

CARRICKFERGUS AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY



THE OLD PRIORY CHURCH, HOLYWOOD, COUNTY DOWN

This ruined Church stands at the end of High Street. The original Church on the site was an earlier ecclesiastical structure founded by St. Laiseran in the year 642 but nothing of this building now remains. Anglo-Norman invaders built a new church on the site about 1200. The north side and part of the south facade are all that remains of this building. The materials used were yellow magnesian limestone from Cultra beach with dressings of Scrabo sandstone. Two thirteenth windows, as seen in the photograph, remain on the north side and one on the south side is similar. There was Franciscan Friary on this site until the 16th century

The Friary was burnt in 1572 by Sir Brian O'Neill. The remains of the ruins were used by Sir James Hamilton to build a Protestant Church. The windows survived. In 1842 the local Church of Ireland parishioners decided to replace the Priory now in ruins with a new Church building known as St. Philip and St. James on Church Road in the town.

By: John Hulme