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Gloucestershire in the Early Fourteenth Century

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Some Glimpses of Gloucestershire in the Early Fourteenth Century

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GLOUCESTERSHIRE WAS prominent in the history of England in the reign of Edward II, as it had also been in the reigns of Henry III and of Edward I; a geographical position near to Wales and the Marches assured its importance. This is made very clear in such recent general works as the relevant volumes of the Oxford history; on the whole these accept the traditional story.¹ But at the present day the history of the later years of Edward I, as of the whole of Edward II's reign, is beginning to be subjected to renewed scrutiny, especially—so far—from the political and administrative points of view. Such work needs to be carried further and is not yet necessarily conclusive.² For example, historians of some fifty years ago accepted the existence in the reign of Edward II of a 'middle party'; a party of moderation, that is, opposed to confrontation. This tried to hold a balance between the king's supporters and the so-called 'baronial opposition'. This idea was started by Stubbs,³ and elaborated, perhaps especially, by Tout and Conway Davies.⁴ The very existence of a middle party is now being questioned.⁵ This reflects upon interpretations of the work of such men as Aymer de Valence, earl of Pembroke, or of Bartholomew Badlesmere, both thought to have been something of leaders in the so-called middle party, and both influential in Gloucestershire. Similarly, the work of the elder and the younger Hugh Despenser is evidently due for revision.⁶

Equally important reinterpretations of other aspects of the history of England and of Gloucestershire have not yet progressed so far as have the political and constitutional. Social, agrarian, and economic history are gradually undergoing microscopic revision.⁷ Local history is tending to become

1. Sir Maurice Powicke, *The Thirteenth Century* (1953); May McKisack, *The Fourteenth Century* (1959).

2. E.g. Michael Prestwich, *War, Politics and Finance under Edward I* (1972) and his article on 'Exchequer and wardrobe in the later years of Edward I' in *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, XLVI (May 1973); J. R. Maddicott, *Thomas of Lancaster, 1307-1322* (1970), and the reviews of this in *History*, LVII (Feb. 1972) by J. W. Sherborne, and in *Speculum*, XLVII (1972) by B. Wilkinson; J. R. S. Phillips, *Aymer de Valence, Earl of Pembroke, 1307-1324* (1972), reviewed in *History*, LIX (Feb. 1974) by J. Taylor. Cf. J. R. S. Phillips's article in *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, XLVI (May 1973) on 'The Middle Party and the Treaty of Leake of 1318'.

3. W. Stubbs's *Constitutional History*, II, 557 (4th ed., originally published 1875). Cf. his *Chronicles of the Reigns of Edward I and II* (Rolls Series, 1882-3), I, cxiii-cxiv.

4. T. F. Tout, *Place of the Reign of Edward II in English History* (1914; revised ed. 1936); *Chapters in Medieval Administrative History*, II (1920), 203-5; J. Conway Davies, *The Baronial Opposition to Edward II* (1918), especially pp. 425-43.

5. Notably by Phillips, chapter V, and *Bull. Inst. Hist. Res.* Dr Maddicott uses the phrase occasionally, but is in general agreement with Dr Phillips's views.

6. Cf. Dr Taylor reviewing Dr Phillips's book, for example. For the crisis of 1321 involving the Despensers see McKisack, 58-65, and the sources cited there; for their fall, similarly pp. 85-8. Pembroke, Badlesmere and the Despensers all had close associations with Bristol, and queen Isabella stayed in Gloucester before her victorious advance on Bristol in 1326.

7. Outstanding on the social side is R. H. Hilton, *A Medieval Society, The West Midlands at the End of the Thirteenth Century* (1966), especially valuable for its consideration of the position of the peasants. The relevant volume of the *Agrarian History of England*, ed. H. P. R. Finberg, has not yet been published. Books and articles on these aspects are listed annually in *Economic History Review* (May issue). The first published volume of the *History of Gloucestershire II* (1907, *Victoria County History*) includes a section on social and economic history which remains a useful starting-point.

a subject in its own right and the Victoria County Histories are pressing on.⁸ The ecclesiastical history of the county, like its social and economic history, were described as long ago as 1907, but recent publications of both primary and secondary works now supplement that invaluable survey.⁹ Splendid maps of the city of Gloucester have recently appeared, but Bristol still awaits similar treatment, which has long been promised.¹⁰ The other forests of the county invite further attention, to complement recent studies of the Forest of Dean.¹¹ The needs of development, conservation and salvage excavation are tending to draw archaeologists and historians together in necessary, and valuable, collaboration.¹² The history of the small, numerous and ancient towns of the county still demands the joint attention of archaeologists and historians; only a few have received such joint attention.¹³ Thus, there is still much work to be done, and this attempt to see how far recent work affects our interpretation of Gloucestershire history in the early 14th century is therefore interim and tentative and is chiefly concerned with government.

A bird's-eye view of Gloucestershire government in the early 14th century must give priority to the church, and to the bishops, rather than to the monasteries, important though these were as land-holders.¹⁴ The greater part of medieval Gloucestershire was in the diocese of Worcester, but the north-western part, chiefly beyond the Severn, lay in the diocese of Hereford. From the days of William Rufus certainly, though there are earlier claims, the archbishops of York had held the priory of St Oswald, Gloucester, which became an Augustinian house, and also the barony of Churchdown, which included several Gloucestershire manors.¹⁵ All medieval magnates were peripatetic and the bishops moved not only about their dioceses, but about the country as a whole, to wherever the court might happen to be. So there was much coming and going of horses and households and escorts and waggons of household gear and so on. Although the bishops of Hereford were only responsible for a small part of the county, they made frequent journeys across it *en route* from Hereford to London. They owned a moated manor-house at Prestbury, and archaeological and documentary sources have been happily combined to tell us a good deal about it, thanks to the work of Mrs O'Neil and her helpers.¹⁶ Prestbury was the second most important of the bishop of Hereford's estates (after Ledbury). The fortunate survival of a household roll of bishop Richard

8. Four volumes for Gloucestershire have now been published: vols II (general), VI (Slaughter hundred and neighbourhood), VIII (Tewkesbury and neighbourhood), and X (Westbury and Whitstone hundreds).

9. *Victoria History of the County of Gloucester*, II. Some recent work is noted in the bibliography to Brian S. Smith and Elizabeth Ralph, *A History of Bristol and Gloucestershire* (1972): this lists books over a wide field, but does not appraise them.

10. *Historic Towns*, I (ed. M. D. Lobel, 1969). *A Gloucestershire and Bristol Atlas* (published by our Society in 1961) remains very useful for general purposes.

11. Dr Cyril E. Hart has produced a series of pamphlets and books on Dean from 1947 onwards, including its archaeology (1967), which are most informative. *Royal Forest* (1966) is, I think, the most scholarly. He knows much about the plea-rolls of the justices in eyre for this forest in 1282, for which he obtained a Bristol M.A. in 1956.

12. For example, in our area, the fruitful co-operation in progress between Mr Michael Ponsford, working on excavations sponsored by the City Museum, Bristol, and the Department of the Environment, and Mrs Frances Neale, who is editing William of Worcester's 15th-century survey of Bristol and studying the topography of the borough in the later middle ages. Cf. the reports on the archaeology of the M5 motorway, e.g. 1st Report in *Trans. B.G.A.S.*, XC (1971), for 1969, ed. P. J. Fowler and C. V. Walthew, and 2nd Report in *Archaeological Review*, no. 5, for 1970. Cf. *Trans. B.G.A.S.*, LXXXV (1966) for excavations at Upton, Gloucester, 1959-64, by R. H. Hilton and P. A. Rahtz. The Medieval Village Research Group, founded in 1952, issues annual reports of great interest to historians as well as to archaeologists, over the country as a whole.

13. An outstanding exception is D. Miles and P. J. Fowler, *Tewkesbury, the Archaeological Implications of Development* (March 1972). *The Erosion of History* (archaeology and planning in towns), ed. Carolyn Heighway, May 1972, for the Council for British Archaeology, underlines the problems; for Gloucester see pp. 51-5; cf. the towns listed on pp. 72-5.

14. A complete picture of Gloucestershire monasteries, as also of the landholders, the towns and the village communities is to be found in R. H. Hilton. The review of his book in *Trans. B.G.A.S.*, LXXXVII (1968) is of special interest. A map on p. 28 illustrates the monastic manors.

15. Hilton, 47; cf. *V.C.H. Glouc.*, II.

16. *Trans. B.G.A.S.*, LXXV (1956).

Swinfield for parts of 1289–90 gives us a vivid picture of the preparations and supplies which were necessary on the occasion of an episcopal visit.¹⁷ He kept Christmas at Prestbury from 22–28 December 1289; he was there again in 1290, from 25 January till 23 February.¹⁸ As Swinfield remained bishop till 1317 there must have been many other such visits. It was convenient to have a commodious manor-house *en route* to his town-house in the city of London, later known as Hereford's Inn.¹⁹ Swinfield was not outstanding as a political bishop, but on occasion showed an independent judgement as against king Edward II.²⁰ Adam Orleton, who succeeded Swinfield at Hereford, was one of the canon lawyers favoured by Pope John XXII;²¹ he was also an unscrupulous politician, successful in his ambitions, who was moved on to the see of Worcester early in the next reign, and ultimately to Winchester.

The bishops of Worcester were however of greater consequence to Gloucestershire. They too had their London town-house, but, like most episcopal residences, it was outside the bounds of the city proper. It was near the church of St Mary le Strand, on part of the site which later became Somerset House.²² The normal stopping-places of the bishops on their way to London or on visitations about the county were at their manors of Bredon or Blockley, on the borders of Worcestershire, as may be seen in their surviving registers, most of which are in print.²³ The 13th-century bishops of Worcester had been able and energetic; bishop Walter Cantilupe (1237–66), in particular, had greatly raised the standard of church life in general and also improved the lot of the poor.²⁴ This careful administration was in the main continued in the early 14th century. A relatively obscure bishop like William Gainsborough (1302–7), was energetic in his visitations. For example, he was in Bristol for ordinations on 16 March 1303, at Westbury-on-Trym on 23rd, Henbury on 24th, Thornbury 24–25th, Kingswood 27th, and back in Bristol for Good Friday on 5 April.²⁵ A good deal of building and rebuilding was going on also at this time, both in the monasteries and in the parish churches. Despite this vigorous ecclesiastical life there was a tendency—characteristic of the age—for the bishops to become involved in politics; hence their individual personalities become of some importance.

The three bishops of Worcester in Edward II's reign are typical of the current trend in episcopal appointments. There was Walter Reynolds, bishop of Worcester from 1307 and translated to Canterbury in 1313, who belonged to the type known as civil-service bishops.²⁶ He was promoted to be a bishop on account of his services in the household of Edward of Caernarvon before he became king. After Edward's accession he quickly became treasurer (1307) and then chancellor (1310). He has sometimes been castigated as a political careerist of easy-going ways and doubtful ability, but this hardly seems a fair estimate of his undoubted administrative achievements. On his appointment to Canterbury, a somewhat prejudiced contemporary chronicler wrote of Reynolds that he 'had recently been a mere clerk, and was scarcely literate, but he excelled in theatrical presentations, and through this obtained the king's favour'.²⁷ The king had indeed a liking for play-acting; he had many personal interests which were offensive to the aristocracy as being plebeian and out of character. The chronicler Higden said of him, 'Undervaluing the society of the magnates, he fraternized with buffoons, singers, actors, carters, ditchers, oarsmen, sailors and others who practise

17. Camden Society, Old Series, LIX and LXII (1853, 1854). There is a map in Smith and Ralph, to illustrate Swinfield's journeyings.

18. Camden Soc., *ibid.*

19. *Stow's Survey of London* (ed. Kingsford), II, 4.

20. 'The political importance of the English bishops during the reign of Edward II', by Kathleen Edwards in *Eng. Hist. Rev.*, LIX (1944).

21. W. A. Pantin, *The English Church in the Fourteenth Century* (1955), 16. For Orleton's career see G. A. Usher, *Trans. Royal Hist. Soc.*, 5th series, XXII (1972).

22. *Stow's Survey*, II, 93.

23. Published by the Worcestershire Historical Society.

24. *V.C.H. Glouc.*, II, 11–14.

25. *Reg. Geynesburgh* (Worcs. Hist. Soc., 1929), p. xi.

26. Pantin, 11.

27. *Vita Edwardi Secundi* (ed. N. Denholm-Young, 1957), 45. cf. Pantin, 18.

mechanical arts.²⁸ But even Edward II is unlikely to have made an archbishop of Canterbury because he enjoyed play-acting.

Walter Maidstone succeeded Reynolds at Worcester by papal provision. He was a scholar, experienced in church affairs, and something of a traveller.²⁹ Although he died after only three and a half years in office (1313–17), he had not been inactive: Tewkesbury abbey, for example, benefited from his help in 1314 when he found it 'so much oppressed by misfortunes and the attacks of enemies, that speedy succour was needed'.³⁰ Thomas Cobham, the next bishop (1317–27) was also appointed by papal provision, and was supported by Thomas, earl of Lancaster, the king's uncle—and critic.³¹ Cobham was an outstanding scholar of deep learning, who had studied in Paris, Cambridge, and in Oxford: he had been chosen by the monks of Christ Church, Canterbury in 1313 as the new archbishop, though the king's influence with the pope frustrated this election.³² Cobham was of good birth, of baronial rather than aristocratic rank; he was known as 'the good clerk' and 'the flower of Kent'.³³ He was perhaps hardly enough of a politician to wish to play a great part in the increasingly intricate political developments of the latter part of Edward II's reign, though, inevitably, he was sometimes involved. He remained a good diocesan bishop for the rest of the reign, and did not neglect the southern tip of his diocese, but liked to visit his episcopal lands in Henbury and Westbury-on-Trym, which were a convenient base for visitations in Bristol.³⁴

The greatest lay landowners in Gloucestershire were not numerous, and pride of place goes without doubt to the Clare family, earls of Gloucester from 1217 till the last male heir was killed at Bannockburn in 1314: the inheritance remained important for it had then to be divided between three co-heiresses, earl Gilbert's sisters; the rivalries of their three ambitious husbands bedevilled politics in the latter part of Edward II's reign.³⁵ The Clare lands extended over much of East Anglia and of Kent, and included some forty manors elsewhere in southern England;³⁶ they had interests in Ireland and in several lordships of the southern marches of Wales. In Gloucestershire they were especially powerful in the town and manor of Tewkesbury. In an earlier age the earls of Gloucester seem to have used the castle of Bristol as their *caput honoris*—that is, as the administrative centre of their whole honour. But John, count of Mortain—the future king John—had got control of it when he married a Gloucester heiress, and when he repudiated her, rather shortly after the marriage, he kept a firm hand on Bristol and its appurtenances. The resultant squabbles between the lords of Bristol castle, now kings of England, and the Clares, earls of Gloucester, were a recurring theme throughout the 13th century. Thus the history of the earls of Gloucester was closely involved with the history of England from the 12th to the 14th centuries, and also with the history of Bristol.³⁷ Gilbert Clare, 7th earl of Gloucester, 6th earl of Hertford, sometimes known as 'the Red', who died in 1295, had married Edward I's third daughter, Joan of Acre, in 1290. He was

28. H. Johnstone, 'The eccentricities of Edward II', in *Eng. Hist. Rev.*, XLVIII (1953). Cf. Tout, *Edward II* (2nd ed. 1936), 8–9. An agreeably popular account of Edward II may now be found in Caroline Bingham, *The Life and Times of Edward II* (1973); the emphasis is on the character of the times, with well-known, but attractive, illustrations. Cf. H. F. Hutchinson, *Edward II: Thepliant King* (1971) also popular, but to be used with caution; see review by J. R. S. Phillips in *History*, LVIII (Feb. 1973).

29. *V.C.H. Glouc.*, II, 63. There is a good account of Maidstone's career as a whole in A. B. Emden, *Biographical Register of the University of Oxford*, II (1958).

30. *V.C.H. Glouc.*, II, 63.

31. Pantin, 55; Maddicott, 320.

32. Emden, I (1957).

33. *Vita*, 45.

34. As, for example, in 1319 and 1320 (*Reg. Cobham*, ed. Pearce, 1930).

35. Tout, *Edward II*, 104; G. A. Holmes, *The Estates of the Higher Nobility in Fourteenth Century England* (1957) 36–7. By the time of the final partition in 1317, Eleanor, the eldest co-heiress, was married to Hugh Despenser the younger, Elizabeth to Roger Amory (as her third husband) and Margaret, widow of Peter Gaveston, to Hugh Audley. All three husbands were associated with the so-called middle party.

36. Cf. Holmes, p. 36 and app. 3.

37. Two recent studies of the Clare lands are illuminating: Michael Altschul, *A Baronial Family of Medieval England, The Clares, 1217–1314* (1966) and Jennifer Clare Ward's unpublished London Ph.D. thesis 'The estates of the Clare family, 1066–1317', summarized in *Bull. Inst. Hist. Res.*, XXXVII, no. 95 (May 1964).

forty-seven and she was rather old for a medieval royal bride at nineteen (her first betrothal at the more usual age of five had come to nothing through the death of her betrothed). Their son, another Gilbert, allegedly a very beautiful child, was born at Winchcombe in 1291 and was followed in the next four years by three sisters.³⁸ After Gilbert the Red's death in December 1295, the king assigned quarters within Bristol castle for the use of his daughter and grandchildren; these were not to be 'within the tower' (that is the keep):³⁹ there seems to be little evidence as to how far this accommodation was actually used. He also detained Ralph de Monthermer, perhaps already Joan's second husband,⁴⁰ first in Gloucester castle and then for twelve days in Bristol castle, in July 1297; the constable of Bristol castle then had to provide two grooms to escort Monthermer to Eltham,⁴¹ where the king pardoned him.⁴² Joan and Monthermer had married without royal approval, for Monthermer had not even been a knight when Joan first met him amongst her husband's followers. Nevertheless in due course he became known as earl of Gloucester in right of his wife until her death in 1307, when Gilbert Clare at last succeeded to his inheritance until his untoward death at Bannockburn in 1314.

The Berkeleys were of course the other family of great local influence. Much more needs to be discovered about them, and we are still largely dependent for their history on the work of the 17th-century antiquarian, John Smyth of Nibley.⁴³ The Berkeley manors—some dozen of them—were chiefly in the Vale of Berkeley, though some were on the Cotswold escarpment. The Berkeley family controlled Berkeley castle and the town and hundred of Berkeley; their Somerset property included Redcliffe and Brislington, which were so nearly a part of Bristol as to cause endless difficulties with the burgesses of Bristol across the Avon; in addition they had much influence over St Augustine's abbey, Bristol, as the Berkeley chapel in the present cathedral reminds us. Thomas II was lord of Berkeley from 1281–1321. His son Maurice III only held the lordship from 1321–6, when he was taken prisoner and died in the baronial revolt against Edward II. His son Thomas III, 1326–61, was connected by marriage with Roger Mortimer and it was thus that the unfortunate Edward II was imprisoned and met his death in Thomas's castle at Berkeley. How far Thomas Berkeley was implicated is perhaps still an open question.⁴⁴

As far as the magnates are concerned the stage has now been imperfectly set for the moving events of the reign, which cannot be retold here. But something should be said of the visits of the king—the linchpin of government—to the county. They started when Edward I's surviving heir was some eight months old, when the king's family were sent from the campaigns in North Wales to stay in Bristol castle. The constable of the castle had to spend some £9 'on various small necessaries' arising from the stay of Edward, the king's son and of the king's daughter.⁴⁵ Their parents joined the family in Bristol for Christmas on 21 December 1284 and stayed till 2 January.⁴⁶ Edward of Carnarvon was certainly there again in September 1293 when his eldest surviving sister Eleanor was married there to Henry, count of Bar; curiously enough she was married by the archbishop of Dublin, and this may have determined the location of the wedding.⁴⁷

No definitive itinerary of Edward II after he became king seems to have been worked out. But he

38. M. A. E. Green, *Lives of the Princesses of England*, II (1849), 336.

39. *Cal. Cl. Rolls*, 1288–96, 471 (19 Jan. 1296).

40. The exact date of the marriage is uncertain.

41. An account of the constable of Bristol castle (P.R.O., E. 372/150 m. 37).

42. *Complete Peerage*, V, under Gloucester.

43. There is a useful short modern summary in *Gloucestershire Studies* (1957), ed. H. P. R. Finberg, 148–9, and a longer discussion in *Trans. B.G.A.S.*, LXX (1951), LXXI (1952), by W. J. Smith.

44. The story as told in Tout, *Collected Papers*, III (1934), on 'The captivity and death of Edward of Carnarvon' has been amended in some details by W. J. Smith (1951), 76–8.

45. Account of the constable of Bristol castle, 1282–4 (P.R.O., E. 372/128 m. 26). Actually, two of the king's daughters were present (H. Johnstone, *Edward of Carnarvon* (1946), 10).

46. *Itinerary of Edward I* in the Round Room of the Public Record Office.

47. Green, II, 305–7; cf. Seyer, *Memoirs of Bristol*, II, 75; cf. Johnstone, 26. At the time the archbishop of Canterbury was in Rome and the archbishop of York was in temporary disgrace. It is not stated where in Bristol the ceremony took place.

certainly came to Bristol in June 1308 to see off his friend Peter Gaveston to Ireland on his second banishment.⁴⁸ Other visits are somewhat uncertain; he was in Bristol in April 1321,⁴⁹ and was certainly in Gloucester later in that year during the war in Glamorgan between the husbands of the co-heiresses of the late earl of Gloucester; after all, Hugh Despenser the younger, his then favourite, was one of the more grasping of those claimants.⁵⁰ He also visited Gloucester in February 1322, and possibly both Bristol and Gloucester in 1324.⁵¹ He may have been in Bristol with Hugh Despenser the younger in the autumn of 1326, after the arrival in England of Queen Isabella, and it is thought that they hoped to take refuge in Lundy Island and thence to escape to Ireland, but bad weather drove them to Glamorgan instead.⁵² The tunnelled steps, recently discovered by M. Ponsford, leading down to the castle moat and the river Avon would have facilitated their escape.⁵³ It was certainly in a great council of magnates at Bristol on 26 October 1326 that the king's son Edward, duke of Aquitaine and earl of Chester was proclaimed temporarily keeper of the realm in place of his father.⁵⁴ There is also a story in a later chronicle, to which little credence can be given, that after his capture Edward II was confined for a time in Bristol before being taken to Berkeley castle.⁵⁵

The king's main strength in Gloucestershire lay in the royal castles of Gloucester and Bristol. The former was in many ways the more important for it was the seat of county government, the home of the county gaol, and there the sheriff of Gloucestershire had his office. The respective powers of the sheriff of the county and the constable of the castle must sometimes have overlapped, and the latter is unlikely ever to have held the almost limitless authority of his Bristol counterpart. Gloucester castle was more closely integrated with the defences of the town than was ever the case in Bristol,⁵⁶ but we are not very well-informed in detail about Gloucester castle. There do not seem to be any surviving accounts of its constables, nor any clear indications of their appointments, as there are in Bristol's case.⁵⁷ The castle of Gloucester was continually used, then as in the past, for the housing of state prisoners, for example Welsh hostages or captives, or Scots taken at Dunbar, as well as for common felons.⁵⁸ Sometimes such prisoners were kept there, but often they were sent on to further captivity at Bristol, Devizes, Marlborough and Corfe.⁵⁹ Both castles were used as royal residences and any profits from either were sometimes given to the queen.⁶⁰ Both castles also had a barton, or home-farm, closely connected with them, but not much is known about Gloucester barton.⁶¹ More can be discovered about the barton of Bristol. In the later years of Edward I it included the three townships of Mangotsfield, Stapleton and Easton; it had close connections with Kingswood forest, and also included a rather indeterminate intermediate area. Most of this was later

48. *Vita*, 5-6.

49. 18 April (*Cal. Cl. R.*, 1318-23, 366), 22 Apr. (Bristol Rec. Soc., I, 62).

50. *Dict. Nat. Biog. Cf. Trans. R. Hist. Soc.*, 3rd ser. IX.

51. *Br. Rec. Soc.*, I, 68 (17 Feb. 1322). It is difficult to trace Edward's movements in 1324, but see Nichols & Taylor, *Bristol Past and Present*.

52. McKisack, *The Fourteenth Century*, 85-7.

53. *Medieval Archaeology*, XV (1971), 146.

54. McKisack, 88.

55. Tout, *Coll. Pap.*, III, 162.

56. This is suggested by the map in *Historic Towns*. The castle is also briefly described in L. E. W. O. Fullbrook-Leggatt, *Anglo-Saxon and Medieval Gloucestershire* (1952), and there is an excellent account in *The King's Works*, II (1963). In 1265 Henry III and the lord Edward captured the town after one day's fighting but it took another two days to take the castle (Hilary L. Turner, *Town Defences in England and Wales* (1970), 77. But in Bristol's 'great insurrection' (1312-16), the castle was impregnable.

57. The search of a few selected pipe rolls gave no information and *The King's Works* adds nothing.

58. Cf. R. B. Pugh, *Imprisonment in Medieval England* (1968).

59. This is shown in the accounts of Edward I's constables of Bristol.

60. For example, Margaret, second wife of Edward I, held Gloucester castle till 1317, when civil war seemed imminent (Tout, *Chapters*, V, 244, n. 7). Queen Isabella had £200 from Bristol castle revenues for the use of her children from 1318 (*Cal. Pat. R.* 1317-21), 222, 453), and was given Bristol in dower in Jan. 1327 (*Br. Rec. Soc.*, XI, 51).

61. For the barton, *The King's Works*, II is more useful than *Historic Towns*.

to be excluded from the area to be defined in 1373 as being within the county of Bristol.⁶² There were farm buildings, granaries and so on, though we do not know just where they lay, probably in the area of the present Barton Hill. There is no indication of the whereabouts of the manor-house, if indeed there ever was one. Whereas at Gloucester there was certainly a royal residence at Kingsholm, within the barton to the north of the town; this went back to Mercian times and survived till well into the 13th century.⁶³

The whole area of the Bristol barton was administered by the constable of the castle, with the assistance of a reeve. We have little information about the courts there and there are no surviving medieval court rolls. Both bartons came to be known as the king's barton, spelt with or without capital initials; they are liable to be confused with each other. The name was inappropriate in Bristol while the earls of Gloucester were the lords; they were slowly to abandon their claims, and the description is not usual till the mid 14th century. Both bartons are sometimes, but not very often, described as manors.⁶⁴ Both also became hundreds, but not in early times.⁶⁵ There is no evidence of a hundred of Barton by Bristol before the mid 13th century, and it became active and generally recognized by the end of Edward I's reign.⁶⁶ In both bartons the king certainly held some lands in demesne; in the Bristol barton the amount varied but was approximately 68 acres of meadow, and some 125 acres of arable.⁶⁷ These acres were farmed for the king's personal profit by the customary tenants, sometimes assisted by a small staff of permanent workers, the *famuli*; there were four ploughmen of whom, after 1284-5, two were called keepers or holders and two were drivers.⁶⁸ In the early 14th century two *messors*, or reapers, were employed in Stapleton and Easton.⁶⁹ No similar details seem as yet to be available for the Gloucester barton.

The affairs of late-13th-century Bristol are well documented. This is partly as a consequence of Edward I's critical attitude towards the town, which had been sympathetic to Simon de Montfort. The burgesses of Gloucester held their town at farm—that is to say, they paid an agreed lump sum to the king and were then themselves responsible for the collection of the town revenues and for routine expenditure.⁷⁰ They did not have to submit detailed accounts to the exchequer, which must have made them rather more independent of the king's ministers, though their gain is our loss. The burgesses of Bristol, on the other hand, no longer held their town at farm.⁷¹ The constable of the castle was responsible for collecting the revenues of the castle, the town and the barton and for routine expenditure, and he had to send in elaborate accounts detailing every item. Edward I's

62. The combined work of Mr Ponsford and Mrs Neale (*supra* p. 6, n. 12) may well clarify some of the problems, as, for example, how near the barton area was to the town of Bristol in the early middle ages. There are suggestive 13th-century documents about the meadow of Wainbrook, which lay 'towards' the king's barton (Br. Rec. Soc., XXI, no. 413 etc.)

63. *Records of the Corporation of Gloucester*, ed. W. H. Stevenson (1893).

64. In the Domesday inquest the description 'hoc manerium' is used once as applied to the Bristol barton; it then belonged to the king. The word manor does not appear again until the 13th century, and then but rarely. By then the barton was associated with the castle, and not with the town. The organization of both bartons was largely manorial, though somewhat varied and irregular.

65. The history of the Gloucestershire hundreds is obscure, but is likely to be elucidated in forthcoming volumes of the *Victoria County History*. Professor Cam made some interesting suggestions in 'Early groups of hundreds' in *Historical Essays in Honour of James Tait* (1935). Reprinted in her *Liberties and Communities in Medieval England* (1944).

66. Professor Cam lists the Bristol hundred of barton as existing in 1274 (*The Hundred and the Hundred Rolls* (1930), 267); however, in *Rot. Hund.*, I, 175 the barton is still in the hundred of Swinehead. From 1296-7 onwards the constable's roll of particulars includes a heading, 'Particulars of the hundred' (P.R.O., S.C. 6/851/6 m. 10d); this has the same contents as had earlier appeared without any such heading.

67. In 1300-1 there were 68½ acres of meadow and 127½ acres of arable (P.R.O., E. 372/150 m. 37).

68. P.R.O., S.C. 6/851/1.

69. P.R.O., E. 372/150 m. 37.

70. The amount of the farm for much of the 13th century was £65 (*Gloucester Records*).

71. They had done so for much of Henry III's reign. The fluctuations in the early financial arrangements are described by Professor Cronne in the introduction to his *Bristol Charters, 1378-1499* (Br. Rec. Soc., XI (1946), 45-50 for the 13th century). The burgesses farmed the revenues for much of Henry III's reign, often at £245 a year.

officials tried to increase his income from all three, with varying degrees of success. In 1283, despite a petition from 'the community of Bristol' the king declined to let the town at farm either to the community or to anyone else.⁷² Moreover in 1295 he took the town into his own hands.⁷³ This attitude to urban liberties in Bristol was not exceptional, and Edward's policy as a whole invites further investigation.⁷⁴

Under Edward I then, there was a good deal of latent antagonism between the king's constable of the castle, the men of the barton and the burgesses. But there was also, inevitably, some degree of co-operation; for example, as to the ceremony due on such formal occasions as royal visits, or the presence of itinerant justices, and also certainly in the pursuit and punishment of felons.⁷⁵ Under Edward II there was a change in the position of the constable after the first two years.⁷⁶ Then the constable was to hold the castle, town, barton, and appurtenances at farm (£210); this meant the constable had opportunities for exploitation in his own interests, which might remain undetected. This new policy cannot have pleased the burgesses. Moreover, the constable then ceased to submit the detailed accounts which might have helped us to understand the chief Bristol crisis of the reign, the so-called great insurrection.

The position of Bartholomew Badlesmere, Edward II's first constable of the castle, is enigmatic. In the early part of the reign he seems to have been a loyal servant of the king. He was a Kentish baron, and his father, Guncelin Badlesmere, had been for some eight years Edward I's justice of Chester, that is, he was the head of government in a county which was in fact, though not yet in name, a county-palatine. He was a very important person and was apparently continuously loyal. His son Bartholomew became constable of Bristol almost immediately after Edward II's accession;⁷⁷ he was also responsible for the town and the barton. He was superseded, in theory, after the ordinances of 1311, by Edmund Mauley,⁷⁸ steward of the king's household.⁷⁹ Despite several royal orders, Badlesmere was slow to give up his office 'to the king's great amazement'.⁸⁰ It does not seem certain that in fact Mauley ever acted as constable; certainly Badlesmere was back in the position within a few months.⁸¹ Badlesmere is sometimes considered to have been a close follower of the earl of Gloucester, with whose family he was connected by marriage,⁸² but Gloucester's influence is perhaps over-estimated.⁸³ Badlesmere became closely associated with politics and especially with the 'middle party'. He was, as constable of the castle, the focus of the burgesses' discontent during the 'great insurrection' at Bristol, though his activities there have not received much attention from recent historians.⁸⁴ Indeed, Badlesmere's activities in diplomatic and military

72. *Rotuli parliamentorum Anglie hactenus inediti*, Camden, 3rd series LI (1935), 18. Cf. Selden Soc. CXLV (1957), 78 where the petition about the charters is printed.

73. From 14 April-7 June 'because the men of the town had chosen mayors and bailiffs there without authority' (Constable's account, P.R.O., E. 372/145 m. 25).

74. For Edward's dealings with urban liberties see Prestwick, 228.

75. E.g. E. A. Fuller, 'Pleas of the crown at Bristol in 1287', nos 26, 43, 46, *B.G.A.S.*, XXII (1899).

76. After 2 Nov. 1309 (*Cal. Fine Rolls*, II, 51). Before that, Badlesmere accounted in detail, like his predecessors.

77. 21 Aug. 1307, *ibid.*, 22. Badlesmere was appointed as 'keeper of the castle', but he accounted for the issues of castle, town and barton from Mich. 1307 (P.R.O., E. 372/161) till Nov. 1309. This is the pipe roll for 9 Edward II and these accounts are to be found under the 'residue of Gloucestershire'. He answered for the farm for six years as appears also, *ibid.*

78. *Cal. Fine R.*, II, 122 (Jan. 1312). Mauley's appointment is interpreted as meaning that Badlesmere was already acting with the opposition, Tout, *Edward II*, 100, n. 1.

79. Until 2 Nov. 1312 (Tout, *Chapters*, VI, 42).

80. *Cal. Pat. R.*, 1307-13, 430 (15 Feb.), 453 (5 Apr.).

81. Badlesmere received orders as constable on 30 July and 12 Aug. *ibid.*, 483, 491. The castle, town and barton were formally recommitted to him at farm on 30 Sept. 1312 (*Cal. Fine R.*, II, 147).

82. Tout, *Edward II*, 100; Conway Davies, 427; Phillips, 144.

83. For example, Badlesmere was not included in the retinue of the earl of Gloucester at the tournament of Dunstable of 1309, but appeared with his own retinue. *Eng. Hist. Rev.* LXXIV, 79, 81, in an article by A. Tomkinson on the retinues there.

84. The account in *Trans. B.G.A.S.*, XIX (1894-5) 'The tallage of Edward II (16 Dec. 1312) and the Bristol rebellion' by E. A. Fuller gives due weight to the importance of the constable and remains the best detailed

missions must have meant that he often had to act in Bristol through lieutenants. Nominally he continued as constable till 1 October 1320, when he was succeeded by Hugh Despenser the younger.

In general politics in the country as a whole, as well as in Gloucestershire, Badlesmere had frequently co-operated with the earl of Pembroke, but Pembroke's part in the final subjugation of Bristol was hardly an active one.⁸⁵ The activities of the sheriff of Gloucestershire, Richard de la Rivere, in Bristol in June 1316, are however of interest, for he was one of Pembroke's retainers.⁸⁶ Badlesmere's subsequent career was largely in opposition to the king, and is important, if somewhat inexplicable,⁸⁷ but he fades out of the Gloucestershire scene.

The association of Hugh Despenser the younger with Bristol after 1 October 1320 brought Bristol and Gloucestershire into close touch with the political history of the last confused years of Edward II's reign.⁸⁸ He was the husband of the eldest of the Gloucester co-heiresses, and his ambitions in the southern marches led to the troubles in Glamorgan and Gower from 1318 on,⁸⁹ and finally to his own banishment in 1321-2.⁹⁰ After his return, he remained nominally constable, but acted through various deputies;⁹¹ on 1 June 1325 he was given the custody of Bristol at farm for life—an innovation.⁹² He surrendered it before 21 October 1326.⁹³ The drama of Edward II's last months was of course largely enacted in Gloucestershire. Hugh Despenser the elder, earl of Winchester, held Bristol on the king's behalf, and was executed there on queen Isabella's triumphant entry to the town, though his son managed to escape for the time being.⁹⁴ The Berkeley family played a considerable part in Bristol affairs in the last two years of Edward's reign, and it was at Berkeley that the king met his tragic end.⁹⁵ This was of supreme importance to the abbey and town of Gloucester. St Augustine's abbey, Bristol, and the abbeys of Kingswood and Malmesbury were too timorous to accept the king's body for burial, but not so St Peter's, Gloucester. Soon pilgrims were flocking to the tomb of a king rapidly regarded as a martyr or even a saint, and their offerings enabled the monks to modernize the church and to give it a firm place in the evolution of what became known as perpendicular architecture.⁹⁶

account of the insurrection. But there are still gaps to be filled in the traditional story. The incidence of the tallage is merely another example of the increasingly strained relations between crown and borough. It is possible that further examination of the legal and financial records would yield further knowledge; moreover, much has been written about tallage since the date of Fuller's article.

85. Dr Phillips's itinerary of Pembroke never shows him as visiting the borough, though he was at Keynsham on 7 July 1316 (Phillips, *App.* 5, p. 328, cf. p. 103). He was at Gloucester 28 Mar. and 13 Apr. 1321, and again 14 Feb. 1322 (*ibid.*, 333).

86. *Ibid.*, 102-3.

87. E.g. Tout, *Edward II*, 131-5; cf. Maddicott, 293-5.

88. Despenser was committed the custody of the castle, town and barton of Bristol at farm on the same terms as Badlesmere (*Cal. Fine R.*, III, 33).

89. Tout, *Edward II*, 124-30; J. Conway Davies, 'The Despenser War in Glamorgan, 1321', *Trans. R. Hist. Soc.* 3rd series, IX (1915).

90. Despenser was ordered to deliver up Bristol on 10 May 1321 (*Cal. Fine R.*, III, 56) but submitted a bundle of 'particulars' of account till 6 June (P.R.O., E. 101/15/35). These include an indenture of expenses on the munition of the castle from 13 Apr.-6 June 1321 and a list of wages of the garrison from 24 Apr.-6 June. After a brief custody by others, Richard Lovel was given Bristol on 15 May, and accounted for some details from 1 June-18 Feb. 1322 (P.R.O., E. 101/4/12); this includes wages of 2 knights, 18 men-at-arms, and 40 footmen, also repairs to the fabric of the castle. Lovel's responsibility is confirmed in the Gloucestershire account on the pipe roll (P.R.O., E. 372/166 m. 21).

91. Despenser was recommitted the castle etc. at farm on 3 May 1322 (*Cal. Fine R.*, III, 126). A Bristol account for the summer of 1322 survives (P.R.O., E. 372/167, under Gloucestershire). Cf. *King's Works*, II, 580, for Despenser's work on the defences. As to his deputies the names of Richard atte Stone, Richard de Rodeneye, John Bek (who belonged to the junior line of the Lincolnshire family to which Antony Bek, formerly Bishop of Durham, had belonged in the senior line), and of Simon de Montbreton are all mentioned.

92. *Cal. Fine R.*, III, 348.

93. *Ibid.*, 421.

94. *Ibid.*, 10.

95. Cf. Smyth, I, 247, 269, etc.

96. W. H. Hart, *Historia et Cartularium Monasterii S. Petri Gloucestriae*, I (1863), 44, 46. D. Verey, *Gloucestershire, The Vale and the Forest of Dean* (Buildings of England series, 1970), 200, 205-6. The south transept (1331/7) was specifically financed in this way.

Glimpses are still all that can be seen of Gloucestershire in the early 14th century, but there remain many untapped sources of information and recent work is adding some clarity and gives promise that in the coming decades a clearer picture can be painted of 14th-century life in Gloucestershire.