

INTRODUCTION

The original volume was small quarto in format, and here the format is A4 . The footnote numbers were not continuous, but began anew on each page, so here they have been re-numbered continuously and placed at the end. This version was digitised from the editor's personal copy. The table of contents at the beginning has been added anew.

Edited by Tony Woolrich & Jane Woolrich, 14/08/2019

The figures enclosed in round brackets (...) refer to the order of the documents in this volume those in square brackets [...] to the order in Dr. Birch's catalogue in the Town Clerk's office.

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Quite recently, when making some research toward a comparative study of the forms of administration of mesne boroughs in the south-west of England, I proved once more the necessity of seeing the original wording of documents. I believe that I have the sympathy of other students in this experience, and would here record my gratitude, to the Council for acceding to my earnest request that in this second volume of Bridgwater archives, as in the first, the original languages might appear. I hope that readers who prefer a translation will find some compensation in an increased number of documents done into English. The introduction will also, I hope, give valuable information on their contents and implications.

EXTERNAL FEATURES

The manufacture of paper in this country has not been traced further back than the year 1495, but long before that date it was in use. At Lyme Regis a paper register of the Hustings Court is dated from 1309. In our own borough accounts the first mention of the purchase of paper occurs in those of 1396-7, and the 'parcel' for the December quarter of the latter year seems to have been written on a piece of it, for it is the earliest paper among our archives that has survived to this day (483, 485).

The two documents, Nos. 398 and 399; which are counterparts of a grant of the wardens of the gild of St. Katherine, form a complete chirograph, and on fitting the two documents head to head, we see the original parchment as a whole before the clerk drew his penknife in wavy line through the words A V E M A R Y A , and allotted to either party to the agreement his copy. The two indentures, Nos. 478 and 479, can be similarly fitted together.

LANGUAGE

Again the mass of the documents is written in the Latin tongue — medieval Latin, with the usual abbreviations. Seven only are in medieval French. Their numbers are given in the index. Here and there amid the Latin will be found an occasional word which may be of interest to students of Middle English. In the Borough Court rolls English words for weapons and household utensils occur for which the clerk has not troubled to find an equivalent in Latin. Personal names and place names are also quarries for finding English uses.

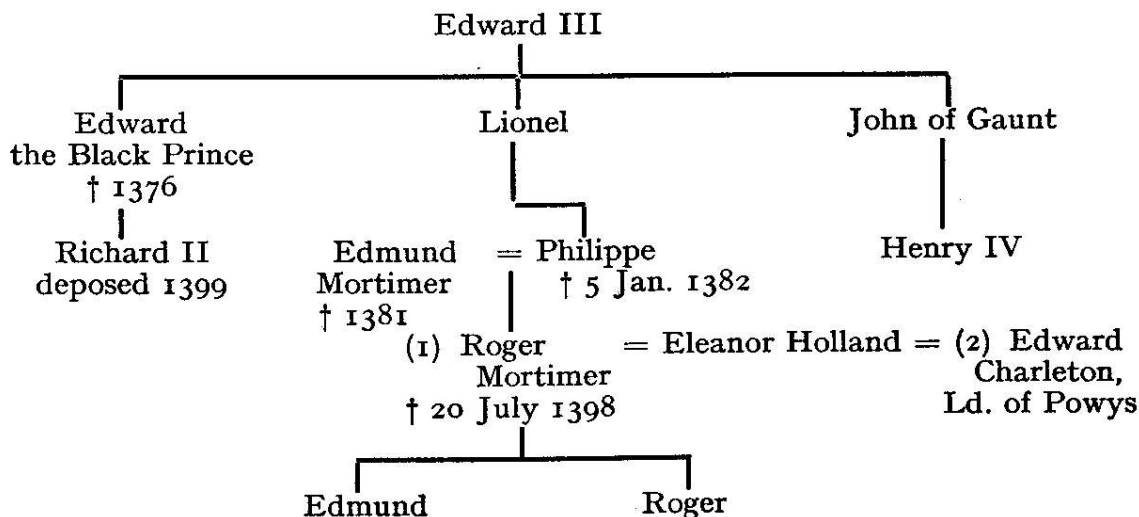
THE MESNE LORDS OF THE BOROUGH

The division of the lordship of the borough between the families descended from Maud and Eve, great-granddaughters of William Briwer, the founder, continued throughout this period. One-third of the

borough, together with the castle and the manor of Hay-grove, rested with the Mortimers, while the remaining two-thirds of the borough belonged to the lords de la Zouch.

The marriage of Edmund Mortimer, earl of March, with Philippe,

granddaughter of Edward III, had brought his house close to the succession to the throne, but he died in 1381, and once more a boy, Roger, was the king's presumptive heir.



But though he reached manhood he did not outlive the king, for in 1398 he fell in one of the petty Irish wars. Richard's party thereupon recognized Edmund Mortimer, a boy of six years of age, as his father's successor in the heirship.

The fall of the king entirely altered the Mortimer prospects, and Henry wisely took care to secure the persons of Edmund and his brother. To his credit he did not consign them to the fate that later attended the sons of Edward IV, but took them to be brought up with his own children in the royal household. Their mother not long after married Edward Charleton, Lord of Powys, whom we shall find farming the Mortimer estates and among them the borough and castle of Bridgwater.

Of the affairs of the castle our own archives have little to tell us. But there is in the Public Record Office a valuable series of what are known as ministers' accounts relating to the Bridgwater demesne of the Mortimers. Some are of the constable or receiver of the demesne which included Milverton, Odcombe, Newton Plecy, now North Newton, and other manors; some, of the borough reeves; others are of the steward of the

Castle manor. Two belong to the days of Edward III, and seven to the 15th century, but the bulk, twenty-six in number, fall within the years of Richard's rule, and therefore of this volume. From these we gain some knowledge of the relations existing between the borough and its lords, and some idea of the castle administration and of the buildings within the castle precincts.

The income which the Mortimers derived from their share of the borough is set forth in detail. One third of the shilling burgage rent, for which the old feudal dues had been compounded, is regularly credited as received from the hands of the borough reeves or lord's reeves, as they are sometimes called. These two officials and the two beadles are as regularly allowed the remittance of a third of their respective personal rents — 4*d.* Each — 'in accordance with ancient custom.' The amount derived from this rent, when not in arrear, appears usually to have been just short of £11, nor had it altered much from what it was in the middle of the 14th century. The total burgage rent of the borough therefore lay between £32 and £33, and at the fixed rate of 1*s.* for each burgage, we arrive at something like 650 as the total number of burgages. This does

not, however, give us the number of tenements, for not all burgages were built over, and many tenements were not more than half-burgages.

Further revenue came to the Mortimers from the river tolls, the market tolls and those of the fairs held yearly on Ascension Day and in the week of Pentecost. Their share of the river tolls average 4s. 1d., and of the market tolls 7s. 9d. The two fairs bring in much less, that on Ascension Day averages 11½ d., that in Pentecost week 10½ d. The perquisites of the courts of these fairs are not given separately but are included in the Piepowder Court account with that of the Borough Court. The fair on St. Matthew's day, which is still surviving, brought in from its court perquisites and a third of its tolls an average sum of nearly 5s. 9d. a year. Lastly the Borough Court of which there were usually twelve sessions in the year, but sometimes thirteen, fourteen and even fifteen, averages an annual income of £3 1s. 4d. to the estate.

On the other side of the account the lords do not seem to have done much for the borough. The only outlay on any public work outside the castle and the manor of Haygrove is found in the repair of the Town Gaol, the cost of which is shared in due proportion between the two lordships. Possibly we should add some expenditure on the grindstones at Little Mill.

But repairs within the castle area were going on fairly continually year after year. From details of these we learn that besides the lord's house there was a building known as 'Morte-mereshall.' There were the *cameræ* or rooms of the castle officials. There was the chapel, dedicated, as we learn elsewhere, to St. Mark and served daily by one of the brethren of the Hospital. This had its campanile or bell-tower. There was a *columbare* or dove-cot, probably like that which is still to be seen at West Bower, and there was a 'culverhey' — emblems of peace amid warlike surroundings. There was a dungeon and it is good to know that it was not without a window. There were the 'wynkepitt' and the 'shews.' There were the stables and, not least important, there was the kitchen.

The defences also of the stronghold needed careful and constant repair. The deep and wide moat must be kept clear for the inflow of the river's tidal water. Plasterers and carpenters were employed on work on the enormous walling, the bridge, the draw-bridge, the great outer and inner gates with their 'wykets,' the doors of the towers facing the river, and the *vys turris* from which watch could be kept above the gates.

The chapel furniture must have been of the simplest, for a penny sufficed to buy a *pyx pro pane cum quo sacerdos celebrat custodiendo*, and the same amount was paid for a wooden 'stoppe' or stoop for the holy water. Two bell-cords cost twopence. Each year 2s. were allowed for wine and candles for service of the altar.

The expenses of journeyings to and fro also appear on the debit side of the castle accounts. On one — it was a month or so after news of Earl Roger's death in Ireland had reached Bridgwater — the receiver, John Filton, sent William, his clerk, on horseback to Coventry, to speak with Lord Edward Mortimer and other executors of the late lord's will.

Other occasions are those on which the money accumulated in the castle had to be transferred to the receiver-general of the Mortimer estates. These large sums collected not from Bridgwater only but also from the various manors of the demesne had to be carried by road amid the customary dangers of transit, usually to London. But in February, 1393, when parliament was sitting at Winchester, the money was delivered to the receiver-general in that city. On one occasion the short journey to Bristol sufficed. The receiver was accompanied by five men and six horses, occupying four days in getting a sum of nearly seventy pounds into the hands of the clerk of the lord's hospice there.

The coming of the auditor was an occasion of expense to the castle as it also was to the community (476). For example, he came in one year from Wigmore in Herefordshire with men and horses, and stayed here for seven days, costing the castle 20s. In November of the same year he came again, this time from Stratfield

Mortimer in Berkshire, and stayed for eight days at a cost of 30s. 6d.

We have no details of the entertainment of the auditor, but there has survived a document attached to the receiver's accounts for 1390-1, which gives the items of expenditure when one of the barons of the Exchequer 'and others with him' were boarded and lodged for a day and a night at Wellington. The occasion seems to have been to secure by means of a jury specially summoned the farm of certain manors in arrear for eight years to the extent of £40. It was in the month of March and in the days of Lent. Hence no charge for flesh appears in the bill of fare. But fish there was in plenty. There were oysters and mussels, hake and conger, plaice and fresh ling, 'mulewell' and 'bukhorn' (dried haddock). There was garlic and pepper and white bread, with wine and ale to wash all down. There were beds and candles for the travellers, and hay and oats and horsebread for the weary beasts. Lastly there is what looks suspiciously like what we should call a bribe — a *gift* of 6s. 8d. to three jurors.

Possibly some opportunity, may arise of making public a fuller account of the contents of these interesting documents.

THE BOROUGH

In the former volume of these archives an attempt was made to give some conception of the burghal administration during the years from the foundation charter to the close of the reign of Edward III. We had some clues to the solution of our problem, but the facts were meagre, and answers to our questions were not always forthcoming. It is possible now, thanks to additional knowledge and to the new light which the work of Dr. Tait has shed on the true position of what is termed the community, to reach conclusions more satisfactory, though not necessarily final.

What was the community, and what does the word connote ?

In some of the earliest of our archives we find the burgesses acting as a legal body, acting as a whole. The burgesses in those days in the-13th century are the lessors of the properties belonging to the chantry of St. Mary. They are the

community, τὸ κοινόν, [the people], the borough or the town. Their qualification was burgage tenure, that is the holding of the whole or the fraction of a burgage, and the payment of the whole or the corresponding fraction of the burgage shilling.

Thus the community did not comprise the whole population of the borough. Women who were not burgage holders in their own right, journeymen and apprentices, domestic servants and others may be counted in the population but they were not of the community.

Then we come to that most important document (10), which holds so distinct a place in the history of our town government, the ordinance of 'all the burgesses and community of the borough' which was committed to writing, almost certainly about the year 1280, and which is sealed with the seal of 'the commune of Bridgwater.' Here we find that strange intermingling of burghal and gild authority which characterised so many mediæval English towns. Is it an ordinance of the borough, or is it an ordinance of the Gild Merchant ?

This question, recurring in the history of so many English towns, greatly exercised students of borough government. There had been much discussion and difference of opinion before Gross came forward with his scholarly work on the *Gild Merchant*, wherein he was at pains to show the vital distinction between Gild and Borough.

The distinction may be considered proven. What had caused the confusion in modern minds is the practical identity of the personnel of the burgesses and the gild-members. As Dr. Tait has shown, gild and community are simply different *aspects* of the same group of persons.

But in order to consider our own history, let us return to the Bridgwater of the 13th century. The charter of 1200, it is true, had transformed the villains of the manor into burgesses of the borough. But though their status was greatly improved, their freedom was not complete. The lord continued to hold the court over which his steward presided and to take the profits. He clung to the tolls of market, fair and river. The burgesses had still a long road

to tread before they arrived. Meanwhile they had their gild merchant and their religious gild which bound them together in common interests, and it was in their gild merchant that they found the nucleus of town government and the officers through whom they might carry it out.

The stewards of the gild were also the stewards of the community and came to be known in English as the common stewards. Their bailiff or receiver was not only the bailiff of the gild but was the common bailiff. Much of the borough revenue went, as we have seen, into the lord's hands, but the common stewards were able to build up a common fund from the entrance fees of the gild members, the amercements in its court, levies on the town for special purposes, the dues on the bridge, and the income from the common cord or hawser, the common bushel, the common plank as well as from the moorage of the vessels which used them. Thus officered and financed the community held a strong position in both things lay and things ecclesiastical.

And yet the whole community — *tota communitas* — was liable to be prosecuted in the borough court and amerced there for not having the gutter between Cornhill and the bridge in proper condition! This was in the last years of the 14th century, and in this borough court we find the officials whom we may consider arrayed against those of the community. For though nearly all were elected, they were the lord's officials. The steward who presided over the court appears to have been the nominee of the lords. Lord de la Zouche speaks of him as 'my steward.' The others were elected. The two reeves or provosts — *preposti* — were responsible for the collection and payment of all dues including the burgage rent, and in this connection they probably presided over the Durneday Court and the Piepowder Court. The two bailiffs of the borough, in distinction from the bailiff of the community, had much responsibility within the court. The wardens of the town wards act much as police-officers. All these were responsible to the lords and not to the common stewards.

Thus we now have a fairly clear idea of how the borough was administered in the latter years of the 14th century, and of what belonged to the community and what to the mesne lords. The two elements seem to be somewhat conflicting, for the burgesses would fain have been rid of the overlordship, and yet somehow they succeeded in living together in peace and harmony as far as we can see. Probably this was due to the fact that the lords' officers were elected by the burgesses from among themselves, and the men who performed the duties of lords' reeves and lords' bailiffs were traders or craftsmen who were members of the gild merchant. Had they been nominated by the lords and brought into the borough from outside who can say what might have happened!

Note. — In the fifth chapter of his *Gild Merchant* Gross assembled the facts whereby he proved the distinction between the borough and the gild. He was showing that gild and borough had different officials and among his illustrations he cited the document numbered 458 in this volume. Misled by Riley's erroneous summary of the deed in *Hist. MSS. Com.* 3rd Report (p. 315) he pointed to 'two bailiffs of the Guild there' and the 'bailiff of the Commonalty' appearing in the same witness list. Unfortunately for his purpose the two bailiffs are not of the Gild, but are described as *ballivis ibidem*, that is bailiffs of the borough, for they immediately follow the two reeves — *prepositis burgi predicti*. But the very illustration which thus fails Gross serves here to show the distinction between the bailiffs of the borough, or lords' bailiffs, and the single bailiff of the community who was also the bailiff of the Gild Merchant.

REPRESENTATIVES IN PARLIAMENT

The members for Bridgwater from 1295 to 1377 were given in the Introduction to the former volume. Those for Richard II's reign are:

1378. John Palmere, John Sydenham.

1380. Jan. John Fytelton, Wm. Thomer.

1381. John Loof, John Henton.

1383. Feb. John Palmere, Humphrey Plomer.

Oct. Wm. Thomere, John Palmere.

1384. Apr. John Palmere, John Wynde.

- Nov. John Loof, Thomas Wyke.
 1385. Wm. Thomere, John Palmere.
 1386. John Sydenham, Richard Mayne.
 1388. Feb. John Sydenham, Richard Mayne.
 Sept. John Palmere, John Wynde.
 1390. John Palmere, Wm. Thomere.
 1391. Wm. Thomere, John Sydenham.
 1393. Wm. Thomere, Robert Bosom.
 1394. John Palmere, John Cole.
 1395. Wm. Thomere, John Kedwelly.
 1397. Jan. Wm. Thomere, John Kedwelly.
 Sept. Wm. Thomere, John Sydenham.
 1399. Wm. Thomere, John Kedwelly

THE BOROUGH COURT

The hall or house of pleas — *aula* or *domus placitorum* — is an alternative designation for the gild hall, and perhaps it is instructive that this building is never so called in the records of the community but only in those of the castle.

Here the lord's steward presided over the borough court which was held once a month and as a rule on a Monday. He heard pleadings on pleas of debt, of detinue, of trespass, of covenant, of false presentment and others. He received the monthly reports of the wardens of the districts into which the town was divided for purposes of police, and the half-yearly presentments of twelve jurors at the view of frankpledge — reports and presentments of cases of wounding, of raising the hue and cry with good cause or with insufficient cause, of neglecting to clear away muck heaps or to keep the kennel clear before a tenement, of throwing offal into the town ditch or fouling the common stream. Here also common scolds were in danger of the punishment of the tumbrel and harbourers of undesirables of a lighter penalty. The long lists of respectable burgesses who had broken the assize of ale, for which they were amerced 3*d.* each, seem to show a short way of exacting a due by imposing a fine. Bread-weighers too were present to report short weight or that half a dozen bakers had no bread for sale on the occasion of the sheriff's session, and on another occasion that loaves at four a penny were not being made as they ought to be made in accordance with statute and proclamation. 'Foreign'

tradesmen, distrained by a parcel of cloth, appear to answer the charge of standing on market days outside the common stalls to the prejudice of the rights and liberties of the town and contrary to its ancient custom. These were cloth merchants or 'drapers' from Taunton. From Shapwick came another 'foreigner,' a butcher, who was caught selling his meat in a private house. Regrating was another market offence that was brought before the steward — buying and selling at an enhanced price in the same market being entirely against the law.

Generally the offenders, if found guilty, are amerced sums of a penny, or threepence, or sixpence or even a shilling. If that is not sufficient, they are distrained by some household or trade implement — basin, ewer, dish, caldron, brass pot, axe, a spinning-wheel and even a horse. If this is not enough, there is further distraint.

There are two medieval terms which recur in these rolls of which some explanation may be sought — *lex* and *loquela*.

Lex is not used here in its ordinary sense of 'law.' The word here signifies 'proof' and in particular the ancient method of compurgation, the oath of neighbours, the oath of oath-helpers. The accused may come with the third hand, or the sixth, or the ninth, or the twelfth; cases in which each of these occurs will be found in these pages. He will bring two, or five, or eight, or eleven others to swear, not to any evidence of his innocence, but to the veracity of their principal. This ancient method of clearing oneself before a court was not removed from the statute book till 1833.

Loquela seems to be equivalent, more or less, to what was known in English as 'imparlance'. It suggests that one or both parties to a suit do not wish to proceed with the case, at least for the present, possibly to find a way out and to effect a compromise.

In the section on Trade and Commerce will be found two cases of yet another type, that of withholding or preventing the collection of customs from the lord. It cannot be forgotten that the lord's interest in this court was primarily financial.

Beyond ameracements and distrains loomed the far more severe punishment of tumbrel and pillory. Alice Berecorn, for example, as a disturber of the peace (330), and Amicia Broun, as a common scold (353), were each sentenced to the punishment of the tumbrel or cucking-stool. This was a wooden stump — stulp — on which the culprit was compelled to sit and abide the jeers and missiles of a hostile crowd. Hugh Plombere's wife had been awarded the still worse correction of the pillory, the form of which is familiar to us. It was only through the intercession of her friends and the payment of a fine of 3s. 4d. to the lord that she escaped the penalty (430).

We read of the old pillory, near which Susan atte Watere kept the muck-heap which, to the public annoyance, she was so slow to remove (317). If this old pillory was out of use at this time, there must have been a less old one, with which Elena Plombere was threatened. Yet in 1386 the Castle servants erected a new 'town pillory', made of oak from the lord's woods, and at the same time provided an accompanying 'thewe' which is yet another name for the tumbrel. Beyond these milder forms of torture the powers of the Borough Court to punish did not go.

THE DURNEDAY COURT

The meagre references to the court known as the Durneday Court — *dorndiei curia* — are worthy of examination, for apparently no other is known to have existed which was exactly like it.

What were the durne-days or dorne-days from which it took its name? Door days they certainly were, for the word, signifying a door-post, is still used in the phrase 'a pair o durnes' in the West country.

We find the term in a Bridgwater lease in the year 1416, whereby Sir Thomas Stawill let a burgage in the borough to William and Joan Schere. The tenants were to pay yearly at Michaelmas the shilling burgage rent to the chief lords, sixpence rent to Sir Thomas, and a rent charge of sixpence to John Slepier, the then chaplain of our Lady's chantry. And the aforesaid William and Joan and John shall keep me the aforesaid Thomas and my heirs

without challenge or damage in 'les durnedayys' every year as long as they live.'

The durnedays therefore were days during or on which the owner of a burgage might incur a liability, a liability presumably in connection with the burgage rent. But a liability to what?

We turn again to our records and in the borough court roll of November, 1387, we find a case which helps us to a solution of our problem. The late reeve, William Blache, presents Andrew Skynnere for having broken his attachment by opening his door which had been sealed by the bailiff because the lord's rent was in arrear (430). From this incident we may conclude that if the burgage rent was not paid on a certain day or within certain days, called door days, the owner was liable to find his door sealed up, and that if he broke the seal he was liable to a penalty.

At Preston in Lancashire, if the bailiff, who collected the farm of the king at the four terms of the year, did not succeed at his first visit, he was at liberty on a second occasion to pull down the burgess's door, and the burgess might not replace it until the debt was paid except by the consent of the bailiff.¹

The Durneday Court of Bridgwater was held in January or February each year. This allowed a period of grace of three or four months after Michaelmas, and it may be that those who were summoned before it were burgage holders who had not even then paid their rent. The ameracement of suitors who defaulted from this session was 6d. The profits of the court did not vary greatly from year to year:

We know the figures for four separate years. In February, 1379, they were 30s. 6d. in January, 1380, 30s.; in January 1381, 36s. and in January, 1388, 36s. Apparently there was an extra session in September, 1380, which produced 20s., unusual and hard to account for, unless it was in some way due to the disturbances of that year.

There is only one record of the meeting of this court, and all we learn from it is that certain suitors were fined for non-attendance and that one burgess was amerced because his rent was in arrear.

(434). An examination of the names of the 72 suitors shows us that out of 72 there are only 28 which appear in other documents of the borough. The remaining 44 seem to be those of strangers to the town, though doubtless burghage-holders. Among them are three heads of religious houses.

The record tells us nothing of what the duties of the court were, unless the reference to Ralph Barwe's failure to pay his rent is an indication.

TRADE AND COMMERCE

The times and seasons of the fairs of Bridgwater varied from century to century. If one disappeared, another took its place. The original fair granted by King John, in the foundation charter of 1200 was 'a fair each year to continue for eight days, to wit, from the day of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist for eight days.' No further record of it is to be found in the borough archives. When, however, we turn to the Castle Ministers' Accounts which have recently come to light, we find that though the earliest of them, that of 1346, is silent regarding this fair, the next in order, that of 1357, tells us that the toll of the fair of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist and for eight days is nothing this year, *because no merchants came*.

In both these accounts and throughout the period of this volume there were three other fairs which provided the lords with a revenue. The first was on Ascension Day, the second in the week of Pentecost, and the third and most important at the feast of St. Matthew. St. Matthew's fair remains to this day an important town institution at which much business in farm stock is done.

In the borough records there is as yet but little light on our home and foreign commerce. Far more detail has been preserved in the later years of the 15th century and throughout the whole of the 16th. But there are two 'inquest' to which reference may be made which bear on the question.

The first of these (340) was taken before the steward of the borough court on oath of twelve jurors who found that John Cole had been withholding the lords' customs of corn sold to foreign merchants during a period of twelve years. John Cole was

perhaps the chief Bridgwater merchant in those days. This sale of corn it was alleged ran into 10,000 quarters, and beside the corn, the jurors found that he had sold iron, fish, salt and wine and had withheld the custom. The lord's servants were ordered to levy the sum of £22 by way of damages.

The second inquest referred to also lay in the borough court.² This time the subject was a diversion of trade from Bridgwater to Comwich, and the jurors found that a group of people including the rector of Otterhampton, which lies near to Comwich, and two Bridgwater burgesses, had been concerned in persuading the masters of trading vessels to put in at Comwich and discharge their cargoes there instead of carrying them to Bridgwater, the lords being thus deprived of their custom. A ship laden with salt, a 'creyer' from 'Ylfarcomb' (Ilfracombe) laden with herring, a Cornish 'pekar' with a cargo of fish, a ship of Tenby called the *Holke*, and a barge, twice laden with salt and corn are specified. Damages of £100, a round and probably fanciful sum, were laid on the ten culprits. It was decided to confer with the lords on the knotty problem.

One of the accused was Nicholas Neeth, a merchant, whose will may be seen in the volume of *Somerset Wills* in this series. But what was the parson of Otterhampton doing in this galley!

THE PARISH AND THE PARISH CHURCH

We left the vicarage at the end of Edward III's reign in the hands of John Comyn, and Sir John, vicar of Bridgwater, who appears at the end of August, 1377, in the will of Robert Castel (310) is presumably he. Unfortunately the long gap in the episcopal registers at Wells leaves us without the source from which lists of incumbents are usually compiled. Both for Bridgwater vicars and masters of the hospital we have to be content with what odd documents may furnish us. The name next to Comyn's in our list of vicars is that of Nicholas Frompton, who with Thomas Engilby led the rioters of 1381 against the hospital. Dr. Powell excluded him from the list, but he was not aware that his name appears in a will of 1383 (380) in which he is styled 'perpetual vicar

of the church aforesaid.' Six years later we have William Hurst as vicar and he still held the incumbency at the close of the century.

The three accounts of the churchwardens will be studied with interest by those who follow ecclesiology as their subject.

First in importance is the custom which obtained in Bridgwater of levying a rate for the church not only in the town but in each of the hamlets which were included in the parish. These were in addition to the special collections for the Easter candle and the clock. Other sources of revenue were legacies and payments of 3s. 4d. for burial within the church. Special gifts for the work on the tower will also be noted.

It will be remembered that the building of the spire on the tower had been begun in 1367 (238). There is evidence that the spire had proved too heavy and much work had to be done on the tower to make it equal to the burden placed upon it. It was necessary to add heavy buttresses on the south-east and southwest corners. Much work too was done on the north side of the nave in these years and the building of a charnel house apart from the church is an important item of expenditure in the account for 1386-7 (426). Lead for the roof is brought in large quantity from Wells.

Godwyn was a Bridgwater name and it may be that John, who was employed on the repair of the glass windows, was a local craftsman, though he is not mentioned elsewhere.

The clock which was later placed in the care of the chaplain of our Lady's chantry was at this time looked after by one of the clerks of the church.

The number of the bells at this time seems to have been three.

It will be noted that the wardens of the High Cross (407, 427) are still identical with those of the church, and that their income as such is expended on the maintenance of the light before the high cross and the candles in the real, rowel or trendal which hung from the roof. The lights in the chancel are provided by our Lady's chantry.

A few months ago Dr. Eeles, examining the bosses of the chancel roof, found inscribed on one of them the words 'Frater Will's Patehull magist' with the emblem of the Agnus Dei. If this master's term of office lasted from 1385 to 1422, we have considerable limits wherein to date the bosses.

CHANTRIES

During the last decade of the 14th century the chantry of our Lady was refounded and re-endowed, and its chaplain, Robert Northover, on the presentation of the stewards of the gild merchant and the community, was re-admitted by the bishop. The cause of this change may be seen in the indifferent state of the finances of the old foundation. It simply was not paying its way.

In the last years of Edward the wardens had been able to show a recurrent surplus of some sort to be brought forward to the next account. But in the years from 1378 to 1387 we find nothing but deficits except in 1383 and in 1387, the last year of which any account survives, when the wardens found they had a balance, handed it over to Sir Robert in part payment of what was still due to him, and cried quits — *Quieti*.

Something therefore had to be done. But before reciting the steps taken to improve the financial position, let us examine the chief items of income and expenditure in those earlier years of Richard's reign.

The chief source of income lay in the property which had been given or bequeathed to the chantry from time to time. This, with the sale of wax for anniversaries and gifts or bequests of money or articles which might be sold, had been sufficient to meet the ordinary expenditure, so long as the rents and rent charges were realized. And now they were not being realized. The section *Defedus redditus* shows that clearly enough. In that last year a special effort seems to have been made for there was a sale of veils and ornaments which brought in 17s. 6d., thus providing that surplus which the wardens were able to hand over to the chaplain.

Of current expenditure the largest item was the chaplain's salary which was nominally £4 6s. 8d. Next, the cost of oil

for the lamp which burned continually in the choir, and of wax for the candles which were renewed at the feasts of Purification and Assumption. The oil cost about 10s. 6d. a year and the wax less, but the 'making' of the wax averaged about 5s. Burgage rent, amounting to about 6s., was paid each year to the reeves. The clerk who drew up the account received 2s. and he who kept the lamp burning, 4d. Irregular but burdensome calls on the resources of the chantry are found in repairs to house property and in law expenses.

After 1387 we have no more yearly accounts. Five years later comes the first step toward reform. On 28 September, 1392, the king, in return for the sum of £20 paid into his treasury, granted a licence to the stewards and community to endow the Lady chantry with certain specified properties for the support of the chaplain. (P.R.O., Patent Roll, 16 Rich. II, pars 2, mem. 30, quoted in Gross, *The Gild Merchant*, vol. ii, p. 353.) The terms of the licence appear in the document (462) in which the stewards and community granted these properties to Robert Northover and his successors. Here also are specified the duties and privileges of the office which form a most interesting addition to our knowledge of medieval chantry administration. On the day following this grant, the rectors and vicar made an additional allowance on their own account (463) and in the following month the bishop re-admitted Sir Roger to the chaplaincy (464).

The receipt given by the sheriff of Somerset to the stewards for 40s. paid to the queen on account of the fine of £20 paid to the king for licence to disregard the statute of mortmain completes this interesting series of documents regarding the refounding of the chantry (470).

It will be evident from these documents that Our Lady's chantry was served in the choir of the parish church. No chapel was yet built in her honour. We read of a chapel dedicated to All Saints (406, 475) and of an altar to St. Katherine (398).

THE HOSPITAL OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST

The aged Thomas of Cadicote, or Catcott, who had held the office of master of the hospital for more than thirty years,

lived to see the beginning of the disturbances which marred the peace of the borough in 1380-1. He was succeeded by William Cammel who bore the brunt of the insurrection in the latter year and reigned for a much shorter period. Possibly the anxieties through which he passed, if they did not shorten his life, may have led him to resign his office. On 8 May, 1385, a licence was granted to elect a successor. This was probably William Patehulle whom we find, in company with his brethren and the vicar, making a special grant toward the income of the chaplain of our Lady's chantry in 1393 (463). He is said to have died in 1422, but no authority is given.

The hospital was the centre of the disturbances of 1381 in Bridgwater, just as the abbey was the centre of those taking place at the same time in St. Alban's. A narrative of the events in Bridgwater, derived chiefly from the Patent and Close Rolls, was given in a paper contributed some years ago to the *Proceedings of the Somersetshire Archaeological Society*³ It is therefore unnecessary to enlarge here on what surely was the most dramatic episode in the medieval story of the borough as we know it. Suffice it to point out what references to the struggle there may be in the documents of this volume.

In the court roll for September, 1380 (352), it may be noted that there are signs of friction between the hospital and the borough authorities. The first may be of minor importance, and yet so important a personage as the master is ordered to be distrained to answer the lord why the place called the common Back opposite his tenement is not maintained in good condition. This is a complaint that might have been made even against the community, in those days, yet in the light of subsequent proceedings we may regard it as significant. The second reference to the hospital in the same court's proceedings concerns one of the brethren, named Robert Spycer, who was presented to the steward by the wardens of the district without West Gate for unjustly raising the hue and cry on Richard Hacche and John Engulby. We gather from this charge that Spycer had been assaulted or had been in fear of being assaulted by the other two.

Hacche was a clerk at St. Mary's who was later in charge of the clock. Engulby is not mentioned elsewhere but may have been related to Thomas, the chief leader in the next year's rioting. This was the September court. A month later, the lord, William la Zouche, obtained a commission on his complaint that the master, and three of the brethren, of whom one is named Robert Spisour, with Sir Baldwin Malet and others, had among other infringements of his rights prevented his steward from holding his court of view of frankpledge. It is near the end of October and we are approaching the year of insurrection. Things are not running smoothly.

Of the aftermath of those fatal days there are two possible indications. In the January following, Nicholas Someryng, master of a vessel, had to find sureties on a charge of having attempted to kill John Sydenham of Bridgwater (374). John had been one of the victims in June. His house-property had been wrecked and his goods stolen, but he had escaped with his life, and lived to become a steward of the gild merchant.

In March the escheator of Somerset and Dorset restored to John Bursy and William Thomer of Bridgwater a vessel called the 'Cog Jon' and three lasts of herring which he had seized (375). A man named Bursy had been unwillingly concerned in the rioting of June, and it is possible that he had been a fugitive and had now been pardoned.

THE GREY FRIARS

These were the days of Geoffrey Chaucer. And in an age when learned treatises were written in Latin, the first English poet was minded to write one in English for the benefit of his, son, 'litel Lewis'. His subject was the astrolabe, and he thought that in his 'lighte English' he could furnish as clear an explanation as

'any commune tretis of the Astrolabie.' In the introduction he tells little Lewis that 'the thridde partie shal contienen diverse tables of longitudes and latitudes of sterres fixe for the Astrolabie, and tables of declinations of the sonne, and tables of longitudes of citeez and of townes; and as wel for the governance of a clokke as for to finde the altitude meridian; and many another notable conclusioun, after the

kalendres of the reverent clerkes, frere I. Somer and frere N. Lynn',

— Brother John Somer of Bridgwater and Brother Nicholas of Lynn, names often found associated with each other in matters of astronomy in the closing years of the 14th century.

If Chaucer, in the days of his forestership of the royal forests in Somerset, ever came through Bridgwater, we should like to think that he knew Friar Somer, not only by his works, but in person also, and that they had many a friendly chat together in the pleasant garden in Friarn Street, looking across the brook and the Friars' mead to the edge of the great forest of North Petherton.

Somer ranked high as an astronomer, and as he is understood to have used the researches of the most distinguished of all English friars, himself a native of Somerset, his name is linked not only with Chaucer's but also with that of Roger Bacon.

Among his works there is in manuscript in the British Museum A Short Chronicle — *Cronica qucedam brevis* — by John Somour of the order of St. Francis of the convent in the town of Bridgwater. The frame-work, Dr. Little tells us, may be his, but 'the entries are short and scattered — some being later than the middle of the 15th century — and in different hands. Several refer to Bridgwater.'

The name of another contemporary Bridgwater friar which has been preserved for us is that of William Auger, or it may be Anger. He was warden of the house, and when he died in 1404 was buried here.

References to the Friars Minor will be found in several of the wills appearing in the pages following, but the bequests are of no special interest.

We get some idea of the size of the Friars' property from an entry in the Castle accounts for 1381-2, which tells us that they paid 9s. in burgage rent for nine burgages 'wherein they are wont' to dwell.'

TOPOGRAPHY

The general plan of the medieval town, illustrated by a tentative map, has been described in the former volume. From the

documents of the period now under consideration we are able to add some further details.

By 1394 the old Tolsey — *vetus tolselda* — which, forty years earlier (163) was already termed 'old,' had fallen on decadent days. It had ceased to serve its original purpose and the castle ministers had been letting it, to what purpose we do not know, for 5s. a year. But now they were not able to raise more than 4s., and the old toll booth was declining not only in age, but in value. It seems to have stood in High Street, in the Coken Row, possibly on the site of the present municipal buildings. Its uses had, it may be assumed, been transferred to the Gild Hall, in which the Gild Merchant held its sessions, but which was also known, at least to the Castle officials, as the 'Hall of Pleas' — *aula placitorum* — where the borough courts were held month by month. A house, cheek by jowl with the hall, was used as an appanage wherein inquests — *inquisitiones* — such, for examples, as those recorded above, were laid before the lords' steward: (P.R.O. 969/11). Near the Hall or House of Pleas — *domus placitorum* — lay the Town Gaol, which it was the business of the lords of the town to keep in repair (P.R.O. 968/25).

We read in a deed of 1399 (492) for the first time of the Orfaire. Let us for ever get rid of the idea that these local names, Orlieu and Orfaire, have anything whatever to do with gold or goldsmiths. Orlieu or Orloue has already been shown to be a personal surname (vol. 48, p. liv). The old Saxon word 'orf,' meaning cattle, lingered on till this very decade, and the late Dr. Bradley suggested that in the word Orfaire we have a synonym for 'cattle-market' — an orf fair. The Basselles, mentioned in the same deed as a place outside the North Gate, is not so simple of interpretation and remains a mystery.

Crouiles Lane (346) appeared in the former volume as Croniles Lane. This was an error, due to the difficulty which the transcriber has in distinguishing between the letters 'u' and 'n' in the medieval script. He simply has to make his choice. Sometimes he chances on another spelling for his guidance and that has now happened. The scribe in one document has

used a 'w' instead of a 'u,' and henceforth the spelling Crouile is used. This is of course one of those street names which have been adopted from the name of a builder or of one of the householders. Godwynes Lane (337) and Pekesplace (414) are examples of the same order.

The bridge at the South Gate (476), which carried the road leading to Taunton over Durleigh Brook, must be clearly distinguished from South Bridge or Lime Bridge with which we have already met. The Blynde Lane (355) is not yet located, but we learn that near Frog Lane there was a Frog Bridge, which we may suppose carried Frog Lane over Durleigh Brook near to the river. Whether the Bak was a general term for space at the backs of the houses or the name of a particular place is undecided, but we now read of 'a house in the street on 'le Bak' towards the bridge of Frog Lane (P.R.O. 969/13). The origin of the curious Cattenechurcheye is still an unsolved riddle.

Lastly may be recorded two place-names outside the town. They are Borshed and Rokescastell (475). Both lie near North Petherton. Boar's Head is a field from which the builders brought sand when they needed it for their work on the church fabric. This was more than 500 years ago, and quite recently hundreds of tons have been raised from the same pits. Rookscastle provided these builders with stone tiles for the church roofing, and the castle account of 1346 (P.R.O. 968/17) shows an entry of 7d. for a hundred stones bought at 'Rokuscastele' for covering the castle barn and for a gallon of ale given to the men who carried the stones. To-day a farm looking out over the lovely landscape below it preserves the name.

My thanks are again due to the Mayor and Corporation for their continued willingness to help in the publication of their archives. Especially may I mention their readiness to place with their store of documents photostats of the Ministers' Accounts which are in the Public Record Office. I would here wish also to express my obligation to Miss Carus-Wilson for having brought these documents to my knowledge.

Dr. Tait has continued that valuable help which I have now enjoyed for many

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years, and to him as well as to Dr. A. G. Little, Dr. A. H. Thomas, Dr. E. W. W. Veale and Dr. F. C. Eeles, who have given me assistance in their special fields of knowledge, I should like to express my

gratitude, as well as to many others who in some way or other have contributed to whatever knowledge this volume contains.

Bridgwater.

T. BRUCE DILKS.

END NOTES

1) Clemesha, *A History of Preston in Amounderness*, p. 44.

2) P.R.O., Ministers Accounts, 968/26, m.i.

3) T. Bruce Dilks, *Bridgwater and the Insurrection of 1381*, vol. lxxiii (1927), pp. 57-69.