

ST. JAMES' PRIORY AT DUDLEY (USUALLY CALLED DUDLEY PRIORY).

This Priory stood a short distance (about 80 rods) westward of Dudley Castle, in the town of Dudley. It was erected on the site of a former church, which was dedicated to St. James. The Priory was founded in 1161, by Gervase Paganell, Lord of Dudley, and was filled with Cluniac Monks, from Wenlock, in Shropshire, to which it was a cell. The original charter begins thus: "Know all men, present and to come, that I, Gervase Painell, considering the purpose of Ralph Painell, my father, who intended in his lifetime to found a convent of religious persons at Dudley, especially for his soul, and other ancestors, and for my own soul, and the soul of Isabel, my wife, and of Robert, my son, and all of mine; to fulfil my father's purpose: Therefore, I give and grant," etc. It was to become a convent when able to support such an institution, the prior of Wenlock and the founder's heirs consenting thereto.

Pope Lucius likewise ordained that it should be a place of sepulture for all persons who might desire to be interred there except ex-communicated persons.

In the 32nd year of Henry VIII. (1540), this priory, as parcel of Wenlock, was granted to Sir John Dudley, afterwards Duke of Northumberland, being then valued at £33 Is. 4d. per annum. After the Duke's fall it was granted by Queen Mary, the papist, to Sir Edward Sutton, Lord Dudley. It was a ruin in the sixteenth century. Erdeswicke saw the "goodly monuments there of Somerys and Suttons, and divers others."

Time and avarice have at last destroyed even the monuments, and no vestige of them now remains except a few coats of arms, which have been found among the ruins.

The monks, who lived at this priory, when they went abroad, sometimes appear to have been called "de Dudley" as Thomas of Dudley. So I suspect they acquired the surname of Dudley; but they were not allowed to marry, and, therefore, could not be supposed to hand down their name to descendants.