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The Archives of the City of Gloucester

by K. H. Fryer
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THE ARCHIVES OF THE CITY OF GLOUCESTER.
 BY
 KEDGWIN HOSKINS FRYER,
 TOWN CLERK.

The documents of historical interest in the Archives of the Corporation of Gloucester consist chiefly of charters of incorporation, the earliest of which is of the date of Henry II., who extended to the smaller towns those charters of privileges which had in former times been confined to London and a few of the larger cities. By this charter the King grants to the burgesses of Gloucester "the same customs and liberties throughout his whole land for toll and other things as the cities of London and Winchester enjoyed in the time of Henry I., and strictly enjoins that no person shall give them molestation." Then follow the charters of King John and Henry III., the latter of whom it will be remembered, was crowned at Gloucester. Then we come to the charter of Edward III., which appears to have been granted during his Majesty's presence in this city, and which confirms all former charters and grants (as it is expressed) "out of respect to his father's being buried in the Abbey Church of the town of Gloucester to the inhabitants, the liberty of using all the old customs granted them by his ancestors but then out of use, and also that they shall be free of tollage, pontage, &c., and all other customs throughout all England and within his dominions." The circumstance of the burial of Edward II., in our Cathedral in connection with his cruel death at Berkeley Castle led, we are told, to such a conflux of persons on visits of devotion to his tomb, that the town was scarce sufficient to contain them, and their offerings were so great that out of the oblations in six years the cross aisle of the Abbey Church was built, and enough, it is added, might have been obtained to have rebuilt the whole church. Next in order of date of the charters which have been

preserved are those of Richard II., Henry IV., Henry V., Henry VI., Edward IV., Richard III., Henry VII., Henry VIII., Elizabeth, James I., Charles I., and Charles II., the latter being the last charter which has been granted. On referring to these charters it will be observed that up to the time of Henry VI., the charters are directed "to all archbishops, bishops, abbots, priors, barons, viscounts, and others," thus indicating by the order in which the several degrees of rank are mentioned the supremacy of the Church over the laity, whilst after that period, when the Crown had come into collision with the Church, the charters are directed generally "to all to whom these presents shall come".

Among the miscellaneous papers in the possession of the Corporation is an award of the Black Prince (son of Edward III.) of the date of 1355, for settling a dispute between the Abbot and Convent of St. Peter's, Gloucester (now the Cathedral), and the Warden and Convent of Friars Minor or Grey Friars, as to their relative rights to a source of water supply, the warlike Prince giving as a reason for his interference that it was not good that discord should exist "inter religiosos viros." We find also the Charter of Foundation by Henry VIII., of the Bishoprick of Gloucester, by which also the town of Gloucester received the dignity of being converted into a city. This document is very elaborately illuminated with an initial picture, which represents the King in the act of delivering into the hands of the first Bishop the Deed of Foundation, whilst the ecclesiastics, with their shaven crowns, are surrounding his footstool. This document, it is presumed, passed with the Cathedral and its possessions into the hands of the Corporation during the Commonwealth under an Act of Parliament then passed for vesting the Cathedral in the Mayor and Burgesses of Gloucester, who appear, from entries in their books of receipts and payments connected with the establishment, to have held possession for some years, probably till the Restoration. The exemplification of this act contains in its illuminated border a representation of the Protector, which will be viewed with interest.

There is also a manuscript book of the date of 29th Elizabeth having reference to the then threatened invasion of the Spanish Armada, who, according to CAMDEN, had it in their instructions to destroy the oak timber of the Royal Forest of Dean, on the banks of the River Severn, such timber affording an important material for shipbuilding. In this book is entered a certificate to the Lord CHANDOS, Lord Lieutenant of the city and county, of the names of all the able men meet for her Majesty's service in the war, and all horses fit for service; and from this book it appears that in order to guard against a sudden attack—which the proximity of the Bristol Channel rendered not impracticable—a beacon was set up on Robin Hood's Hill (as it is spelled in the old MS.) overlooking this city, to be in communication with the beacon on Cleeve Hill, near Cheltenham, and the beacon at Tewkesbury. A little house, it is said, was set up for the two watchmen of the beacon, who were to be two of the ablest men of every parish in the liberty, and to serve for one day and one night. These watchmen were to appoint two other persons under them, who were to run in case of necessity from parish to parish to give warning all over the hundred. They were to have a horse in readiness, and one of them, in the event of either of the beacons at Cleeve Hill or Tewkesbury being lighted, was to endeavour to find out the occasion, and with all possible speed proceed on horseback to the Mayor and take his direction, and not suffer the beacon on Robin Hood's Hill to be fired unless by his order. This beacon appears to have been watched day and night from the 2nd July, 1588, until the departure of the Spanish fleet. Similar beacons were established along the whole line of the West of England. We also learn that in May, 1588, the Lords of the Council required Tewkesbury and Gloucester to bear the expense of sending one ship to serve under the Lord High Admiral against the Spanish invasion, and accordingly that for this purpose the Bark Sutton was fitted out at a cost of 440*l*.

Connected with this reign, in the Corporation books occur entries of payments incidental to the entertainment in this city of Queen Elizabeth, who paid a visit to this city when sojourning

on one of her royal progresses at Sudeley Castle, near Cheltenham, then the seat of Lord CHANDOS. There are two items indicative of the amusements of that period, and in which occur also the names of the two rivals to the Queen's favour; the one refers to a payment to my Lord of LEICESTER's players (whether or not any of SHAKESPEAR's productions were represented on this occasion must be left to conjecture), and the other is a payment to my Lord of SUSSEX's bear-ward "for the dancing of his bears before Mr. Mayor."

In another manuscript book are copies of orders from the Privy Council as to raising trained bands, and the proceedings thereon, from about 1626 to 1638, and a copy of a warrant under the Royal signet requiring the Earl of NORTHAMPTON, then Lord Lieutenant of the city and county of Gloucester, to raise 1000 men, and appointing York as the place of rendezvous. There is a commission of 17th Charles I. for the administration of the oaths of allegiance and supremacy to suspected persons.

And we have another commission under the great Seal of 11th October, 2nd Charles I., for raising money by way of loan (no doubt of a compulsory nature) for the use of the Crown, which recites the neglect of the Parliament to afford the necessary supplies to carry on the war with Spain commenced in the preceding reign, and that the King had therefore, with the advice of his Privy Council, thought fit of his own authority to adopt this course to provide for the expense of carrying on the war and the protection of this Kingdom, therein stated to be menaced.

The raising of money by commissions of this kind without the consent of Parliament led, with other circumstances, to that disruption between King and Parliament which caused the overthrow of Monarchical power and the establishment of the Commonwealth. The important part played by this city in these stirring times is well known, but it may not be out of place to give a few particulars. On the 10th August, 1643, Charles the first appeared before the city, with the Royal forces,

about 6000 horse and foot being placed in Tredworth Field, at the foot of Robin Hood's Hill about a quarter of a mile of the town, and about 2000 horse more being in Walham, "within cannon shot at random of our workes." About two o'clock in the afternoon two heralds bearing a summons from his Majesty appeared at one of the city gates, requiring the surrender of the city, offering pardon upon submission, and requiring an answer within two hours. A consultation then took place amongst the citizens and soldiers, and a formal answer was drawn up to the demand of surrender. The persons selected to be its bearers were, for the citizens, **TOBIAS JORDAN**, a bookseller and member of the Corporation, and for the military Sergeant-Major **PUDSEY**, men (it is said) who would stand unawed in the presence of the Sovereign. The heralds conducted them to the presence of the King surrounded by his troops and attended by Prince Charles, the Duke of York, Prince **RUPERT** (the commander of his Horse), the Earl of **FORTH** (General of his Foot), and the nobles and distinguished officers of his train. The contrast exhibited in the appearance and demeanour of these messengers, as they are somewhat sarcastically described by **LORD CLARENDON**, is characteristic of the party and the times, viz., "Within less than the time prescribed, together with the trumpeter returned two citizens from the town, with lean, pale, sharp, and bad vizages, indeed faces so strange and unusual, and in such a garb and posture, that at once made the most severe countenances merry, and the most cheerful heart sad; for it was impossible such ambassadors would bring less than a defiance."*

The answer which they presented was in these words— "We the inhabitants, magistrates, officers, and soldiers within the garrison of Gloucester, unto his Majestie's gracious message return this humble answer. That we doe keepe this city according

* The scene here described has been well represented in a Picture, some time since exhibited at the Royal Academy, and lately presented to the City by Mr. Powell, Q.C. This Picture is now in the Tolsey.

to our oathes and allegiance to and for the use of his Majesty and his Royal posterity, and doe accordingly conceive ourselves wholly bound to obey the commands of his Majesty, signified by both Houses of Parliament, and are resolved by God's help to keepe this City accordingly." The ambassadors returned "and the siege began by the advance of the Royal forces into the suburbs, chiefly on the east part into Barton-street. From a record kept of each day's events (or diurnal as it is called) we learn that the women wrought hard in fetching turfe for repairing the Workes," and so straightened were the besieged for men that for want of sufficient men for guarding the city itself (the number not being above 1400 at most), the out-posts were forced to be abandoned. The diurnal is quaint and pithy in its language, and, although undesignedly, is not without humour, as the following extracts will show :—

"Thursday, August 17. The enemy shot divers grenadoes out of their battery in Gawdy Green (now Brunswick square), into the towne, whereof about 4 fell upon some houses and brake into them, but (by God's providence) did no harme and one fell into the street near the Southgate, but a woman coming by with a payle of water, threw the water thereon, and extinguished the phuse thereof, so that it did not break, but was taken up whole. It weighed 60lb.—Saturday, August 19. The enemy began a most furious battery upon both sides of the corner of the City Wall next Rignall stile, making above 150 great shot thereupon, wherewith they shrewdly battered the wall, but our earth works stood firm; by all this shot there was only a man and a maid hurt, and a cannon ball, its force being almost spent, running along the ground, struck down a pigge, which our soldiers ate and afterwards well jeered the enemy therewith. This day and the night following the enemy shot divers grenadoes into the town, whereof one fell in at the top of Mr. Hathway's house into his chamber over his kitchen, and thence obliquely descending took that with it, and brake in his Court. One peece fell in the kitchen chimney, where three women were sitting by the fire, but by God's blessing hurt none

of them. The rest did no other hurt than to houses and that not much either.—Thursday, August 24th. The enemy made divers shots this day with two pieces of ordnance they had newly planted at Lanthony, but did little hurt and killed none. One Bullet of about 20lb weight came through a chamber of the Inn called the Crown, carried a bolster before it into the window and there slept upon it.—Friday, August 25th. In the evening and night following the enemy shot from their battery at Lanthony above 20 fiery melting hot bullets, some 18lb. others 22lbs. weight. In the night we perceived them flying through the air like a star shooting; most of them fell into houses and stables where hay was, but by God's providence did no hurt at all. One came through three houses and fell into a chamber of Mr. Commelin's the Apothecary, and being perceived, many pails of water were cast upon it to quench the same, but that little availing, it was cast into a cowl of water, where after a good space it cooled.—Sunday, August 27th. The enemy wrought hard in casting earth into the moate. They also made about 20 great shot upon the house over the Eastgate.—Monday, August, 28th. We conceived that the enemy had sunk a mine under the Eastgate, whereupon we began to countermine in two several places, but finding springs we left off, conceiving the enemy would be forced to do the like for the same reason."

We find that the mining operations were subsequently renewed at the Eastgate, and this may account for the fault or break in the Roman wall pointed out by Mr. BELLOWS underneath his house at this spot. September the 4th was appointed for a Public Fast, to be kept by such as could be spared from labour, and between the sermons it is said that it was discovered that the Royalist forces were retreating, and the siege, which had lasted about a month, was eventually raised; at which there was great rejoicing. The sufferings and losses of the inhabitants during and consequent upon the siege were very considerable, especially in the suburbs, as many as 241 houses having either been pulled down by the defenders of the city so as not to afford

a shelter to the enemy in their attack, or fired by the enemy themselves. The value of the property so destroyed was represented to the Commonwealth Parliament as 28,720*l.*, a large sum in those days. The city after the siege is described by Dorney as like a garment without skirts, which he says; "We were willing to part withall, lest our enemies should sit upon them."

Upon the restoration of Monarchy in 1662 it appears that a Commission was issued under the Great Seal to the Right Hon. Lord Herbert, Lord Lieutenant of the County, Sir Richard Ashfield, Sir Christopher Gise, Sir Robert Atkins, Sir Baynham Throckmorton, Thomas Chester, Esq., John Wintour, Esq., William Cooke, Esq., and Henry Gyse, Esq., empowering them as commissioners to require all members and officers of the Corporation and of the Magistracy to appear before such commissioners to take the oath or declaration required upon the new order of things. Accordingly we find that the oath was taken by the commissioners themselves and others in this form:—

"I doe declare that there lyes no obligation upon me or any other person from the oath commonly called the solemn League and covenant, and that the same was in itself an unlawful oath, and imposed upon the subjects of this Realm against the known Laws and Liberties of this Kingdom."

It seems that some of the members of the Corporation as well as John Dorney (Town Clerk), refused to submit to the altered regime and to take the oath, and were by formal order of the Commissioners displaced from the Corporation, and that other persons were put in their places. The signatures to the Orders of the Commissioners, and the armorial bearings upon their seals, corresponding exactly to those worn at the present time by descendants of the same families still resident in the county, will be viewed with interest.

Amongst those who have borne rule in this ancient city it appears that Oliver Cromwell, when Lord Protector, was, on the 30th September, 1651, elected High Steward, and amongst the Recorders the names occur of Sir John Bridgman, one of the

Judges, 1626; William Lenthal, Esq., Speaker of the House of Commons, 1638; Earl Somers, Lord High Chancellor of England 1690; Earl of Hardwicke, also Lord Chancellor, 1757. The roll of the chief officers of the city extends back to 1273. From Edward I. to Richard III. they were called Bailiffs; but from the latter date, by charter of the King, the civil government was altered, and it was ordained that a Mayor instead of Bailiffs should be elected annually, and amongst the Mayors so elected we find the names of ancestors of the Chairman of this Archaeological Society, viz., Sir John Guise, Bart., in the year 1690; and Sir John Guise, Bart., 1787; besides other persons of distinction.

John Dorney, the Town Clerk during the Rebellion, and historian of the siege, was a man of great learning, and although removed from office on account of his refusal at first to take the oaths upon the restoration of the monarchy, he was afterwards re-instated. Some of his speeches upon the installation of the new Mayor each year have been printed, and embellished as they are with quotations in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, even rival those flights of rhetoric and imagination with which in the present day the newly-made Lord Mayor of London is presented by the Recorder to her Majesty's Judges at Westminster. Dorney was preceded in the office of Town Clerk by William Guise, Esq., who was elected in 1615, and in the same year he gave to the Corporation "a great silver cup or bowl, and cover, double gilt," which was subsequently sold to contribute to the fortifications of the city. John Powell was elected Town Clerk in 1687, and afterwards became one of the Judges, and was one of those who tried the seven Bishops. He resided in the fine old timber-house still existing nearly opposite St. Mary de Crypt church, and was buried in the Lady chapel of the Cathedral, where there is a fine monument to his memory.

Turning to another subject, there is a commission 9th Charles I., 1634, for raising money for rebuilding St. Paul's Cathedral which was subsequently destroyed by the Great Fire of London of 1666. The Commission recites that "this church, famous for magnificent structure and an ornament to the city of London,

had fallen into decay, occasioned partly for that so much of the possessions of this church had come into lay hands that the residue sufficeth not to the continual charge required in the reparation of so great and costly a fabric and the maintenance of those that attended divine offices there, and partly by wasting which length of time doth produce, many hundreds of years having passed since this church was erected."

Before concluding I will briefly refer to an interesting document found in the City Archives, but which appears to relate more to the Priory of Lanthony, near this city, than to the Corporation. It is a rent-roll which on the face of it is expressed to have been written out by Brother Robert Cole, Canon of Lanthony, in the reign of Henry VI. On the back of the roll is drawn up in a tabular form the genealogy of the Kings of England from William the Conqueror to the commencement of the reign of Henry VI, containing in addition a concise chronicle of the principal events of each reign, marking particularly those which bore special reference to the Church, and quaintly contrasting the good or bad qualities of each Sovereign in proportion to his beneficence to Holy Church. For instance of William Rufus he says, "This King did great grieouces to Holy Church, and held in his hands the reuonues of diuers bishopricks and abbeys;" whilst of his successor Henry Beauclerk, he adds, "This King discomfited the King of France in battle, and died at St Dennis, in Normandy. He founded the Abbey of Reading, of the order of Saint Benedict, wherein he is sepelchred. This King loved well God and Holy Church, and was a blessed man, wherefore God gave him three things—wisdom, riches, and victory, and he reigned in peace thirty-six years." Under the heading of King Stephen's reign the foundation of the Priory of Lanthony is stated in these words, "Also the second yer of thys king foresayde, Milo the sone of Walter Cousular Earl of Hereford, Lord of Breckenock, Constable of England, and of al the Forest of Deue, the yer of our Lord a thousand an hundred xxxv., fownded the Hous of Lanthony by-syde Glouc' by his lyve, and aft his discece was buried in the Chapter hous of ye sayde place."