Mary**, founded for Augustinian Canons by Eustace De Lovetot early in the XIIth century. Not a trace of this monastery remains, but it stood partly on the site of Tennis Court-avenue and the Tennis Courts adjoining, its precinct wall approximating to Priory-road, Primrose-lane, Hartford-road and Nursery-road.

The other "less magnificent pile of buildings" towards Brampton was the **Benedictine Nunnery of Hinchbrooke**, founded early in the XIIth century. The present house incorporates much of the ancient masonry, though no early details are visible, but the plan of the Church and Cloister buildings can be easily traced.

**Cromwell House** stands on the site of the **Augustinian Friary** (quite distinct from the Priory), which was founded about 1225. Very few traces of the old work are now discernable.

#### THREE HOSPITALS.

Of the Three Mediæval Hospitals, that of **St. John** still remains in part, and its fine XIIIth century facade betokens its early origin. For centuries the old Grammar School was located here. **St. Margaret's Leper Hospital** is now represented by the modern "Spitals" along the Stukeley-road, but the site of **St. Giles' Leper Hospital** is unknown.

Though Huntingdon Castle was destroyed in 1173, the Chapel therein continued in use until the XVth century. Another Chapel was built about 1330 on the Bridge itself, at its N.E. end, and no doubt this would have been the last religious building our traveller would pass before he finally left the town.

The sixteen Parish Churches stood at various points all along the Ermine-street and High-street, and this would probably be the order in which our traveller would have visited them—had he been sufficiently interested to do so.

**St. Peter's Church** stood at the junction of St. Peter's-road, where the north abutment of the Iron Bridge now stands. A little further down the road, near Sayer-street, stood **St. Michael's Church**, which was apparently absorbed by St. Peter's Church in later years.

**St. Andrew's Church** stood on the north side of Dryden's Walk, adjoining Ermine-street. Passing the **Augustinian Friary** and its precincts on the left, the next Church to be visited would be that of **St. John the Baptist**, which stood close to the High-street in the present churchless Churchyard.

#### CHURCH PILLAR IN HOTEL?

A short way up George-street stood **St. George's Church**, and it is said that part of one of the church pillars stands in the buildings of the George Hotel. Then comes **All Saints' Church**—very different then from now, as it was mostly rebuilt in the XVth century. Immediately opposite were the buildings of the **Hospital of St. John the Baptist**.

At the far end of Princes-street stood another church—probably dedicated to **St. Botolph**—as an old deed in the Town Hall indicates. **St. Germain's Church** stood one-third of the way down St. Germain's-st., on the left-hand side. **St. Benedict's Church** stood in the disused Churchyard opposite the Brewery. Its dilapidated tower was standing in 1802.

Two more churches, standing almost opposite each other in the High-street, near the Hartford-road corner, were dedicated to **St. Martin** and **Holy Trinity** respectively.

The church of **St. Mary** (not the Priory Church) still stands opposite Castle Hill House—in the garden of which, off St. Mary's-street, stood yet another church—that of **St. Lawrence**.

**St. Edmund's Church** stood near the old County Gaol, between St. Clement's passage and Orchard-lane. **St. Clement's Church** stood at the far end of Orchard-lane on the side nearer the river.

The only church of which the site is quite unknown is that of **St. Nicholas**.

By the end of the XVth century only four Parish Churches remained and two of these were destined to be destroyed during the XVIIth century civil wars: so that to-day only two churches are left to suffice for the whole town.

At the Reformation, the Priory was destroyed. Hinchbrooke Nunnery and the Augustinian Friary were converted into houses by their new lay owners. **St. John's Hospital** was spared as it belonged to the commonalty of Huntingdon.