VICTORIA COUNTY HISTORY
Somerset

Victoria County History of Somerset

Issue 20

Winter 2022-23

Welcome to the twentieth edition of our newsletter.

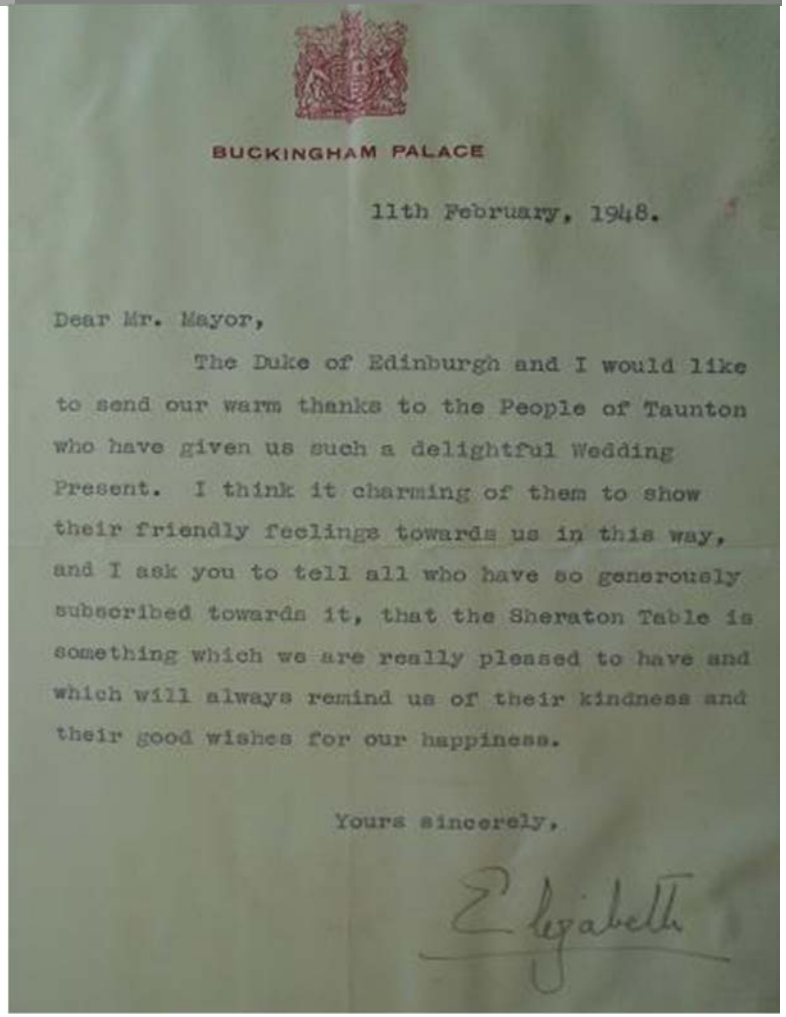
We hope you enjoy it.

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

In many ways 2022 was an eventful year. In September we said farewell to Queen Elizabeth II, who was patron of the VCH. I had the privilege of meeting her on her Diamond Jubilee visit to Crewkerne in 2012. In a happier although no less austere time the people of Taunton raised money for a wedding gift for Princess Elizabeth, as she was then. Not knowing what to give her and several months having passed since the wedding, Alderman Goodland asked his brother, then a businessman in Bond Street to seek an audience with the Princess to find out what she would like. The answer proved to be a Sheraton writing table, which was duly purchased and given to her Royal Highness.

Photograph of the 1780 Sheraton writing table given to Princess Elizabeth in 1948, with her letter of thanks



BUCKINGHAM PALACE

11th February, 1948.

Dear Mr. Mayor,

The Duke of Edinburgh and I would like to send our warm thanks to the People of Taunton who have given us such a delightful Wedding Present. I think it charming of them to show their friendly feelings towards us in this way, and I ask you to tell all who have so generously subscribed towards it, that the Sheraton Table is something which we are really pleased to have and which will always remind us of their kindness and their good wishes for our happiness.

Yours sincerely,

Elizabeth

We have had two outings. James Bond took a group round Cleeve Abbey on 25 June, which was very informative and enjoyable, and has written about the abbey for this newsletter. After exploring the outside in pleasant although cool weather James took us round the interior including the well preserved dorter and refectory and then to see the handsome mosaic floor.

On a chilly 6 November we took a walk through a little known area of Taunton between St Mary's and St James' Churches. Our kind hosts at St James Church provided refreshments and a small exhibition about the church.

We are planning another VCH lecture in the spring and a possible visit to Glastonbury. Newsletter readers will be the first to hear about our events so look out for mailings.

More Taunton material has gone up on the VCH section of the South West Heritage Trust (https://swheritage.org.uk/somerset-victoria-county-history/). Taunton research is almost complete and texts are being revised before work resumes on completing Scott Pettitt's work on Wilton. Alex Craven continues to work part-time on Staplegrove.

In October the editor received an award for service to the VCH!

In this issue we follow the story of Cleeve Abbey following our visit last summer and of the rebellion of 1497 in the south-west. We also look at two very different Taunton workers; clothier Elizabeth Harvey in the 1690s and 1700s and William Smith a mid 19th-century tinman. We also have news of a wonderful fashion exhibition at the Museum of Somerset until March 2023.

In case you thought scams were modern you might like this story from 1899 of a smart Spanish crook and even smarter Somerset farmer with a sense of humour. A Pitminster farmer received a long hard luck story from a Spanish 'nobleman, a political prisoner in Valencia', who on a visit to England had buried £15,000 at Pitminster. He needed 'help' sent to his servant to enable his daughter to travel to Somerset to recover the money.

The farmer being no fool replied as follows: 'It is a most fortunate thing that you wrote me concerning your property. The money has just been discovered. I am the only one in the 'know' beside the actual miscreant who is in possession. Place a bank draft of one hundred pounds in any bank to my credit, and I will give you such information that you shall probably receive the greater portion of your splendid fortune. Telegraph me immediately on receipt of this, and send on the bank draft by next mail, as no time should be wasted.' Needless to say the 'Spanish nobleman' made no reply!'

A Change to the Somerset VCH

Since 2015 the Somerset VCH has been managed by a small charity called the Somerset County History Trust (SCHT). The Trust has had significant success in fundraising and through the voluntary contribution of our editor, Mary Siraut, a great deal has been achieved.

Looking to the future, the trustees of SCHT have increasingly felt that the long-term continuation of VCH work in Somerset could best be assured if the project were part of a larger organisation. For that reason it recently decided to amalgamate its charitable activities with the South West Heritage Trust (SWHT). In practical terms, very little has changed, and a steering group will continue to oversee and manage the project. VCH resources from the SCHT have been moved to a restricted fund within SWHT, and a distinct budget will be continued for its activities in future.

I do hope you will continue to support the Somerset VCH in whatever ways you can.

Tom Mayberry

VCH Outstanding Contribution Award

We were delighted to hear in August that Mary Siraut had been awarded an inaugural VCH Outstanding Contribution Award. These awards have been conceived as a way to recognise and honour exceptional contributions to the VCH, and to express gratitude.

As editor of the Somerset VCH Mary's dedication and scholarship have been outstanding. She works full-time in a voluntary capacity, using her wealth of research experience and incredible knowledge of Somerset. In recent years she has produced volumes on the Cadburys (vol. 11) and Minehead (vol. 12, forthcoming), as well as the EPE Exmoor volume. She is currently researching the complex history of Taunton Deane and its voluminous sources. She also promotes the VCH through talks, walks and newsletters. Mary's passion and commitment have enabled the Somerset VCH to thrive. Her voluntary contribution is wholly exceptional and very worthy of recognition.

Mary received her award at an event on 12 October at Senate House in London, home of the Institute of Historical Research.

Well done Mary – this recognition is very well deserved!

Janet Tall

The Monastery in the Flowery Vale: Cleeve Abbey

On 25th June 1198 twelve Cistercian monks from Revesby Abbey in Lincolnshire arrived in west Somerset to begin monastic life on a site where the Washford River left its constricted valley on the north flank of the Brendon Hills to flow across the coastal lowland towards the Bristol Channel. They named the place *Vallis Florida*, the 'Flowery Vale'; but most records referred to it by the name of the parish in which it was situated, Cleeve. On 25th June 2022 the 824th anniversary of the abbey's settlement was (by sheer chance!) celebrated by a visit of supporters of the Somerset VCH.

The founder of Cleeve Abbey was William de Roumare, grandson of William, 2nd Earl of Lincoln, who had founded Revesby Abbey 55 years earlier. Their family had close connections with the Cistercians, having previously been founders or benefactors of 16 other abbeys of the order, mostly in the north and east midlands. The younger William inherited the Cleeve estate in 1161, and around 1190 he decided to use his lands there to endow a new abbey. It received only a modest income from its initial foundation grant and from other lands subsequently acquired, and it never rose above middle rank within the order; but monastic life continued there for 339 years.

The Cistercians were a reformed monastic order which had expanded rapidly during the twelfth century, following a strict interpretation of the Rule of St Benedict. They preferred to settle in remote locations. Their architecture was plain and functional, rejecting unnecessary ornament. They stripped the seven daily church services of superfluous ceremony, in order to free more time for manual work and for private prayer and study. The Benedictine ban on consuming the flesh of four-footed animals was enforced.

The Cistercians were noted for their water management skills, and at Cleeve they diverted the Washford River out of its natural course, canalising it along the western boundary of the precinct, so that the abbey buildings could be constructed over the flat valley floor. Some 400m above the abbey, some of the river's flow was diverted into two leats along the valley sides, the western leat serving two corn mills outside the abbey gates, while the eastern leat formed part of the precinct boundary, filling a three-sided moat around a rectangular

Illus.1: Aerial view of Cleeve Abbey from the south-west (Mick Aston, Somerset HER 22776), showing the canalised Washford River and west precinct boundary (left, alongside the road), the garden moat (centre, above the abbey buildings) and the eastern leat and precinct boundary (right). (I am grateful to Chris Webster for providing this image)

garden north of the abbey buildings before discharging back into the Washford River (Illus.1). Further channels drove the monastic corn mill, filled fishponds, and flushed the abbey's latrines.

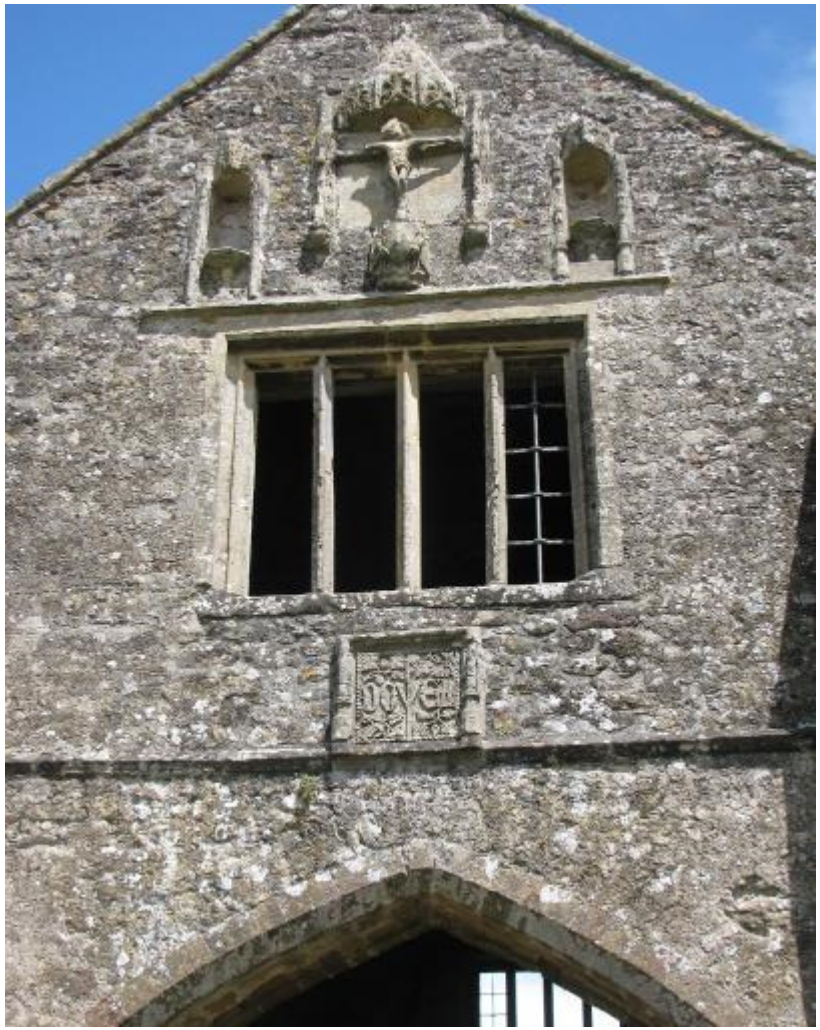
The abbey precinct was entered from the north-west, over a bridge spanning the canalised river and through an outer gate, a relatively minor structure of which only fragments remain. This gave access to the outer court, which would have contained stables, a bakehouse, brewhouse, kilnhouse, tannery and smithy. On the further side of this court, a much grander gatehouse, flanked by ruins of the porter's lodge and almonry, survives to its full height. This controlled access to the inner precinct, church and main communal buildings. Three sides of the gatehouse retain much thirteenth-century masonry, but its construction across the original river course had caused subsidence, necessitating substantial later

buttressing to save it from collapse. A stone-cut inscription commemorates Abbot Dovell, who completely rebuilt the south side of the gatehouse and inserted a mullioned window into its north side in the early sixteenth century (Illus.2). At the same time several sculptural panels of fourteenth and fifteenth-century date were incorporated, including portions of a Crucifixion sculpture reassembled over the south window, and a plaque over the north window proclaiming the duty of hospitality, with the message *Porta patens esto, nulli claudaris honeste* ('Gate be open, closed to no honest person'). Reset in the north gable is a Ham Stone panel portraying the Virgin Mary, which has been affected by burning in an earlier location. This may have come from a hospital chapel maintained by the abbey at Chapel Cleeve, which collapsed into the sea in 1452. The chapel's image of the Virgin miraculously survived, and was then placed in a new chapel built further inland, where it became an object of pilgrimage. Fire damage to the new chapel may then have resulted in its removal to its present position. The gatehouse was maintained into the late seventeenth century as the entrance to the gentry residence created within the claustral buildings after the Dissolution.

The central buildings of the abbey were all constructed during the thirteenth century in austere style to a relatively standardised plan. However, major new building works undertaken by Abbot David Juyner (1435-87) and Abbot William Dovell (1510-36) significantly altered the original plan and introduced more ornate forms of architecture.

Founders of Cistercian abbeys were required to make provision for the routine of services to begin from the very first day of occupation by monks from the mother-house. Evidence for small short-lived primary churches has been found on at least four other Cistercian sites in Britain. In 1999-2000 traces of an earlier south transept, about half the width of its visible successor, were discovered at Cleeve. Almost certainly this belonged to a temporary church provided by William de Roumare in 1198. Such buildings were always intended to be replaced by a larger permanent church as soon as resources permitted.

Most of Cleeve's replacement church was demolished soon after the Dissolution, apart from the nave's south wall and part of the south transept, which were retained to enclose a courtyard north of the post-Dissolution residence. A vertical discontinuity in the rubble masonry of the nave represents the starting- and finishing-point of several decades of construction, ending with the nave's completion. The walls would originally have been rendered and limewashed, so this join would not have shown. Excavated low walls and foundations reveal the remainder of a characteristic Cistercian church plan. There was no west door, since Cistercian naves were never intended to cater for a local secular population.



Illus.2: South face of the inner gatehouse, rebuilt by Abbot Dovell (1510-36). Above the window are reassembled portions of a Crucifixion sculpture probably of 15th-century date.

The nave and north and south aisles had six-bay arcades of round piers. This was the church of the lay brothers, illiterate men of humble background who followed a simplified routine of monastic life, supporting the choir monks by practical works, including labour on the abbey's granges or estate farms. Housed in the western claustral range, they entered the nave through a door towards the west corner of the south aisle. Further east a screen defined the west end of the monks' choir, the stalls of which continued beneath the crossing. The transepts each incorporated a pair of square-ended east chapels, separated by solid walls; and a short square-ended presbytery projected beyond them. A royal grant in 1232 of oaks from Newton Park for making choir-stalls roughly dates the completion of the choir.

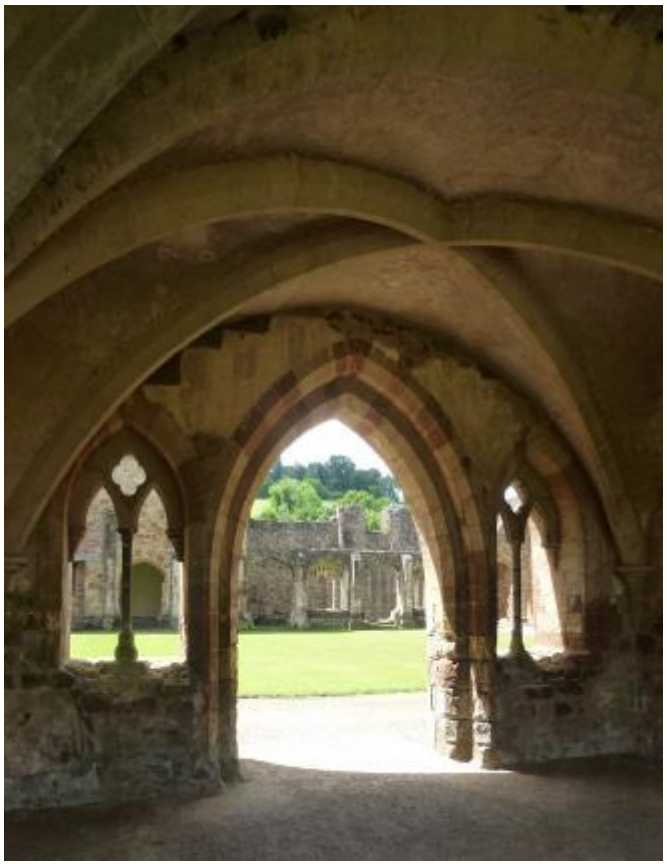
The square cloister garth south of the church was originally surrounded by sheltered walks. Evidence for their roof-lines can be seen in the surrounding ranges. At the mid-point of the north walk a shallow trefoil-headed recess marks the position of the abbot's collation seat. Chapter 42 of the Benedictine Rule required the monks to sit together to hear a reading before entering the church for the last service of each day. This custom took its name from one of the recommended texts, the *Collationes Patrum* written around AD 420 by St John Cassian, recording his conversations with the pioneers of monastic life in the deserts of Egypt. Unreformed Benedictine communities held collation in the chapter-house, but the Cistercians held it in the cloister walk backing on to the church, the monks occupying benches on either side of a central seat reserved for the abbot. The west cloister walk at Cleeve was rebuilt with large glazed traceried windows by Abbot Dovell shortly before the Dissolution, part of an uncompleted project to convert the west range to a grand residence for himself.

The east range of claustral buildings survives much as it was built in the mid-thirteenth century (Illus.3). Their arrangement follows the usual Cistercian pattern. At the north end of the ground floor, accessible only from the south transept, is the sacristy, a narrow barrel-vaulted room with storage cupboard recesses, where church plate, altar-cloths, vestments and other liturgical equipment were kept. It also contains a piscina, for washing the vessels used in the Mass. An unusual feature is a large round east window, originally containing tracery. Immediately south of the sacristy a similar vaulted room entered from the cloister was used for book storage.

Illus.3 : Part of the 13th-century east range from the west, showing the row of dormitory windows above the line of the cloister walk roof and, along the ground floor (left to right), the large 13th-century doorway to the book store, reduced in size in the 15th century; the front of the chapter-house vestibule; the day stairs inserted in the 15th century; the parlour entry; and the

Beyond the library is the distinctive façade of the vestibule to the chapter-house, with a central doorway flanked by two-light plate tracery windows. The ribbed vaulting of the vestibule is unusually shallow for its span, to maintain an even floor level in the dormitory above. (Illus. 4). The taller eastern bay of the chapter-house, which projected beyond the rest of the range, has not survived. The chapter house was where the administrative business of the abbey was conducted in daily meetings. It took its name from the requirement that one chapter of the Rule of St Benedict should be read aloud at every meeting. A lead-lined socket in the floor marks the position of the lectern.

Continuing southwards, a smaller barrel-vaulted room served as the parlour, where any necessary conversations could be held, strict silence being observed elsewhere in the cloisters. This was reduced in size in the fifteenth century when a winding stairway was inserted to provide daytime access to the dormitory, a change necessitated by the loss of the original day stairs during the rebuilding of the south range. The plaster wall of the stairway has interesting post-Dissolution graffiti depicting sailing ships. Beyond the



Ilus. 4: Interior of chapter house vestibule looking across to the ruined west range

parlour was the slype, a narrow passage providing access between the cloister and the infirmary. The southernmost room in the ground floor of the east range was the largest, and served as a day-room where the monks could undertake a range of practical work. In the fifteenth century a fireplace was inserted here for the benefit of the monks in winter, following the demolition of the original warming-house in the south range.

The entire length of the upper floor of the east range was designed as a communal dormitory for up to 36 monks, though that number was never actually reached. At its north end are two doorways: one led to the night stairs by which the monks descended into the church for the night-time service; the other gave access to a chamber above the south -east transeptal chapel, probably used as the treasury. In the fifteenth century timber partitions were inserted to subdivide the open dormitory into individual cubicles and some of the lancet window-sills were converted to window seats set with reused patterned tiles. At the south-east corner another doorway gave access to the latrine range, which extended eastwards with space for about 17 seats in line on the upper floor. The door to the latrine was centrally pivoted to allow entrance on one side and exit on the other. Alongside it is a small opening with an iron hook for a candle lantern.

The latrine was demolished soon after the Dissolution, but investigation in the early 1980s revealed its ground-floor plan. It was flushed by a sewer along its southern side, supplied by water drawn from the eastern leat. In the later fourteenth century an additional narrow drain was inserted along the full length of the lower room, parallel with main sewer channel, converting it to a ground-floor latrine. The angle between the east range and the latrine formed two sides of a secondary cloister, closed on its eastern side by the monastic infirmary. This was excavated shortly before the 1914-18 War, but no report was ever published and, regrettably, no known plan survives to show what was discovered.

The south side of the cloisters was the standard position for the communal refectory, which most other monastic orders placed in east-west alignment parallel with the church. Through their need for an extended west range to accommodate their lay brothers, the early Cistercians rotated the refectory round to a north-south alignment, accommodating a warming-house to the east and a kitchen to serve both the monks and the lay brothers, to the west. Usually the axis of the refectory coincided with the mid-point of the south range, but at Cleeve it was placed further to the west, for unknown reasons. Surviving portions of the mid-thirteenth-century buildings on the cloister side include the original refectory doorway and another doorway at the east end which probably served the original day stairs, but now gives access to a through passage. Immediately east of the refectory doorway is a broad segmental-arched recess about 14ft wide, which spanned the trough of a laver where the monks would wash their hands before meals. The trough was removed after the Dissolution, but its outline can be seen in the stonework. Normally there were two lavers of this type, one on either side of the refectory entrance. The western laver at Cleeve was destroyed during later alterations, but remains of its arch were rediscovered in 1979.

Excavation of the site of the original thirteenth-century refectory revealed that its original pavement had survived almost intact, with most of the patterned tiles still in their original arrangement. Many of the tiles have heraldic designs which

can be connected to Henry III's brother, Richard, Earl of Cornwall, to Richard's son Edmund, and to Edmund's wife, Margaret de Clare, whom he married in 1272. Similar tiles, probably manufactured somewhere in the lower Severn valley, are present at the Cistercian abbey of Hailes (founded by Richard of Cornwall), and occur elsewhere in Gloucestershire and Somerset.

In the mid-fifteenth century Abbot Juyner had the original refectory and warming-house demolished, replacing them with a new two-storey range aligned east-west (Illus.5). This reflected the community's changing requirements: fewer monks and a more relaxed regime of meals permitted a smaller refectory, while more private rooms were needed, some of which could generate income. The original refectory entrance now gave access to a stairway to the upper floor. The remainder of the new lower floor contained two living-rooms equipped with fireplaces and independent entrances, and two smaller bedchambers each with access to a privy projecting out from the south wall. These rooms were designed to accommodate corrodians, men who had paid a pension to the abbey in exchange for accommodation, food and drink during their declining years. The privies were flushed by a new branch drain led off the main drain just below the monks' reredorter. The setting for a wooden sluicegate to direct the flow can be seen at the point of its diversion.

The five eastern bays of the upper floor served as the new refectory. Though smaller than its predecessor, it is a magnificent room, with large three-light traceried windows on both sides (Illus.6). The southern windows, having no obstruction from the roof of the cloister walk, are taller, incorporating a transom with quatrefoil openings in the spandrels below. The spectacular arch-braced timber roof has carved wooden angels projecting from the base of the principal and subsidiary trusses, vine-trails along the wall-plates, cusped arcading over the principals, and elaborate bosses. It was intended to have a boarded wagon ceiling, which was never put in place. In this room the monks ate in silence while hearing a reading delivered from a stone pulpit. The pulpit was removed to allow the insertion of a large fireplace when the refectory was converted to use as a residential great hall after the Dissolution, but the doorway and lower stairs leading to it remain in place.

The lobby at the top of the staircase also gave access to a small chamber occupying the westernmost bay of the new range. The east wall of this room is covered by a remarkable late-fifteenth-century wall-painting depicting an elderly man standing at prayer on a double-arched bridge, threatened by a

Illus.5: Abbot Juyner's south range, from the south. The corrodians' rooms occupied the ground floor: two of the buttress contain the chimneys from their fireplaces, and the shallow projections with small slit windows are their privies. The four large upper-floor windows light the new refectory, and the large chimney serves the inserted fireplace which replaced the refectory pulpit. The middle windows to the left light the painted chamber and staircase lobby, the top window lights the second-floor chamber. The projecting framework at ground level (now replaced by a more substantial shelter) outlines the tile pavement of the original thirteenth-century refectory.

lion and a dragon, but protected by two tiny angels. Fish are shown in the water below the bridge. Flanking this scene are two much larger figures, St Catherine to the left and St Margaret to the right. For long a complete mystery, this painting has now been identified as a scene from one of the moral tales in the *Gesta Romanorum*, a collection of stories from different parts of Europe and Asia first brought together around 1300 and subsequently widely copied and distributed. This room may have been used as an office or counting-house by the abbot's secretariat. A narrow gallery outside its north wall, linking the refectory with the abbot's private quarters to the west, has several medieval graffiti, including a caricature of a tonsured monk. Above the painted chamber and staircase is a second-floor chamber accessed from the cloister by a spiral stairway at the north-west corner. Spanned by a roof which continues the structural form of the refectory roof in a simpler design, lit by two-light mullioned and transomed windows on either side, equipped with a fireplace and retaining fragmentary decorative wall-paintings, this was clearly a room of some

importance - perhaps the private apartment of a senior monk, possibly even part of the abbot's own lodging. Under the roof-eaves outside the north wall of this chamber is a projecting bellcote, from which a bell was rung to call the monks to the refectory at meal-times.

In most Cistercian houses the west range included storage space for the cellarer, with the lay brothers' refectory occupying the southern half of the ground floor, while the upper floor contained the lay brothers' dormitory. There is some evidence that the west range at Cleeve was rebuilt in a much abbreviated form in the late thirteenth century, not closing in the entire side of the cloister. This must reflect a significant decline in the number of lay brothers. Subsequently the southern part of the west range was rebuilt to accommodate the abbot's private quarters, a change begun by Abbot Juyner and extended, but never completed, by Abbot Dovell. All that they built was destroyed when a new farmhouse was inserted over the south-west angle of the cloisters in the late seventeenth century.

Illus.6: Interior of Abbot Juyner's refectory, east end, showing the elaborate roof and the entry to the stairs to the refectory pulpit, which was destroyed when the fireplace was inserted after the Dissolution. Traces of a large mural depicting the Crucifixion were visible on the end wall up to the end of the 19th century.

Although Protestant reformers usually portrayed monks as corrupt, greedy, idle and generally unpopular, there had been no serious allegations of misconduct at Cleeve. Instead, there was still local appreciation of the abbey's beneficial activities. In 1535 its estimated annual income had been £155 9s 5¼d, so it should have fallen under the provisions of the 1536 Act of Parliament which had ordered the closure of all monasteries having an assessed annual income of less than £200. Either through bureaucratic oversight or local concern, it had escaped. Sir Thomas Arundell, the king's receiver, reported the monks to be of 'honest life'. He had heard much lamentation over the abbey's threatened closure, and begged 'on behalf of the honest gentlemen of that quarter' that it be permitted to remain open to continue its duties of hospitality and charity. The 'welcome mat' inscription over the Inner Gate was not just empty words. Cleeve was one of the last places where hospitality was available to westbound travellers before they embarked on the hazardous crossing of Exmoor. Moreover, according to the assessment made in 1535, approximately one-fifth of Cleeve Abbey's income was distributed in alms to the local poor. If this is correct, then its charitable provisions were about four times the average for a house of its size.

Despite Arundell's plea, Cleeve Abbey was surrendered on 6th September 1537. Abbot Dovell received a substantial annual pension of 40 marks (£26 13s 4d). Six of the monks wished to continue their religious life and were permitted to transfer to larger abbeys elsewhere, though these too would be suppressed within a few years. The remaining monks were dismissed with one -off gratuities of 26s 8d. The site and buildings of the abbey were acquired as a tenancy by Anthony Busterd on a 21-year lease, and it was he who adapted the south and west ranges as a gentleman's residence. A later tenant, Robert Boteler, decided to rebuild the abbey's former grange at Binham as a more fashionable family home in 1624, and the abbey buildings were reduced to use as a farm. In 1868 the property was bought by George Luttrell of Dunster Castle, who terminated the leases to tenant farmers, began repairing the decayed buildings and financed the earliest archaeological excavations, the first steps on the way towards the conservation and presentation of the abbey for public education and enjoyment that we appreciate today.

James Bond

1497: A year of great unrest in the south-west of England

Torrigiano's bust of Henry VII
(Courtesy of the V&A)

At the end of Shakespeare's play, King Richard III, Henry Tudor, earl of Richmond, shortly to be crowned King Henry VII, is left with the closing speech. In it he declares: 'Now civil wounds are stopp'd, peace lives again'. Those words were not entirely prophetic. By the time we get to the year 1497, almost 12 years into Henry's reign, we find that civil strife is alive and well, especially here in the south-west of England.

At the start of his reign, Henry had needed to staunch one significant rebellion in the shape of the pretender, Lambert Simnel. Simnel claimed he was the son of Edward IV's brother, George Duke of Clarence and thus rightfully King Edward VI of England. Crowned in Dublin, Simnel and his supporters landed in England in June 1487 but were then soundly defeated by Henry's forces at the Battle of Stoke. This was just one of the woes that beset Henry's reign. In the words of his biographer, Stanley Chrimes, 'The problem of security remained a besetting preoccupation of Henry VII for the whole of his reign, except perhaps perhaps for the last two or three years of it'. Ten years after Simnel's revolt, the year 1497 is above all the year of Perkin Warbeck, so a very brief introduction to him is needed.

Born in around 1474, Warbeck surfaced into public view in 1491 as a new pretender to the English throne. The claim was that he was Richard Duke of York, the younger son of Edward IV, our Yorkist king. He was therefore one of the two princes in the Tower who had disappeared from sight in the summer of 1483. If he truly were this Richard, he would have a claim to the throne of England much stronger than that of the incumbent, Henry Tudor. Warbeck became embroiled in the complex power politics and diplomacy of north-west Europe, and was taken up by successive princes. First Charles VIII, king of France, then Margaret, dowager duchess of Burgundy, sister of Edward IV and aunt to the young princes in the Tower. She had last seen her nephew, Richard, on a visit to England in 1480 when he was seven. Now she encountered the nineteen-year-old Warbeck, declared that she recognised him, and, in a letter to Queen Isabella of Spain, celebrated his miraculous deliverance. Margaret had of course been a supporter of our previous pretender to the throne, Lambert Simnel. She now funded Warbeck's first and unsuccessful attempt to land in England in July 1495. He then fled to Ireland and on to Scotland, where he was warmly received by King James IV.

Perkin Warbeck as Richard Duke of York

In January 1496 Warbeck married Lady Katherine Gordon, a Scottish noblewomen and a distant relative to James. Warbeck was provided with Falkland Palace as a base for himself and his adherents. However, relations between James and Warbeck began to cool after an unsuccessful foray by Scottish troops into England. The presence of Warbeck on the Scottish side had not led to the recruitment of rebellious northern Englishmen to his cause. Warbeck was not perhaps the talisman that James had hoped. By Christmas 1496 Warbeck was still in Scotland, though not with the king. That New Year there was raid and counter-raid between English and Scottish forces. By the spring, King Henry of England was massing a large and well-equipped force south of the border while King James was also seeking to muster his army in response. It did seem that major hostilities between the two kingdoms would shortly erupt. However things now began to turn rather sour for the English king.

King James IV of Scotland

On 14 May 1497 a major rebellion began in western Cornwall in the parish of St Keverne, south-east of Helston. In the words of Polydore Vergil (that contemporary Italian humanist scholar and historian), this was ‘a rebellion of serious dimensions in an area where it might have least been feared’. It was initially led by Michael Joseph An Gof, a smith and Thomas Flamank, a gentleman’s son. The rebels may have had political motivations, but their revolt was principally one about tax. Since the time of Edward I, English kings had derived much of their direct tax from instruments known as the fifteenth and the tenth. However that method of taxation was inflexible and was no longer suited to the demands of the Tudor state. A primitive tax system needed reform at a time when the requirements for defence expenditure were becoming ever more onerous on the royal Exchequer. However, what the administration came up with was not a shining beacon of fairness and sophistication. The tax grant of 1497 authorised two fifteenths and tenths supplemented by additional levies that were equivalent to a further fifteenth and tenth. No inhabitant of Cornwall would happily put up with a major new tax demand like that.

So the rebellion erupted with energy and by the end of May the rebels arrived at the walled city of Exeter. The frightened citizens eventually admitted the commanders of the rebellion into the city. However, after some discussions, and I think to the great relief of the citizenry, the rebel force then moved on to Taunton. A more general rising took place that extended north to Devizes in Wiltshire, south to Dorchester and east to Winchester.

In Somerset they were joined by a new leader in the shape of the nobleman James Tuchet, seventh Baron Audley, whose seat was at Nether Stowey. Twenty-four Somerset gentlemen also threw in their lot with the rebels. In the first week of June 1497, they entered Wells. The unrest was now at its height, centred on the area around Wells, Bath and Bristol. Their hopes of capturing Bristol itself ended when the mayor of the town robustly rejected their advances. The rebels left Wells, with Joseph heading toward Winchester and Guildford, while Audley went further north, arriving at Wallingford on 9 or 10 June. Henry VII’s forces left London and headed towards Wallingford. He was supported by the retinue of Edward de La Pole, earl of Suffolk. To the south Giles, Lord Daubney the King’s Chamberlain, had a minor engagement with the rebel force near Guildford, but that rebel force, possibly as much as 10,000 strong, was still able to head towards Blackheath, much to the king’s discontent.

By 17 June, Henry had assembled all his forces, numbering maybe 25,000 and was then able to defeat the rebels soundly at Blackheath. With the exception of Audley, all the king’s nobility had supported him. The rebels were scattered, Audley, Flamank and Joseph were all captured alive, and the Cornish contingent returned home, beneficiaries of the king’s clemency. Because of his noble rank, Audley had the doubtful privilege of death by beheading, whereas the other two were taken to Tyburn where they were hanged, drawn and quartered.

Now our attention must turn back to Perkin Warbeck, because this earlier Cornish rebellion can be seen as a prelude to what happened next. It was probably on 6 July that Warbeck departed Scotland from the port of Ayr. James IV in the end had not launched a full-scale invasion of England. Instead he encouraged Warbeck’s departure with a plan that he should land in Cornwall to capitalise on the rebellious spirit of that year. James may well have decided that he wanted to get rid of Warbeck, possibly hoping he would be captured. The king of the Scots’ attention was on the next move in his hostile relations with the English.

The castle site at Nether Stowey

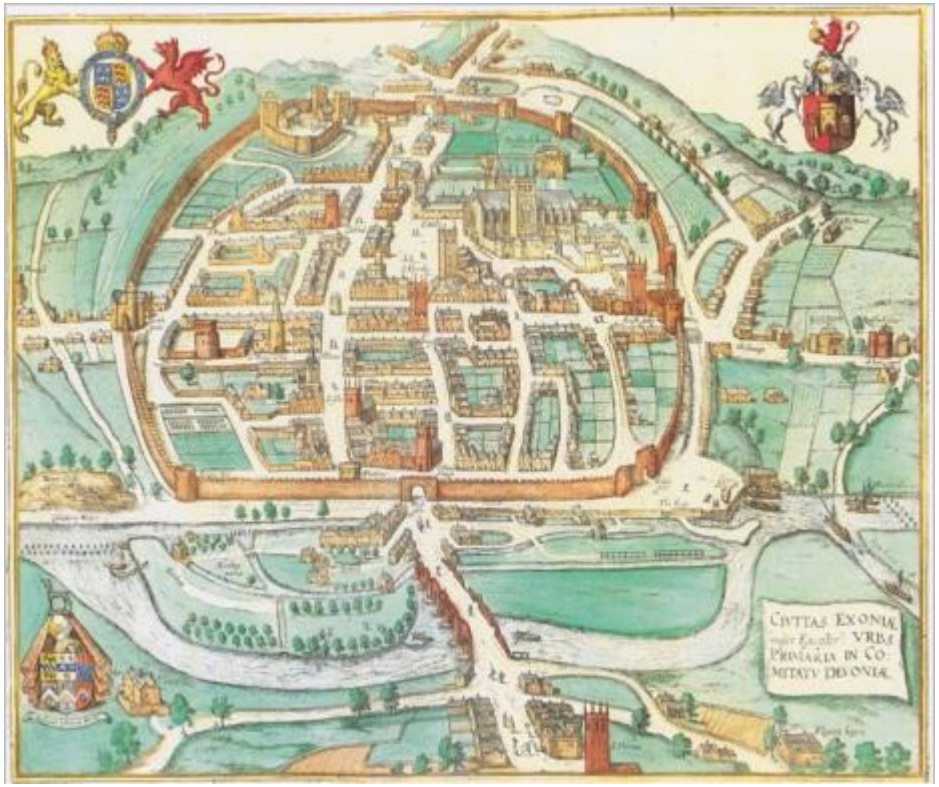
Nevertheless James had continued to pay a pension to Warbeck, and Warbeck's little flotilla was well-provisioned. It seems clear that Spanish diplomacy was in play between James IV and Henry VII, and it may have been that Warbeck was being encouraged to seek Spain as his destination, albeit with Ireland as his first stopping-off point. Anyhow, the voyage was lengthy, and it was about three weeks after departure that Warbeck's now degraded flotilla arrived near Ardmore, on the southern Irish coast between Waterford and Cork. The Irish earls of Desmond and Kildare were hostile to Warbeck who made his way under pursuit to Cork, arriving on 26 July. He evaded his pursuers, took ship at Kinsale and landed just north of Land's End at Whitesand Bay in Cornwall on 7 September 1497.

It seems he then placed his wife, Katherine Gordon, at St Buryan for sanctuary. Warbeck had possibly less than 300 men at his disposal. However, local rebels were eager to join his force, and within a week he had around 3,000 men gathered near Bodmin. They then moved quickly on to Exeter by which time the force might have been as large as 8,000 (a formidable number for the city to face).

The earl of Devon, Edward Courtenay, was the loyal aristocrat whom Henry called on to stop the rebels. On 12 September he had sent Richard Empson with the great sum of £666 to the earl, urging him to raise as many troops as possible. Courtenay had fought with Henry at both Bosworth and Stoke Field for which he had been rewarded by becoming a knight of the Garter. Henry knew that his earl was a man he could rely on. However, the rebels were advancing rapidly, and Courtenay decided that he was unable to face Warbeck's burgeoning forces in the field, so he withdrew inside the city. The expectation and hope on King Henry's side was that Warbeck would seek to take and hold Exeter rather then head east towards the capital. Henry hoped Warbeck would be captured and brought to him alive, saying this was his chief desire.

Courtenay was correct about Exeter's importance. Warbeck's rebels arrived there in the early afternoon of Sunday 17 September. They had probably crossed the River Exe at Cowley Bridge, approaching the city from the north. It seems their initial plan was to lay siege, tactically a mistake. The city walls were strong, and it was well-garrisoned and defended with guns. Even if the rebels were to dig in and wait out a siege, Courtenay could rely on royal forces to come to his aid within several days.

The rebels decided not to wait, and launched their first main attack on the North Gate of the city on that very Sunday. Although significant damage was caused, they were driven back. The next day, Monday 18 September, after what might



John Hooker's 16th-century map of Exeter

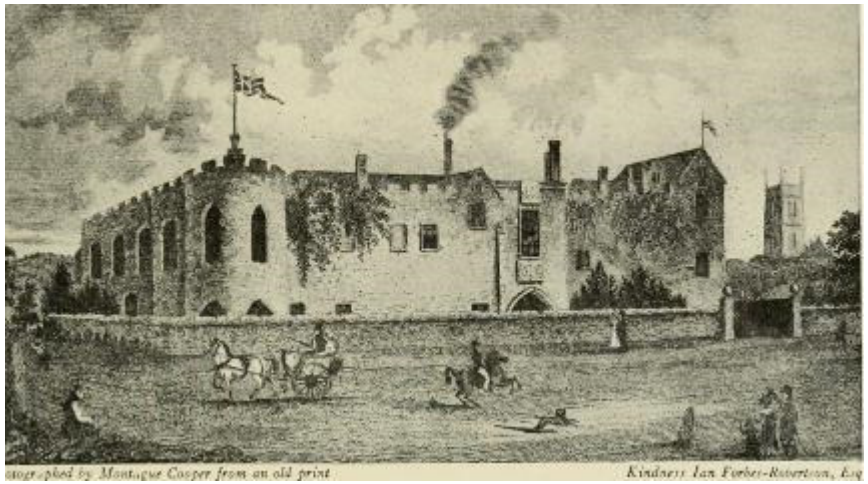
have been a diversionary attack on the damaged North Gate, the rebels focused their efforts on the East Gate. They managed to force an entry and occupied the High Street. It appears that both the citizenry and garrison countered, and the rebels were driven back out of the gate, at least according to John Hooker's later description in his 'Annals of Exeter'.

However Nicholas Orme questions whether the rebels could have penetrated so far inside the city without some of the defenders being killed. Accounts suggest that two attacks were made by the rebels before 10am. Both sides were badly bruised by these encounters with Edward Courtenay seemingly receiving an arrow wound in the arm. A truce was arranged whereby Warbeck's forces would withdraw if Courtenay, his numbers depleted, agreed not to pursue them. One estimate suggests that between 300 and 400 rebels died in these assaults.

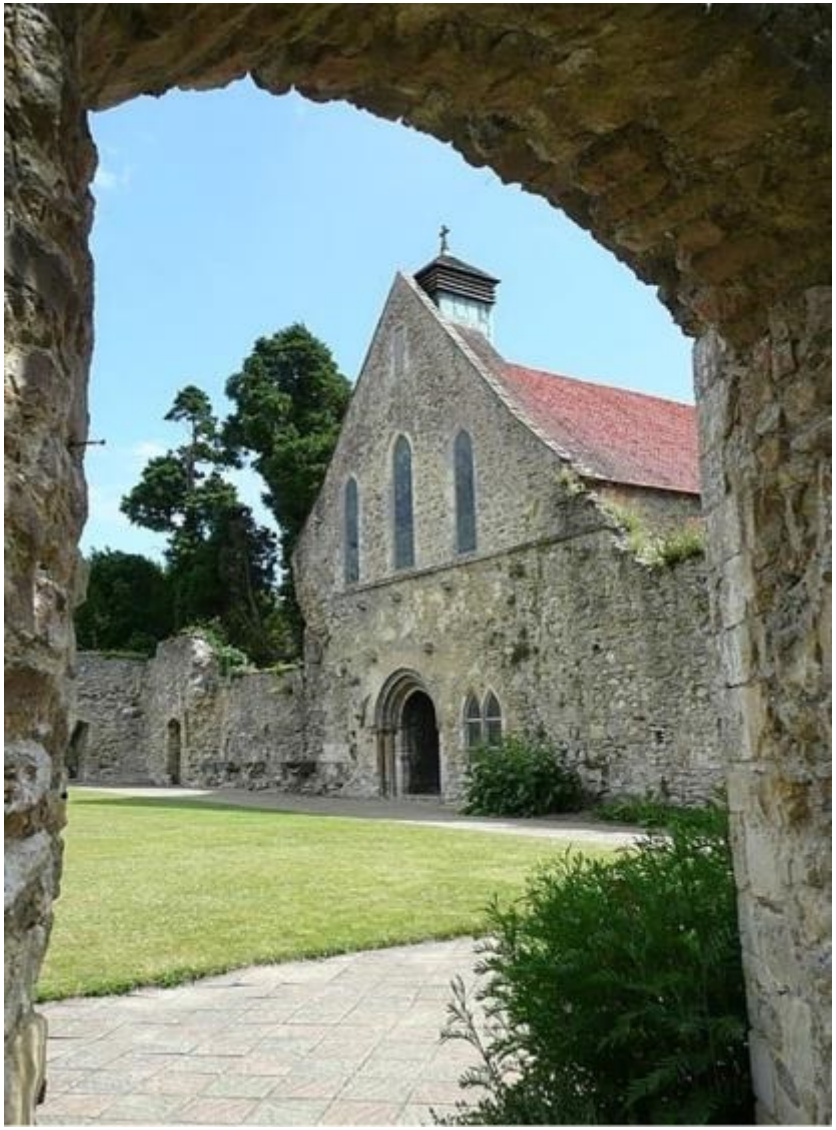
The damage done to the city of Exeter's fabric was significant. The Receiver's Roll for that year shows just how much was spent on items such as gun-powder, guns and their transport, on lead for the making of ammunition, on ironwork and timber to repair the gates, etc.

Back to Monday 18 September. Even before noon it seems Warbeck's forces were heading north-east towards Cullompton and on to Taunton, where they arrived on Tuesday 19 September. But it was not a place they could adequately defend. The castle of the Bishop of Winchester was being re-built and the town had no walls. It became known also that strong forces loyal to the king were advancing from the east, and that the earl of Devon would be pursuing them from the south and west. Indeed that same day, a powerfully-armed royal force under Giles Daubney had arrived at Glastonbury. Warbeck and that group of men who were controlling him, decided to flee in the early hours of Thursday 20 September. That next morning it must have been very clear to the remnants of the rebel force that all was lost.

Warbeck and his little group may first have headed towards Minehead, but then they split up, with he and three of his followers heading across country to Beaulieu Abbey near Southampton. Here they hoped to gain sanctuary and then escape by boat to France. Indeed, John Taylor, an Exeter man and one of Warbeck's very first promoters, did manage to escape across the Channel. However the abbot of Beaulieu sent word to King Henry of Warbeck's arrival and a force under Sir Rice ap Thomas surrounded the abbey, together with the citizenry of Southampton. One of Warbeck's companions, John Heron, negotiated with the king for pardons, and one was to be granted to Warbeck on condition that he surrendered to the king and renounced sanctuary. This he did, and he was brought to Taunton Castle on 5 October to face Henry in person. He confessed that he was not Richard Duke of York but an impostor, and that he had been persuaded or pressed by people in England and Ireland to make this false claim. Warbeck then made a full written confession that was widely circulated.



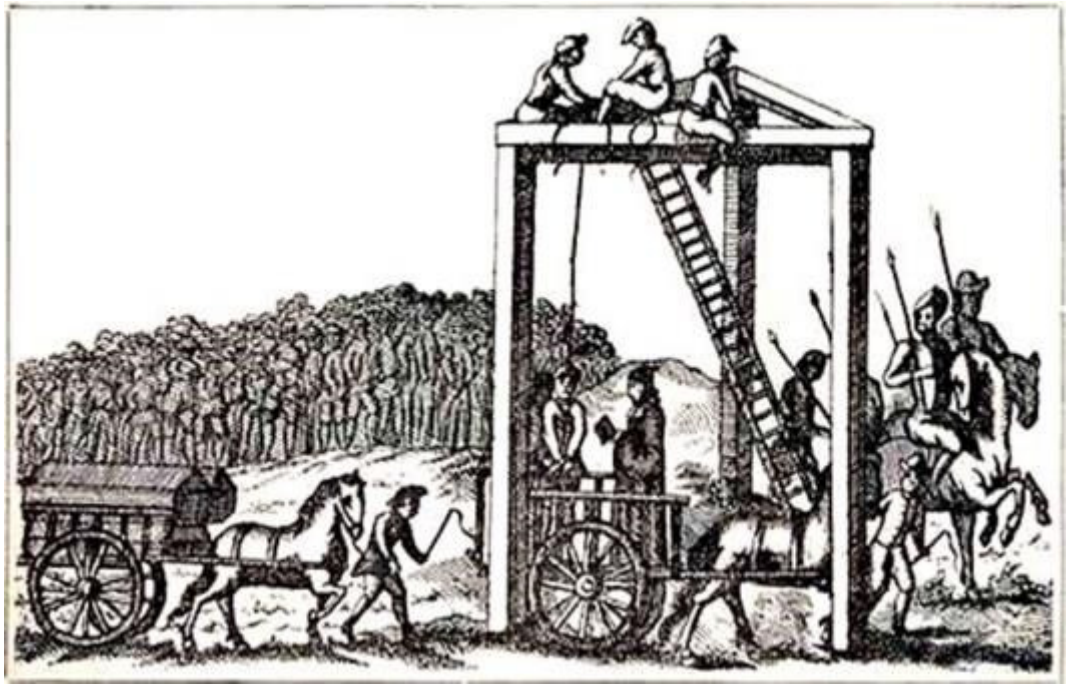
Taunton Castle in a 19th-century engraving



Part of the remains of Beaulieu Abbey

This was exactly what Henry wanted. He later wrote to the mayor of Waterford to say that Warbeck had humbly submitted to him and that he had 'of his free will openly shewed, in the presence of all the lords here with us, and of all the nobles, his name to be Pierce Osbeck, whence he hath been named Perkin Warbeck, and to be no Englishman born, but born of Tournay, and son to John'. What of Margaret of Burgundy's reaction to all this news? According to the chronicler, Edward Hall: 'When these tidynges came to the lady Margarete in Flauders that Perkin her dere darlyng had no good lucke but losse, bothe of his entreprice and her great studious furtheraunce, and was brought into captivitee, she was not well pleased with theim, but wepte and lamented hys vnlucky spede, and cursed her infortunate chaunce'.

Warbeck meanwhile accompanied the king on his royal progress back down to Exeter, arriving there on 7 October. Either Warbeck or the king (probably the latter) was accommodated in the house of the Treasurer of Exeter Cathedral. This medieval building was erected up against the north face of the Cathedral's North Tower, and taken down at some point in the early nineteenth century. On 13 October Warbeck wrote a letter to his mother in Tournai, a document that does seem to confirm good knowledge of his family's circumstances. Meanwhile, Warbeck's wife, Katherine Gordon, had been taken from her sanctuary in Cornwall and placed in the care of Henry's consort, Queen Elizabeth. Henry and Warbeck remained at Exeter until 2 November, leaving only after punishment of the guilty and the bestowing of rewards on the loyal. The rewards included the cap of maintenance and the sword which the city still possesses. Punishments included the levying of fines on those who failed to take action against the rebels. The royal party then travelled via Dorchester, Salisbury and Windsor, arriving at the palace of Sheen on 18 November. Here Henry was re-united with his Queen, while Warbeck was made to explain his deception to his distraught wife, Katherine. Three days later the two men departed for London, stopping off firstly at Lambeth Palace. Then it was across the Thames to Westminster where Warbeck was shown off to much ridicule in the Great Hall. On 28 November Warbeck was made to ride through the city of London itself. Although the initial destination that day was the Tower, Warbeck was spared the traitor's death and was taken back to Westminster, suffering 'many a curse' as he travelled.



The gallows at Tyburn

Attempts were made by Maximilian I, King of the Romans (and future Holy Roman Emperor), to gain Warbeck's release into his safe custody by offering a large payment. However those efforts were rebuffed. But Warbeck was treated well initially, albeit under close supervision. His wife, Katherine Gordon, was housed in the same palace, although she and Warbeck were not allowed to sleep together. However, he was not to live for much longer. He accompanied the king on his progresses until 9 June 1498. He then escaped from royal custody in circumstances that are unclear. Steven Gunn suggests that this occurred 'perhaps with the king's connivance.' Warbeck was found at the Charterhouse at Sheen and locked up in shackles for life in the Tower of London. It appears he then became embroiled in one final plot to have himself freed and proclaimed again as Richard Plantagenet. For this he was condemned. Finally he was hanged at Tyburn on 23 November 1499, having once again confessed that he was indeed Perkin Warbeck and not Richard Duke of York.

A few final comments on the year 1497. In early August, while Warbeck was on his wanderings, King James of Scotland decided to cross the Tweed and lay siege to Norham Castle in Northumberland. The defences had been recently strengthened by Richard Fox, bishop of Durham, and they proved too strong. James had such weapons as the mighty Mons Meg at his disposal, but decided to take his force back to Edinburgh on 10 August. Two days later he received news that a very large English force had come north under the command of Thomas Howard, 1st earl of Surrey, to make a revenge attack. The target was Ayton Castle, five miles north of Berwick. King James decided not to hazard a battle with the superior English force. Surrey then also decided to withdraw after just five days in Scotland, complaining that he had been 'vexed grevously all that tyme with contynuell Rayn and cold wedyr' according to the Great Chronicle of London. A negotiated agreement now seemed the better option for both sides, and a seven-year peace treaty was signed in September at Ayton. That treaty led to the marriage of James to Henry Tudor's eldest daughter, Margaret. It was from this marriage that the Stuart claim to the English throne in 1603 derived.

Henry was now at peace with Scotland, and his diplomacy was paying dividends elsewhere. Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain had proven themselves to be solid allies, never yielding to the temptation to support Henry Tudor's adversaries unlike so many other princes. Henry had always been keen to advance further his relations with the papal court, and in 1492 had already appointed a key Italian cleric, Francesco Piccolomini, as England's first cardinal protector there. It proved a wise choice, as Piccolomini worked assiduously on England's behalf until 1503 when he was elected pope. The Church both in Rome and in England gave Henry its staunch support.

1497 had therefore been a most turbulent year for Henry, but as midwinter drew on, events seemed to have progressed to a more satisfactory position. However, there was to be a sting in the tail. On 23 December the king and his family were resident in his palace at Sheen when a major fire broke out. They escaped without injury, but the palace was largely destroyed. In some ways this setback was one more example of the turbulence of Henry's reign, not the era of 'smooth-fac'd peace, With smiling plenty and fair prosperous days' as presented by Shakespeare.

Des Atkinson

The Wife of Taunton

Elizabeth wife of William Harvey of Taunton castle has been noted for her involvement in the cloth industry but other aspects of her extraordinary life have been overlooked. Despite numerous pregnancies she worked as a clothier, and until *c.*1699 as a maltster and in the 1700s as a wine merchant. She must have been well-educated with a good knowledge of business and Latin. When her husband was in London she regularly looked after the manorial administration that was his main business, often checking through the records for him. When in London she would conduct business for him as well as herself on one occasion returning with documents she had had sealed for him. She often had dealings with other women both in the cloth trade and on manorial business although men often replied to her husband instead of or as well as to her when she wrote to them. The couple never seem to have been in London together presumably because of the children, hence the correspondence between them in the late 1690s and early 1700s.

Early stage coach *SWHT*

In London she had many contacts and friends including her cousins, the brothers Robert and Henry Gale of Lincolns Inn and Mr Stephens with whom probably both she and her husband stayed. One Christmas Mr Stephens sent William his box after him by Whitmash the carrier containing not only several quantities of coloured fringe that Elizabeth had ordered together with coffee berries but also gifts of a muff and oranges, lemons and pomegranates

for the family. Elizabeth thought nothing of travelling regularly alone on the Taunton to London stage coach, which would have taken at least two days. There were concerns at getting back for Christmas as the coaches did not run in the holidays and the difficulties of ‘earnesting’, advance booking, a place. On one occasion she had to get the Dorchester coach and asked for a servant to come to the George inn in Dorchester with a horse for her; presumably she rode home!

In 1677 Elizabeth Gale from a wealthy family of Taunton clothiers and merchants married William Harvey, a young widower with an infant son. William was the son of Thomas, a clerk, and Mary. He was an ambitious attorney who aged only 24 became deputy clerk of Taunton castle, responsible for the paperwork, courts and property transactions of Taunton Deane manor. As if that were not sufficiently demanding he took on the stewardship of Obridge manor in 1678, Taunton Priory manor in 1682 and Fons George manor in Wilton in 1686.

His mother Mary, who had been twice married and widowed, traded in wool and malt. She lived in Wilton with her unmarried son Thomas Harvey, a clothier. When he died in 1690 he left everything to his mother who may have continued his business and certainly invested in property. She clearly missed her sons and asked William to come and dine with her and visited Elizabeth and the children. She was always fondly referred to by her daughter-in-law, who on one occasion brought a barrel of olives from London, knowing Mary liked them.

It is not clear how many children Elizabeth had and some may have been born dead. Her correspondence contains a few references to such losses. She also had to bring up her stepson, William, who was sent to school with Deborah Toogood at great expense in schooling, board, medical bills, clothing, repairs and hair cutting. William later studied French, Latin, Greek and shorthand probably at Ilminster with Edward Gatchell who asked his father to supply books including Virgil and a Greek grammar.

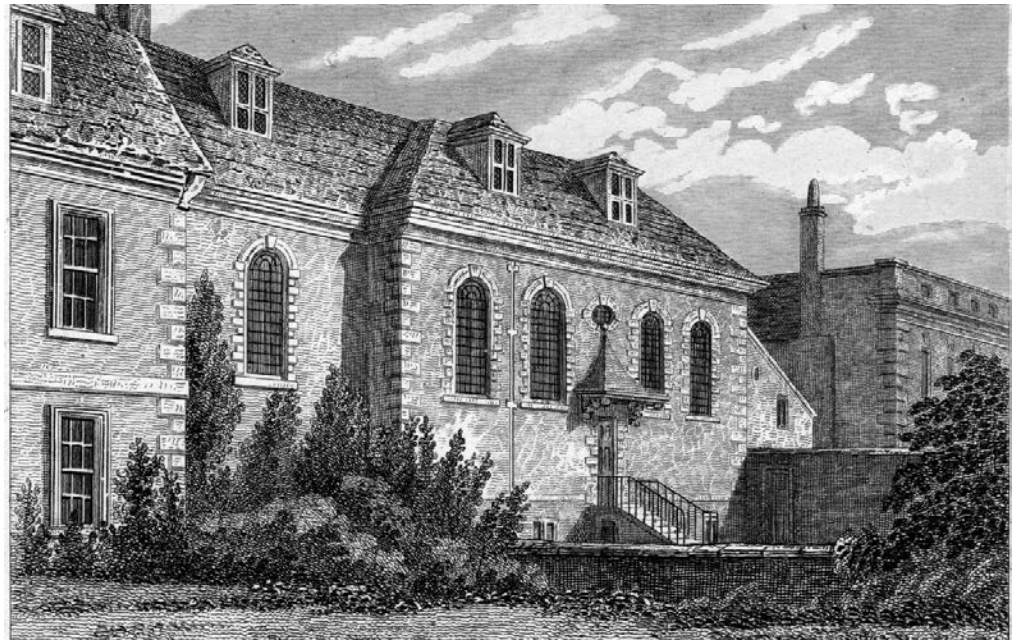
In his late teens young William went to London to train as a legal clerk and learn court hands, lodging with Mr Carswell in Milford Lane, which links The Strand with the Temple. In addition to contracting smallpox in 1694 and the flux, possibly dysentery, in 1696 there was always the problem of money and low company. A man known as Uncle King, probably his grandmother’s stepson William King, was considered an unsuitable companion for the young man who assured his father he would not see him again.

Sadly William died, possibly on a visit home, and was buried at St Mary’s in October 1697. Attempts to settle his affairs included not only clearing his papers and books from the office where he had been working, but the whereabouts of his watch and rings purloined by one Frances Patrick, a woman of dubious reputation who had disappeared with her booty. Elizabeth later had two babies called William who were buried in 1699 and 1702.

Milford Lane today

A portable octave spinet

Elizabeth's only recorded daughter, her namesake Elizabeth or Betty, 'her good housekeeper', looked after her siblings in her mother's absences. In 1698 she was sent to Salisbury to socialise with girls considered superior and to learn singing, playing the spinet and French. There was initial 'mother sickness' when she was left in her new home and some difficulty which necessitated her mother getting the stage coach to Salisbury. Young Elizabeth told her father she was not at fault and apologised for her mother's delay in returning home as the stage only went on alternate days and to hire a coach home would have cost £6. Her father was concerned that if she did not work harder with Mademoiselle at her French lessons his money would have been thrown away. He paid £5 *6s.* a quarter for her keep and lessons. A few days later he was booked on a coach from London to Salisbury to visit her. Young Elizabeth remained in Salisbury for several years, returning home for holidays. Her parents were fairly indulgent and in 1700 bought her a spinet with a case costing £6, a book of the newest tunes and a gold watch that was specially made in London and cost £16. A saddle was also made for her.



Salisbury grammar school

Her two surviving brothers were sent to Salisbury grammar school. Possibly Elizabeth's stay in Salisbury encouraged her parents to send their sons there and Thomas arrived in 1703. All did not go well and Tom wrote to his father of the beatings he received from the other boys at the encouragement of Richard Heale who had just taken over as headmaster. Young Tom had also been invited out to supper and been late back for which he was punished. He asked his father if it would be alright to accept such invitations if he was back by 8pm. His father was sufficiently concerned to arrange alternative lodgings for the boy in 1704 at £12 a year, William providing sheets and table linen.

Elizabeth's cloth business had its ups and downs but her letters illustrate the problems of keeping up a trade during slumps and responding to changes in fashions. Some years people wanted serges and not druggets, other years it was the other way round. Elizabeth got her workpeople to respond quickly and got patterns sent from London so that she could copy the colours in druggets. She bought large quantities of dyestuffs in 1698 comprising 300lb of fustic, sandalwood and fine madder and complained the last batch of madder 'did not answer to expectation'. She had a spinning house at Mattocks Tree in Thornfalcon and also used a Bridgwater spinning house. Her chief assistant, a woman named Martha, warped yarn for weaving. In 1699 she had great difficulty selling to London buyers who returned her serges and patterns.

An attempt to export through Lyme drew the response that 'the plantations abroad are glutted with drapery', none were wanted in Holland and the cloth was unsuited to the Spanish and Portuguese markets. In December she ordered that no more druggets be made as they were more difficult to sell than serges and both fetched a low price, which maybe why she bought lottery tickets.

She and others working on her behalf walked around London selling cloth directly where possible, presumably to get a better price from drapers and tailors. When money came in she would leave large sums often with her Gale cousins to meet payments due in London. Money was often tight although the family lived well and handled large sums of money and cloth worth hundreds of pounds. One London woman alone took nearly £300 worth of Elizabeth's serges although they disagreed over carriage costs.

In April 1700 she left for London again, instructing her husband at the chamber door that he must keep the keys of the malthouse and cellar and see that Martha sort the goods to go to Exeter. She put up at the Bell in Friday Street and had 299 cloths that she hoped to sell. The following week she wrote that she 'almost lost my feet' walking the streets looking for buyers. She asked for mixed yarns to be set aside till she returned home as browns were a dull commodity but she might have sold 1,000 sagathies or crepes.

Tuckers arms, Tuckers Hall, Exeter
Mary Siraut

She wanted cloth in many different colours with a 'white chain', that appears from her instructions to her workers to have meant weaving with a white warp and a coloured weft. She was unable to sell her serges and suggested she might try a contact at the East India Company. Undeterred on her return home and with William in London she bought wool worth £40 and packed goods for Bristol fair confident of covering the £40 owed for the wool. However, she could not sell her wine, which was too expensive by the barrel. She thought that if she could get a licence to sell retail she could sell by the bottle to country gentlemen. By early June she could send William 15 pieces of crepe worth over £22. Purchasers drove hard bargains; in July a Mr Doyley who was charged 32s a piece for 22 narrow sagathies wanted an abatement of 2*s* each.

In October 1700 some 'evilly wrought' cloth was returned, possibly similar to those damaged by a tucker in April. In November Mr Doyley wrote to Elizabeth asking her to make him 100 druggets and send with all speed but later that month changed his mind and wanted her to send 40 pieces of the chequered cloths but they must be coarse as designed for horse cloths. He liked two pieces she formerly sent him but trade was dull and he wanted nothing else. Henry Gale advised that the death of Charles II of Spain had made merchants cautious, it did indeed lead to war, and Elizabeth's cloth was currently unsaleable. William Harvey told one Londoner than his wife was 'capable of serving you in anything belonging to the Woolen Manufacture made in these partes.' However, one of her London agents William Higgins wrote to William Harvey that Elizabeth had tried nearly 60 shops and all liked the pieces but would not buy unless at a great advantage. A Mr Daly, possibly Mr Doyley, would give £35 for 17 pieces of cloth and no more. Mr Higgins said he would speak with a Cambridge dealer but a few days later reported that he was footsore with trying to sell but all said they lacked money and beat down the price too low. He was attacked and robbed of over £3, which was more than his quarter's wages.

It was a precarious industry and bills were covered by drawing on others in the hope of selling or receiving money owed before the debt had to be paid. Elizabeth had one debtor arrested in London for half the cost of serges worth nearly £200 she had sold him. She was clearly tough, as was her husband, and both seem to have made enemies and been involved in or threatened with litigation.

In 1701 a parcel of serges was in Exeter for sale and Elizabeth obtained wine there but in 1702 was still trying to get money owed by a purchaser. In 1704 two of her female agents had secured sales of cloth worth £30 and wanted more to sell. However financial difficulties were looming. William may have lent money on mortgage and he certainly bought valuable property in Taunton, possibly having borrowed more than he could repay. In 1704 Elizabeth reminded him that the mortgage on her estate was due and by 1706 he was bankrupt. Elizabeth continued trying to sell drugget and double milled cloth in London but one of her buyers, Mr Brooks of Broad Street was said to owe a lot of money. 'The sooner you get your money the better' was the advice. She needed money to 'sweeten' creditors until she could send up goods. She found no want of trade and asked for clothing wool to be obtained fast as she could sell 500 druggets. In 1708 she had sent cloth to London and may have diverted some from sale in Exeter but William's bankruptcy probably damaged Elizabeth's business as she would have been unable to get credit. It may have discouraged visits to London as there is no further correspondence.

Mary Siraut

William Smith, brazier and tinman

In our throwaway society it is hard to imagine a world in which tools, kitchen, heating and plumbing equipment, indeed anything made of metal, was made to last for decades if not centuries. If a chisel was blunt, a kettle leaked or the pump broke the brazier was called in to make repairs or the object was taken to his shop. Several braziers worked in Taunton in the 19th century but thanks to the survival of one of his account books we know a bit about William Smith and his work.

He was born in Ilton and baptised on 23 May 1802, the son of Joseph Smith and Sophia. He learnt to read and write and keep accounts and was presumably apprenticed to a brazier in Taunton. He was living in East Reach in the 1820s. He met local girl Ann Hughes and when she was pregnant with their first child they got married on Christmas Day 1824. They had at least 12 children, the sons also had very large families, and many were baptised on Christmas Day. All appear to have been to school. In the 1830s William and Ann moved first to Star Platt in Mount Lane and finally in the 1840s to Mill Lane. That provided a house and shop well-sited for business and the miller of the Town Mills became a regular customer. By 1851 William employed an assistant and had an apprentice.

The account book comprises accounts with major customers including millers, founders, plumbers and private householders and daybook accounts for individual repairs, presumably items brought to his shop usually pans, kettles, tea and coffee pots and tools for sharpening for which the charge was usually a few pence. An unusual repair was to a parrot cage.

William would also make items from a fish kettle or a new lid for a coffee pot to a tin shop counter with scales. These items were relatively expensive but would have had a very long life span with a few pence spent on repairs. Customers were varied, from his aunt Eliza whom he provided with a saucepan and flour dredger, to the police station in Church Square, which needed regular lamp repairs.

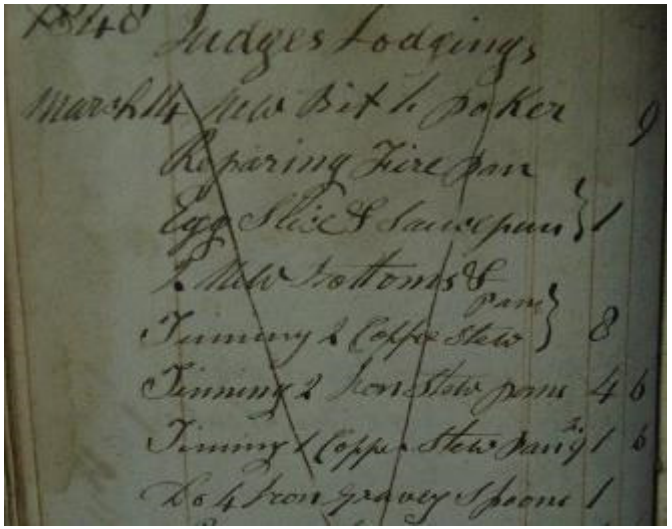
Parrot cage , 1835

Police lantern

Police lamps repaired. William often crossed accounts when they were settled.

SWHT

In March 1848 he was busy with a multitude of repairs including tinning at the judges' lodgings in the castle, presumably to prepare for their arrival. Items for attention included an egg slice, copper pans and four gravy spoons. At the other end of the social scale he made a zinc ventilator for the workhouse for 12*s*. and supplied 10 dozen porringers and other items marked, presumably to prevent theft.


1848 Judges Lodgings
March 14 New Bit to Poker 9
Repairing Fire Pan
Egg Slice & Saucepan 1
2 Milk Bottoms & Pans 8
Tinning 2 Coffee Stew
Tinning 2 Iron Stew pans 4 6
Tinning 1 Copper Stew Pan 1 6
Do 4 Iron gravey Spoons 1

Part of the account for work at the judges lodging. SWHT

Hotels needed repairs to grates, candlesticks, cooking utensils, and coal scuttles. On the 22 May 1848 he ground a chopper and repaired a tea kettle for Giles Hotel, now the Castle Hotel, and two days later he was cleaning and repairing two coal scoops and three dish covers for the hotel. Caterers needed his services frequently. Wickenden's of North Street were the leading confectioners and caterers and in 1849 William made several dozen patty pans, pastry cutters and moulds for the firm. One man who presumably kept a coffee tavern had a regular flow of tea and coffee pots, urns and kettles needing repair. Another customer was Mrs Warren, a coffee woman, presumably one of those who set up stalls in the market complained of by local victuallers. She used a coffee fountain, a form of samovar with a grate underneath to keep the coffee hot, and having had it repaired several times, in May 1850 paid 10*s*. 6*d*. for a new one. A Mrs Cox served tea and had several rocking tea kettles and hot water cans repaired in 1852.

William also made tools and did boiler repairs for iron founder Mr Sandsbury of North Town, one of his main customers. He made fire doors for Mr Hitchcock of Town Mills and sharpened chisels for the Long family, stone and marble masons by the Tone Bridge. He noted the opening of the Westgate public house on Saturday 13 February 1841, possibly he had done work for it and hoped for future custom. Plumber Thomas Hucklebridge had an account with William for domestic and business repairs including copper pipe for an 'Ingine' and repairing a gas lamp.


1848 Mr Hucklebridge 13 9
January 22 New Cover to Coffee Pot 4
Feb 7 28 Planishing 3 Plates 14
May 17 Making Piece of Copper
Pipe for Ingine 10
June
28 Bottom to Coffee Pot 4
July 14 Reparing Lanthorn 4
August 5 Cover to a Tin Case 4
22 Reparing Gas lamp 2 6
31 Reparing Lantham 3

Part of the account with Thomas Hucklebridge. SWHT

Victorian carbide gas lamp

Not all William's children survived but among the girls were a tailoress, a dressmaker and a milliner and the sons, no doubt trained by their father, left Taunton to find work. Robert married a girl from Bishops Lydeard and became a smith and bellhanger in Gloucester. John settled in Abingdon as a coach smith, but died a labourer leaving his wife to work as a charwoman to support her large family. William worked as a brazier in Malmsbury before returning to his parents in Mill Lane, where he died only a few years after them and within a year of his brothers. William senior continued working until his death in 1875. By 1883 the business had been taken over by John Sansome who carried it on, later with the help of his son, and it was still there in 1957!

Mary Siraut

Centenary of Taunton's Vivary Park war memorial

TAUNTON ROLL OF HONOUR.

SIR,

I am supported by others in the town in the strong feeling that some special and suitable permanent memorial should be established in Taunton to perpetuate the memory of those soldiers and sailors of Taunton who have given their lives to save their country and uphold the cause of freedom and justice.

Tauntonians will, I do not doubt, approve of the suggested scheme, namely, the placing of a brass plate, engraved with the names of our deceased town heroes, against the wall of the entrance hall in the Municipal Buildings, and the dedication in their memory of a special bed at the Taunton and Somerset Hospital.

I have opened an account at Parr's Bank, to which I invite subscriptions, large and small, and you, Mr. Editor, have kindly offered to acknowledge the same in your newspaper. Mr. H. J. Badcock has consented to act as hon. treasurer, and Mr. George H. Kite will act as hon. secretary.

The amount required will be about £1,500, and I trust the scheme will receive liberal support. It needs no recommendation from me, as it so strongly appeals to all—those who have served in any capacity in the war, those who have relations serving or who have served, those who have lost relations in the war, and those who have been unable for any reason to take an active part in the war.

I hope I may rely on the co-operation of my fellow townsmen, as I shall require the assistance of representatives of all classes as the scheme developes.

It is suggested that the part taken by Taunton in the war and the before-mentioned scheme, with a list of subscribers, shall be recorded and placed amongst the town archives. The bank will receive subscriptions of not less than 2s. 6d., but later on all will have an opportunity of giving. I have handed the treasurer a cheque for £25 from the Mayoress and myself to start the subscription list.

H. J. VAN TRUMP,
MAYOR OF TAUNTON.

Many war memorials throughout Britain including Somerset were set up in 1922. As early as 1918 they were planned and towns began fundraising. As with so many schemes Taunton's original plan was simple, a brass plaque on the Municipal Buildings advocated by Henry van Trump during his mayoralty. He also suggested funding a bed at the hospital in memory of the fallen. He even opened an account at Parr's Bank with a contribution of £25 to start a fundraising campaign hoping to collect £1,500. In the end a large monument designed by the borough surveyor Ivor Shellard was built in Vivary Park and unveiled in 1922

Unveiling Taunton's War memorial 1922 *SWHT*

In Fashion

In Fashion: How a Changing World Shaped What We Wear at the Museum of Somerset explores how changes in society have influenced fashion from the late 1700s to the present day. The exhibition discusses how society has impacted the clothes that we wear, through four main themes.

It starts with how traditions for some of the most significant events in life have inspired special kinds of clothing. Christening gowns, wedding dresses and sombre outfits for funerals are all reflections of dress codes that in many cases have changed and developed very slowly.

How developments of new technologies from the 19th century, particularly during the industrial revolution, changed all parts of society and how we live. The most significant invention for the fashion world was the lockstitch sewing machine in the mid-1800s, it simplified production methods seeing the introduction of mass production of clothing in standardised sizes. This and the development of synthetic or man-made fibres from the late 1800s allowed for clothing manufacturers to create clothes which were cheap, durable and easy-care allowing for the latest styles to be within reach of more of the population.

The exhibition then moves on to look at the social transformations of the 20th century which changed the course of history, including fashion. The move towards gender equality, new workforce roles and sexual liberation particularly influenced women's fashion and continues to do so today.

Both World Wars greatly influenced fashion, and for the first time many people began to wear uniforms that reflected new wartime roles. Many women took on roles left behind by men often requiring uniforms suitable for the job, many would wear trousers for the first time.

War-time shortages meant there were restrictions on both the manufacture and purchasing of clothing. Clothing became rationed in 1941, restricting the amount of new clothes which could be purchased. The government encouraged people to repair and alter their existing clothes.

After the restrictions of the Second World War, the post-war period saw an explosion of imaginative styles. Unlimited materials, new identities and sexual liberation all helped to shape a time of experiment and change.

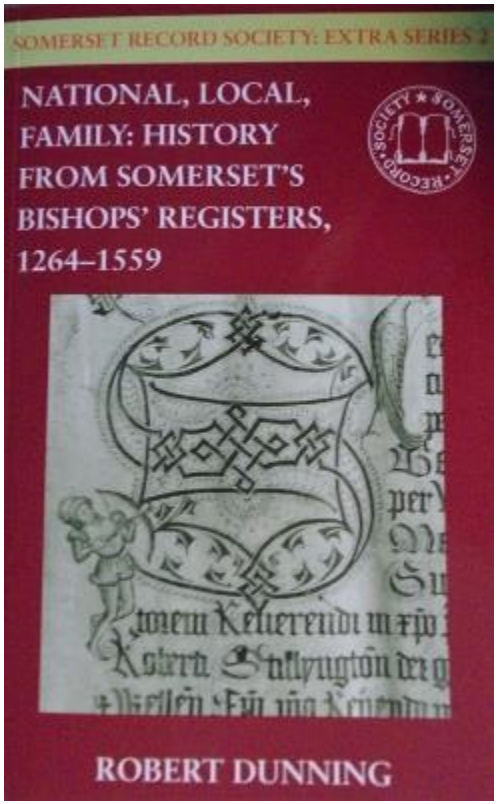
The final theme of the exhibition is one that has been in the background for centuries. Since the 18th century media and figures of high social status have provided guidance on the latest fashion looks. Magazines and newspapers have long included images of new designs for current and future seasons. and waistcoat.

Each theme is explored through garments which form part of the Somerset Museum Service's fashion collections. Featuring an Edwardian wedding from W. and A. Chapman of Taunton, a first world war army uniform, examples of Utility fashions and late 18th century embroidered sack back dress

In Fashion: How a Changing World Shaped What We Wear is on at the Museum of Somerset until Saturday 18th March. You can find out more about the exhibition and events programme at museumofsomerset.org.uk.

Bethan Murray

National, local, family: history from Somerset's bishops' registers, 1264-1559



Bishops registers, as the title of this book suggests, are about more than formal church business and contain a wealth of material on all aspects of history. Many early Somerset Registers have been transcribed and published by the Somerset Record Society.

This book, the second of the society's extra series, is an excellent introduction to the registers and their contents. There are chapters on the clergy and laypeople, on parishes, religious houses, family cases and probate matters. Each subject is illustrated by examples. There are also chapters on the light the registers cast on rural and urban life, church estates and buildings, national and international affairs. There are several images including examples of register entries, detailed appendices listing religious, charitable causes and oratories and a substantial index.

Among the more interesting items we learn of hermits and pilgrims, clandestine marriages, naked bathing at Bath, the woodmen of Bath priory who needed a bridge from Bathford to cross the Avon and noble families held for ransom after Constantinople fell.

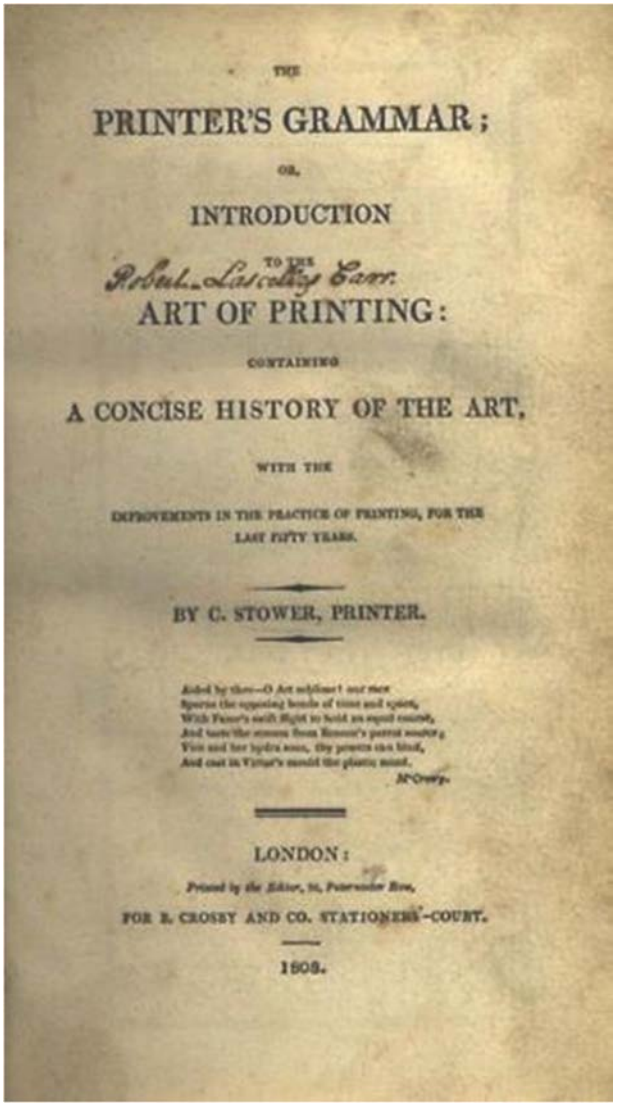
Record Society volumes are free to members and £23.15 for non-members. To buy this volume or join the society contact the Hon. Treasurer, c/o Somerset Heritage Centre, Brunel Way, Norton Fitzwarren, Taunton, Somerset, TA2 6SF or go to the website: www.somersetrecordsociety.org.uk

Snippets from VCH research: Caleb Stower, printer

Among the hundreds of young people privately apprenticed in the 18th century one name stood out. In 1793 John Poole a well-established Taunton printer, whose name appears at the foot of most surviving handbills and notices, took as apprentice Caleb Stower, aged 14. Caleb clearly took to the printing trade and must have spent all his spare time studying the business and its history. He was born into a prosperous nonconformist Taunton family one of several children, but was clearly a favourite with his childless uncle and namesake, a sergemaker. When Caleb the elder died in 1793 he left his nephew Caleb £200 at 21 and smaller sums to all his other young relatives.

At the end of his apprenticeship Caleb, no doubt using his legacy, set up in business for himself in London. In 1801 he married Anne Twining, a clergyman's daughter, at St Mary Woolnoth and between 1802 and 1810 they had four children. In 1804 Caleb printed *The Use of Life and its End*, a sermon preached by Joshua Toulmin at Taunton on the occasion of the death of Mr Caleb Stower. That was followed in 1805 by a work of his own: *Typographical Marks, employed in Correcting Proofs, explained and exemplified for the use of authors,* published by Longman. A second edition was issued the following year. In 1808 he had two books published by Crosby and Co. In *The Compositor's and Pressman's Guide to the Art of Printing*; Caleb gives hints and instructions to learners with sections on printing ink, types of printing presses, lists of typefounders, printer's joiners and an abstract of acts relative to printers. However, his best known work was *The Printer's Grammar; or introduction to the Art of Printing: containing a concise history of the art, with the improvements in the practice of printing, for the last fifty years.* This comprehensive printer's manual was last reprinted in 1981.

Unfortunately all this book production probably detracted from the bread and butter business at 32 Paternoster Row and in 1811 Caleb was bankrupt. However, he went into partnership with a printer in Hackney. In April 1816 his partner retired leaving Caleb in sole control of the firm, but sadly the following month Caleb died. His son Caleb did not follow him into the business but moved to Liverpool to work as a customs officer. However, the elder Caleb's London-born children still considered Somerset the ancestral home. Sarah was married in Taunton in 1829 to a merchant from Bristol. In 1841 Hannah married in Liverpool a draper from North Petherton, where they settled with her sister Mary Anne, and the younger Caleb and his wife retired to Wembdon where he died in 1875.



THE

PRINTER'S GRAMMAR;

OR,

INTRODUCTION

TO THE

ART OF PRINTING:

CONTAINING

A CONCISE HISTORY OF THE ART,

WITH THE

IMPROVEMENTS IN THE PRACTICE OF PRINTING, FOR THE LAST FIFTY YEARS.

BY C. STOWER, PRINTER.

LONDON:

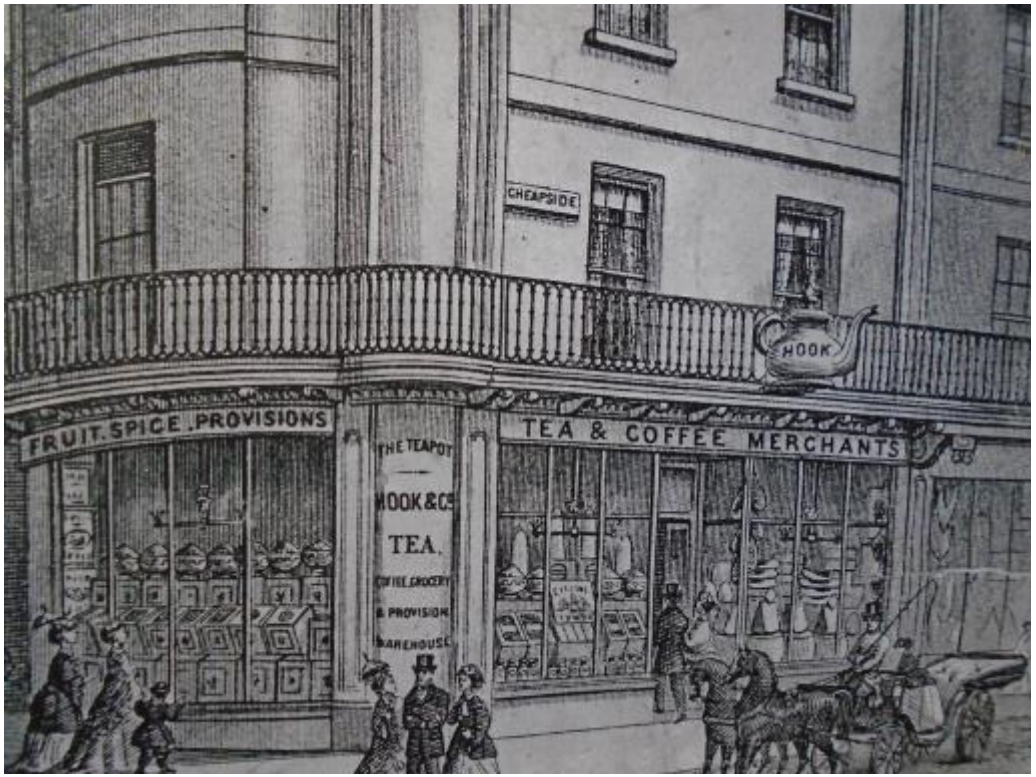
FOR B. CROSBY AND CO. STATIONERS'-COURT.

1808.

Another famous Taunton apprentice was the 'biscuit king' George Palmer, from a Quaker family in Long Sutton, who learnt his trade in North Street in the early 19th century. He returned on a visit late in life to see the premises where he had been trained in confectionary. Although not apprenticed in Taunton, Quaker businessman John Horniman, founder of the tea-dealing firm, kept a grocery store in North Street in the early 1830s.

Historic Images of Somerset

What happened to the Cheapside teapot?



Early advertisement for Hook's shop *SWHT*

Charles George Hook, born in America to British parents, brought up on a farm in Westonzoyland and a pupil of Dr Morgan's school in Bridgwater, was an ambitious young man. By 1881 aged only 21 he had a large grocer's shop prominently positioned at 6 Cheapside in Taunton and married Ellen Dyer at St Mary's Church. To advertise his business he had a giant teapot made and fitted above the entrance. The gas-lit windows were filled with assorted tea chests, sugar loaves, bacon and cheese to tempt passers by.

The couple had four children including a son Henry who later ran the business in partnership with his father. The family lived over the shop until *c.*1900, when they moved to Fons George in Wilton where Ellen died in 1935 and Charles George in 1937. The business was continued by Henry for several years and the teapot survived the scrap drives of the Second World War.

However, at some date in the 1950s it vanished. Is it hiding in somebody's attic? As the shop has been for many years a café the re-instatement of the teapot would seem appropriate!

The last known sighting of the teapot in the late 1940s! *SWHT*

Stoke St Mary church

Mary Siraut

Please Support Us

Further work is entirely dependent on public generosity. If you would like to support the future work of the Somerset VCH please consider making a donation or legacy. **Please note** that the Somerset County History Trust has been amalgamated and the Somerset VCH now forms part of the South West Heritage Trust, itself a charity: Charity Number 1158791. Cheques should be made payable to 'South West Heritage Trust' with a note that the money is for the Somerset VCH. For more information contact:

Victoria County History of Somerset, Somerset Heritage Centre, Brunel Way, Norton Fitzwarren, Taunton, TA2 6SF
vch@swheritage.org.uk

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