

The Duke of Norfolk's Lodgings
No.95 (144/48), Westgate Street, Gloucester

by B.J. Drake

On 4 October 1971 'One of Gloucester's historic buildings tumbled to the ground as demolition workers moved in on the Duke of Norfolk's lodgings' (1). This house was situated on the north side of Lower Westgate Street, adjoining the White Swan Inn to the east of Swan Lane, an area demolished for the construction of the Westgate Flats completed. In the Ministry of Housing, Lists of Buildings of Architectural or Historic Interest, it was scheduled as Grade 2, 'the most elaborate 18th century facade in the city'. For eight years historical bodies had urged restoration, but finally, on 14 September 1971, the Secretary of State for the Environment announced to the City Housing Committee, who then owned the property, that demolition had been approved, 6 months after the committee had pressed for this decision. 'If preservation was ever to have been a serious proposition then the time to have considered it would appear to have been 30 or 40 years earlier'(2).

A description of the building, known for a period as Eagle Hall or Spa House, is to be found in John Clarke, Architectural History of Gloucester (1850) p.99, 'The Old Spa House ... is built of freestone, in the Italian style of Palladio. The design of the front is rather overcrowded but the details are very passable. It consists of two fluted Corinthian pilasters supporting an enriched cornice, surmounted by an ornamental balustrade; the windows are adorned with architraves & pediments. (i.e. ornamental mouldings and lintels surrounding the windows.) The interior was originally very richly fitted up, many of the rooms being panelled with mahogany. (This house is now divided into two and disfigured by the projection of two unsightly shops in front.)' These remained, spoiling the frontage, throughout its subsequent history, until its recent demolition, though when they were added is as yet unknown. Projecting wings ending in ornamental urns formed a little forecourt, with railings at the roadside. From an early 19th-century print, 'South-west Prospect of City from Llanthony Causey', by J. Lewis, (3), can be seen to the west of St. Nicholas Church the stone eagle on the roof of Spa House, flanked by more urns along the balustrade. It appears to have been a quite considerable feature in Westgate Street. The house was formerly known as Eagle Hall.

The Duke's coat-of-arms, carved in stone were attached above the central window of the first floor, '... but H.Y.J. Taylor reports that one day as the local worthy Mr. G.S. Wintle was passing by, he saw the arms come crashing down'(4).

The actual date when this imposing mansion was built remains uncertain. In the title deeds of 1801 (5), it states that the former messuage was taken down, 'and the present messuage erected on the site by Anthony Freeman, deceased, now better known by the following description: Capital stone fronted messuage known as Eagle Hall or Spa House with a malt house, corn chambers, brew house and premises with appurtenances on the north side of Westgate St., having a new built messuage belonging to Thomas Cooke, corn factor on the east, and a certain public house known as the Royal Oak on the west ... together with court and garden (belonging) to said messuage formerly in occupation by his Grace, the Duke of Norfolk ...' This Anthony Freeman, a maltster (6), took possession of the property on 24 June 1724 from Robert Frampton, maltster, and died 9 October 1750 (6a), though the property remained in the Freeman family until 1801. At the time of Frampton's ownership from 1716, it was divided into 4 tenements, valued at £160. In the conveyance of 1724 to Freeman it is described as being an undivided property, valued at £330, (7), showing that Frampton made considerable improvements.

A possible reference to its date of construction, though it would appear to be rather later than expected, comes in Dr. Hemming, Mineral Water discovered in Gloucester (1789) (8), a booklet analysing the medicinal virtues of a spring of saline water found at Spa house, Westgate St. 'This water was first taken notice of about 40 years ago, by a gentleman' (Mr. Freeman) 'who, when building the mansion now occupied by Mr. Lewis, ordered a well to be sunk; and soon found that the water of this spring differed much from that of the town'. This would seem to date construction around the 1740s.

Though the spring was discovered when the well was sunk, '... the gentleman, being advanced in years, did not think it an object worthy his attention, although well appraised of its medicinal virtues'. His daughter, Mary, who continued to live there after his decease, also totally neglected it, 'as unfit for domestic purposes'. When Mr. Lewis, cornfactor, became tenant in November 1787, he used this spring water for the first 8 months, the other source of water being at some distance, and being unacquainted with the reason for its peculiarity, found it totally unfit for every purpose for which he used it. 'Linen washed therein was spoiled; and the water, when boiled for tea, used in brewing or other culinary purposes produced such disagreeable effects as to defeat the intention for which it was used.

Later his wife used it and found relief from a nervous disorder from which she suffered. Also, his daughter, suffering from scrofula, for which physicians prescribed Malvern water to no avail, was greatly relieved by using this water. 'From this time it was suggested to Mr. Lewis to have the water conveyed into a small room by means of pipes, which he did, then advertised its virtues and free access to all who came; and upon a moderate calculation, as I am told, 400 persons assembled a day, most of whom received great benefit and many cures were accomplished. Since the last summer there has been added a very large and commodious pump room for the nobility and gentry; the former pump being reserved for the poor, who by applying will still receive great attention as before'(8).

Ownership, 1455-1716

The 1455 Rental of the Borough of Gloucester states that the site of the Duke of Norfolk's House belonged to the Prior of St. Oswald who 'holds a tenement with a bakehouse wherein Thomas Bour, a baker, dwells'. The records of St. Oswalds being unavailable, the subsequent history of the site has to be traced through the lease-books of the Dean and Chapter (D936 E 12/1-20, 1550-1870). Their property included the tenement immediately to the west of the Duke of Norfolk's House, on the corner of Dockham Lane, and orchards or gardens at the rear. Leases of these properties frequently refer to the occupant of the Duke of Norfolk's House, and have been used to trace occupation from 1574 until title deeds become available in 1693. In 1574 William Webbe, baker, was tenant; in 1629 Elizabeth Willshire; in Oliver's Survey (D936 E/1), 1649, Widow Collett, and from 1666 to c.1689 the house was in the occupation of William Cook, baker.

Title deeds of the house are available from 1693, when Thomas Sexton, gent., of London, sold the property to Joseph Webb, woolcomber. Sexton's wife, Sarah, was daughter of Henry Norris, of Gloucester, and his sister married John Hallett, a Gloucester victualler (7).

Joseph Webb was born about 1659 and died between 1693/98. He was a Quaker, or became one when he married Hannah Hoptop in 1684. He had five children, Joseph being the eldest. On his death, his widow married John Lea and in 1699 Mr. & Mrs Lea, plus all the Webb children sailed on the 'Canterbury' to Philadelphia. (The Ancestry & Posterity of John Lea, Philadelphia, 1906).

As a merchant from Philadelphia, Joseph took possession of the property on 3 February 1714. By October 1716, with the consent of his mother as executrix of his father's will, and step-father, he sold the property to Robert Frampton, maltster (7), who conveyed it to Anthony Freeman in 1724.

The Freeman family

Anthony Freeman, the maltster responsible for the construction of Eagle Hall in the 18th century, married Elizabeth Field, grand-daughter of Rowland Freeman of

Saintbridge, Upton St. Leonards, gent. and one time freeman of the city, on 19 May 1713 (9). Anthony Freeman may have been a descendant of Anthony Freeman of Badgeworth who died in 1671 (10). In 1713 Anthony Freeman lived at Freeman's Farm, Badgeworth. By Elizabeth he had two sons, Anthony and Rowland, baptised February 1713/1714. Both children died, Rowland 4 months later and Anthony on 13 March 1721 (11).

He remarried, possibly in 1718, and it appears he may have married Mary, the sister of his first wife (12). Rowland Freeman bequeathed to his wife and grand-daughter Mary, jointly, his many properties in Upton St. Leonards and Barnwood (9), which on the death of his wife 7 October 1717, became Mary's alone. On 7 November 1718 Mary granted to Anthony Freeman all rights to this property. This could represent a marriage settlement, or may have no relevance. It is known, however, that his second wife was called Mary.

By Mary he had 2 sons, Anthony baptised 26 December 1726, and Thomas baptised 13 January 1728/9, and a daughter Mary (13). Anthony Freeman senior, died 9 October 1750, his wife about 1757. It would appear that Anthony Freeman must have been a cultured man from the style of the elaborate building erected by him in Westgate Street with its urns, eagle and Palladian design, and also from a reference in his will dated 1747 to the collection of coins and medals he wished his eldest son to inherit.

His eldest son matriculated at Oxford at Pembroke College at the age of 16, July 1743, gained a B.A. at Magdalen College, 1750, and an M.A. at St. Alban's Hall, 27 February 1749/50 (14). He became curate of Elmstone Hardwick 24 November 1763, vicar there 6 April 1773, and vicar of Badgeworth with Shurdington, 12 June 1780 (15). By his wife, Mary, he had Rowland, Thomas, Rebecca and Elizabeth. He died 27 June 1789, and was buried at Cheltenham (16).

The Revd. Anthony Freeman's eldest son, Rowland, became a surgeon and apothecary, living in Cheltenham, after a spell in Stratford-upon-Avon.

Mary Freeman, daughter of Anthony Freeman, maltster, who held Spa House after the death of her parents, was married to a Gloucester man, Charles Payne by June 1765 (17). A document dated 24 June 1765 recounts that money bequeathed to her in her father's will had not been received. Along with her husband, she applied to her brother the Revd. Anthony Freeman for payment. He replied that there was insufficient money left by his father, only enough to pay the debts and funeral expenses. A loan was arranged with a Sarah Jenner of Hasfield (12).

After Anthony Freeman had died in 1750, his wife continued to live in Eagle Hall until her death in 1757. It was then jointly owned by his daughter Mary and son,

the Revd. Znthony Freeman, until the latter died in June 1789; his son, Rowland, continued the joint ownership with his mother Mary, until 1801 (17).

In the Gloucester Journal, 7 October 1760, the Revd. Anthony Freeman advertised for tenants: Charles Payne who married Mary Freeman, became tenant 1763-1778 (18), and his wife until her death in 1787 (19). Thomas Lewis, cornfactor, became tenant following the advertisements in the Journal, 19 March and 15 October 1787, from November 1787 until 1791. This announcement appeared on 21 April 1788: 'This is to inform Ladies and Gentlemen, that the commodious House, known by the name of the Mansion House . . . lately in the occupation of Mrs. Payne, is now in the possession of Thomas Lewis, Cornfactor, and is completely furnished for the purpose of a Lodging House for respectable persons, with a pleasure garden, and elegant summer-house'. Another advertisement 14 July 1788: '... acquaints the nobility and gentry that the Ladie's Boarding School is removed ... One of the largest dining rooms has an excellent view, and there is also on the premises an excellent water, proved by the faculty to be a steel mineral, and recommended for internal weaknesses, which persons inhabiting the lodgings have the free use of without any additional price'.

An advertisement in the Gloucester Journal of 10 August 1789 reads: 'Gloucester Spa. The Proprietor begs leave to inform the Nobility and Gentry of this City, and its environs that this day (Mon. 10th) the Long Room in the Garden will be opened for their accommodation with Tea and Coffee, morning and afternoon. Newspapers will be regularly taken in. Lodgings and Board at the Spa'. There is another on 30 August 1790: 'Gloucester Spa, Hotel and Tavern, in the Westgate-Street. The Proprietors ... beg leave ... that the Hotel is neatly fitted up for the reception of such as please to honour them with their company ... Good stabling and Coach-houses. Genteel apartments to Let for the Music-meeting. There will be a Public Breakfast on Tuesday, at 1s. a head. The garden will be opened every day for the reception of company, and Tea provided morning and evening at 8d. a head'. It was announced on 6 December 1790: 'To be sold by Auction, by Mr. Read, on the 16th day of December at the Horse and Groom Inn, in the city of Gloucester ... the Beneficial Lease of all that spacious stone-built Dwelling House in the Westgate Street, late in the occupation of Thomas Lewis, cornfactor ...' St. Nicholas rate book shows that the Revd. Mr. Chamberlain was tenant in 1791, followed by the Revd. James Commeline, 1792 (20), until the Duke's tenancy (24).

In a conveyance dated 23 June 1801, Rowland Freeman and his aunt, Mary, leased all their many properties to Spencer Newcombe Meredith of Gray's Inn. These included Spa House (Thomas Bach Nott, tenant), Freeman's Farm of 50 acres in the parish of Badgeworth, a messuage with a 4 acre garden in Rea, Hempsted, and 3 acres of meadow at Minsterworth (21). They finally sold to George Worrall Counsel in October 1801.

When Clarke wrote his Architectural History in 1850, he felt his readers might be surprised to find such a good house in Lower Westgate Street for by then the courtyards of those fashionable houses were being filled by 'miserable hovels and the houses themselves converted into "lodgings" for the lowest descriptions of characters'. He accounts for this by stating 'that 100 years ago the lower end of Westgate St., the Island and St. Mary's Square were the most fashionable parts of Gloucester. Many gentry had town houses in these parts to which they came to spend their winter. They were constructed of solid brick walls, and oak panelling, and the staircases were of solid and ornamental workmanship, and the rooms large and lofty'.

A notice in the Gloucester Journal, 15 October 1787, illustrates this point: 'To be Lett that large stone Mansion lately completely repaired and fitted up, with a handsome new staircase, together with a Garden and elegant Summer-house, situate in the Westgate-Street ...'

The Duke of Norfolk

It was to this fashionable area that the Duke of Norfolk came, to the Spa House, in October 1798 for his year of office as Mayor of Gloucester for the second time. Charles Howard, 11th Duke of Norfolk, 1746-1815, was Mayor in 1783, 1798, 1809, 1815, and was Recorder of the city from 1792 until his death in 1815. He was first elected Mayor when Earl of Surrey, but as Duke of Norfolk in each subsequent election (22).

The Duke's association with Gloucester began with his marriage in 1771 into a landed family, the Scudamores of Newark House, Hempsted. He was an intimate of the Prince Regent and there is evidence in his correspondence that his political activities at Gloucester and Leominster, also a Scudamore (23), preserve, were motivated by his desire to aid his Royal friend in building a party.

When His Grace was elected Mayor in 1798 he gave a most elegant dinner at the Spa House, '... which the Duke has taken for the period of his Mayoralty'. This was most welcome as the Corporation had 'suspended all public entertainments during the War'. It appears, from accounts in St. Nicholas parish rate book (24), that he only leased the Spa House at the time of his Mayoralty in 1798, there being no entries relating to him either previously or subsequently. The interior of Spa House during the time of the Duke's residence is well described in the Gloucester Journal for 9 September 1799, in an advertisement for the sale of 'that large Capital and elegant Stone-built Mansion-house, most desirably situated in the Centre of Westgate-Street, in the City of Gloucester, in the Occupation of his Grace the Duke of Norfolk ... 2 large Parlours, a Drawing Room and 9 Bed-chambers over, Hall, large Kitchen, Brewhouse, and Back Kitchen, with excellent cellars under ... a delightful Pleasure Garden and Summer-house walled in, with a large Kitchen Garden behind, and Malt house adjoining ...'

His genial nature and generous hospitality made him much respected, and the dinners he gave to the Corporation livened up local affairs. The King's Head Inn, Westgate St., then at the height of its importance, was often used, and at one sumptuous turtle-feast reported in the Gloucester Journal on 1 October 1810, '... the dinner, which consisted of every delicacy of the season, was arranged with the taste characteristic of the house ... The evening was particularly distinguished for festivity and harmony and the company departed highly gratified with the elegant hospitality of the Noble Mayor, whose period of official duty closes this day'. A full-length portrait was painted of the Duke by Sir William Beechey (1753-1839). It hung in the Old Tolsey, until it was removed to the Guildhall (25) and is now crated in store there for want of hanging space.

Subsequent ownership of the house can only be given here briefly in the following notes:-

George Worrall Counsel, author of The History of Gloucester, 1829. October 1801-May 1805 (7).

Margaret Smith, widow of a wealthy barge-owner, William Smith, to 1807. (7).

Richard Brown Cheston, doctor of Physic, to 1809 (7).

Henry Edwards, architect and builder, 1820-1823. (Directories).

Mr. R. Gilkes' 'Spa House Preparatory School and Finishing Academy'. From 1823 (Directories) to 12 January 1824 (Gloucester Journal).

David Lundie's Day & Boarding School, 10 January 1825. (Gloucester Journal).

J. Creed, New Auction Mart, 17 February 1827. (Gloucester Journal).

The Spa Hotel & Boarding House, 27 May 1827. (Gloucester Journal).

William Jackson, callenderer & calico glazier, February 1828-1840. (7).

? Void 1840-6 (26)

Edwin Bick, shoemaker, 1851 (formerly of Southgate St.) (7)

Robert Reece, shopkeeper, 1852-53. (Directories).

B. ownsend, cabinet maker, 1865-70. (Directories and 1865 Poll book).

T.A. Summerhayes, baker, 1873-75. (Directories).

Edwin Trigg, baker, 1876-77. (Directories).

B. King, butcher, 1879-83. (Directories).

95a W. Preedy, greengrocer. 1884, 1887-91. (Directories).

John Earl, tinman, 1886-91. (Directories).

28 February 1880, Gloucester Mercury - 'The Old Spa House ... was converted into barracks for the 14th Light Dragoons & 8th Hussars ...'

Henry Preedy, cab Proprietor, 1893-97. (Directories).

A. Preedy, greengrocer, Co-op Stores, Branch 3
Hannah Preedy, 1897. (Directories).

Mrs. Young, shop and lodging-house keeper, 1902
(Directories).

95a A. Green, china-dealer, 1902

W. Lee, shop and lodging-house keeper, 1905-1939.
(Directories).

95a Void

Mrs. Elizabeth Lee, 1939-40-1952. (Directories).

Mr. F. Chapman, to 1971.

From a gentleman's town house, the residence of a Mayor, a Spa with hotel and pleasure gardens, to an auction mart selling household furniture; next an establishment 'for Bleaching, Dying, Calendering, Glazing, Cloth pressing and embossing ... & Paper Hangings which consist of beautiful Flock and Gold Papers, Satin Grounds, etc....'; then the slow run down and resultant decay leading to demolition.

References

1. The Citizen, 5 October 1971
2. The Citizen, 17 September 1971
3. Records of Gloucester Cathedral, Vol. II, 1883/4
4. Gos. R.O., G.M.S. 30
5. Gos. R.O., D3117/4138
6. Gos. R.O., D1421, Bundle 4
- 6a. Gos. R.O., P154/15 IN 1/2
7. Gos. R.O., D3117/4118-4162
8. Gos. City Library, Gloucestershire Collection N23.2
9. Will of Rowland Freeman, 1716/16
10. Will of Anthony Freeman of Badgeworth, 1671/7
11. Gos. R.O., Upton St. Leonards bishop's transcripts
12. As 6.
13. As 6a
14. Gos. City Library, Alumni Oxoniensis (1715-1886)
15. Gos. City Library, Hockaday abstracts, Badgeworth and Elmstone Hardwick.
16. Gos. Notes & Queries, Vol. I, p.296
17. Will of Mary Freeman, 1757/175 and (7).

18. Glos. R.O., P154/15 CW 2/3
19. Gloucester Journal, 19 March 1787
20. As 18
21. Glos. R.O., D3117/4135
22. B.G.A.S. Transactions, Vol. XC, p.174 and (2).
23. B.G.A.S. Transactions, Vol. LXXXIV, p.143 and (4)
24. Glos R.O., P154/15 OV 2/5
25. As 4
26. Glos. R.O., P154/15 OV 8/6