

The Monk's letter to a friend tells us about life in the Priory.

Our house is confined to the top of a high rock, and is surrounded on every side but one. Here is the approach to the monastery through a gate cut out of the rock, so narrow that a cart can hardly pass through. Day and night, the waves break and roar and undermine the cliff. Thick sea-frets roll in, wrapping everything in gloom. Dim eyes, hoarse voices, sore throats are the consequence. Spring and summer never come here. The north wind is always blowing, and brings with it cold and snow; or storms in which the wind tosses the salt sea foam in masses over our buildings and rains it down within the castle. Shipwrecks are frequent. It is a great pity to see the numbed crew, who no power on earth can save, whose vessel, mast swaying and timbers parted, rushes upon rock or reef. No ring-dove or nightingale is here, only grey birds which nest in the rocks and greedily prey upon the drowned, whose screaming cry is a token of the coming storm. The people who live by the seashore feed upon black malodorous seaweed called 'slauk', which they gather on the rocks.

The constant eating of it turns their complexions black. Men, women and children are as dark as Africans or the swarthiest Jew. In spring the sea-air blights the blossoms of the stunted fruit trees, so that you will think yourself lucky to find a wizened apple though it will set your teeth on edge should you try to eat it. See to it dear brother, that you do not come to this comfortless place. But, the church is of wondrous beauty. It has been lately completed. Within, rests the body of the blessed martyr Oswin in his silver shrine, magnificently embellished with gold and jewels. He protects the murderers, thieves and seditious persons who fly to him, and commutes their punishment to exile. He heals those who no physician can cure. The martyr's protection and the church's beauty furnish us with a bond of unity. We are well off for food, thanks to the abundant supply of fish, of which we tire.

- What might the cook in the Priory have written at this time about his daily life?
- How might the poor people, who lived near the shore, have viewed the way the monks lived, compared to their own lives?