Victoria County History of Somerset Newsletter

Issue 13

Summer 2019

Welcome to the thirteenth edition of our newsletter. We hope you enjoy it.

Please pass this newsletter on to others. If you are not on our mailing list and would like to receive future copies of the newsletter please let us know by contacting us at vch@swheritage.org.uk.

County Editor's Report

The main news for this edition is that we are delighted that the County History Trust has obtained funding to employ a part-time researcher on a temporary basis. Scott Pettitt is working three days a week researching and writing the history of Bradford on Tone. Work is progressing well and it is good to have another parish being completed while the editor continues to climb the mountain that is Taunton! Work is also on-going towards the revision of the Dunster and Minehead volume for publication.

After commemorating the First World War attention has moved to the Second World War, but in 1919 people were still celebrating the peace. Men were returning from the army and the flu had abated in Somerset. Most pubs sold twice as much drink as usual and schoolchildren had an extra week added to the summer break.

Old Army Supply Corps depot *Mary Siraut*

We have been marking the 75th anniversary of D-Day. The Somerset Heritage Centre is located on the site of the railway sidings of the army supply depot created in 1940 and by the time of D-Day it was part of the United States Army's General Depot G 50'. In 1945 the depot became a British Army supply depot again, producing ration packs. The enormous warehouses were still standing until a few years ago.

The group in the grounds of Halswell House *Bob Croft*

Our recent big event was a very successful visit to Halswell. On Sunday 19 May 2019 over 40 supporters of the Somerset County History Trust visited Halswell House near Goathurst. Halswell House is one of Somerset's premier 18th century houses and was once owned by the Halswell and Tynte families. A detailed history of the house is given in the new edition of Pevsner, *Somerset South and West* by Julian Orbach and Nikolaus Pevsner (2014), pp. 339-43.

The group were guided around the house under the supervision of Ann Manders, Claire Fear (Conservation Architect) and Bob Croft (Archaeologist). An extensive programme of repairs is currently underway and work to date has concentrated upon the repairs and conservation of the 16th-century house and range of buildings at the rear of the main 1689 house built by Sir Halswell Tynte.

On the roof

Photographs: left by Janet Tall and right by Bob Croft

1920s chinoiserie decoration *Janet Tall*

We would like to thank the owner Mr Edward Strachan for his permission to see the work in progress and to Ann Manders for guiding the group and organising the refreshments.

A collection on the day raised £230 towards the work of the Somerset County History Trust.

The main house was extensively damaged by fire in 1923 and then rebuilt and refurbished to a very high standard in 1924-6.

The group also visited the gardens around the house including the ice house and the now restored Doric Rotuda built in 1755.

The restored rotunda *Bob Croft*

John Gunthorpe, *c.*1430-1498, Dean of Wells

John Gunthorpe, dean of Wells from October 1472 until his death in June 1498, achieved high office in both state and Church, yet he never attained the rank of bishop. Part of the explanation for this may lie in the political events of his maturity, with the death of Edward IV, the seizure of the throne by Richard, duke of Gloucester, and the eventual accession of Henry Tudor. However, Gunthorpe does stand in contrast to John Morton who, despite his steadfastness to the Lancastrian cause, was elevated during Edward IV's second reign to the wealthy see of Ely. Morton's highly political role in the events of the 1450s and 1460s stands in contrast to the less high-profile career of Gunthorpe. Yet, even though Gunthorpe was favoured by Edward IV in both his reigns, it was men such as Morton who achieved greater advancement.

Nevertheless, Gunthorpe displayed many of the characteristics of the men who did finally achieve episcopal rank. Educated firstly at Cambridge and then in Italy at Ferrara, Gunthorpe excelled at Latin rhetoric and was a scholar of Greek. While in Italy he went into the service of the papal court. He returned to England in 1465 and, we must assume, brought the fashionable ideas of Italian humanism with him.

Gunthorpe then went on to hold many key positions, any one of which might propel a rising cleric ever further: at various times he was keeper of the privy seal, clerk of parliament, king's councillor, king's almoner, chaplain to both the king and the queen, dean of the royal chapel and dean of Wells. For example, the list of those future bishops in the period 1400-1520 who were once dean of the chapel royal or of the chapel within the royal household is an impressive one: William Dudley, Richard Nykke, William Atwater, Robert Gilbert, Richard Hill, Thomas Jane, Edmund Lacy, Richard Praty, Thomas Savage and John Veysey.

The career prospects for the keepers of the privy seal were even more striking with many either becoming bishops while keeper, or enjoying elevation soon afterwards. For example, taking either side of the period when Gunthorpe was keeper, his fellow office-holders included Thomas Rotherham, John Hales, John Russell, Peter Courtenay, Richard Fox and Thomas Ruthall.

Of course there were keepers who did not rise to the episcopacy such as John Prophete, but they were very much the exception. Two men who progressed from the deanery of Wells to the episcopacy were John Stafford (later bishop of Bath & Wells and then archbishop of Canterbury) and Richard Courtenay (later bishop of Norwich). Henry Beaufort and John Fordham are further examples. However Wells did not provide quite the springboard that some other cathedrals represented – the deanery of Exeter provided five future bishops, that at Salisbury seven and at York a total of eight. Gunthorpe's experience had included service at the papal court, as well as employment on diplomatic missions. His career as a whole would therefore appear to be a perfect prelude for any man who sought the office of bishop.

Table Men awarded their first bishopric in England during the reigns of Edward IV

Name	Diocese	Year of provision
John Kyngescote	Carlisle	1462
Richard Scrope (d. 1468)	Carlisle	1464
Robert Stillington	Bath & Wells	1465
John Booth	Exeter	1465
Edward Story	Carlisle	1468
Thomas Rotherham	Rochester	1468
James Goldwell	Norwich	1472
John Alcock	Rochester	1472
William Dudley	Durham	1476
Thomas Millyng	Hereford	1476
John Russell	Rochester	1476
Richard Bell	Carlisle	1478
John Morton	Ely	1478
Peter Courtenay	Exeter	1478
Edmund Audley	Rochester	1480
Lionel Woodville	Salisbury	1482

What is the explanation for Gunthorpe's not achieving such elevation? It may be that he excluded himself and chose a different path for whatever reason. It does seem inconceivable that Gunthorpe's name was never considered by Edward IV as episcopal sees became vacant. The table that above lists those men who were awarded their first bishopric during his two reigns.

Gunthorpe's best chances of episcopal elevation were probably during Edward's second reign (May 1471 onwards). However the table indicates just how intense the competition was. Edward favoured nobles such as Dudley and Courtenay, while clergy from monastic orders (Millyng and Bell) were being accommodated at the lesser dioceses. There were few remaining positions, and prominent men such as Morton and Alcock had to be given their just rewards.

Gunthorpe was clearly in favour with Richard III who appointed him as keeper of the privy seal. When Richard's brief reign came to its rather abrupt end at Bosworth field, Gunthorpe was not treated as an opponent by Henry Tudor. He received a general pardon, and continued in royal service, including on diplomatic missions. However he was now probably in his sixties and spent most of his final years in residence at Wells. There he was responsible for the construction of the Deanery, a notable feature of the north side Cathedral Green. He had a large library of books, both in manuscript and those produced by the new technology of printing. Unfortunately he did not bequeath them in his will to a single beneficiary as John Russell, bishop of Lincoln had done – Russell put them in the care of New College, Oxford. Thus the full scope of Gunthorpe's library is not clear, and the known volumes are scattered in various libraries. He died on 25 June 1498 and was buried in the cathedral in St Katherine's Chapel where his chest tomb remains.

Gunthorpe was one of a line of highly educated clerics who had served Church and state in many capacities in the late medieval period. Although he did not achieve the very highest offices that his contemporaries such as John Morton attained, he was nevertheless a very noteworthy resident of Somerset at the end.

Des Atkinson

Banwell Church Tower: the Mystery of the Lily Pots

St Andrew's church at Banwell has a fine example of the ornate late medieval perpendicular gothic towers which are so characteristic of Somerset (1). It shares distinctive architectural details with a group of neighbouring towers around the western end of the Mendip Hills. (especially Winscombe) and in the moors to the south. The third stage of the west face of the towers at Banwell, Winscombe and Cheddar all contain a two-light window flanked by canopied arched niches designed to contain sculptures. The niches at Banwell and Cheddar retain a male figure to the north of the central window and a female figure to the south. At

(1) St Andrew's church, Banwell, from the west James Bond

Banwell and Winscombe the southern blind panel within the intervening window is carved with a stylised plant in a vase. John Rutter's *Delineations of the North-West Division of the County of Somerset* (1829) made no mention of these features at Banwell, but he speculated that the Winscombe niches formerly contained 'figures of the patron saint, and probably of the founder'. He also noted, without appreciating its significance, that 'In the blank window…is a curious sculptured figure of a handled flower-jug or vase, in the mouth of which is a flower or branch'.

The combination of figures with the flower vase makes it virtually certain that these carvings depicted the Annunciation. The northern figure represented the angel Gabriel, sent by God to Nazareth to announce the incarnation of Christ to the Virgin Mary. Medieval paintings of the Annunciation allow us to identify the carved plant at Banwell and Winscombe with the Madonna Lily (*Lilium candidum* L.), native to the Balkans and Asia Minor, and cultivated across Europe from an early date. Possibly bulbs of this plant were imported to Britain in the Roman period. It was familiar to Bede, who wrote of its white petals as a symbol of the virgin's purity and its bright yellow anthers as the light of her soul. The widespread association of this lily with Annunciation scenes seems anomalous, since it flowers in midsummer and would not have been available at the Annunciation Feast, observed on Lady Day, 25 March. Probably it simply served to identify the female figure as the Virgin.

What is unique about the Annunciation scene at Banwell is that, for a time, it included a second lily pot. When light falls obliquely across the west face of the tower clear traces of another vase can be discerned in the lower northern panel of the window. This was evidently added long after the original carving, in ignorance of its significance, and then removed after the correct meaning of the design was recognised. Banwell's vicar, Revd C.S. Taylor, recounted the story in 1905: 'On the western face…is an uninjured representation of the Annunciation with two panels between the figures; on the panel by Our Lady is the usual lily pot, and about a century ago another lily pot was placed in the northern panel. A fiction was developed that the figures represented Henry VI and his queen, and it was thought right to give the king a lily pot; but the picture of the Church which appeared in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for 1805 shows the northern panel blank'. This story was repeated in Edward Hutton's *Highways & Byways in Somerset* (1912) and in a chapter by Vincent Waite in A.W. Coysh, E.J. Mason & V. Waite's *The Mendips* (1954). By contrast Francis Knight's *The Seaboard of Mendip* (1902) relayed only the view that we would accept today: 'These figures are believed to represent the Annunciation.…The Lily Pot in the

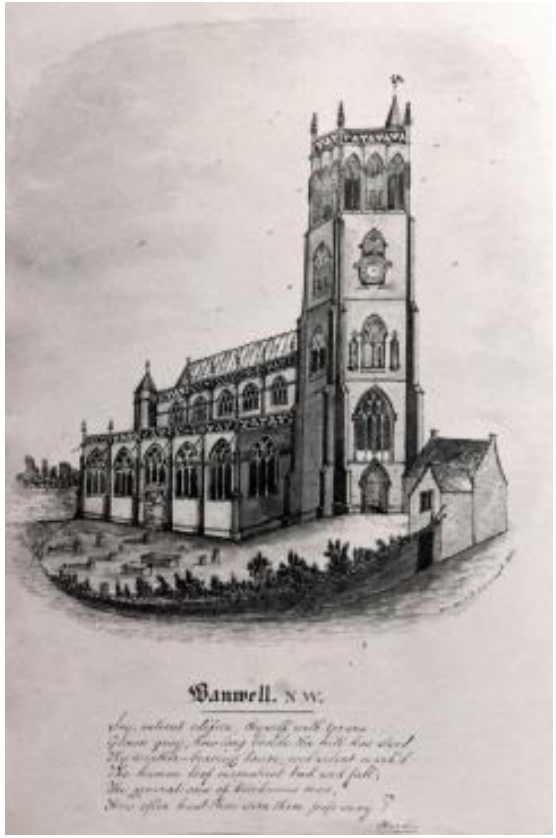
(2) Detail of the Annunciation scene in the third stage of the west face of the tower, with figures of the angel Gabriel and Virgin Mary, the original lily vase, and traces of the added vase in the northern panel of the Window James Bond

Virgin's niche is the symbol of Purity'. Knight, Taylor and Hutton all indicate that the northern lily pot was in place when they were writing. Waite recalled that it was still there when he was a boy, but was 'recently removed'.

Several queries arise out of these accounts. What lapse of time would be required after the Reformation before the significance of the lily symbol in Annunciation scenes should have passed so completely beyond memory as to permit the invention of any other interpretation of the figures? Henry VI and Margaret of Anjou do not immediately come to mind as popular folk-heroes, so why should they have been adopted as alternative candidates? Who then took the decision that the northerly lily pot was sufficiently spurious for its removal to be necessary, and when did this take place? Having sought answers to these questions I am greatly indebted to Roy and Netty Rice for their generosity in sharing their own research and local knowledge with me. Although a search of the churchwardens' accounts from 1765 to 1867 did not yield a single mention of the lily pots, further details have now emerged from other sources.

Previous suggestions had dated the addition of the northern lily pot to the early nineteenth century. Revd Taylor's comment that it was added 'about a century ago' could relate to repairs recorded in 1812-13. However, vestry meeting accounts indicate that those works were urgent and costly, and it seems doubtful whether additional unnecessary expense would have been considered. Knight's account that the second lily pot 'was put up about the year 1825' could tally with repairs recorded in 1827, but no details of those repairs are known.

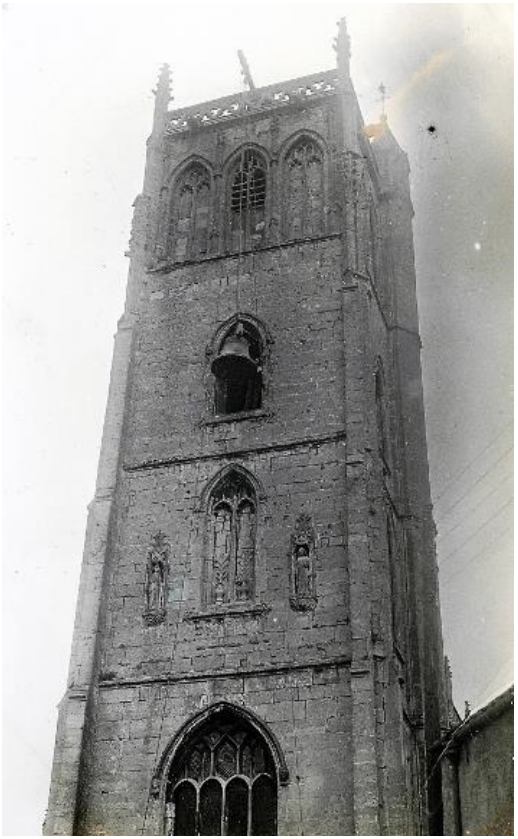
An article by Mr W.T. Edginton, a local schoolmaster, published in the *Weston Gazette* around 1883, suggests a later origin: 'In this closed window… are represented two lilies, emblems of virginal purity; the one on the right-hand side is coeval with the tower, but that on the opposite side is of recent workmanship, having been executed at the order of a former churchwarden, who thought the presence of the solitary lily was an oversight of the ancient architect, and needed to be supplemented by its fellow on the other side'. Edginton's description of 'recent workmanship' in 1883 conflicts with the earlier dates implied by Taylor and Knight, and would be more compatible with another substantial restoration undertaken in 1863-5.



(3) George Bennett's drawing of the church from the north-west, made in 1812, before the addition of the second lily pot

Collection of Roy Rice

Drawings of the church by George Bennett in 1805 and 1812 clearly show only one lily pot (3), as does a copy of the 1812 picture made by his son Alfred in 1828. The latter is not merely a slavish reproduction. Since he recorded the growth of trees beyond the east end of the church in the intervening years, it seems likely that Alfred would also have added the second vase, had it been in place by 1828. The earliest known photographs date from the 1880s and, although their clarity is imperfect, it appears that the northern vase was present by then. The evidence of the illustrations alongside Edginton's article now point to the 1863—5 restoration as the most likely occasion for the addition of the second lily pot.



(4) The last known picture showing the Northern lily pot before its removal: works on the tower in August 1937

Collection of Roy Rice

Edginton provides the earliest record of the misidentification of the figures: 'a suggestion has been made which helps to fix the date of this church, viz that that the two statues in remarkably good preservation, which adorn the west front of the tower, are those of Henry VI and Margaret of Anjou'. No precise documented dates for the construction of Banwell's tower are known, so we have to fall back on opinions based upon architectural style. Revd Taylor dated it to approximately 1380. Subsequent investigators have put it several decades later. Rutter attributed the rebuilding of Banwell church to 'about the middle of the fifteenth century', describing it as 'a fine, well-proportioned, and lofty edifice, in the elegant pointed style of the reign of Henry VI' (1422 -1461 and 1470-71). Edginton's record of the belief that Henry and Margaret were the figures represented in the niches, and Rutter's views on the rebuilding date may reflect a tradition of construction in Henry VI's time which had come down in local memory. Andrew Foyle's introduction in his revised edition of Nikolaus Pevsner's *Buildings of England : North Somerset* (2011) expresses the view that the west Mendip towers resembling Banwell were probably built between about 1380 and 1440, allowing the reasonable possibility of construction within the early part of Henry VI's reign.

Finally, what of the removal of the second lily pot? Knight's 1902 account had dismissed the addition as 'modern, and, it may be added, meaningless'; and in 1954 Waite had credited a 'wiser generation' for realising that 'the figure with the original lily is the Madonna and the other represents the angel Gabriel', noting approvingly that 'the latter's gratuitous lily has recently been removed' We can now date its removal to the final stages of repairs undertaken by W.D. Caröe in 1931-8. A photograph taken in August 1937, showing a bell suspended outside the window above the Annunciation stage, shows both lily pots intact **(4)** However, Roy Rice has discovered a critical annotation in a copy of Revd Taylor's book on the Banwell Screen and Rood-loft which had belonged to the schoolmaster, William J. Shepherd, who served as churchwarden from 1937 to 1945. On the page containing Taylor's description of the tower, Shepherd had inscribed several notes relating to the 1937-8 repairs, including 'Lily pot in N. panel removed'.

James Bond

The *Taunton Castle* and some of those who sailed in her

The painting now hanging in the Museum of Somerset (and reproduced on the next page) was painted in 1791 by Thomas Whitcombe. It shows the *Taunton Castle* three times: in full-sail and with her sails adjusted as she tacks with the wind. The middle image shows her name plate clearly on the carved square stern. It was customary to paint ships in various positions, especially hove-to and tacking into the wind, on the same canvas so as to show all sides. The crew are busy with the sails and one man is up on the foremast. Her gunports are all open, which is probably artistic licence, and her figurehead is of a crowned man. She is probably heading south-west, being piloted down the Solent with Yarmouth castle and town in the left background. Her maiden voyage was delayed in January 1791 by storms.

Thomas Whitcombe (1763-1824) was a prolific naval painter, especially known for *c.*150 paintings of naval engagements during the Napoleonic wars. He travelled widely especially around the west country, Wales and the Channel Islands painting ships and harbours. For the naval battles such as the Nile he may have been on board ship. He was reputedly born on 19 May 1763 and this would fit with his age 27 in 1791 at the time of his first marriage when he was living in Covent Garden.

He was not a poor man, was literate and married both his wives by licence. His first wife whom he married in St Mary Woolnoth on 27 March 1791 was Elizabeth Young. They do not appear to have had any children and she may be the Elizabeth Whitcome who was buried at Bloomsbury 21 March 1794. Certainly it was from the mid 1790s to mid 1800s that Thomas appears to have travelled most widely and painted his best-known works probably at sea with the English fleet. He had settled back in London when he married 21 year-old Abigail Griffin in St Pancras Old Church on 1 April 1806. They had three children Thomas, Hepseba and Arthur. They lived in Clarendon Square, St Pancras and the children were baptised between 1808 and 1812 at St Pancras Old Church. Thomas was still living in Clarendon Square when he died in 1824. He was buried on 8 May at St Martin in the Fields.

The painting belongs to the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society and was in Taunton Castle in 1910. The inscription on the panel below the frame reads:

> "Taunton Castle East IndiaMan
> Capt Urmston built by Mr Barnard
> For Sir Benjamin Hammet 1790"

There are few marine paintings in the collections and although the scene is not Somerset the ship marks an important link between Taunton bankers and the sea and the East India trade.

The *Taunton Castle*, reg. no. 1190, was a *c.*1200-ton ship built by William Barnard of Deptford. The Barnard family were among the most significant British merchant shipbuilders between 1700 and 1850. She was said to have been modelled on the *Halsewell* whose tragic wreck in 1786 was notorious and is perhaps a little old-fashioned for the end of the 18th century. *Taunton Castle* was registered on 20 Oct 1790 in the ownership of a syndicate including Benjamin Hammett and Sir James, Peter and William Esdaile, bankers of Lombard Street. She was 182 ft in length, 42 ft in the beam, had a burthen of 1246 tons, was copper bottomed and carried up to 36 guns. She made nine long voyages for the East India Company between 1790 and 1812. Her log books for 1796-1800 are in the British Library.

Hostilities with France meant that the ship had several licences to privateer. In 1794 under Edward Studd she was permitted to take French ships and was not only equipped with 36 guns, their powder and shot but a large number of small arms and cutlasses. She carried 155, two thirds of them seamen, was victualled for 12 months at a time, carried three spare sets of sails and 5 anchors and other spares necessary for her long voyages around the Cape although she sometimes called at St Helena. A second privateering licence in 1796 permitted him to take Dutch ships. However, no evidence has been found that the *Taunton Castle* took prizes. Her last voyages were under the ownership of Andrew Timbrell and the captaincy of James Timbrell, sailing to China 1807-8 and Bombay 1809-10. Her last voyage began at Portsmouth on 12 March 1811 for Madras and China returning home in July 1812. For reasons unknown she was broken up in June 1813 after an extremely short life for her class.

At least ten seamen drew up their wills on board ship. Some like quartermaster James Freeman in 1802 were well but made their wills ‘considering the perils and dangers of the sea’, more often like William Hillum in 1805 they were dying. Most were illiterate and the captain’s clerk or the surgeon’s mate wrote the wills. The presence of the surgeon’s mate as a witness to several wills indicate that the man was sick or injured but the death of a seaman and his desire to make a will were important enough for the captain and chief mate to be present and act as witnesses for several men.

Many men were from London and left everything to their wives there, others were bachelors and some left everything to a shipmate, in one case also a cousin, indicating the close friendships built up on long voyages. Most were ordinary seamen but a quartermaster, a boatswain, a carpenter and an armourer on the ship were testators. We learn little about the circumstances of their death or even the date because it was often a year or more before the ship and the will returned to England. Robert Pinkerton was taken off at St Helena in 1802 and transferred to hospital there but William Hillum, a ship’s carpenter was very ill and confined to his hammock when he made his will in 1805 and he died the next day. Many men had nothing but their wages and clothing to leave. Wages were obviously paid long in arrears and Emmanuel de Saintes making his will in 1802 was owed his wages from previous service including on a Portuguese ship.

The painting before restoration

Phoebe Jarvis and Taunton St Mary Workhouse

Before the new poor law was implemented in the 1830s each parish in Taunton had its own workhouse. St Mary’s lay south of the church its site later used to extend the parish school, now an Italian restaurant. It was probably the medieval church house and had a courtyard behind including the governor’s house. Governors often ran the house as a business, farming out the paupers for a share in their wages. Attempts were made for example in 1819 to stop bad practice and a new select vestry appointed men to visit the house and report back. At first little seems to have changed but the death of a young girl in January 1821 was a watershed moment. People died in the workhouse all the time including children but this death had far-reaching consequences for the house and its inmates.

Most of the Taunton Jarvis families at that period were silk weavers. Phoebe Jarvis was the last child of weaver Robert Jarvis by his third wife Mary Mockridge. Ages given for her vary but she was baptised on 26 October 1806 at St Mary’s church. Her mother died in 1810 and her in Huish’s almshouse in 1813. Phoebe lived in Black Boy Lane with her half brother, also Robert, a widower 28 years her senior. In 1816 Robert married a young woman half his age called Mary Fox by whom he had several children. Phoebe became an unwanted liability, although she was said to be in good health in 1819-20. She was working for her brother for nothing but her parish pay was stopped. She was turned out by Robert in 1820 and taken into the workhouse until she could be found work silk weaving.

By late 1820 she was clearly ill with ‘rheumatic gout’, presumably a form of rheumatic fever and was in the care of an apothecary who prescribed for her. She shared a bed with an older woman in a room with at least two others, a mother and daughter. She was having difficulty breathing, could keep nothing down and was probably dehydrated.

On her last day the other women were concerned but the cook and maidservant Sarah Maul refused to come and help or to give Phoebe her medicine, presumably a powder to be dissolved in a drink, and the women had no access to provisions. One of them gave Phoebe her peppermint tea but Phoebe was later sick and all that could be got for her was some cold water out of a pitcher. Phoebe went to bed and in the morning her bed mate told the others that Phoebe was stiff. She had died in the night. Phoebe Jarvis was buried on 21 January 1821 aged 15.

However, that was not the end of the matter. The other women were outraged at the lack of care Phoebe had received when she was dying. She would possibly have died anyway but it was the lack of attention to a dying girl that rankled. The matter was reported to the select vestry who decided to make a thorough investigation with witnesses including Phoebe's married sister Lucy, the occupants of the workhouse and many others.

The inquiry took several days and unearthed a sorry story of abuses including the encouragement of young women to leave the house shortly after giving birth. Those girls were offered 1*s* a week if they left on which to keep themselves and their babies when in the workhouse they had a bed, fuel and light, and 1*s* 6*d* worth of food each week. There were accusations that the cook not only neglected her duties to the inmates but had on occasion assaulted other women. Despite orders the governor was still farming out paupers for a percentage of their pay and the workers often returned drunk, which led to fights in the overcrowded workhouse. However, the inquiry also showed how paupers supported each other including a woman who had spent all her meagre earnings to buy clothes for the children in the house.

The result of the enquiry was a shake-up of the administration of the workhouse. The governor resigned and the cook was given notice, the former orders were to be enforced, the sick were to be given whatever they needed, the assistant overseer was to superintend the management and the workhouse was in future to be in charge of a matron. An 'industrious widow' Mrs Webber was appointed. Thereafter the house remained in charge of matrons until it closed and when in 1827 an unsatisfactory governor was removed from the St James workhouse the vestry said they wanted a matron like St Mary's. The visitors regularly inspected the house, heard any complaints and ensured that repairs were done. The diet also improved; in addition to beef, wheat, cheese, oatmeal, carrots and turnips the poor had spring greens, fish, tripe, eggs, bacon, cake and biscuits, and in December a substantial amount was spent on 'materials for the puddings'. The children had bread and treacle in the afternoons. In 1832 the then assistant overseer complained that the vestry and magistrates were too prone to side with paupers and relieve the undeserving but the order not to farm out paupers was still being adhered to. It would seem that lessons had been learned.

Mary Siraut

St Mary's church *Mary Siraut*

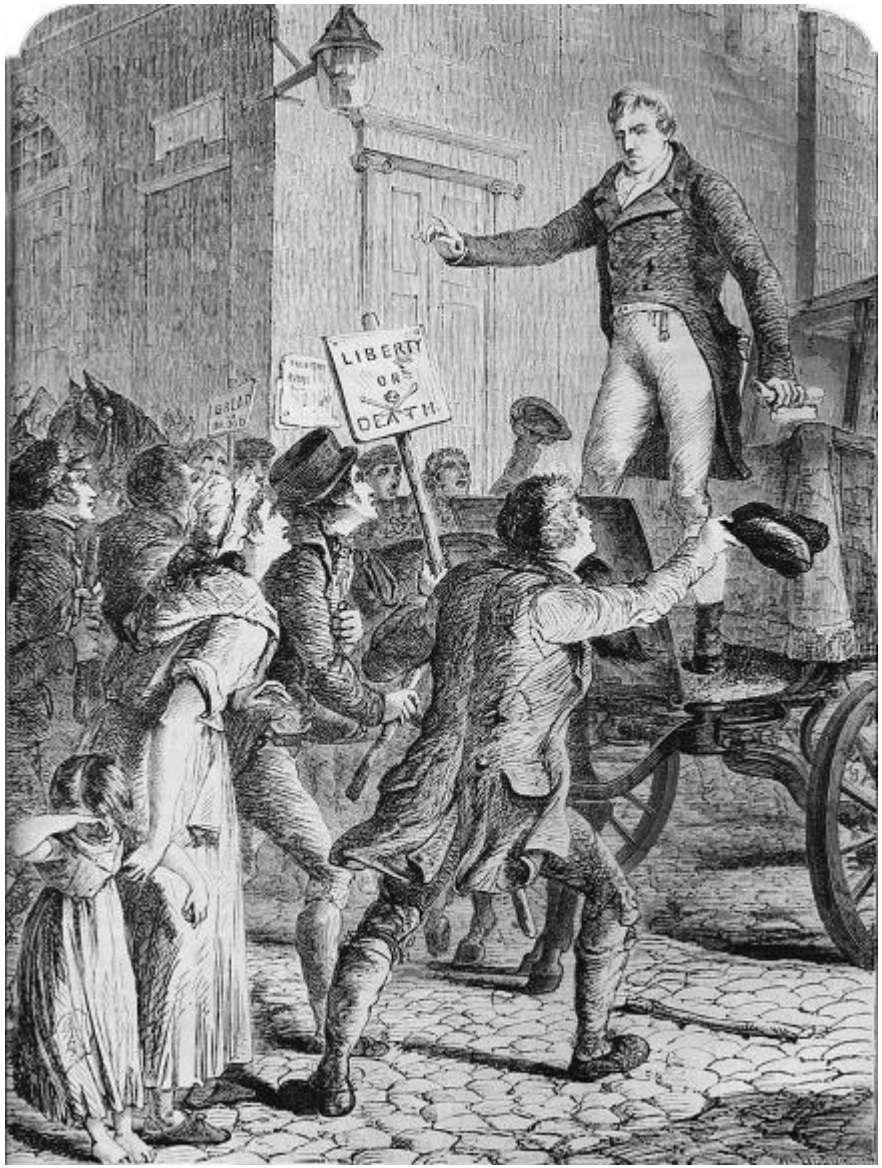
SOMERSET AND THE PETERLOO MASSACRE

On 16 August 1819 the radical orator, Henry Hunt (1773–1835), arrived at St Peter's Fields in Manchester to address a crowd of at least 60,000 people. They had gathered to demand parliamentary reform.

The meeting was broken up by the local yeomanry who were seeking to arrest Hunt. But in the process at least 11 people were killed and more than 400 injured. 'Peterloo' immediately became a symbol of government repression and a rallying cry for radical reformers.

There was a surprising Somerset connection with the events in Manchester. Henry Hunt was convicted of 'unlawful and seditious assembly' and in May 1820 was sentenced to two and a half years imprisonment in Ilchester Gaol – 'the worst, the most unwholesome, and the most infamous county gaol in the kingdom'.

Hunt, whose family had deep roots in Somerset and Wiltshire, made it his task during his imprisonment to expose the cruelty of the prison regime. A Royal Commission was appointed and the 'Ilchester Gaol Scandal' led not only to the dismissal of the prison governor but to national reform.



When Hunt was set free on 30 October 1822 there was widespread celebration in Somerset, led by his old friends Oliver Hayward of Mudford and the firebrand vicar of Creech St Michael, Henry Cresswell. Finally, in 1843, Ilchester Gaol was closed and demolished. It was one outcome which the bombastic but good-hearted Henry Hunt could never have foreseen on that fateful day in St Peter's Fields.

Tom Mayberry

'Somerset and Peterloo', a talk by Tom Mayberry about Henry Hunt and his part in the Peterloo Massacre and the Ilchester Gaol Scandal, will take place at the Museum of Somerset, Taunton, on Wednesday 18 September at 7.30 pm.

Nuggets From VCH Research

Bradford on Tone Board School at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century

School log books and other records enable us to glean a huge amount of information about Somerset's schools in the Victorian age and beyond. Surviving log books for Bradford on Tone school exemplify what a richly evocative resource they can be. The entries for the dawn of the twentieth century are a case in point.

The school then occupied a building erected in 1887, replacing an 1863 structure that HM Inspector had cause to condemn as the 'Worse lit classroom in the district'. In 1903 it was noted that there were separate classrooms for the infants' class and mixed school, with cloakrooms, water closets and separate playgrounds for the boys and girls. The school had capacity for eighty-four children. There were twenty boys, twenty-three girls, and thirty infants on the books. The core subjects were English, Arithmetic, Needlework, Drawing, History and Geography; Singing and Physical Training were also taught. The singing was no doubt supported by the 'American Organ', which the Vicar of Bradford, the Revd R. C. Hunt, had presented to the school in 1901. A school

Child actors at Bradford on Tone school

SWHT

School reports were generally positive. HM Inspector noted in July 1904 that in the Mixed School 'The order is very good, the teaching shows creditable intelligence and the scholars are interested in their work.'

Beyond the classroom, the school staged 'musical plays' ('The Sleeping Beauty' in 1901 and 'Cinderella' in 1904). There were also cricket and football teams. Fixtures against other local schools were regular events. In May 1905 the school cricket team walked to Bishop's Hull to play the school there, losing by twenty-two runs to eighteen. The following day they were defeated at home by Norton Fitzwarren School, by twenty-nine runs to twenty-three.

Scott Pettitt

Boys' cricket team *SWHT*

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Please pass this newsletter on to others. If you are not on our mailing list and would like to receive future copies of the newsletter, please let us know by contacting us at vch@swheritage.org.uk

Forthcoming Events

Our Annual Somerset VCH Lecture is taking place at the Museum of Somerset, Taunton at 7.30pm on 7 November. This year it will be given by Professor Barbara Yorke. More details will be published closer to the date.

Notices of events and walks will be sent to subscribers to this newsletter and posted on the Victoria County History website.

Historic Image of Somerset

Home Guard stand-down parade at Yeovil 1944 *SWHT*

We have been remembering D-Day 1944, but a later consequence of the allied success in Normandy was the standing down of the Home Guard later that year.

Many units had a parade through their local town. This is the 3rd Somerset (Yeovil) Battalion of Home Guard parading through Sherborne Road and Middle Street in Yeovil on a wet 3 December 1944 with few onlookers.

The Elephant and Castle public house on the corner of Wyndham Street on the left and the Western Gazette offices, just visible on the right, are all that remain of this 1940s townscape.