

SOME HISTORIC HOUSES IN WESTGATE STREET

by Barbara Drake

1. "THE HOUSE OF THE TAILOR OF GLOUCESTER",
9 College Court, Gloucester.

"Messrs. F. Warne are pleased to announce the opening of a Beatrix Potter Centre, 'The House of the Tailor of Gloucester' ..." December 1st, 1979.

25 years earlier Frederick Warne & Co Ltd., publishers of all Beatrix Potter's works, had made an unsuccessful bid for the shop when it came on the market. Following the retirement of the well-known antique dealer, Mr Percy Zatman, who owned the shop from that time, Warne's were successful (1).

The tiny shop built on to the ancient Abbey Wall lies in the narrow medieval lane leading to St. Michael's Gate, an entrance used by pilgrims to the shrine of King Edward II. It has been restored to simulate the illustrations in Beatrix Potter's book, 'The Tailor of Gloucester' (1902), and includes a new shop front with small paned windows and panelled wooden surround. Inside, false beams and fireplaces all help to create the atmosphere of the Tailor's 18th century kitchen. The displays include all manner of things 'Potterish'. (2)

"It will be not so much a museum as an international Beatrix Potter Centre to create interest in her work at home and abroad. Because people like to take away a souvenir we will be selling mementoes." (3)

This intriguing children's story was based on a true tale she heard whilst staying with Cousin Caroline Hutton at the family home of Judge Crompton Hutton, at Harescombe Grange, near Stroud. A Gloucester tailor. John Pritchard, used to make suits for the Mayor and Corporation for the Annual Show of the Root, Fruit & Grain Society. A richly dressed procession went from the Guildhall to the Boothall in Westgate St., where the show was held.

On this particular occasion, Pritchard, struggling to get the orders completed on time, found that the suits and waistcoats had been completed whilst the shop had been empty after the week-end break, all except one buttonhole, attached to which was a note, "No more twist". Following this incident, he put an advertisement into the local paper and the shop window: "Have your suits made by the Tailor of Gloucester (the name under which he traded) where the work is done by fairies."

However, the son of the original tailor, Mr Douglas Pritchard, has exposed the truth behind the myth, writing from Bahrain: "The true story of the waistcoats was not quite so romantic. Two or three years after the incident, with my father still puzzled as to how the work had been done, one of his workmen told all. Two or three of them got drunk one Saturday night and could not get home. They went to the shop and slept off their excesses in the workroom. Waking on Sunday morning, unshaven and in their working clothes, they did not dare to leave the shop exposed to the view of the people walking in the Cathedral precincts and were thus trapped until darkness could cover their movements. To pass the time they finished the waistcoats, but ran out of twist. Subsequently they were ashamed to admit they had got so drunk, and did not wish my father to know they had a key to the shop. So the truth spoils the fairy tale!" (Beatrix Potter so much preferred mice to fairies!) (4)

John Pritchard was 'moved' to this romantic setting in College Court by Miss Potter, but actually lived and worked at No.23 Westgate St. in 1906, moving to Hardwick by 1910. In Kelly's Directory of 1902, it appears he was living in St. John's Lane at the time the book was written. By 1929 he was living at No.2 Ashley Cottages, Croft Rd., Charlton Kings, where he died in 1934, aged 57, from T.B. He was buried in Charlton King's Cemetery, Plot 2 No.35, with 'Tailor of Gloucester' inscribed on the headstone. (5)

Research into the earlier uses of this site in College Court reveals the following information:

The Rental of the Borough of Gloucester for 1455 states: "The Prior of Llanthony holds in fee 4 tenements ...", to the north west of the then Crafte Lane (formerly called 'Turries Lane').

The Rental of Llanthony property, 1535, states for Crafte Lane: "Jhohan Backer occupiess a tenement next to the Abbey Gate on the west side of this lane." (6)

The Corporation lease book for 1606 refers to permission given to Abel Angell, baker, to enclose an area to the west of the gate and to maintain "the gutter and goute ..." (7)

Abel Angell also leased the vineyard outside the Southgate, between the City Wall and Gooseditch, adding to an existing "old building now standing on the premises ... 2 good rooms for habitation with a chimney in each, and keep all in repair. To place in the rooms infected persons during outbreaks of the plague ..." The 'old building' had been a pest house previously, owned by Ald. J. Woodward. (8)

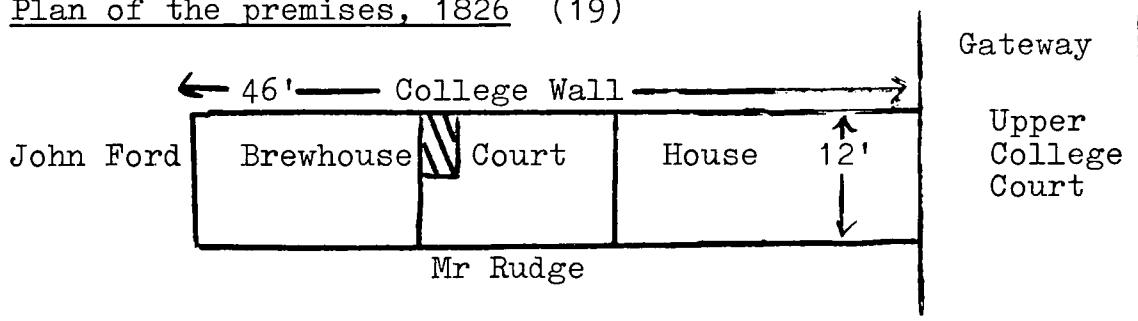
In 1650 William Angell, merchant, leased "a tenement, orchard, garden ... inclosed with a New Brick wall ... adjacent to the uppergate called St. Michael's Gate ... containing in length 10 yds, breadth 5 yds 1', with a court length 8½ yds, breadth 6 yds, and garden length north to south 22 yds 8", breadth 21 yds 1' in occupation of Henry Winkcombe ... which said premises ... have been by indenture bearing date 13 Nov., 1639 demised by the late Dean & Chapter ... to W. (---)rench ... last passed at a yearly rent of 3/4d ... to be upon improvement ... £5. Os. Od." (9)

In 1693 Elizabeth Bayley leased the site, having The George Tavern lying to the west (10). From 1712-1769 it was occupied by the Gregory family, (11) beginning with Ald. Edmund Gregory, followed in 1726 by Rev. John Gregory, who was vicar of Sandhurst in 1724 (12) and instituted to the Rectory of Rudford in 1729 (13).

Subsequent leasees were

- 1740 Mr John Gregory, followed by Mrs Dorothy Gregory, spinster in 1729 (14).
- 1769 William Prater, City of London, linen draper (15).
- 1788 Charles Taylor, baker (16)
- 1801 Ellis Taylor, baker. ' ... part of the premises having been sold off (by the Corporation) to Paul Martin' (for Land Tax redemption) (17).
- 1816 Joshua Ellis, grocer (18).

Plan of the premises, 1826 (19)



- 1822-1852 James Whitehead, boot & shoe maker; property owned by Mrs Ellis (No.5 as it was then numbered) (20).
- 1853-1856 William Whitehead, Registrar of Births, deaths and marriages (21). (In Gell & Bradshaw's Directory, 1820, Whitehead appears as a straw hat manufacturer.)
- 1857-1861 Ann Groves had a French cleaning & general dying establishment at No.5, where she remained until 1889. Here the gentry were able to get their kid gloves cleaned free of smell, and their feathers, shawls, moreens, damasks, furs, merinoes, etc., cleaned or dyed 'equal to new' (22).
- 1893 Mrs M.A. Byron, confectioner.
- 1897 The Broadway Oyster Co.
- 1902-1910 H.G. Norton & Co., cycle depot (22).

At the time Norton's owned the premises, it was linked to No.138 Westgate St. and formed a 12'6" shop frontage. Motor showrooms fronted Westgate St. where Norton's sold Humber, Wolsey and Panhard cars. (A price quoted in 1910 for a 4 cylinder Humber was 225 guineas, an expensive proposition in those days) (22). There was a driving entrance from College St. (23).

The entire premises were auctioned on 6th June, 1913; No.5 College Court was purchased by W.H. White, antique dealer, and No.138 Westgate St. became the Palladium. Miss Alice White remained in College Court from 1936 until the shop was sold in 1951 (24).

Mr. Zatman, antique dealer, remained at No.9 (as it was renumbered) from 1953 until his retirement at the age of 85 years, in October, 1978. As a Manchester gold and silver salesman, he attended a Gloucester house sale in 1928 and opened a shop of his own in Market Parade. Later he opened a further two shops in Barton St., and finally moved into No.9 College Court (25).

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9. Glos. R.O., D936 T/4
10. Glos. R.O., GBR 1409/1524 f.154
11. Glos. R.O., GBR 1659
12. Glos. R.O., GDR 279A f 89
13. Glos. R.O., GDR 279A f 221
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2. ST. NICHOLAS HOUSE, 100 Westgate Street, Gloucester

Immediately to the east of St. Nicholas Church, Westgate Street, stands St. Nicholas House, one of the last reminders of the fashionable 18th century town houses of the gentry that were built in the western side of the City.

The fate of this house hung in the balance during 1977/78 following masonry falling on to the busy pavement below from the crumbling early Georgian facade. Also the high boundary wall at the rear collapsed on to garages, damaging cars within. By this time many slates were missing from the roof (1). Its rapid deterioration recalls to mind the final days of the Duke of Norfolk's Lodgings, on the north side of Lower Westgate Street, which was demolished in 1971. Would St. Nicholas House suffer the same fate? (2)

After just over 3 years behind scaffolding, thanks to the Gloucester Civic Trust, restoration of this house in which Queen Elizabeth I is thought to have stayed, seems in sight, provided a grant can be obtained from the Historic Buildings Council (3).

St. Nicholas House is a building of some architectural importance to the City, being any almost unique example in Gloucester of this type of early Georgian facade; "... a two storied house of red brick with stone dressings ... The ends and slightly projecting centre are emphasised by chamfered stone quoins, and all the upper windows have moulded architraves and keystones, the pediment is flanked by balustrading supporting 5 very handsome carved urns. This is a good example of Georgian provincial architecture." (4) The rear part of the house is a timber-framed 5 bay building, possibly dating from the 15th century.

It is a Grade One listed building and an ancient monument. "... Experts think that because of the large rooms inside it, the building was probably a medieval Guild Hall of some sort" (5). In one of the rooms was once a fine carved fireplace and overmantle of pretentious proportions bearing the royal coat of arms of Elizabeth I, with tiling within the fireplace. The entire room was panelled, with a carved frieze around the top of the walls, and around the doorways. This was sold, along with the fireplace, for £750 to a London firm in 1907, and is believed to have gone to Chicago (6).

The 1455 Rental of the Borough of Gloucester states: "The Prior of Llanthony holds all those houses and buildings ... from the said Lane of Abbey Lane to the common and processional way there near the chancel of the Church of St. Nicholas, and the tenements of Richard Whittington, Lord of Staunton, which are called 'Raton Row' and 'Ashwell's Place', and which in the old landgavel are called by the name of 'the 8 booths and land of W. Banbury'; wherein divers tenants dwell. Landgavel '12d"

The Richard Whittington, Lord of Staunton, is a relative, possibly a nephew of Dick Whittington, made famous by his legendry cat, Mayor of London in 1397, 1398, 1407, 1420, who lived in the village of Pauntley, 9 miles north of Gloucester. Part of the Whittington's manor house still remains. Richard (or Dick), youngest of 3 brothers, was only two years old when his father, Sir William Whittington, Squire of Pauntley, died in 1360. He is definitely identified with the Pauntley branch of the family by the left light in the west window of Pauntley Church, where his arms appear impaled with the Fitzwarren arms (as they also appear, in colour, in the ancient frieze of the 14th century reredos of St. Edmund's Chapel, Gloucester Cathedral).

At the age of 13, Dick was sent to London to be apprenticed to Sir John Fitzwarren, a merchant adventurer, himself a west-country man and a friend of the family. He married Alice, daughter of his master, but outlived his wife; they had no children and he died in 1423. He was buried beside his wife in the Church of St. Michael Royal, London (his local parish church), which was rebuilt in 1694 by Sir Christopher Wren's workmen, according to an ancient custom "... whereby a living sacrifice was made at the time of building; a fowl or other bird was commonly used for this purpose. But for Whittington's church, the obvious choice was a cat".

In 1862, in the course of repairs to St. Nicholas House excavations were made in the cellars. A broken stone was found, probably part of an old chimney piece, on which is represented the figure of a boy with a cat in his arms.

The Richard of 1455 might well be the son of Dick's remaining brother, Robert of Pauntley. (Pauntley and Staunton lie within a few miles of each other on the Herefordshire border) (7).

In the 1535 Rental of Llanthony property is a reference to a mansion house on the site: "Alice Messenger occupieth one great tenement above our 2 tenements at St. Nicholas Church end, next unto Abbey Lane, some time in divers parcels and in decay occupied by Isobel and 16 or 17 others ... She payeth by year £6. 10s. 0d." (8).

In 1545 John Hawkins, vintner, occupied the mansion house, referred to in a Corporation lease of vacant ground "extending from the corner of the bulke end of the mansion house to the butress end of the Lady Chapel of the Church" (9). It is assumed that this ground continued to be leased by the occupant of the mansion house (St. Nicholas House). In 1555 John Taylor, vintner, was permitted to enclose the vacant ground, yet allow St. Nicholas parishioners to have their customary processional way through (10). The lease of the ground was granted by the Corporation in 1598 to John Taylor, presumably his son. He became an Alderman and later Mayor, 1613/14. His conduct came under severe censure when in April 1604 he not only concealed the fact that one of his servants lay dead of the plague in his house for 3 to 4 hours, but also that

another servant had plague boils under his arm. A goodwife Clark administered medicines to break the boil which discharged for a whole week, during which time both Taylor and his servant came into the presence of the mayor, aldermen and chief men of the City; and entertained many in his house. This was considered extremely dishonest for a person of his rank and standing. "As a result, other persons and houses were already infected and it was feared many more would be infected ... to the great and dangerous hurt of the state of the whole City and hazard of many lives." He was expelled from the Council and fined £100 for the relief of those to whom he had caused such suffering.

It was also ordered that since a number of people were living in the house at the time of this incident, including his son, John, they were "... to keep themselves in and that the door should be shut up". Taylor's son "... did in great scorn and contempt of the said order not only break up the door of the said house and offered to discharge firearms against such as were appointed to keep them in, but also delivered railings and rude terms against the said Mr Mayor". He was ordered to pay 100 marks and to be put in the stocks in the Wheat Market on 3 separate market days. (11)

Whilst Taylor was Mayor in 1613/14, he was again guilty of misconduct resulting in his removal from office under the provision of the Charter of James I. He had already been disfranchised four times and imprisoned several times; this time he was accused of embezzlement, receiving bribes, extortion, drunkenness and for refusing to swear in the newly-elected Town Clerk (11).

In 1655, Elizabeth Robinson, widow of Robert Robinson, the next owner of the mansion house (11), leased "All that Gatehouse with a parcel of ground being a little Garden ... next adjoining said parish Church" (12). T.D. Fosbrooke, in his Original History of the City of Gloucester, (1819) prints a monumental inscription which states that Robert Robinson, son of Anthony Robinson, died 6th March, 1653.

In 1684 the property was leased to Mrs Anne Arnold, widow of Anthony Arnold (11). She was previously Mrs Anne Guise, of the College in Gloucester, a widow, who married Anthony Arnold at All Hallows, Bread Street, London, Nov. 1678 (13).

In 1704 the nextlessee was James Pitt, of Gloucester, innholder (18). The alehouse licences give Pitt as licensee of the King's Head Inn, which abuts on to St. Nicholas House. It would appear that whoever leased the gatehouse, also occupied the mansion house as in the 1545 lease to Hawkins. The gatehouse would have been far too small for a dwelling house being a mere 3 yds x 11', and the lessees were gentry (17). It would also seem, that they may have also owned the King's Head Inn - both Hawkins and Taylor were vintners.

Three members of the family of Hemming were the next occupants of St. Nicholas House. Benjamin Hemming (23), gent., in 1742, then his wife Margaret, from 1756, leased the gateway, garden and shop: " ... next the church ... a small shop or room is now built containeth in the forepart next the street, 3½ yds 4" (14).

His son, Benjamin Hemming, clerk, lived there from 1770. He matriculated 27 April, 1757 at Pembroke College aged 17; B.A. 1761, M.A. 1764, and died in 1824. He was appointed curate of Pitchcombe Church, 16 December, 1776 (15). (His son, also Benjamin matriculated at Trinity College 10 October, 1785 aged 16; M.A. 1792, B.D. 1802, D.D. 1807, and fellow until 1815.) (16)

The next occupant, during the period 1823-34 could possibly be James Whalley & Co., linen and woollen drapers. The name in the St. Nicholas parish Poor rate book (19) is very indistinct, and this name does appear in Gell & Bradshaw's Directory for 1820. From 1835-42 the property was owned by William Powell, with Thomas McLean, as tenant. In the 1841 Directory McLean is listed as a baker, grocer, tea dealer, miller, having his Bakehouse and mill in the Island, next to The Boot public house south of the street, adjacent to the Gloucester Iron Foundry (20).

In July 1842 the house is called Church Court, with John Powell as occupier, followed from 1846-51 by Charles Tasker, a wines and spirits merchant. His wife continued there in the wine trade until 1855. (It was then No.116 Westgate Street) (21).

William Johnstone, furniture dealer, lived there from 1867 until 1893 (then No.11), followed in 1897 by George Merrylees & Co. (then No.115). He was joined by Mr Pugh and from 1910-73 the firm continued in its manufacture of leather, balata and cotton belting. It also dealt in machine requisites, as it still does today, in Quay Street (22).

Lastl came Jelf & Langston 1973-78, coach trimmers and upholsterers, now in St. Oswald Road Market. Now is the time for much needed restoration, before yet another of Gloucester's old buildings is beyond repair.

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14. Glos. R.O. GBR 1411/1525; GBR 1662, f. 106.
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GDR E 2 Priests 1776; Alumni Oxonienses
16. Alumni Oxon.
17. As 12.
18. Glos. R.O. GBR 1409/1523, f. 347.
19. Glos. R.O. P 154/15 OV /1-5, 6-9; OV 8/1-11.
20. Glos. R.O. PC 1086.
21. Gloucester Directories 1820-1973.
22. Advertisement in 1910 Directory.
23. Benjamin Hem(m)ing was keeper of the County Gaol c.1724 (see Glos. R.O. Q/SO 5, 1724, Trinity Sessions). Also referred to as 'of the Castle of Gloucester, gent.'

3. THE CROWN & SCEPTRE INN,
No.122 (105) Westgate Street, Gloucester.

On the 10th October, 1754, a meeting of the nobility and gentry was held at the Tolsey '... to support an Infirmary in the City of Gloucester'. Those who subscribed to this worthy charity for the sick of the City formed a committee, whose next consideration was a suitable site. It was felt that the Crown & Sceptre could well be fitted out as an Infirmary, but, "Mr Tulley ... is of the Opinion that it would be more beneficial to the Charity to erect a New Building than repair any place he can see and that the Talbot Ground is the most proper for such erection".

By 23 January, 1755, the committee agreed to 'The County Infirmary' being erected in the Talbot Ground near the South Gate of the City of Gloucester. The Crown & Sceptre would be used for immediate reception of patients following any repairs and alterations necessary, thanks to Mr Benjamin Hyett generously offering to lend the Inn for 3 years rent free in December 1754 (or to sell for £300).

It was officially opened on 14th August, 1755, 10 a.m. followed by a service in the Cathedral, where the Vice-President (of the Infirmary Board), Rev. Dr. Atwell preached upon the occasion. Afterwards the whole company dined at the Bell Inn.

The Infirmary is well described in the fire insurance policy taken out with the Sun Fire Office, 14 May 1756: '... the Dwelling house situated in the Westgate Street, Gloucester, known by the name of the Gloucester Infirmary with Brewhouse, Laundry, Apothecary's shop, Laboratory, Surgery and Store room with 3 wards all adjoining. All Brick and tiled except a small part of the dwelling house'. (1) Odd glimpses appear throughout the minute books of the Weekly Board meetings. It had 40 beds, with wards both up and downstairs (though this does not tally with the policy). "Mr Roberts is to prevent the Dust and Water from falling through the floor of the Upper to the Lower ward."

Reference to its layout comes in an entry for 14 Dec., 1758, when it was: "Ordered that the Casements of the windows in the Upper Long Ward next the Lane (now known to be Archdeacon Lane) be made to open on the inside with wire lattice on the outside". On the front of the building was an inscription reading "The Gloucester Infirmary, supported by voluntary contributions".

An advertisement in the Gloucester Journal for 28 August, 1755 gives notice " ... that this Infirmary will be ready to receive such patients as come properly recommended and upon examination shall appear fit objects as far as the accommodation of the House will admit, on Thur., September 11th. And it is desired of the Board that the Patients may be sent as clean as possible".

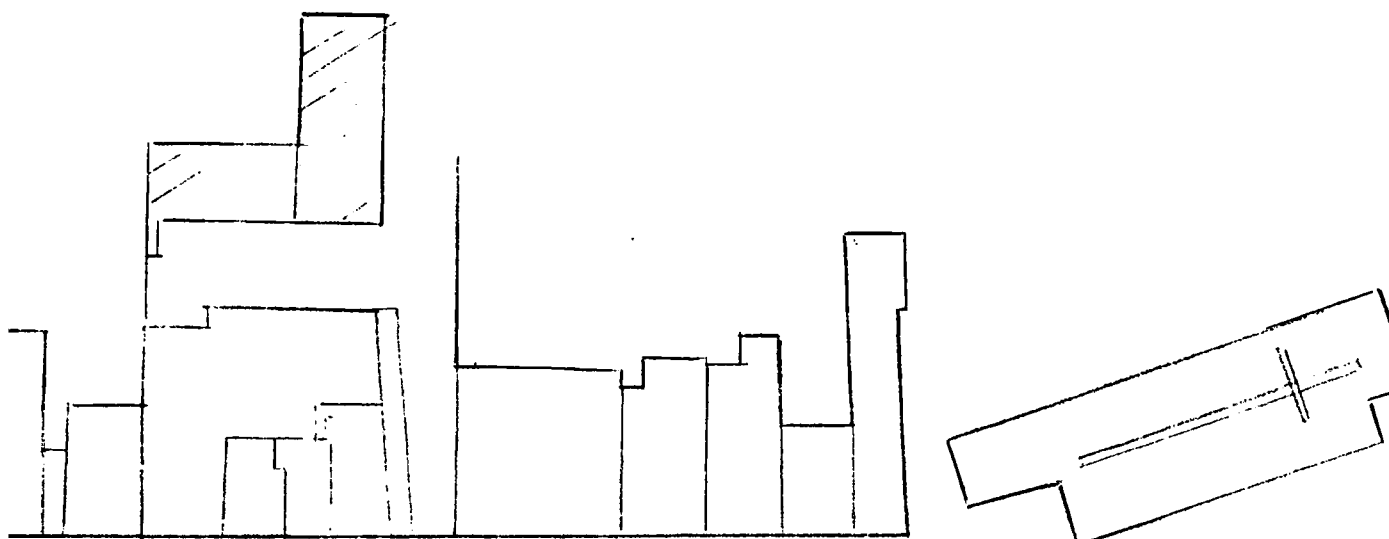
By 15th January 1756, bed shortages were apparent in a statement that patients cured and discharged continued to occupy beds for want of friends or officers of the respective parishes to fetch them away. 16th February, 1758, "It is desired that subscribers will recommend no more women patients to the Infirmary till further notice be given in this paper, the Women's Ward being now quite full and several beds engaged to patients who could not be taken in for want of room", Not until 6th April were vacancies announced.

When the Infirmary first opened in 1755, Mrs Hester Partridge of Painswick was appointed Matron, at £20 per annum. The nurses, one for each ward, received £4, which became £4 10s in 1759, by which time a porter was receiving 4 guineas.

On the 14th August, 1760, the Infirmary was advertised as being for sale in the Gloucester Journal. The New Infirmary, in Southgate Street, was officially opened on 18th July, 1761.

It has long been known to local historians that the Crown & Sceptre Inn was used as an Infirmary, but its whereabouts has posed a problem. Further detailed research has finally placed this inn at No.122 (105 as it formerly was), on the north side of Westgate Street, west of Archdeacon Street. It was demolished c.1963 to make way for the present Westgate Flats.

Detail from Causton's map of Gloucester, 1843, showing site 100 years later. (Glos. R.O. D1740 P23)



The property belonged to St. Bartholomew's Hospital, and in the Charity Trustees' survey books Nos. 39-41 the site is accurately measured and recorded. It is noted that Dean and Chapter property abuts on both sides. Turning to Dean and Chapter lease books, a reference was spotted in a lease in 1743 to Benjamin Hyett of a stable in St. Nicholas parish " ... in a lane called Archdeacon Lane together with a way or passage at the south end of said stable leading to an Inn called the Crown & Sceptre ..." (3). Turning to a copy of Causton's map of the City, 1843, belonging to the Dean and Chapter on which Dean and Chapter property is marked, No.105 Westgate Street was clearly an odd shaped plot that fitted the measurements in the surveys, with a passageway into a courtyard leading off Archdeacon Street, having Dean and Chapter property on either side. Following this tentative positioning of the inn, the title deeds of No.122 (105) Westgate Street were examined. These confirmed the site, and covered the period 1839-1906.

The 1455 Rental of the Borough of Gloucester states: 'The Prior of St. Bartholomew holds a tenement near (there) which Christina, daughter of Thomas Ovenat, formerly held, wherein John of Mitton dwells. Landgavel 18d'. Next to this property lay Powke Lane according to the Rental.

Not until 1682 is the Crown & Sceptre mentioned as such in the Corporation alehouse licences. In that year Thomas Cobb was Innholder (4), followed by Richard Robinson until 1686 (5) and James Browne in 1687.

In November 1700 Benjamin Hyett leased property in St. Nicholas parish, (6) on the north side of Westgate Street, though it was not actually called the Crown & Sceptre. He was the grandfather of Benjamin Hyett who lent the Inn for an Infirmary in 1754 (7). The Hyetts are a well-known Gloucestershire family even today, both in the City and the County. The first Benjamin was born March 30, 1651, in Dursley and is thought to have been related to Richard Hyett of Wootton, clothier. He married Elizabeth Morwent in 1674, daughter and heiress of Joseph Morwent of Tetbury. She died in 1708, having given birth to 6 sons and 5 daughters, 4 of whom survived: Charles, Benjamin, Elizabeth and Mary.

"He was an attorney, who after his marriage, passed his life in Gloucester. He resided in different quarters of the City for he had children born in the parishes of Holy Trinity, St. Mary de Grace, St. Michael, and St. Nicholas. He seems to have had a large practice and to have taken an active part in local affairs. He was Deputy Clerk of the Peace for the county of Gloucestershire 1673-78, then appointed Clerk of the Peace until 1689. In 1678 he became one of the Sheriffs of the City He must have found his profession lucrative for, at different times in his life, he purchased land in the parishes of Badgeworth, Haresfield, Hasfield, Longney, Westbury-on-Severn and Upton St. Leonards, a house and garden adjoining Gloucester Castle, Maribon Park, and two ale-houses called 'The Pyed Horse' and 'The Crown & Sceptre'." Benjamin died in 1711 at the age of 60 (8).

In 1726, Charles Hyett, his eldest son, leased the Crown & Sceptre (9). He was born in 1686, and was the first Hyett of Painswick. He was married in Gloucester Cathedral, 11th March, 1707, to Anna, daughter of Ald. Nicholas Webb. "He succeeded to lands which his father had purchased and during his life added to his estates by purchasing lands in Longhope, Badgeworth, Ashleworth, Bulley, Hempstead, Upton and Painswick. ... On May 27th 1715, the Constablership of Gloucester Castle was granted by Letters Patent to Charles Hyett for his life, with the remainder to his sons Benjamin and Nicholas for their lives successively ... He represented the City in Parliament from 1722-27". He became a Justice of the Peace in 1725 and was "very regular in the performance of his Magisterial duties".

His wife gave him 3 sons, Benjamin, Nicholas and Charles, who died at one year old. She died on the 20th October, 1728.

In April 1733 Charles purchased of the Adey family, a farm house called 'The Herrings', on the site of which he built Painswick House. "He did not enjoy his new residence for he died on the 17th February, 1738, and was buried in the family vault in the Cathedral." (8)

Benjamin Hyett, eldest son of Charles, leased the Crown & Sceptre in 1743 (7). He was born in Gloucester on the 17th December, 1708 and matriculated at Pembroke College, Oxford, 1724, aged 15. "He became a member of the Inner Temple and was called to the Bar on July 3rd, 1731, but there is no record of his ever having practised." After his father's death he became Constable of Gloucester Castle. In 1741 he contested the City in the Parliamentary election. He married Frances, only daughter of Sir Thomas Snell, knt., a London merchant, 15th May, 1744. "On a pane of glass in one of the windows at Painswick House the words 'Ben & Francis Hyett, 1744' apparently scratched with a diamond ring, may still be seen." They had only one child, whom they called Frances, born 1745, but she died aged 9 months.

In 1761 he was appointed a Deputy Lieutenant for Gloucestershire and in the same year he had the degree of Doctor of Common Law conferred on him (frequently conferred on country gentry). He died on the 15th December, 1762, aged 53, and was buried in the Cathedral. His brother, Nicholas, perpetuated the family name, having a son in 1743 whom he called Benjamin. (8)

From 1722-38, John Braithwaite was the tenant innkeeper of the Crown & Sceptre, followed in 1740/41 by John Woodman. An advertisement in the Gloucester Journal for 6th July, 1742, announced that: "The Crown & Sceptre Inn in Westgate Street, Gloucester, lately kept by John Woodman, is now kept by Thomas Hooper and Ann his wife (daughter of the late William and Mary Powell of Frog Mill) where all gentlemen and others may depend upon meeting with good Entertainments and Civil Usage". They remained until 1744 which is the last year the inn was licensed. Though it remained known as the "Crown & Sceptre" until at least 1905 (in the title deeds) it was never again used as a public house. (10)

Following its use as Gloucester Infirmary from August 1755 to July 1761, John Pitt leased the property in 1771 (11). On the 3rd October, 1799 the Corporation sold the inn to Pitt (for redemption of land tax). Pitt was an attorney at the King's Bench and also stood for the City in Parliamentary elections. " ... Opposing the Duke of Norfolk and the Corporation was John Pitt, former steward of the Yorke family estates at Hardwick and collector of customs at the Port of Gloucester." Pitt had been active in City politics as early as 1754, on behalf of the Yorke interests supporting Barrow and George Selwyn. With the death of his patron and a quarrel with Selwyn, Pitt's politics became decidedly more partisan; he sided with the local blues, as Gloucester Tories described themselves. This brought him into direct conflict with the Corporation, a confrontation that was to engage his energies and passions for the rest of his life, and was to animate the local Tories until the Municipal Corporations Act allowed them to elect a majority to the corporation for the first time. "Pitt in 1780 became an antagonist of the Duke of Norfolk, who, as Earl of Surrey, assiduously promoted the Corporation-sponsored Gloucester Gaol Bill in the House of Lords. Pitt lobbied mightily but unsuccessfully to defeat this bill, which he feared would raise the rates to a ruinous level and give the Corporation additional patronage through control of police and prisoner". In 1786 he determined that he would stand for the next vacant seat. However, Selwyn's nephew, Charles Townsend contested the seat, but in the face of stiff opposition from the Duke, he retired. "Pitt then announced his candidacy, resisting financial blandishments offered by Norfolk to keep him from contesting the seat." In 1789 Pitt won the seat by one vote, and as a result Gloucester Tories formed a True Blue Club, which met each year in early February to celebrate the anniversary of their victory over the Corporation.

According to the Gloucester Journal, 15.7.1805, John Pitt, Gloucester's largest private landlord, was reputed never to have raised his rents. He died in 1805 (12).

Following Pitt's death, the property passed to Thomas Bayliss, grocer in 1839. The stables and brewhouse were used as a warehouse, and the whole was valued at £1995. In June 1847 it passed to William Brown Wells, of Gloucester, hardware dealer, valued at £1400. After Wells died on 15th July, 1854, the property, now known as No.105, passed to George Kent, of Gloucester, baker, valued at £1000. After a period of financial difficulties, by 15th December 1862, Kent was declared bankrupt in the Bristol District Court and the property was offered for sale by public auction on 21st August, 1866, at the Greyhound Hotel, Gloucester. Insufficient offer was made, so the sale could not be effected. William Stephens of Highnam, gent., who had originally loaned Kent money, arranged with Kent's creditor, Charles Cooksey of Tuffley, provision merchant, that the property should be made over to him.

By 1 March, 1888, Stephens was also declared bankrupt and the Official Receiver contracted with James Wheeler, of Gloucester, marine store dealer, to sell the property for £475.

Wheeler died 7th September, 1905, having appointed as his executor Albert Seymour of Westgate Street, a shopkeeper and picture frame maker. He conveyed to Samuel James Long, of 23 St. Mary's Square, a forgerman, on 23 December, 1905, 'All that messuage with yards, warehouses, outbuildings adjoining and formerly used as a public house known by the name of the Crown & Sceptre, but lately used as a shop and lodging house, occupied by James Wheeler until his death .. having a frontage to Westgate Street 23' and containing in area 504 sq. yds. .. together with a driving way and entrance from Deacon Street ...'. In October 1906 Long made the property over to his wife, Clara (13).

The Gloucester City street Directories of 1867-1963 fill in the remaining details. Despite George Kent's bankruptcy in 1862, the Directories mention him in occupation until 1870. In 1875 the premises were the grocery branch of the Co-op Stores. Void in 1889, the property was occupied in 1891 by Joseph Mills, bicycle and tricycle manufacturer. James Wheeler is listed as a furniture broker from 1893-1905, who offered accommodation for travellers. In 1906/7, the property became known as Snell's Tea Store at the time of Mrs Long's ownership. Samuel Long ran a lodging house there from 1910 until 1930 when W.H. Salcombe took over, followed by his wife in 1945. Albert Salcombe took over the lodging house from 1959 to 1963.

E. Baldwin ran a provisions shop in part of the property until 1918. Then the Co-op are again mentioned as having a bread shop there. H. Peters became the shopkeeper from 1930 to c.1936/40, after which the shop as such ceased to exist.

Some time after 1963 the site was demolished and remained a car park, along with many other sites in the area, until the redevelopment of the Westgate Street / Archdeacon Street region began in January 1970. The building of the present Westgate Flats complex, which includes the site of the Crown & Sceptre, began in 1972 (14).

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