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**The Hospital of St. Mark, commonly called Billeswicke, or  
Gaunt's Hospital**

by J. Taylor  
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THE HOSPITAL OF ST. MARK, COMMONLY CALLED  
BILLESWIKE, OR GAUNT'S, HOSPITAL.

By JOHN TAYLOR,

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ROBERT DE BERKELEY, by his wife Alice, (the daughter and heir of Robert de Gaunt, by his first marriage with Alice, daughter and heir of William Paganel,) left an only son Maurice, who assumed his mother's name of Gaunt. This Maurice, who was one of the most powerful of the Barons who coerced King John, was the Lord of the Manor of Billeswike (Billeswyke?), of which College Green is the site. He was one of the founders of the Convent of Dominican Friars in Bristol, where he was buried in 1230, as well as of the house of which we are now treating, which was dedicated St. Mark, and called St. Mark's, or Gaunt's, Hospital, and also the Hospital of Billeswike. This latter was founded for the support of a Master and three chaplains, with daily alms to poor Christians, according to their deserts and needs, every hundred of the applicants to have distributed among them 45 lbs. of bread, made of wheat, barley, and beans, in equal quantities. There were also to be 12 scholars, to be admitted or removed at the will of the Master, who were to officiate in the choir of the chapel, dressed in surplices and black caps. At the admittance of each novice, he had a red shield affixed to his habit, which was worn during the year of his novitiate, after which, upon taking the vows of continence, obedience, poverty, &c., according to the rules of the order, a white cross was added. Leland observes that the Master was sometimes called a Prior, and the House a Priory of the Order of St. Augustine, and the house is often so described in the Gaunt's Charters.<sup>1</sup> Leland also

<sup>1</sup> Sir Thomas Phillips' Library.

states that the religious belonging to this house were called *Bonne hommes*, or good men. There were only two other colleges so named in England: viz., Ashridge, in Bucks., and Eddington, in Wilts. Annexed to the Hospital was an orchard and a garden, which form the site of Orchard Street, Unity Street, and the Grammar School. Upon the lower part of Stony Hill, adjoining, was situate the Columbarium, still identified by the name of Culver Street (from Culver—a dove). The extent of the hospital grounds towards the north is still indicated by a niche in the angle of the corner house of Pipe Lane and Frogmore Street, and near it are the remains of a winged lion, carved in stone.

“Sir Henry Gawnte,” the first Prior of the Hospital, is described by Leland, as “a Knight, sometyme dwellynge not farre from Brandon Hill, by Brystow.” Dying in A.D. 1268, his body was interred in the vestury,<sup>1</sup> that is in the S. aisle, where his effigy, on a restored tomb, still appears.

It has not hitherto been noticed that the Lady Jane Guildford, widow of Sir Richard Guildford, retired to Gaunt's Hospital to spend her latter days. Possibly no more than the name of this lady will be recollected by many. She was the confidential friend and adviser of the Lady Mary, sister of King Henry VIII., who, when she proceeded to France, in 1514, to become the Queen of Louis XII., was attended by a long array of English nobles and servants, but on the morrow of her marriage her first grief and trouble arose. The king, her husband, dismissed the whole of her English suite, whose loss, especially that of the Lady Guildford (Mother of the Maids), and the Queen's most confidential companion, she very keenly felt. On Lady Guildford's return to England, King Henry VIII., as some compensation for her disappointment, granted her an annuity of £60 a year for life.

In connection with her residence in Gaunt's Hospital, in the days of her later widowhood, there is a letter to Secretary Cromwell, stating that “certain Injunctions,” she understood, had “been given to the Master of Gaunt's Hospital, in Bristol, that

<sup>1</sup> Leland's Itin., Vol. 7, fo. 70.

no woman shall come within the precincts of the same, where I have a lodging most meetest, as I have chosen, for a poor widow to serve God now in my old days ;” and she begs “that both for herself and her women, like as we have been hitherto to be of such governance, with your licence to the same, that no inconvenience shall ensue thereof. And where hereto I have been used from my house to go the next way to the church, for my ease, through the cloister of the same house to a chapel that I have within the quire of the same, I shall be content, from henceforth, if it shall so seem convenient vnto you, to forbear that and to resort to the common place, like as other do, of the same church.”<sup>1</sup>

Barrett states that the Hospital of the Gaunts was surrendered by John Coleman, then master, and his brethren, by deed dated 11th Sept., 1534, into the hands of the King's Commissioners, to the king's use.<sup>2</sup> Its value has been variously stated from £112 to £184 per annum, and there were 420 ounces of plate.<sup>3</sup>

In 1540 the premises were granted by the crown to the Mayor and Burgesses for public uses, who afterwards granted the Church to the French Protestant refugees, for their worship, by whom it was held until the year 1721, when it reverted to the Mayor and Burgesses, by whom it was fitted up for their own use, the preacher being allowed £1 for each sermon.

The church lies nearly N. and S., instead of the usual position E. and W., but in describing it we shall treat of it as if it possessed the usual orientation. On either side of the exterior is a range of grotesque corbels belonging to the Early English building. Some of the windows are of the same style, but somewhat advanced. The great west window, covering nearly the whole front, is of eight lights, and is a combination of Decorated and Perpendicular. The head is a wheel of twelve spokes ; the whole of the present tracery is modern, but a re-production of the old work. In the south aisle is a sub-arcuated window of three lights, with ball flower, a beautiful specimen of pure Decorated.

<sup>1</sup> Wood's Letters of Illustrious Ladies, II., p. 158.

<sup>2</sup> See post, p. 250.

<sup>3</sup> See post, p. 253.

The tower was finished in 1487. The east end of the church, with its fine altar-piece of late Perpendicular niches and tabernacle work, is asserted to have been re-constructed by Miles Salley, Abbot of Eynsham, afterwards Bishop of Llandaff, who died in 1516, and his tomb, on which is his effigy arrayed in full pontificals, beautifully carved, is conspicuous on the south side of the altar.

The greater part of the glass in the chapel was, says Mr. Winston,<sup>1</sup> I believe, brought from Mr. Beckford's house at Fonthill. Amongst other specimens of cinque-cento work, I may mention an excellent figure of St. Barbara, in the East window, and a companion figure of St. Catherine, of inferior merit. These, as well as most of the specimens of cinque-cento, seem to be of Flemish workmanship. The scourging of Christ, in one of the South windows, is remarkable for the use made of sprinkled ruby to represent His lacerated body. In another of the side windows—the first from the west—is some late French ornamental work, exhibiting cyphers, mottoes, and emblems of Henry II., of France, and Diana, of Poitiers. Some of the glass is dated 1543. The stained window in the south aisle, containing a figure in pontificals to represent St. Thomas a Becket, is a copy of a painting by West. It cost Mr. Beckford 280 guineas.

The Poyntz Chapel, now the vestry, is of highly enriched architecture. Attached to the walls are 8 niches, with carved canopies, once filled with figures. The roof is of fan tracery. The floor is partly of encaustic tiles, supposed to be Moorish azuleiás, brought from Spain. This chapel is a superlative example of Perpendicular work (dating from 1510 to 1520), in composition and detail, says Rickman, one of the most elegant models of that style remaining.

In 1730, the entrance to a large vault under the floor fell in and some bodies were discovered. One of the bodies, lying under the present fire-place, was that of a female, clothed in white satin, with her robes attached at her breast by a handsome gold clasp.

<sup>1</sup> Bristol Volume of Royal Archaeological Institute, p. 15.

She was supposed to be Dame Margaret, wife of Sir Robt. Poyntz, for whose obsequies, with his own and those of his family, by his will, dated Oct. 19th, 1520, he richly endowed the chapel of Jesus and the Church of the Gaunts. When King Henry VII. visited Bristol, on the Whit-Tuesday, 1486, he dined at the residence of Sir Robt. Poyntz, at Iron Acton. The house is yet standing.

The Hagioscope, in the side chapel, is engraved in the *Glossary of Architecture*, vol. I., p. 350.

#### SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

#### ON THE HOSPITAL OF ST. MARK, OF BILLESWICK, OR GAUNT'S, HOSPITAL.

BY SIR JOHN MACLEAN, F.S.A.

WE are enabled to add some particulars to, and make a few corrections in, Mr. Taylor's interesting Paper on Gaunt's Hospital, or, as it is now called, the "Mayor's Chapel."

Tanner states that Gaunt's, or Billeswick, Hospital, was founded by Maurice de Gaunt before 1229, and that the foundation charter, in his time, was preserved in the Treasury of the Dean and Chapter of Wells; and he establishes the date by saying that the charter of Robert de Gurnay, confirming the grant of his uncle Maurice de Gaunt, was witnessed by Anselme, Bishop elect of St. David's, who was elected in that year. He states that the house was founded for one Chaplain and that 100 poor people were to be fed every day, for which use Maurice de Gaunt gave the Manor of Poulet, in co. Somerset, with certain mills, to the Canons of St. Augustine, to whom he made his hospital entirely subject. Robert de Harptree, who assumed the name of Gurnay, and confirmed his uncle's charter, increased the number of Chaplains from one to three, and directed that the Hospital should be free from the Abbey of St. Augustine (see charter in Dugdale's *Mou.*, vol. vi., p. 687).

The earliest direct information which we have upon the subject of this Hospital, is derived from a confirmation to William Lane,