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Long Row Almshouse, Bristol

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LONG ROW ALMSHOUSE, BRISTOL

During recent work (June 1940) at the almshouse in Long Row (Thomas street to Redcliff street), Bristol, an interesting discovery of carved figures on each side of the entrance was made. The one represents S. Thomas the Martyr, the patron saint of the parish church of S. Thomas, and the other S. John the Baptist, patron of the mother church of Bedminster. The founder is traditionally held to have been Simon de Burton, who was mayor of Bristol 1293-4 to 1295-6, and again, 1303-4, 1304-5. He was buried at the almshouse. Leland in his day (16th cent.) knew the house as 'Burton's'.*

The only mention of Simon I have been able to find, apart from the name in deeds as Mayor of Bristol, is in the Patent Rolls†. On 12 March 1305 a commission was appointed by the king on the complaint of Maurice de Berkeley, William Randolph, and Eborard le Fraunceys. Simon and others led the Bristol men to his manor in Bedminster, besieged and assaulted it and rescued Robert de Cornubia, attached by his bailiff of Redcliffe street for the death of Joseph de Wynchelese.

The first mention of the almshouse is in the will of Walter Derby, who in 1385 left a legacy to the poor in the house of 'Langrewe'. So far as I can say the house was always known by this name before it was mentioned by Leland.

John Burton, Mayor of Bristol 1423-24, 1429-30, 1448-9, by his will 21 March 1454, left property to endow a chantry in S. Thomas. Part of the income of the chantry was to be spent on other works of piety. In the warden's accounts for 1543-4 under the section devoted to his chantry £1 0s 10d was paid for repairs to the almshouse and for wood. In the certificate of the Chantry

* *Transactions B.G.A.S.*, xiv, 256, and xxxii, 88-90.

† *Calendar 1301-7*, pp. 347-8, and see p. 352.

Commissioners it is stated that part of the profits of the lands were to be bestowed in alms such as buying wood and other charitable deeds for the relief of the poor. I suggest that possibly the House may have obtained the name of Burton from the benefactor rather than from the founder. John Burton was buried in the chapel of S. John the Baptist in S. Thomas church. Perhaps the recently discovered figures owe their existence to him. He would choose S. Thomas because he was the patron saint of his parish church, and S. John the Baptist because he had a special devotion to that saint.

We know that the house has been rebuilt twice—in 1606 and 1721. On both occasions there was a subscription list of the parishioners. In a vestry minute for 10 May 1721 it was ordered that the almshouse should be taken down and rebuilt as soon as sanction was obtained from the Mint for the payment of £8 yearly or more as rent. On 11 September 1722, a rent of £5 was accepted.

In the 16th century there were 24 inmates—12 men and 12 women (will of William Pykes, 12 January 1550). Afterwards until early in this century there were 16. Now there are eight. Thomas Parsons, an almsman, was buried on 8 August 1700 in S. Thomas churchyard.

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THOMAS BAYNTON 1761-1820

As a footnote to the paper on Thomas Baynton, of Bristol, surgeon, which Professor J. A. Nixon contributed to the *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine* (1915) vol. VIII, it may be stated that there is a tablet to Baynton on the north wall of St. Philip's church, Bristol. The inscription is as follows:—

'Sacred to the memory of Thomas Baynton Esqr. Surgeon of this city who died sincerely regretted by the Public to whom he rendered some essential services that will long distinguish his name as a Professional Character