

On the History of Chard.

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THE MANOR.

IN tracing the history of the ancient Manor of Chard, there are no personal or family doings, no exploits of the mailed warrior or belted earl to record. The whole border district hereabouts was early granted to the bishop, and formed part of his territory, which became known as the Bishop's Hundred. In the Gheld Inquest of A.D. 1084, taken two years before the Domesday survey, it is specially named as the land of Bishop Giso, who was made bishop in 1061, in Saxon times, and from this date our credible history for Chard begins. Giso made it his especial business to gather property by every means to enrich his bishopric, and under his own hand he has left an entreaty to his successors, "in the spirit of fraternal affection," begging them to continue this course, "that they may possess in glory a recompense when they have passed out of this life."¹ For himself he managed so well that his territory measured in 1086, in Domesday book, 78,153 acres. Of these, in Chard there were 5,152, in Tatworth 1,552; together 6,704 acres,² estimated or rated as eight hides; six hides being in hand, and two held of the bishop by one Tegnus.

The average measurement of the taxable hide in Somerset was $248\frac{1}{2}$ acres; so that there was a large area of no special value, not considered taxable at this time.

There were twenty plough lands, a mill valued at a rent of 30d., and the existence of twenty goats is also recorded. The value of the whole in Domesday was £16. Taking Chard in an average with the other taxable lands of the bishop, the

(1). *History of the Bishopric of Somerset. Register of the Priory of Bath.*

(2). *Gheld Inquest, R. W. Eyton.*

rental would be a little more than a penny an acre. There was one labourer to each eighty-five acres, or one to every fifty-two acres actually under the plough.

The records of the time immediately following this are few, and the time itself we should not wish repeated upon ourselves.

The next mention of the manor is in 1256, when the King, Henry III, confirmed to William (Button, 1st) Bishop of Bath and Wells, and his successors, free-warren in his various lordships, including Cerde. To this document there are eighteen witnesses, among them being Robert Walerand.³

In these days, and for long afterwards, not only was the property of a deceased owner enquired into, to avoid damage or loss to the King, as lord in chief, but all sales of land made under license were duly registered. Thus in 1305, 34th Edward I, there is a deed of a purchase by Gregory de Wellington, from William de Borne, of five messuages, a carucate and six bovats and one hundred and twenty acres of land, an acre and a half of meadow, eight acres of moor, and twenty-five shillings rents in Cerde, and other places.

A carucate of land varied in measurement from 147 to 154 acres. As already mentioned, there were noted in Domesday, twenty plough lands in Chard—that is, land occupying or requiring the annual labour of twenty ploughs; these lands would vary in measurement as the quality of the land varied, as the power of a plough to work in light or heavy soil varied. In Somerset a plough land was about 120 acres. There were eight oxen to each plough or team, so that one bovat would represent the possible yearly work of one ox—that is, the eighth part of the work of a plough, which here would be fifteen acres; six bovats would thus be ninety acres.

A few other small transfers may be noticed here. In 1339, Robert le Tailleur sold to Richard de la Chambre, besides messuages, sixty acres of land and woods, and four pence rent in Chard; and it was agreed that after the death of Richard

(3). *Charter Rolls*, 41st Hen. III, mem. 5.

this should go to John Sylveyn and his son John, and to Alice the wife of John the son of John; and after her to the heirs of John, the son of John.⁴ Thus, by a simple process, not only was the transfer made, but in a few lines a settlement also.

In 1418, Edward Courtney, formerly Earl of Devon, had messuages and lands in Chard. In 1421 these had passed to Hugh Courtney, Earl of Dorset, and in 1424 to Sir Hugh Courtney, Kt.⁵

In 1465, Walter Rodeney, Kt., had two tenements, which seem to have passed to Thomas Rodeney, who died in 1469.⁶ In 1466, Johanna, widow of John Talbot, Viscount Lisle, a daughter and heiress of Thomas Chedder, owned four messuages.⁷

In 1418, John Keynes owned lands in Walterscombe; and in 1461, Johanna, widow of Hugh Champernoon, had lands also in Walterscombe.⁸ With other sales or inquisitions there comes a matter of interest to Chard and the neighbourhood.

In 1312, there was a deed between Peter de Columbarius and Roger de Weston and Robert de Quantoxheved, for some messuages, ten carucates of land, woods, and rents, and a mill in Cerde—for which he was to render a pound of wax and a pound of cummin.⁹ In 1359, again there was a transfer of a mill, with belongings.¹⁰ What these mills were is not stated, but it must not be assumed that they were grist mills, as a watchful attention will show.

Passing now to the more important transactions, it is recorded that in 1334, 9th Nov., at Chard, the bishop granted a

(4). *Feet of Fines, Somerset*, No. 99, 14th Ed. III.

(5). *Inq. Post Mortem*, 7th Hen. V, No. 75; 10th Hen. V, No. 29 b; 3rd Hen. VI, No. 30.

(6). *Inq. P. M.*, 6th Ed. IV, No. 42; 9th and 10th Ed. IV, No. 63.

(7). *Inq. P. M.*, 7th Ed. IV, No. 42.

(8). *Inq. P. M.*, 7th Hen. V, No. 42; 2nd Ed. IV, No. 13. *Feet Fines*, 24th Hen. VIII, 1532. *Pat.*, 14th Eliz., part 1.

(9). *Pedes Finium, Divers Counties*, p. 163.

(10). *Feet Fines, Somerset*, 38th Ed. III, No. 49.

license to Umfrid de Keel, to celebrate service in his chapel of Walterscombe, in the parish of Chard.¹¹ In 1383, by an inquisition taken at Yevele, it was found that John Kaill died seised of a carucate of land in Walterscombe, which he held of the Bishop of Bath, as of the Manor of Cherde, valued at 40s.¹² It was further declared that Thomas, his son, was his heir. Thomas died in 1394, and by a similar enquiry the jury found that he had died under age, and at the time was in the care of the King—a ward of Court; that he held the Manor of Cudworth of John Chideoke; a carucate of land in Walterscombe of Mathew Gurney, as of the Manor of Cory Malet; and two messuages and a fuller's mill in Cherde, of the bishop, as of his Manor of Cherde; and lastly, that Idonia, his sister, then aged twelve years and twenty-five weeks, was his heir.¹³ Here is a distinct mention of a fuller's mill, as existing in 1394. Idonia, as a minor and an heiress, after the custom of the time, seems to have been allotted to the wardship of Elizabeth Poulet and others, with the consequence that John Poulet married her when she must have been about fifteen. In 1396, John Poulet, in right of his wife, claimed her land, and asked for an enquiry and a declaration that she was of age, that it might be delivered to him.¹⁴ Five years only afterwards, in 1401, occurs the inquest taken at Bryggewater, on the death of Idonia wife of John Poulet, when it was found, very curtly, that on the day of her death she held a messuage and a fuller's mill in Cherde.¹⁵ But possibly after the deaths of her children, perhaps at the instigation of the next heir, there was a second enquiry, in 1404, in which the general facts and the title are set out fully and clearly, and with the additional information that John Kaill had originally held this property by the concession of John Deynyn, and had died, leaving the children John and Idonia; that John had died, leaving then

(11). *Wells Registers*, Ralph, fol. 83.

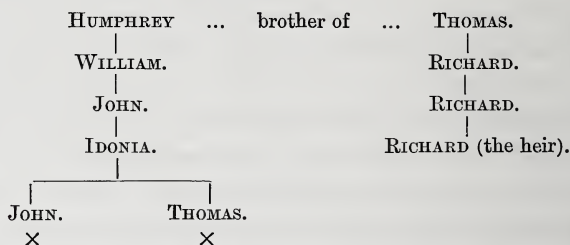
(12). *Inq. P. M.*, 7th Rich. II, No. 48.

(13). *Ibid*, 18th Rich. II, No. 26.

(14). *Ibid*, 20th Rich. II, No. 149.

(15). *Ibid*, 3rd Hen. IV, No. 42.

Idonia as his heir, and that she had married John Poulet.¹⁶ Poulet died in 1413, when by the inquisition taken at Charde it was found that he had left no heirs of his body surviving. It was also found that a son John (Poulet) the son of Idonia, had died young, without issue, and that his brother Thomas the son of Idonia then became next heir; but Thomas having also died under age, Richard Kaile was declared to be next in blood and heir of the said John the son of Idonia and Thomas the brother of John, as being the son of Richard, the son of Richard, the son of Thomas the brother of Humphrey, who was the father of William, the father of John, the father of Idonia, the mother of John the son of Idonia and Thomas the brother of John.¹⁷



These inquests show well how interesting such early documents are; and here we have on one small parchment a pedigree title showing five generations, and all registered in a few lines beyond dispute.

Leaving other holdings, the fortunes of the manor may now be followed.

In 1417 died Sir Thomas Brook, owning twenty-seven messuages, four tofts, a carucate and eighty acres of land, forty-five acres of meadow, and eight acres of pasture in the town of Cherde, held under John Speke, but by what service the jury were ignorant. He held other lands, some in Saunton, of the Bishop of Wynton, as of his Manor of Saunton.¹⁸ The property was next held by the widow Johanna, for her

(16). *Inq. P. M.*, 5th Hen. IV, No. 42.

(17). *Ibid*, 1st Hen. V, No. 54.

(18). *Ibid*, 5th Hen. V, No. 54.

life,¹⁹ and then passed to Sir Thomas Brook, who died in 1438,²⁰ who was succeeded by Sir Edward Brook de Cobham, who in 1464, besides many other properties, had lands in Brookylchester, Brookmontague, and in Chard. Of the lands in Chard, one hundred acres were held of Henry Hull, Esq., by military service; the other of the Bishop of Bath and Wells.²¹ This Sir Edward was summoned to Parliament as Edward Brook de Cobham, in 1463, 28th Edward IV, and the summons being repeated and continued, a barony by writ was established, and he thus became Lord Cobham. John, his son and successor, died in 1506, and was succeeded by George Lord Cobham, who died in 1558, the last year of Mary, possessed of the Manors of Chardborough, Brook Ivelchester, and Cudworth, and several others in Somerset.²²

This is the first time that Chard Manor is found separated from the bishopric, and it is at once suggested that this change must have occurred after the ecclesiastical disruption, and as the result of some transfer in the reign of Mary. But no such transaction seems to be recorded.

William, Lord Cobham, died in 1596, and by the inquisition taken at Maidstone he was found seised of the Manor and Burgh of Chard, and of the Manors of Hurtham and Brookes Court in Evelchester, and much other property, and Henry, his son, aged thirty-two, was declared his heir.²³ This Henry was summoned to Parliament by Elizabeth in 1597, but afterwards failed in his allegiance to King James, as with Sir Walter Raleigh, he espoused the cause of the Lady Arabella (Stuart) as being a better successor to the crown, was consequently attainted, and his honours and property forfeited in 1604. He died in 1619.

An interesting letter, the result of the intrigues against James has been preserved, and has an especial reference to

(19). *Inq. P. M.*, 15th Hen. VI, No. 62.

(20). *Ibid.*, 17th Hen. VI, No. 32. (21). *Ibid.*, 4th Ed. IV, No. 26.

(22). *Ibid.*, 1st Eliz., pt. 2, No. 118. (23). *Ibid.*, 39th Eliz., pt. 1, No. 24.

Chard. It arose from the seizure and examination there of a travelling trader, one of three who had uttered some "verie sclanderous speeches" against the lords of the Council. On Wednesday, 27th April, 1603, he reported that the Lord Treasurer, the Lord Admiral, and Sir Robert Cecil, were committed to the Tower for a conspiracy to kill the King, the Queen, and the young Prince, and these speeches were repeated in divers places, as at Crewkerne, at the "signe of the Swanne, to ye goodman of ye house, called Beard." He was examined by Robt. Tocker, Constable of Chard, in the presence of Thomas Cogan and Edward Doughtie. It was the last named who in a fit of loyalty and flutter reported the circumstance in the following letter:—

RIGHT HONBLE.

The dutie whereby I am and ever will be willinglie bound towards your good Lordships wolde not suffer me to heare so damnable an imputation as the enclosed papers doe declare—for God knoweth what unreste it bredde in me after I heard of it. I was from home that daie in wch the wicked person spake thus cursedlie, and at my coming home heard relation of the same to my intollerable greefe and thereupon charged the hoste of the house where the fellows had bene unto the constable of the town (or chief officer) to laye wayte for theyr returne and with all purposed to have made oute hue and crye after them to apprehend the villains, had I not learned that one of the company had left a horse behind him till his return. They are yet in Cornwall, as (the one examined) affirmeth, who came like base fellows from London on foot and on the way fell into companie. I pray God to throw a juste revenge on such impious and execrable blasphemers.

If it be your Lps. pleasure to sende your messenger to my house in Charde I will give the best directions I can for the apprehension of them, for I have seemed to let all slippe withoute much adoee, lest by stirring before aforehande too hotelie the parties might have it brought to their eares afore they loose them, as I hope they shall.

From my poor house in Chard, 5th August, 1603.

EDW. DOUGHTIE.

It is superscribed—

To the right honorable my verie good Lorde the Earl of Nottingham, Lord High Admirall of Englande.

Hoste, Haste, poste poste haste.

This was apparently sent special, and bears the times at which it passed through the hands of certain postmasters. It

was received at "Andever at fower in the afternoon, being Sondaye;" at "Basingstoke at nyne in the nighte sonday;" at "Harfordbury at 2 in the morninge, and at Staines at 7 morning."²⁴

A survey of the manor taken in 1602, tells the value of the principal tenements, and also, by marking how many of them had been newly built and what a largely increased value was anticipated when lives fell, shows how great was the prosperity in the Elizabethan time.

Thomas Every held for lives as from 1578, one "fayre Inn lyeinge in the hye street," called by the "name of the signe of the Lyon," consisting of "a hall" and a kitchen; "dyvers other fayre and newe built" chambers and stables and out-houses; a garden of one rod, and a bowling alley; a kitchen garden, a meadow of four acres adjoining the back of the house, worth 26s. 8d. per acre, and two other meadows at the end of the town, on the north side of the way leading towards Exeter, containing two acres and five acres, worth 20s. per acre.

Upon the ground were growing sixty elms and ashes, worth twelve pence a piece, one with another.

The "rent to be improved £40 per ann."

John Slape held as from 1584, a dwelling house in the High Street, adjoining the Lyon, with a little garden and a little close, containing an acre, worth 10s. per ann.

The "rent to be improved £5 per ann."

Margaret Channen held for lives from 1593, a tenement on the north side of the High Street, with outbuildings; a garden of an acre, worth 26s. 8d.; and a close of pasture, an acre, worth 27s. 8d.

The "rent to be improved £5 per ann."

John Alston held a large tenement as from 1560, in the High Street, with outhouses and garden, and two closes of pasture at the town's end towards Exeter.

(24). *S. P., Dom.*, 1603, vol. iii. No. 9.

Upon this ground were eight trees, worth 12d. a piece.

The "rent to be improved £6 8s. 4d."

This was a new grant or renewal, made in 1599 with the addition of two lives, when a fine of £30 was paid.

John Moore, alias Brewer, held from 1560, a tenement on the north side of the High Street, with a barn and an acre of pasture, worth 28s. per ann.

The "rent to be improved £4 per ann."

Austyne Atkyn held a faire tenement, newly built, in Hollirod Street, with a fulling mill, and divers convenient rooms for a dyer.

The "rent to be improved £8 per ann."

For inserting two new lives a fine of £12 had been paid.

Besides these leaseholders, there were the copyholders, "without widows' estate."

Henry Munday held a water mill to grind corn, with a little tenement newly erected adjoining.

The "rent to be improved £13 6s. 8d."

Anne Pincher held a large house in the High Street wherein there "now dwelleth" four tenants "severally," with the gardens containing half an acre, and an acre of meadow adjoining, worth 20s. per ann.

The "rent to be improved £7 per ann."

John Sprake held a fair dwelling house and shop to the street.

The "rent to be improved £7 per ann."

A new grant for fresh lives produced a fine of £10.

William Burges held a tenement and orchard of one acre.

To be "improved sixty shillings." For inserting two lives, fine £13 6s. 8d.

Nichs. Wall held a tenement, newly built, in the High Street, divided into two, with a curtilage, newly built, an orchard of half an acre and a meadow of an acre, each worth 20s. per annum.

On the ground were six ashes, worth 12d. a piece.

The "rent to be improved £8 per ann."

Upon a new grant for three lives, one of which terminated almost immediately, a fine of £40 was exacted.

John Braunton held a dwelling house in the High Street, with a garden and a meadow.

There were forty elms and ash, worth 2s. each.

The "rent to be improved £6," and he was to be compelled to repair. The fine for a new grant was £25.

Thos. Raymond held a dwelling house in Holly Rood Street, with garden. A surrender for a new grant cost £20.

The "rent was to be improved £4 per ann."

Thomas Sprage held a fair dwelling house, "newe built," in the High Street with divers other necessary houses, which cost £200 in the building, with a garden plot worth £6 yearly, and a meadow of four acres with forty small oaks thereon, lying in the midst of the great Common called Heathfield in Chafcombe, worth 10s. per ann. There were also sixty oaks, worth 12d. a piece.

The rent improvable £10 per ann.

Robt. Sellwood held two garden plots in the middle of the High Street, "next the Sessions Hall," containing one rod, and a meadow adjoining, of two acres, and a meadow called the Millmead, lying at the back of Munday's Mill, containing five acres, worth 20s. per ann. Upon this ground were growing six ashes, worth 12d. a piece.

The "rent to be improved £8 per ann."

There were, besides some smaller rents, a mill and a cottage built on Cleyves Bar Common, and two mills and two cottages newly built on the same common. The tenants of Robert Henley paid yearly for their cattle going upon this common, 2s. There was also the smith's forge, and some payments, one of 4d., and another of 2d., for walls built on the lord's land; and Phillip Cogan paid 8d. for a wall built on the lord's land, belonging to the sign of the Lyon.

The rents of assize for the manor were £9 13s. 4d. The

tenants had "a large scope of common of pasture for all manner of cattle on Chard Common and Heathfield."²⁵

Before any advantage could accrue from this survey Lord Cobham forfeited the property, and it passed to the Crown. By "grace special," in July, 1605, the King granted all that the Manor and Borough of Chard parcel of the lands of Henry, Lord Cobham, to Edward Earl of Hertford, Charles Earl of Devon, Edward Randhill, Kt., Thos. Paradin, Gent., and Andrew Caninge, of London, grocer; their heirs and assigns; which manor and borough were declared worth £11 16s. 7d. per annum.²⁶ A holding such as this, jointly with others, would be but a temporary one and for profit purposes; to trace a descent after it however is often difficult, as not knowing to whom it really passed.

In 1616, 14th James I, Edward Lord Hertford, Fras. Seymour, Knt., Gilbert Prynne, Kt., and Jas. Kirton, Kt., received a license to alienate to the Earl of Essex, the manors of Hatch Beauchamp, Northprit, and Kingsbury, with belongings, and twenty messuages, twenty gardens, two acres of wood, three hundred acres of gorse and heath, and a rent of five shillings, and free-warren in Chard, Hatch, Northperet, Kingsbury, Ilminster, and Somerton; a fair and market in Castle Carey, and the advowsons of the vicarages of Ilminster and Somerton. This sale was duly carried out, but the deed seems not to have been enrolled.²⁷ The buyer was Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, the Parliamentary commander during the Civil War, who died in 1646. It will be noticed that no mention is made here of the "Manor and Borough" of Chard, although free-warren was conveyed, the Chard land, the acreage not determinable, being mixed up with other lands in other parishes. The absence of detail, through the non-enrolment, makes the position extremely puzzling, and for a time the manor must

(25). *State Papers, Domestic.*

(26). *Index, Warrant Book*, p. 43. *Pat.*, 3rd Jas. I, pt. 25.

(27). *Alienation Licenses*, Hil., V. 13, p. 116; *Feet of Fines*.

disappear, until, as presently will be seen, it is found in the possession of the bishop in 1633.

And further, notwithstanding the distinct possession and forfeiture by Lord Cobham, and the equally clear re-grant by royal patent, a title which would supersede all others, no record has been found as to when either the manor or the borough left the bishopric, except for the short time now to be noticed.

In 1548, 20th May, Bishop William Barlow accepting the reformed doctrines and, in his own words, utterly repudiating his earlier ones, surrendered to the King in acknowledgement of the royal supremacy, with other properties, the Manor and Borough of Chard, and on the 27th September he appeared before the Commissioners in the Chapter House at Wells and acknowledged and confirmed the writing and all that it contained.²⁸ On the 10th October in the same year, as a consideration for this surrender, he received a grant of several advowsons named and with them the manor of Woky,²⁹ and then in 1549, on the 13th February, in exchange for the manors of Congresbury and Yatton, the bishop again obtained the manor of Huishe and the manor and borough of Chard, formerly part of his possessions.³⁰ It would seem next that in 1553, the last year of Edward VI, he leased Chard for a term of years to Lord Poulet, accepting a fine of a hundred marks and a rent of fifty pounds a year.³¹ This document may be in existence, but as being a private arrangement it was not enrolled.

On the accession of Mary, Bishop Barlow, as a protestant, was deprived and imprisoned, but escaping he got away to Germany. The bishopric being thus vacant was granted to a popish successor, Gilbert Bourne, who in turn was deprived on the accession of Elizabeth for refusing allegiance and the

(28). *Close Rolls*, 2nd Ed. VI, pt. 4, mems. 1 and 2.

(29). *Pat.* 2nd Ed. VI, pt. 7, mems. $\frac{32}{12}$.

(30). *Pat.* 4th Ed. VI, pt. 2, mem. $\frac{41}{17}$.

(31). *Add. MSS. Brit. Mus.* 30280, fol. 60; *Collinson*, v. 2; *Phelps*.

required acknowledgment of the royal supremacy. These changes however, did not apparently affect the lease of Chard, as this was clearly a legal transaction, the rent being due to the bishop for the time being. In a return of the temporalities or property belonging to the bishopric, made in the third year of Mary, Chard is found duly entered and as farmed or leased by Hugh Poulett, at a rent of £50 a year, but, rather awkwardly adds the record, no indenture to this effect was produced.³² In 1583, 25th Elizabeth, by a similar return, Chard is again down as belonging to the bishop, and also in 1584, 26th Elizabeth, in both cases being farmed by Amias Poulett. In 1591 and 1592, 33rd and 34th Elizabeth, similar documents say the same thing, Anthony Poulet having now succeeded as the farmer.³³

It will be noticed that these documents entirely clash with the ownership of Lord Cobham through the same time.

Passing now to the time of the Civil War the end can quickly be traced. Soon after the commencement of that great struggle the properties of those who sided with the King were sequestered or taken from the owners by the Parliament, as were those of the Parliament party by the Royalists, the dominant party in any district endeavouring to impoverish their opponents and get their rents for their own purposes. As the bishop of that time and the Poulets were Royalists their lands early suffered in this way. Besides this, with the strong religious animosity of the time, after abolishing episcopacy and substituting the presbyterian system, an Ordinance was passed in November, 1646, for the sale of all the lands of the late bishops, Commissioners being named for carrying this out. Acting under the powers thus conferred, on the 3rd January, 1649, "in the twenty-fourth year of the reign of King Charles," which would be just three weeks before his execution, in consideration of the sum of £3,718 9s. 6d., one

(32). *Bishop's Temporalities*, 2, 3 Ph. and M., Somerset, No. 47a.

(33). *Bp. Temp.*, Somst. Eliz., Nos. 48, 49, 50, 51.

moiety paid down, the other in six months, they sold to Nathaniel Whetham, of London, Esq., all that the Lordship or Manor of Chard and Borough of Chard, with all belongings, and the rents of assize, burgage rent, customary or copyhold rents, rents of service and other rents, and the yearly rents called old rents, and all that the capital messuage or mansion house with appurtenances, commonly called the manor house, situate and being in the parish of Chard, with all outhouses thereto belonging, containing by estimation three acres, together with all those closes and meadows (called by various names, all duly set out with their measurements), and the messuage called Tapston House, with outhouses, &c., with all courts, wards, heriots, escheats, waifs, strays, goods and chattels of felons and fugitives, felons of themselves, fairs, markets, tolls, and the toll of the beasts sold at St. James's Fair to be kept in Chard, all customs, rights, and royalties and privileges whatsoever belonging, or reputed as part of the said lordship or borough, just as they may have been within ten years before this present Parliament. All which premises were by indenture of the 1st October, in the eighth year of His Majesty's reign (1633), leased by Walter late bishop, to Francis Keene, for twenty-one years, under a yearly rent of £50, to be upon improvement after the expiration of the present leaseholds and copyholds, and of the yearly value of £279 5s. 8d. over and above the said reserved yearly rent. All advowsons of parsonage or vicarage, tithes, churchyards and places used for burial were excepted.³⁴

Whetham under this purchase held the property through the Commonwealth, until the restoration of Charles II, when those who could do so got their lands returned, and Chard again became the property of the bishopric. Although a Francis Keene is named as the lessee, the lease really passed to Poulet, so in 1661 Lord Poulet is found petitioning that—

(34). *Close Rolls*, No. 3415, mem. 42, No. 2.

Whereas one Whetham by some title under the late pretended powers having possessed himself of the Manor of Chard, of late had sought for a lease thereof to be granted unto him by the bishop, whereupon the petitioner had applied also claiming his tenant right to the said manor, the said Whetham first to be re-imbursed by the bishop if upon accompt anything was due to him. The bishop being willing to conclude this arrangement for a valuable consideration in ready money, Poulet promised to defend him against the said Whetham, if the King would be pleased to leave him to the law of the land.

He therefore prayed that he may take the benefit of the law for recovery of possession if he concluded with the bishop's terms, and that the said Whetham, upon a just accompt, should be re-imbursed or otherwise have satisfaction.

The case was then debated by the Commissioners for Public Sales, who recommended the petitioner for a lease, upon the promise that the bishop should be secured against Whetham, and that Whetham should have full satisfaction. This being sent to the Council, it was ordered:—At the Court at Whitehall, 10th July, 1661, that the petitioner be once more recommended “effectually” to the bishop to make him a lease if he found that the right of tenure was in the petitioner.³⁵

It thus passed to the Poulets, who continued as lessees until 1801. In 1800 the lease was just renewed for three lives, father and two sons, when the then bishop determined to avail himself of the provisions of an Act of the 39th Geo. III for the redemption and purchase of the land tax, and for enabling bodies politic or corporate to sell lands for that purpose; this, as always seems necessary, being an Act to explain two other Acts of the year before. On the 19th February, 1801, by indenture between Charles, Bishop of Bath and Wells, and John, Earl Poulett, the latter purchased the Manor and Borough of Chard, for the sum of £10,951 8s. 9d., of which £5,988 7s. 0d. were paid down and the balance by quarterly

instalments, the eighth and last being paid on the 1st February, 1803.³⁶ By descent the property is then traced to the present owner.

Before passing to the history of the borough, notice may be taken of the manor of Tatworth and another property which local knowledge may be able to identify. Want of space prevents more than a short record of a few facts.

Tatworth after Domesday mention, appears in 1315-16, as held by Robt. Filius Pagani, and in 1353-4, John de Palton being Escheator, Tateworth manor with the advowson of the church, was held of the bishop by military service by Robt. Fitz Payn, value 40s. per ann. Robert left as his heiress Isabella his daughter, and so the manor is next found owned by John de Chidyoke, 1387-8, held of the bishop as of his manor of Cherde. His son, John, succeeded him, but in 1407-8 the property had passed to Wm. Bonville, Kt., who was succeeded by his grandson William, the son of John. It then passed to Thomas Bonvyle, at whose inquisition, taken at Charde, 18th April, 1466, it was found to be held in fee of the bishop by the payment of six shillings and four pence in lieu of all services, and John Bonville his son was declared his heir. By inquisition taken at Wayford, 24th Aug., 1495, on the death of this John some settlement is noticed, and the property passed to John Coplestone as being the son of Ralph, the son of Anne, the daughter and heiress of the said John. John Coplestone seems to have died in 1500, when some of his lands were in the hands of John Merifield and another,³⁷ but Tatworth is no longer mentioned. It seems to have passed to Lord la Warre and then to Henry (Grey) Duke of Suffolk and Marquis of Dorset, and on the attainder and execution of the latter for opposing the accession of Mary

(36). *Close Rolls*, 41st Geo. III, mem. 6.

(37). *Inq. P.M.*, 9th Ed. II, No. 63; 28th Edw. III, No. 41; 11th Rich. II, No. 14; 9th Hen. IV, No. 42; 6th Edw. IV, No. 46; 10th Hen. VII, No. 176; 20th Hen. VII, No. 45.

in 1553, was in ordinary course forfeited. By patent,³⁸ in the second year of Mary, it was granted, with other manors in Devon, to William Petre, Kt., as all the manor of Tatworthy and our park of Tatworthy in the parish of Chard, formerly held by Thomas West, Lord la Warre, in hand by the attainer of the Duke of Suffolk.

The other property called Hall is found mentioned so early as 1482, when a sale is recorded, made before Richard Chokke, by John Hugyn and John Heyron, to John Speke, Esq., of a messuage, a hundred acres of land, twenty acres of meadow, sixty of wood, and common of pasture with all rights in two hundred acres of gorse and heath, with belongings, in Hall in the parish of Chard.³⁹ This property appears again in 1600, through a Chancery suit brought by Robert Hendley of Leigh in Winsham, gent., against the representatives of Thomas Selwood, late of Blyndmore, who had died seised of the capital messuage called Blyndmore in Buckland St. Mary, and other lands and tenements called Hall in Chard, leaving his widow executrix, and three children—William, Susan, and Johann. Robert Hendley, the “orator” in the suit, “in consideration of a very great sum of money,” bought the property of William, supposing that he was the heir, but “so it is may it please your good lordships,” the said William with his mother (now married to John Street) and his sister Susan wife of Wm. Foy, and Johann wife of Marmaduke Street, by indirect means withheld the writings and unjustly expelled the orator from the premises.

To this it was answered that deceased was seised of the messuage and land called Hall, and by his will dated 13th April, 1571, bequeathed it with the manor of Westcombeland in Buckland Marie, to his son William, but subject to a life interest for Susan.

The widow answered that Thomas Selwood had settled

(38). 1st and 2nd Ph. and M., No. 889, part 9, mem. 16.

(39). *Feet of Fines*, Somerset, 22nd Edw. IV, No. 81.

these messuages and lands in Chard, called Halle and Wydney, in trust for the life of himself and for her life after him, and through her then husband she claimed the same.

The daughter, Johan, answered that she claimed only one close of pasture called Fursey Close, parcel of the lands called Hall in Chard, as a legacy left in her father's will for her life.⁴⁰ All agreed that William had tried to suppress the will. The "orator" seems to have gained the suit and to have obtained possession, as in 1615 he is found selling lands in Blindmore, Hall, and Chard to Richard Golding and Henry Crukerne, who in 1616 sold again to John Merryfield and John Chase. In 1625, Andrew and Robert Henley sold their lands in Hall in Chard to Henry Henley, and in 1630 he sold them with a water mill and a fulling mill in Hall in Chard, to Thos. Freke and Rich. Swayne, without first getting a license to do so, and this being afterwards discovered the buyers were fined and then as usual pardoned, 9th Feb., 1647-8.⁴¹

THE CUSTOMS OF THE MANOR.⁴²

A Presentment made at the Court Baron held for the Manor of Chard the 20th day of October Anno Domini 1715, by us whose names are under written.

We present our Customs as followeth, viz. :—

We present that the Lord of the Manor may grant five lives upon his copyhold tenements successively, and the first wife or the first husband unmarried may be nominated upon the copy and is good according to our custom.

We present that the wife may surrender her right by her husband's lifetime, being first privately examined by the steward before the surrender, and doth it freely.

We present that no copyhold estate can be granted by the

(40). *Chancery Proceedings*, Eliz. Hh. 3.

(41). *Alienations*, vol. xii., pp. 192, 202 ; vol. xv., p. 184 ; vol. xx., p. 155.

(42). Kindly contributed by W. C. Tucker, Esq., Town Clerk.

Lord of this Manor to any person without the consent of the purchaser and each person named in the copy doth make a surrender.

We present that no person can surrender being under age.

We present that no copy in reversion can be granted by the Lord of this Manor without the consent of the purchaser and those lives that are then living named in the copy.

We present that if two or three persons do purchase an estate from the Lord of this Manor to hold the same jointly together, it is good according to our custom.

We present that no copyholder within this Manor can sell any parts of his copyhold tenements without an agreement with the Lord, and a surrender made in open court within this Manor.

We present that no copyholder can within this Manor let fall into decay any dwelling house, nor suffer any of the Lord's soil against the river to waste for want of piling or fencing or otherwise, upon pain of amercement according to the offence.

We present that no copyholder within this Manor can allow any one to common for part of his copyhold tenement, but every copyholder within this Manor hath a right to common as many cattle as he can winter the same upon his copyhold tenement.

We present that every copyholder tenant hath a right to cut furze for house keeping, and to dig marle in our common for the improvement of his copyhold tenement.

We present that no copyhold tenant, nor any other person, are to keep any sheep in our common between the 5 and 20th (25th) day of March and the 1st day of November, but may be impounded and pay as trespassers.

We present that by our custom we are to have two courts a year, one at Lady Day and the other at Michaelmas, and at our court we are to present every year three for Reeves, who have Reeves' places, and of those three Mr. Steward is to choose one to be Reeve for the year ensuing.

We present that the Reeve is to have all his rent and wheat allowed him for his year's service, and is also to have all the wafts and estrayers as they are appraised by three or four customary tenants—a sheep is four pence and a lamb is two pence. The Reeve is also to have two loads of wood out of the Lord's woods.

We present that the copyhold tenants that serve's jurors in the Court Baron are to present three for Haywards that have Haywards places by copy of court roll, and the Reeve is to choose one of them to be Hayward for the year ensuing, and for his year's services he is to have all his rent and wheat allowed him as the Reeve hath, and is to have a certain plott of ground lying in Bishop Mead, one of the common meadows called the Haywards Ham, and to have one load of wood out of the Lord's woods.

We present that at the death of every tenant the Reeve is to seize a heriot, if it be heriotable it is the best lived goods which the tenant died possessed of wheresoever it is to be found, but if he died possessed of no lived goods then the best dead goods which he hath of his own at the time of his death, but not the goods of any other persons although it be found upon his copyhold tenement. There are several heriots named by our agreement in the several copies within the Manor.

We present that every copyholder that is to pay chisem wheat is not to be compelled to pay better wheat than is that year grown upon his copyhold tenement.

We present that no freeholder hath any right of common belonging to this Manor.

We present that time out of the memory of man at Martin's Day when the Reeve and the Hayward doth receive in the Lord's chisem wheat, the Lord of this Manor did allow eight shillings and the Dean of Wells five shillings towards the charges expended on the tenants which brought in their wheat.

We present that the Lord of this Manor is not to build or erect any house or houses in or upon our common or Hearth-

field or waste ground within the said common Hearthfield, neither to break up any ground in the said common for marl without the consent of the tenants of this Manor.

We present that the Lord of this Manor is to maintain a sufficient pound within this Manor for the impounding of cattle.

THE BOROUGH.

The first mention of Chard otherwise than as a Manor is in 1198, when Savaricus being bishop, one hundred shillings were given from Cerde by the hand of the parson there, for masses to be said for one year in the church at Wells, for the bishop, his predecessors, the benefactors of the church, and all the faithful defunct.⁴³ But the time from which Chard starts into life as a town dates from Bishop Joceline (Trotman) who began his episcopate in 1206. In 1234 Joceline divided the income of the church, and appointing the larger or rectorial tithes to a cathedral officer known as the Prepositus or Provost, he decreed that in the church of Cerde there should be a vicar whose income should arise from all the small tithes and fees, and the tithes of hay, except the tithes of hay from the bishop's own demesne and the tithes of the mills.

A house was also assigned him near the Court of the Provost, with the condition that no new aperture was to be made in it on that side.⁴⁴

Having done thus for the church Joceline then gave the first form to the borough, making a certain limit independent of him as Lord of the Manor. The document, the original being in Latin, reads: "To all to whom the present writing shall come, Joceline, by the grace of God Bishop of Bath, greeting in the Lord. Because we desire the improvement of our Manor of Cerde we will and grant that the town of Cerde within the metes underwritten, be a free borough

(43). Add. MSS. Brit. Mus., 30280, fol. 61; Registers 3, fol. 136.

(44). Add. MSS. 30280, fol. 61; Joceline Register, fol. 105.

for ever: and these are the metes of the same borough:— on the east side Schirested, on the south side the gate of our Court, on the west side the Staunesmith, on the north side la Hertbyri next to the cross near Kynemercerde. And we will and grant unto all persons willing to build within these metes an acre each for twelve pence each yearly. And that every one now possessing, or who shall possess hereafter, any burgage within the same metes, shall have free license to dwell there and to depart and also to return with his chattels and to mortgage and sell his houses to any, other than to Jews, and with full power to transfer the same unto the use of whomsoever they may please except unto religious houses or churches which they shall not be able to do without the special license of us or our successors. And whatsoever they shall make out of their burgages our rent shall always remain to us entire, to wit, from every burgage twelve pence each. Moreover we have granted that if any injurious dispute shall happen to arise within the bounds, they shall have full power of making concord between the parties, no judgement being required from us as to the custom thereupon, nor any reparation until the burgesses shall fail in doing justice, unless a mortal wound or lasting bodily injury shall have befallen or unless one of the burgesses shall make an appeal to our judgement, the royal justice or dignity being in all things preserved. We forbid also that any one presume to buy raw skins or hides in the same town, unless he be in the rank and authority of a burges of Cerde. Given at Werminster, by the hand of Master Walter de Maydenestan on the day of St. Maurus (Jan. 15), in the twenty-ninth year of our pontificate (1234).”

Although it is not so stated, this self government must have included the right to nominate a chief and assistants for him, in the place of the lord's steward. This chief would become in some districts the Bailiff or Provost, in Chard he became the Reve, the name specially in usage in the western parts of England, a word of Saxon derivation, and from which then

comes the Portreve, or Townreve, as distinguished from the Shire-reve. His duty would be to keep the peace and do various offices for the welfare of the town, to prevent trespass, and to see equity and right between the lord and his tenants.

These privileges were confirmed by Bishop William Button (1st), with some additions. His grant reads:—

“To all faithful Christians to whom the present writing shall come. William by the grace of God Bishop of Bath and Wells, greeting in the Lord. Because we desire the advancement of our Burgesses of Cerde, we will and grant for us and our successors that the aforesaid Burgesses have yearly for ever the Fairs of St. James entirely and without diminution within the metes of the borough of Cerde, and their Markets every Monday freely as they have been accustomed to have, saving to us and our successors the tolls and fines and other profits in the aforesaid Fairs and Markets for any trespass whatsoever committed. Also we will and grant that the aforesaid Burgesses may be able freely to bequeath their burgages in their wills to any person or persons whomsoever without impediment, except to Jews or to religious Houses, saving to us and our successors the rents and services due from the same. Moreover we have granted to the same Burgesses that none of them shall be bound to perform suit save at the two Hundred Courts yearly in the aforesaid borough, to wit, at the Hundred Court of St. Michael and the Hundred Court of Hokeday, saving the pleas commenced and to be determined in the same Hundred Courts from three weeks to three weeks, and for writs of the Lord the King that are pleaded touching the indictment of robbers, and also by lawful summons in matters affecting the peace and rights of the Lord the King and ourselves. All which as aforesaid for us and our successors we have specially granted unto the aforesaid Burgesses and their heirs or assigns, and by this present writing do confirm all their liberties which they have hitherto

used, for ever. In testimony whereof we have caused our seal to be affixed to the same. Given at Kyngesbury on Monday next after the Feast of St. Barnabas, in the fifth year of our pontificate (1253)."

In 1275 when enquiry was made throughout the county to learn by what title lands and other privileges were claimed, the jury found that the bishop held the town of Chard, but by what title they were ignorant.⁴⁵ The bishop was then called upon to appear at Somerton to show by what warrant he held the town and by what warrant he claimed waifs and strays and assize of bread and corn therein. He replied that he held by charters of King John and King Henry, but that Chard was not a town or borough.⁴⁶

The charter of Henry III, 1256, granting freewarren in the manor is already noticed; that of John granted that all men of Axbridge, Welynton, and Cherde, free tenants and born in the same, should be free of toll—*theolomo, picagio, panagio, et Kaiagio*—for all things.⁴⁷

Bishop Robert Burnell confirmed all these grants, and now not only privately as for himself but by *inspeximus* under a royal enrollment. The bishop's confirmation sets out that, having inspected the charter of the Lord William of happy memory our second predecessor and holding firm and valid the same, by our pontifical authority we have caused it to be strengthened by the affixing of our seal. Given at Crukern the 2nd day of the Nones of April in the year of our Lord 1280 and in the fifth of our consecration. This affixing of the seal was not the sole strengthening which now occurred, and the burgesses must have rejoiced when these hitherto private promises were confirmed by royal grant and a legal title given by the enrollment of the whole. The King's document begins:—

(45). *Hundred Rolls*, 4th Ed. I, p. 127.

(46). *Placitu Quo Waranto*, 6th Ed. I, p. 703, *Rolls* 47, 68.

(47). *Pat. Rolls*, 19th Ed. III, mem. 13.

“The King to all whom &c., Greeting. We have inspected the Charter of confirmation which the Venerable Father Robert, Bishop of Bath and Wells, hath made to the Burgesses of Cerde:—and then setting out the documents already quoted:—We the grants aforesaid holding firm and valid do grant and confirm to the aforesaid Burgesses and their heirs as the same Burgesses and their ancestors have hitherto used the same liberties. In testimony whereof, &c. Witness the King at Exeter, the 7th day of January (1285).”⁴⁸

After this enrollment Chard soon became a borough, sending its members to the Parliament.

Parliaments in those days were not continuous for years, as known to us; called perhaps for a special purpose, they lasted but a short time at the will of the King, and were then dissolved. The writs, too, seem to have been issued with much irregularity. The first record found for Chard is in 6th Edward II, for the Parliament summoned to meet on the 18th March, 1312-13, when the members returned were Wm. le Sopere and Peter Clericus. In 1313, 7th Edward II, John Long Faber and Stephen de Leghe took their places. In the next Parliament Chard was not represented, or possibly the return has been lost. In 1315, 8th Edward II, John Bouedich and Thos. Haul were the chosen ones; and then, although there were other Parliaments, it is not until 1321, 15th Edward II, that Chard appears again, when John de Worthe and Wm. le Sopere were returned. In 1322 the Parliament met at York on the 2nd May, when Wm. le Sopere and John Bouedych reappear. In 1323, 17th Edward II, the Parliament having met at Westminster on the 20th January, was prorogued to the 23rd February, when William le Sopere and John le Watersmyth came up for Chard. In the next Parliament there is no return for Chard, but in 1325, 19th Edward II, came Henry de Corton and Henry Faber. There are then two Parliaments without Chard, and then, in 1327, 2nd

Edward III, at York, occur John le Smyth and Richard le Dykare. The writs for this meeting requested that some discreet wool merchants should be elected to advise the King on matters relating to that trade. The next Parliament was held at Northampton, in 1328, 2nd Edward III, when Chard was represented for the last time by the same John le Smyth and Richd. le Dykare.⁴⁹ According to the then custom, members were paid for their attendance, and from Chard it is found that John le Smyth and Richard le Dykare were paid 2s. per day, or five pounds in all—a good sum then—for attending twenty-eight days.⁵⁰ The return of members was sometimes discontinued to save these expenses.⁵¹

Chard also became an assize town, not specially so, as now would be the case, but a resting place for the judges, who made no stay but were itinerant, journeying on almost daily. The first notice found occurs in 1266, 51st Henry III, when the courts were held at Cerde Episcopi, on Saturday, on the morrow of St. Katherine.⁵²

Chard is here called Episcopi—Bishop's Chard—the only occasion met with, thus distinguishing it from its neighbours.

Other assizes were now held from time to time, the actions recorded being almost all relating to land, and especially to get declarations of the interest owned by widows in dower. There was an action in 1322 of "novel disseisin," as it was called, against Margaret, widow of Nicholas Moelles of North Cadbury, and the document is interesting as it bears thirty North Cadbury names.⁵³

In 1324, again, at Easter, there were several such actions about lands in several parishes named, including some belonging to the Chapel of St. Eustache in Donneyete; common of pasture in Blackwell, and one by John Cole against Stephen

(49). *Returns of the Parliaments, &c.*

(50). Mr. Spicer, M.S.

(51). Prynne, *History of Burgesses*,

(52). *Coram Rege Rolls*, skin 3, skin 8, dors., No. 132.

(53). *Assize Rolls, Somerset*, 16th Ed. II, M. $\frac{5}{16}$ 2.

de la More, Knt., for lands and tenements in Backwell juxta Chelvy.⁵⁴

One other assize must be noticed, and this one will give a clear notion of the judges itinerant and the delightful exercise experienced by suitors. The chief trial, too, is a curious one. In 1377 the judges arrived at Bathoneston on Monday after the Feast of St. Bartholomew the Apostle: on Tuesday they were at Bath; on Wednesday at Wells, and on Thursday at Street juxta Glastonbury. It will be observed that they did not enter Glastonbury officially, but a stay seems to have been made hereabouts, as they next appear at Pontyngton on Wednesday in the Feast of the Decollation of St. John. The business here, as recorded, was simply the adjournment of the Court to Jevelchester for the Saturday; then came Mulborn Port on Monday, and on the 7th March, 51st Edward III, they arrived at Chard. From Chard they proceeded to Taunton, and so in due time returned to Westminster. The case which occupied them was a question of trespass brought by the Dean and Chapter of Wells against several persons named, some being called chaplains and others from their names being local gentlemen, for disturbing the peace and their free warren at North Curry, and that they *vi et armis* entered and carried away cattle to the value of £200, and also killed the hares, rabbits, pheasants, and partridges—*lepores, cuniclos, phasianos, et perdrices*—and took corn and hay to the value of £40, and did no good to the ditches and walls.⁵⁵

It would certainly appear that these parties had a very good time, and that—

A moonlight night was their delight,
In the season of the year.

Chard continued prosperous, especially so, as did all England, during the reign of Elizabeth, but whether any other charter than that already noticed was ever granted cannot be here

(54). *Assize Rolls, Somerset*, 18th Ed. II, M. $\frac{5}{16}$ 3.

(55). *Assize Rolls*, No. 24, 50th Ed. III, M. $\frac{5}{16}$ 9.

determined. The present corporate seal bears the date 1570, but notwithstanding much search for it no Elizabethan charter seems to have been enrolled. The chief officer, however, certainly became the Mayor, as may be gathered from documents now to be noticed. The first mention found is in 1609, by a letter sent by the then Mayor to certain London commissioners, relating to a proposed monopoly or company for trading to France. This letter is of sufficient interest to be noticed in full.

THE MAYOR OF CHARD TO THE COMMISSIONERS.

Upon receipte of your Worships lre to me directed dated the 13 Julie last I have accordingle acquainted all marchants of this town of Chard with the contentes thereof. Whereunto they awnswere that (as they thinke) they did not misunderstand the former letter sente by the right hon. the Lo. Treasurer for that (as they saie) the firste chardge uppon the troubles in Fraunce of this newe tax and imposition came by reason of false and defective cloth sente thither by the Londoners, and yet they (to their great chardge) have been enforced to contribute to their loss. And whereas nowe youe demand by your letter £5 of every marchant that shall be made free of this newe devised incorporated Companie by the Londoners wch (yf it shd proceed) will amounte to a greate sume throughe the whole land, they have againe delibatlle considered of the manifold mischiefes and greate inconvenyences wch may ensue to themselves and their posterities thereby, and thereuppon doe altogether mislike deny and refuse to joine with the Londoners in anie trade order or Corporation at all, but to remaine free (as they were borne and ever have lived in former times). The aged sorte having traded 50 or 60 yeares thinke it muche nowe to pay £5 a man at the period of their travells. The younger sorte and the reste say that their dailie chardge is so great for custome and other newe imposicons that they scarce gaine or win £5 at the years end uppon all their adventures, and many cominge newlie oute of their apprentishippe have scarce £5 stocke to beginne their trade and yet by this their credites doe mainteine their estates in good sorte. Besides manie poore decaied marchants thoughe not of abillitie to pay £5 yet desire to contynue their trade and doe seeke to lyve and mainteine their Credyt. They further awnswere that experience doth teach them that by the late Spanish Corporacon wch the Londoners also first soughte oute, these western p'tes were manie waies chardged and troubled and yet at laste never gained anie thing at all by it, but that it was a dailie burthen to them as long as it contynued. Touchinge the takenge awaie of the late newe imposicons, they saie they have had greate wronge in that theye have paid it as long as they have done uppon the Londoners losses and their peticons made to the Lords

for that they alledge that not long scence by duke Mercuries time in Brittain they received and susteyned greate losses to the utter undoing of divers of them and makenge their griefes knowen by waie of complaint at the CottnCELL table in hope to have some redresse and to be relieved here at home, could never obtaine that the Londoners nowe have done, so that these western marchaunts loste altogether and never had anie recompense at all. Many other causes they alleadge for themselves over long now to trouble you wo: wth all, onely this they conclude that as theire bodies, goods, and lives are all at his maieties pleasure and in his highnes power, soe they hope that his grace will not presse them to so greate and intollerable inconvenyence, but will rather so graciously favoure them, as that they may peaceably enjoy theire trade here for Brittain wthoute anie such contribution to theire fellow subiectes or payenge anie other fee then onelie theire Customs and Subsidies wch they acknowledge to be due to his matie. Further they alleadge that yf this extraordinarie chardge of £5 a man or anie other newe tax should be imposed uppon them and that this newe devised Corporacon should be established it will in small time growe so greate a hindrance and defecte in the Commonwealth, that shippinge and maryners will be cleane decaied, over and besides many poore clothiers makenge course cloths by reason of the free trade for Britanie have vente for their comodities to their (sometimes) pffit and comfort, who otherwise by this newe practise will be cleane barred from all trade, by reason that the Londoners being men of greate wealth by their agents in Fraunce and their helpers at home will be alwaies readie first to buy, and the best and first to sell, and the meaner sorte shall buy and sell when they have done and ever come to a late market to their utter undoing, for they say, yf the marchant have noe trade, the clothier hath noe vent, yf the clothier want utteraunce the whole country decaieth, for noe trade noe marchant, no marchant no clothier, noe clothier noe flourishinge Common Wealthe. All wch premisses, both marchants and clothiers of this our poore Towne, doe all confidently hope that his Royall Matie in his most princely providence and the honorable Lordes of his highnes moste honorable pryvie Councell in their greate and inestimable wisdomes will charitably consider and weighe and will graunte to them the libtie of theire former accustomed trade for Britanie freely, for they never or very seldome trade for Roane or anie other place thereabout, but onely Britanie, Rochell and Bourdeaux. And thus havinge as I hope satisfied your demand in this respect, doe nowe wth due remembrance of mye humble dutie do commend yo^r wo: to the most mercifull p^tection of the almightie and wishinge yo^r everlastinge healthe doe humbly take my leave.

Chard this xiiith of August 1609.

Yor most humble to be Commanded.⁵⁶

This document bears the Corporation seal, but unfortunately there is no signature, no mark, and so the name of the mayor must remain unknown, but the story gives us a pretty insight into the trade at this date. Other notices of the trading occur from time to time. In 1613, a warrant was issued under royal sign manual that the "customer" of Lyme should enter as Taunton "cottons" certain coarse "cottons" made at Taunton and Chard, and charge a duty of 16d., instead of the duty on baize.⁵⁷

There seems no special record further until the time of the Civil War, when Chard, as did Somerset generally, opposed the tyranny of the King. The earliest intimation came with the attempt to collect the tax called Ship-money, when Sir Thomas Wroth, the sheriff, attending the judges at Chard, reported that he "found much delay and unwillingness in the place" to pay the impost.⁵⁸ When all disputes culminated in open rebellion in 1642 and volunteer and militia troops were raised on both sides, Chard situated on the western road was constantly alarmed by the passing and re-passing of the troopers. No great fight however occurred in the immediate neighbourhood. It happened that in 1643, when all interest was concentrated in an expected encounter, which eventually came off on Lansdown, near Bath, in July, that the lower borders of the county and about Chard were unprotected. Advantage was taken of this by "young Bragg" of Sadbury, and "young Bancroft," to raise about eighty troopers and, so aided, they much disturbed, plundered, and oppressed the "well affected" to the Parliament. To check them a troop of horse and a company of dragoons were sent to "old master Bragg's" house, hoping to find the youngsters there, but they getting notice of the intended visit quickly fled. The soldiers however sacked the house and took "store of silke gownes and scarlet clothes with much pillage." The

(57). *State Papers, Dom., Jas.*, vol. 75.

(58). *State Papers, Dom.* v. 448, No. 78.

young gentlemen were soon heard of again at Chard, when a company of foot, joined now by a company from Lyme, went there after them and should have captured them all. As it was Capt. Pyne, getting to Chard early in the morning secured sixteen prisoners and nineteen horses. The others lay out of the town about a mile off towards Taunton, and as Pyne's men were leaving Chard to attack them they met a troop of their own comrades, new arrivals, coming in, who persuaded them rather to return and refresh themselves. This being agreed to was done, sentries being duly posted in a proper manner, but these intended guardians instead of watching neglected their duty and also fell to drinking. As soon as "young Bragg" heard of all this he took forty of his horsemen and, coming suddenly on the revellers, recovered seven of his men with their horses, killed the Lyme Captain and took one prisoner. The others of Capt. Pyne's men, retaining their prisoners, got safely away.

In 1644, the King in passing through Somerset was at Chard and stayed at Mr. Bancroft's house, his troop going to White-staunton. On leaving for Devon he had hardly got clear of the town when a party of horse from Lyme attacked and took eleven horses which, from their rich trappings, were supposed to be the King's saddle horses. On his return from Devon His Majesty again occupied Mr. Bancroft's house, and, with about ten thousand men, remained in or near Chard for a week, waiting promised supplies which never came. From "our Court at Chard," 30th September, he issued a proclamation declaring his intention to proceed to London and offer terms of peace. During the stay the troopers as usual lived entirely on free quarter. Some being billeted in the house of "an ancient honest poor man" (*i.e.*, a Parliament man), had boiled meat and broth supplied them, but to this they demurred as not being good enough. When Grimes, their Quartermaster saw it, he abused the host and bawled out, "You old rogue, do you give us your hog's wash, we will have roast meat." Yet with all

this abuse the utmost courtesy was demanded and accorded as to guests. All expected and promised support and supplies from Somerset having failed, as did a petition attempted in his favour, the King left Chard for Hinton St. George reporting that he was going to Bristol hoping to draw his opponents that way, but troopers and spies were sent forward to watch and these reported that he marched with but few impedimenta, so it was concluded that he did not mean fighting but was rather a "western oar," when he "looked west he rowed east." In December, 1644, on hearing that a Parliament force was advancing to relieve Taunton, the Royalists then besieging that town retired to Chard where their opponents came up to them, causing them at once to retreat, at first orderly enough, then disorderly, so that no engagement occurred. In 1645 again, the Parliament force coming from London to relieve the second siege of Taunton arrived at Chard 9th May, where they heard that that town must fall if not at once succoured. Their march was consequently continued notwithstanding their fatigue, with the well known result.

Exeter being another doomed garrison, on the 7th October, 1645, Sir Thomas Fairfax arrived at Chard with about nine thousand men, and, not waiting for General Cromwell, went on at once for Devon. Cromwell arrived on the 20th, and after resting his men for a few days he went on to join Fairfax.

After the fighting was over, the losing Royalists were compelled to pay a composition or fine for the restoration of their estates, with some exceptions, where even this privilege was not allowed; and others had to send in a return or schedule of their property, upon which a proportionate fine was fixed. Taking a short notice of the Chard names alphabetically, first comes:—

Bancroft, John, Merchant. Adjudged a delinquent 5th Oct., 1643, and paid £400; 10th Oct., compounded and paid another £400, when he was freed from sequestration, released from prison and returned to Chard. He was found in Exeter

at the surrender of that city, and was consequently again sequestered. He appealed against this, 19th June, 1650, but the judges "found not sufficient matter to discharge his sequestration.

He then compounded for	£	s
Two messuages in ruins from the late war,		
formerly valued at	12	0
A copyhold	24	0
Three closes held for three lives	6	0
Goods	15	0
Household stuff taken from him during his		
appeal	58	3
Owing to him, for which he had been in suit		
for many years	1,154	14
Other debts, doubtful	620	0
All which debts were compounded for in his		
first composition.		
Other debts due to him, "absolutely deperate"	4,161	0

Against these amounts, towards a reduction, he stated that he owed 1,886 10
 That the Parliament ships had taken from him 2,020 0
 Taken from him in the West by the Parliament force 1,350 0

And by the King's forces as much or more. —————

On the 24th Sept., 1650, the fine, at a 6th, was fixed at⁵⁹ 500 0

It must be remembered that these amounts represent perhaps fifteen times their sums in our money: as the subject is a difficult one, say ten times only; that is, one shilling then would buy as much or more than ten shillings now.

Cogan, Thos., Gent., made a first return in 1648, but, as was not unusual, understated the value:—

(59). *Royalist Compositions*, 2nd series, vol. xlv. fols. 829 to 852.

His Chard property, a "ruinated Inn," and a	£	s
meadow were valued at	...	...
Lifehold at	...	...
Devon property	...	...
	33	0

For which the fine was fixed at... 147 15

But the under value perhaps being discovered he sent in other particulars, 5th April, 1649, acknowledging his error, when the first fine was cancelled.

Rents in Tatworth, value per annum	...	1	16	2
The first shear of the grass of Orchards				
Meadow	...	...	4	0 0
Tenements in Chard, value before the				
"troubles"	...	...	10	0 0
"Parsons Lands" in Chard, for three lives,				
before the "troubles" worth	...	...	18	0 0
A property in Devon	...	...	36	0 0

The fine at a 6th was now ... 206 15 6

Towards getting a little favour, it was certified by John Pym, Edward Ceely, R. Trevillian, and He. Minterne, that he had taken the Covenant, 16th March, 1647.⁶⁰

The first shear of grass above noted was bought by Philibert Cogan, 31st Elizabeth, 1589, as *quartam part: primæ tonsure*—the fourth part of the first shear of six acres of meadow.⁶¹

Cogan, Wm., Clothier, was charged that he deserted his own dwelling, went to Exeter, and voluntarily contributed towards the maintenance of the King's forces.

His account says that he had a tenement in	£	s
Chard, held for three lives of the Dean and		
Chapter of Wells, worth before the "troubles"	7	10
That it was mortgaged for	...	...
And this not being paid the property was forfeited.	64	16

(60). *R. C. P.*, 2nd series, vol. xxxiii., fols. 571—584.

(61). *Pat. Rolls*, 31st Eliz., part 7.

A messuage mortgaged to John Harvey for					
£150...	...	...	...	...	10 0
A copyhold in Chafcombe				...	5 0
Personal estate, goods and lumber				...	40 0

Took the Covenant at "Zacharies," 20th June, 1646.

With a pass from Sir Thos. Fairfax he went from Exeter to Chard, and had the benefit of the articles agreed to at the surrender of that city.

He petitioned that he lived in Chard, which lay subject to two several garrisons of contrary parties, viz., Taunton for the King, and Lyme for the Parliament; by reason whereof he was sometimes plundered on the one side and sometimes on the other, until at last he scarce had a bed left to lie upon. And having some friends in Exeter willing to relieve him he repaired thither and was residing there when it surrendered, for which he was sequestered. Forasmuch as he was never in arms against the Parliament, and had endured great losses, his house being spoiled and made uninhabitable; that he had taken the Covenant and Negative Oath; had been obedient to all commands and did advance money on the propositions of the Parliament, he humbly desired a reasonable composition for his enforced delinquency.⁶²

Harvey, John, Merchant, was sequestered "for that he voluntarily contributed to the maintenance of the King's forces; that he had lived in the King's quarters, and that he made rates and assisted against the Parliament."

He petitioned that at the beginning of these "unnatural wars" he voluntarily contributed money and sent in a "musqueteer" and horse to assist the Parliament. That he never bore arms, nor contributed directly or indirectly against the Parliament but what was forced from him. That the Marquis of Hertford and Sir Ralph Hopton defeating the Parliament force in the West, "on coming to Chard sent for him and three more to make a rate for the King, which they refused to

(62). *R. C. P.*, 2nd series, vol. xii. fols. 203—213.

do, whereupon they were threatened to be plundered, sent to prison, and tyed head and heeles together." To avoid this they made the rate against their wills. He had repaired to Exeter and Dartmouth, where his trade and personal estate lay, where the Parliament ships had taken £770 worth of goods and part of a ship from him. He took the Covenant before the minister of "John Zacharies," 25th November, 1645, and the Negative Oath the same day, and begged, "to avoid all future trouble that he may have an easy composition." The property was in London and elsewhere, with a tenement in Chard, against which he set off £300, debts due to him, "all very uncertain, and may prove desperate."⁶³ His fine was fixed at £170.

Hertford, Marquis, had a quit-rent of five shillings in Chard.

Isaac, Saml., of Exeter, besides other property, in right of his wife owned a burgage and dwelling-house, held for three lives. His fine was £140.

Johnson, Peter, Gent., sent in his particulars, declaring that he was never sequestered nor impeached by the Parliament, nor engaged in the war; but "doubting that he might be lyable to sequestration for something said or done by him," he prayed to compound and receive the benefit thereof.

He held a tenement in Chard, "in the best	£	s
times" worth, per ann.	5	0
A rent for two lives, "both being very old," of	1	0
Owing to him from several persons	30	0
And he was indebted	191	0

His fine was £7 10s.

Pole, Courtenay, of Culleton, had the reversion of some cottages in Chard, on which he was fined £20.

Poulett, Lord, possessed the remains of a term of eight years of and in the Manor of Chard, and of certain lands and tenements belonging—held of the Bishop of Bath and Wells, at a yearly rent of £50. The advantage or profit was

only in granting copyhold as lives fell in. Lord Poulett's fine on his whole property would have been £10,432, but under the articles agreed to on the surrender of Exeter, it became reduced to £2,743.⁶⁴

Poulett, Lieut.-Col. Amias, a younger son of Lord Poulett, was seised of an estate in the parsonage of Chard, held from the Dean and Chapter of Wells at a rent of £40, and was worth over and above that £80. This return was apparently not exact as he found it advisable to send in another account, stating now that "upon a mere mistake," the rent payable to the Dean and Chapter was £24, and not £40. He was allowed to rectify, and was fined £120.

Poulett, Sir John, of Courtaweeke, Knt., was a Member of the Parliament, but having license to go into the country went to Oxford and sat in the "Assembly" there, but he declared that he was not present when the Parliament were voted Traitors. He had taken the Covenant, and prayed to compound on the particulars delivered. On the death of his father there would come to him in Chard the rectory and tithes, and the Manor and Borough of Chard held of the Church of Wells, the rent being yearly £67. The rectory of Chard, held for three lives, was worth yearly £80 for which £10 were paid, and there was a vicarage endowed worth £80. His fine altogether was £3,760 12s.⁶⁵

Pynce, Benj., Apothecary, and Thos. Pynce, his son and heir, were charged that they left their habitations in Chard and went to Exeter and lived there until the surrender, and received the benefit of the articles that their composition might not exceed two years' value of their estates.

To this they answered that for the "better exemption of his person" from those troubles and "sadd tymes" and for the exercise of his trade, he left Chard and repaired to Bridgewater, and afterwards for a like reason to Exeter. Out of charity he had used his best skill on divers soldiers of the

(64). *R. C. P.*, vol. xi. fol. 28.

(65). *R. C. P.*, vol. xi.

Parliament, without any payment. As he had lost all his goods and household stuff, having none left for necessary use, he prayed for clemency and declared he was not popish recusant nor popishly affected. In the particulars of the goods formerly at Bridgwater there are found, four nests of boxes, with small and great mortars; one hundred galley-pots with appurtenances, and one hundred glasses, with other materials belonging. The fine imposed was £46; the property in Chard being:—

A messuage, worth before the troubles, per annum	...	...	...	...	£	s	d
					6	13	4
A tenement held for lives	...	...	...	...	6	0	0
Other goods and chattels	...	...	...	...	80	0	0

Against which there were debts £30.⁶⁶

Smith, Parris, of Combe, Gent., had household stuff in Chard value £20, and a tenement in Combe “taken from him by Symon Crymes to whom it was mortgaged.” A fine, as usual, was imposed, but the document concludes with the short memorandum “paid nothing.”⁶⁷

Notwithstanding that the war had been so long over, and these fines and other consequences endured, the partisans of the King now and again made a stir and showed signs of an activity which had to be suppressed. An episode of this sort occurred in 1655. The rising commenced in Wiltshire, where Mr. Mountparsons (Mompesson) and others, having met near Salisbury, secured the Judges then there on circuit, burned their commissions, and proclaimed Charles II King.⁶⁸ They then marched for Babylon Hill, by Yeovil, and then to Yeovil, where they stayed until Tuesday afternoon, 3rd April, when they left for Honiton. As they passed the postmaster of Crewkerne gave the alarm to Ilminster, reporting them near a thousand strong, although they were not three hundred, or,


(66). *R. C. P.*, 2nd series, vol. viii. fol. 768.

(67). *R. C. P.*, 2nd series, vol. xii. fol. 829.

(68). *Perfect Diurnal*, No. 277, 1655.

as one account says "not above a hundred and sixty." A party in Taunton was supposed to be aiding them, guided by Col. Francis Windham and Sir Hugh Windham, and here a force was assembled to check this intention. As the risers reached Chard, Col. Ceely resolved to "alarum" them from Taunton, but a dispute arose about the command and Ceely was stopped by the outguard and compelled to return: the difference was eventually arranged but the Col. then refused to move. The party consequently advanced unmolested until they were met and defeated near Honiton, sixty being taken prisoners to Exeter gaol where they received a "fixation," and thus the country was saved "from an old thing called a King." We have cause, wrote one, to acknowledge the goodness of God in dissipating those who assembled for the ruin of his people.

General Desborow was sent off into Somerset, where he learned of the defeat of the Tories, as the Somerset men called them, and writing from Wincanton he notified that he had consequently divided his force, sending some to Crookehorne, some to South Petherton, some to Somerton, and a guard at Langport; also orders were issued for diligent enquiries as to what persons had been absent from their homes within the past ten days. At Wincanton two cavalier chaplains were caught, their horses and £32 in money taken from them, and they sent to gaol. On the 18th March, Gen. Desborow was at Chard, from whence he enclosed a letter he had received, in which the writer says that he had encountered a Scotchman, who had remarked that he hoped to see Mr. Cromwell—he refused to give him any title—in a lower condition before long. To which the writer replied that other countries were likely soon to know what Englishmen were, which "caused his spirit to be something abated."⁶⁹ Desborow next went on to Exeter, and then returned to Taunton, from whence he wrote to the Protector concerning the Somerset

(69). *S. P. Dom.*, 1655. 

"State Papers Domestic 1655,"

party, "I doe understand that many of them doe pretend to innocency, as the Lord Paulet, and one Mr. Tent;" the information against them was nothing new or "late acting,"⁷⁰ although he was confident they knew of the rebellion. There were now a hundred and thirty-six prisoners in all, few however being Somerset men. Twenty-five were in Taunton, two in Ilchester, and the others at Exeter. The next business was their trial, in which Mr. Roger Hill was at first ordered to assist Edmund Prideaux, appointed Attorney-General in January. The business commenced at Exeter, where Francis Bennett of Killington, Somerset, Gent., was acquitted, as was also Wm. Strode of Wincanton, Gent.; several others were condemned, but not so many as was expected. The assize at Chard was first appointed for the 23rd April, afterwards altered to the 25th; but when the Exeter trials were over it was seen that not much of the principal business would remain to be "acted" in Somerset.⁷¹ The Attorney-General wrote, 21st April:—"We are upon our last bill here. Our work, I believe, will not be great at Chard, but what care is taken to have good jurymen there I know not. Justice Windham is expected to meet us there."⁷²

On Wednesday, 25th April, the commission was opened at Chard,⁷³ and on the same day Prideaux wrote to Secretary Thurloe:—

SIR,

We are come unto Chard and upon enquire doubte wee shall not be able to proceede against many of the prisoners heare, because, although we can prove them to have beene in armes in other places, yet in this county we cannot; they only past through this county and did not any notable actes; and were taken only by the country people as straglers, and were not taken in armes. But as against the chiefe we shall proceed and hope to have cleare evidence against them; and for the rest, we shall not give them an acquittal, but if hereafter they shall be thought fitt to have a proceeding against them, they may be removed to Salisbury, where it will be fullie

(70). *Thurloe State Papers*, vol. iii. fol. 308.

(71). *S. P. Dom.*, 1655, vol. xcvi. fol. 10. *Mercurius Politicus*, No. 1254.

(72). *Thurloe S. P.*, vol. iii. fol. 398. (73). *Perfect Diurnal*, April 30, 1655.

X Killington in Exeter
" More with

proved. It's here reported, the prisoners will petition to be banished and that the petition is draweing, but of this I have not any certaintie, only twoe have this daie brought me a petition to that purpose. I desier you will deliver this letter to Mr. Serjeant Glyn, whoe will waite upon you for it. The Grand Jury is sworne but we are not soe confident of them as in the other countyes, therefore we begin only with Captain Hunt, against whom there is cleare evidence.

I am, your most humble servant,
Chard, April 25, 1655.⁷⁴ EDM. PRIDEAUX.

Captain Hunt and Major Clark of Wiltshire, the only prisoners of "eminence," were duly brought to trial. Major Clark was acquitted, an escape which one writer accepted with the quiet comment that "his estate was not great."⁷⁵ Capt. Thomas Hunt was condemned to be hanged, a sentence afterwards commuted to beheading, and to be imprisoned at Ilchester until his execution. Incarcerated there, it seemed that he was not placed in irons as he should have been, an oversight or indulgence which much facilitated his escape. On the 18th May, after about a week's imprisonment, there went off a hurried letter, signed John Carye and J. Barker, reporting that Mr. Hunt had escaped out of prison on Wednesday night, the 15th instant, by the assistance of his two sisters, Elizabeth and Margery, who came that evening to visit him. The letter says, "he went with Elizabeth in the woman's apparell of Margery through the watch; the other sister Margery lieth in his bedd that night and the escape of the prisoner not knowne till the next morninge, beinge Thursday, the day he was to be executed, the scaffold being up and all ready." A hue and cry was quickly abroad but Hunt was not found; the sisters were secured, and the pleasure of the authorities was asked concerning the gaoler. In the plans for this affair the ladies had been aided by a "Dr. of Physick," who on that day came to the prisoner and asked him how he felt. He replied that nothing "troubled him but his heart which was so big he could not stoop to death, fearing he should be a long time a dying." The doctor advised him to

(74). *Thurloe S. P.*, vol. iii. fol. 407. (75). *Faithful Scout*, 11th May, 1655.

“let blood” it being the only way to make his passage more easy, and accordingly Hunt bled himself, using his pen-knife, bleeding nearly “three quarts.” This must have made him pale and perhaps enabled him to pass better as a woman, for the same night his sisters came, having a horse and necessities within a mile of Chard (*i.e.*, Ilchester), and so got him safely away.⁷⁶

Seven others were condemned at Chard, five for treason and two for felony. Cromwell, who was always tender hearted and much disliked taking life on these occasions, now “abated” the usual drawing and quartering and ordered the executions to be by beheading or hanging only.⁷⁷

After this but little occurred for local notice, except an occasional dispute on the burning question of religion or religious differences. As the Presbyterian system, substituted for episcopacy by the solemn League and Covenant, amongst other unacceptable rules allowed no toleration for others, it never became thoroughly established, and soon had to bear with a strong nonconformity, dissenting brethren, the Independents. The preacher at Chard in 1651 was one Mr. Lye, who used his opportunities apparently to express political as well as religious opinions, thus bringing upon him the attentions of the Council of State. On the 18th Nov., the information against him was read at the Council, and a letter thereupon written to Col. Pyne to send for Lye and “tender the engagement” to him, and if he refused to take it, to “require him to depart out of Chard within ten days and not to come near it by ten miles, and not to preach within any market town in the county, without leave from the Parliament or Council.” Mr. Lye managed to satisfy Colonel Pyne and the Council, and so the order was cancelled and he was left at liberty to preach in Chard or any other place, as before the order.⁷⁸

(76). *Faithful Scout*, No. 229.

(77). *Perfect Diurnal*, No. 282.

(78). *S. P.*, 1651, vol. xvi.

As may be supposed, amidst so much excitement many new religious societies were formed. It was apparently in 1654 that those having similar views formed the first Baptist congregation in Chard, and the following document entire, dated 2nd Feb., 1654, *i.e.*, 1655, will perhaps make their position clear:—

To His Highness the Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England, Scotland, and Ireland: with his Ho^{able} Counsell, the Humble Petition of the Congregation of Baptized Beleevers in and about Chard.

Humbly Sheweth,

That whereas your Petitioners for Conscience sake upon scripture grounds are separated from the Publike worshipp of this Nation and that hitherto no Provision hath been made in Law for our Place of Meeting, but it is left wholly in your Highnes's brest together with yo^r Ho^{able} Counsell in yo^r Clemency to grant us the Priviledge of a Place to Meet to worship the Lord in (neither of us haveing a house fitt). May it therefore please yo^r Highnes, wth yo^r Ho^{able} Counsell to give us leave by yo^r order to Meet in the Sheire Hall in Chard to the Godly ends aforesayd (it being vacant and unoccupied). And you will hereby further engage yo^r Humble Petitioners to Pray for yo^r Salvation by Jesus Christ, and for understanding hearts to go in and out before this great people That Peace Through Righteousness may flourish in yo^r dayes. So prayeth

Yo^r Humble Petitioners in all Duty to be Commanded

John Sprake
Robert Channon
George Stronge
Arthur Clarke
Constantin Dommett
John Legge
John Deane
John Dyer
John Hill

John Vvall
Richard Slape
William Gudge
John Jeffry
James Scriven
Roger Bryante
George Buridge
John Clementt
Th. Donne
John Stuckey⁷⁹

This Petition was considered at the Council, present with the others Col. Sydenham, and it was ordered that a letter be written to the Magistrates of Chard to recommend to them that the Petitioners be allowed the use of the Hall at such times when it was not required for the use of the Commonwealth. The letter was as follows:

Gentn,

It hath been represented to his Highnes the Lord Protector and his Councill by the petition of a Congregation of several persons under baptisme in and about yo^r Towne of Chard, That they are destitute of a convenient place to meet in for performance of their religious worship. And therefore they have been humble suitors, That they may be at liberty to make use of the Shire Hall there (being as they alledge vacant and unused) for the purpose aforesaid, which the Councill taking into consideration and being willing to give convenient accomodation to persons truly fearing God and expressing the same by an humble walking with him in wayes of piety, and by a sober and inoffensive conversation towards men in reference to Civil Peace. They have therefore thought fit to signifie to you their approbation of the Pet^s request and doe hereby recommend it to you to permit them freely to make use of the said Hall for their religious exercises at such tymes when the public service of the County shall not otherwise dispose of it. Yo^r concurrence wherein will be very acceptable to the Councill.

To the Mayor and Burgesses of the Corporation of Chard.⁸⁰

So passed on the somewhat dull time of the Commonwealth, dull from the very regularity with which life was lived and every action done. During this time, in 1656, the Churchwardens ordered the royal arms to be removed from the church and defaced, for which work they paid one shilling and four pence. In 1657 five shillings were paid at the "proclayming ye Lord Protector, and in 1658 ten shillings were paid for proclaiming Richard, his son. In 1659 there comes a change and payment is recorded "for ringing on Thursday and Friday when the King's Majesty was proclaimed at London and when he was proclaimed here in the market." In 1660 the Churchwardens ordered the renewal of the royal arms in the church, and must have been surprised when they found that the man employed to remove them in 1656 had preserved them, for which he was rewarded with ten shillings. They were again removed some years later during some repairs, and so never reappeared. During this first year of his reign the King got a grant of £1,260,000, and the Mayor of Chard, as one of the mayors for the time being, was appointed a Commissioner for col-

(80). *S. P.*, Interregnum, v. 75 I, fol. 661.

lecting the borough contribution. Somerset paid altogether £2,722 4s. 6d.

But Chard, Puritan in religious feeling and Parliamentary in politics, was not especially thankful for the new royalty, and notwithstanding the apparent rejoicing the old opinions were still at work. In July, 1662, Mr. E. Phelipps was writing hurriedly to London that he had learned there was a great probability of an insurrection in or about Somersetshire and that there had been divers private meetings at one Trotter's, a phanatic parson about Thorncombe near Chard. Some of the Deputy Lieutenants had met at Keinton to consult, and, he adds, I fully believe there is some great design on foot, the chief actors being Pine, Bovett a Parliament colonel, and Whetham of the same. A little later he wrote that the soldiers called together were dismissed, but that some of those parties he had secured had acknowledged they were engaged in such a scheme and that they had invited others to join them.⁸¹

A knowledge that similar opinions were widely held and especially fostered in the towns, caused the King to endeavour with uniformity in religion, to force conformity in politics. By a statute for the well-governing of corporations, passed in the first year of his actual reign but the thirteenth as he called it dating from the death of his father in 1649, "to the end that such may be in the hands of persons well affected to his Majesty, it being well known that notwithstanding all his majesty's endeavours and unparalleled indulgences in pardoning all that is past, many evil spirits are still working;" it was ordered that all mayors, aldermen and others bearing any office in any corporation, should when called upon take the oaths of allegiance and supremacy and also as follows: "I, A. B., do declare and believe that it is not lawful upon any pretence whatsoever to take arms against the King, and that I do abhor that traitorous position of taking arms by his authority against his person or against those that are com-

(81). *S. P.*, 1662, v. 57, 72.

missioned by him." Each had also to subscribe that: "I, A. B., do declare that I hold that there lies no obligation upon me or any other person from the oath commonly called the Solemn League and Covenant, and that the same was in itself an unlawful oath and imposed upon the subjects of this realm against the known laws and liberties of the kingdom." All who refused to comply were to be removed from office, and the Commissioners had power to remove those who did comply if they "deemed it expedient for the public safety," and to appoint others in the place of any so removed. No one was to be elected afterwards to any office unless he had received the Sacrament in the church, and taken these oaths besides any other usual upon his admission.

Writing from Montacute, 1st Nov., 1662, Mr. E. Phelipps, Junr., may tell in his own words the fate of Chard.

Wee went with our troop of horse on tuesday last from our quarters at Yeovill to the town of Chard, where the Commissioners for regulating Corporations mett, and divers others gentlemen and Deputy Lieutenants. After dinner wee went to the town hall and summoned the Maior and 12 aldermen and the other town officers before us, and after our commission was read wee tended the oaths and subscription to the Maior who took, but 10 of the aldermen refused and the other 2 were not present but left word they would refuse to, upon which and for some affronts these non-conformists gave to us wee bound them all to the good behaviour. Mr. Maior going, himselfe left a bond, subscribed a desire to the King to call in the Charter, there being not honest men enough in the towne to carry on the government, (and by the way had wee gon about to fill up the number Mr. Maior honestly was not so cleare to us as to have continued him.⁸²

Honest men here of course meant royalists or "Tories."

Thus ended the first actual charter, whose origin cannot be traced.

An idea of the unrest of this time may be gained from the fact that John Wallington of Chard was obliged to have a license allowing him to travel to London on his business.⁸³

The political feeling being perhaps supposed somewhat abated and differences overlooked, another Charter was granted

(82). *S. P.*, 1662, v. 62, 4.

(83). *S. P.*, 1664, v. 96, 91.

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in 1683. It is a very long one, translated in full in Pulman's *Book of the Axe*, and recites that the inhabitants, giving the King to understand that the previous Charter had been "forfeited" by reason of divers misdemeanours and offences in violation of an Act of the 13th of his reign and that they supplicated to be restored and made a body corporate, he granted their request. It concedes three fairs; the first on St. James's day, the second on the 2nd Nov., and the third on the 3rd May, instead of that held on the 1st May. The market was to be on Tuesday instead of on Monday for heavy goods and cattle, with other markets on Thursday and Saturday weekly for provisions, &c. There is also the right to hold a court of Pie-powder during the fairs.⁸⁴

This charter was evidently promoted by one political party, the "Tories," who would be represented by Lord Poulet, in opposition to the others and the Nonconformists and the differences thereon led to a curious state of affairs, as the one party, the Nonconformists in possession, adhered to their old system under a Portreve and declined to be superseded, whilst the others set up the new Charter, and so the two rival Corporations were actually existing at the same time. Soon after granting this Charter, Charles died; Chard did not congratulate the new King on his accession.

The next incident is the insurrection attempted under the Duke of Monmouth. The Duke, as is well known, made a visit to Somerset in 1680, and on that occasion arrived at Chard on the 27th August, accompanied by five hundred horsemen. Within the town, says the little tract recording the event, he was met by a crowd of men, women and children, not a mute amongst them, but all deaf with their own cries and acclamations; scarce was there one who drank not his health with vollies of God bless the King and God bless the Protestant Duke his son. A collation was presented to him "of great variety and excellence, the second course being the

(84). *Pat. Rolls*, 35th Chas. II, part 4, No. 12.

hearts and tongues" of the numerous people, and in the evening he was received and lodged by Esq. Prideaux. Coming on his next and fatal visit to Somerset he landed at Lyme early in June, 1685, with about a hundred and fifty followers, this event being quickly notified by express from the mayor. Troops were at once sent off under Lord Churchill who arrived at Chard on the 19th. Hearing of a party near, a lieutenant with twenty men and a quartermaster went out in search of them and coming up with about their own number (only twenty) two miles from Taunton, they charged in and killed twelve on the spot and wounded most of the remainder; then perceiving another party advancing they thought fit to retire, with the loss of the lieutenant, shot in the head mortally, and three others wounded. The story of Monmouth's rebellion and that of the Jefferey executions which followed it, have been told frequently and need not be repeated. In 1686, 10th March, came out a proclamation of a general pardon, among the exceptions being Lawrence French of Chard. Also Commissioners were appointed to deal with forfeited estates and sell them to the best "chapmen:" they sat on Thursday, 21st July, 1687, at the George Inn, Wells; on the 11th August, at the Castle Tavern, Taunton; on the 18th August, at the Cornish "Chaugh," Chard; and on the 23rd August, at the Lyon, Somerton.⁸⁵

But King James, not heeding this attempt of Monmouth, proceeded to govern in his own way by proclamation, without the sanction of Parliament, thus creating widespread discontent, and eventually he completed his isolation by avowing himself a papist. To relieve his co-religionists, who, with other non-conformists, suffered under heavy disabilities, he issued a Declaration of Liberty of Conscience; his idea being that the Protestant Nonconformists would readily accept it, and so by this means the Papists would also be relieved: but it happened that besides declining to be relieved in such company

(85). *London Gazette*, 11—14 July, 1687.

they also refused to accept a relief so clearly illegal. Every effort was made to get the country districts to send up addresses of thanks for this extraordinary favour—this “transcendant goodness in relieving the deplorable state of the Dissenting interest.” Very few were induced to do so. It was long before anything came from Chard—so long, that it seemed as if none would come; and then it will be seen it combined, with the hope that a Parliament may enact the Declaration into a law; a sly knock at the Mayor, who, with all Churchmen would be opposed to the whole scheme, and whose expressions would have savoured probably of anything but thanks.

To the King's Most Excellent Majesty.

We Your Majesties most Loyal and most Dutiful Subjects, the Portreeve, Burgesses, Principal Freeholders and others the Inhabitants of Your Majesties Borough of Chard in the County of Somerset, being weary with waiting to see an Address from the Corporation of Mayor and Justice, &c., in the said Borough, presume now to present Your Majesty with this our following humble Address the 22nd of October, 1687.

GREAT SIR,

The good Effects that your Majesties most Gracious Declaration hath had both on the Persons and Estates of your Majesties Subjects are so Visible, that none can or dare deny the good Influence thereof, but such as are biassed by a Principle of Disloyalty towards their Prince, and Malice towards their Fellow Subjects; and therefore, for our parts, (though we know your Majesty to be far above our acknowledgements, or Promises, yet) reflecting upon the Egypt your Majesties Tender-Conscienced Subjects were in, the cruel Task-Masters they served under, and possessing the Canaan you have been pleased to conduct them to, we cannot suffer the Heathen to upbraid us, from whom we have it as a Maxim, *Si ingratum dixeris, omnia dixeris*. But we presume to lay our selves down at your Majesties Feet, rendering our most unfeigned Thanks for your Majesties most Gracious Declaration of Liberty of Conscience, promising all faithful Loyalty, and our utmost Endeavours in the several Stations and Capacities in which God hath set us under our Sovereign, that there shall be such Representatives Elected, (whenever it shall be your Royal Pleasure to call a Parliament,) as shall answer your Expectation, Remove both the Penal Laws and Test, and Enact your Kingly Declaration into a perpetual Law; To which we heartily add

God save the King, and say, Amen.

James soon discovered that all this was well understood and that one illegal act begat the necessity for others. Announcing his intention of maintaining the Declaration, he "reviewed" the list of deputy lieutenants and justices in the several counties that those only should be continued who were ready to assist him; and then to reduce the boroughs pretending (11th Oct.) to have had complaints of abuses in corporations he authorised the Lord Lieutenants "to inform themselves thereon and report." But not waiting for any reports, on the 17th October, 1688, he announced by Proclamation, that whereas in the charters of several cities power was reserved to him to remove or displace the mayors and other members, all those who claimed office by any charter granted from the late King or since 1679, should be removed and displaced in pursuance of these powers so reserved. This had it been carried out would have affected Chard, but the King found he had attempted too much. Before any surrenders had been enrolled, this Proclamation was followed by another restoring to all corporations their ancient liberties and declaring all surrenders cancelled. All too late; he was doomed; great was the feeling of relief when the Prince of Orange landed at Brixham on 5th November. Forthwith came out a Proclamation declaring against such an unchristian invasion, and especially since the ancient rights had been "actually" restored to all boroughs and corporations, so that a Parliament could be freely chosen. All too late. The Prince as he advanced omitted the Church prayer for the King, substituting one by Burnet for himself, so that says the Gazette noticing this, the King was now left out both by churchmen and dissenters. In December he fled, and in due time William reigned in his stead.

To the old differences in Chard between Portreve and Mayor, was now added this one of the Charter, the old Portreve party asserting that it was cancelled and that they were therefore the only real thing, whilst the others declared, and very truly, that it had never been either surrendered or can-

celled and that it was in full force as ever. But their opponents held out, notwithstanding that Lord Poulet got the Charter exemplified, and in 1704, according to Collinson, they were attacking the Tuesday market as against their old original Monday. The local documents relating to this time do not exist, an occasional one met with however will be found signed as by the Mayor, appointed perhaps by the influence of Lord Poulet; but the other party proved the stronger and took the lead, so that when the two eventually merged, not long probably after this date, and the charter was accepted by both, the Portreve style was retained, and was in use at the time of the Municipal Corporations return of 1835. At some time since then the Portreve disappeared and now Chard boasts a chief who is very properly called the Mayor.
