

AFTER THE END: GLASTONBURY ABBEY, 1539–1825

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INTRODUCTION

Interest in the post-Dissolution history of monasteries has been growing steadily in recent years.¹ This paper places one of the most important abbeys in its social, economic and religious context. Knowledge of Glastonbury Abbey's archaeology has been much boosted recently by the University of Reading project to re-interpret the work of the Abbey's 20th-century archaeologists, the thorough examination of building fabric by Jerry Sampson and the Downland Partnership, and the detailed investigations of St Patrick's Chapel (2008-9) and the Abbot's Kitchen (2013) by Stewart Brown.² The post-Dissolution history of the Abbey, however, is little understood. Attention has understandably focussed on the monument during its heyday. Yet not only is there a wealth of little-known historical evidence from later periods which can be used to supplement the archaeological record, but the abbey itself has had a very interesting afterlife as an important and highly contested cultural icon.

1. THE OWNERS

Glastonbury remained in the king's hands from the Dissolution until Henry VIII's death in January 1547. Three weeks after the accession of the nine-year-old Edward VI, the Lord Protector, Edward Seymour, earl of Hertford, made himself duke of Somerset, and began to build a territorial power-base in Somerset itself. He acquired Glastonbury later that year, and in 1548 William Barlow, his appointee as Bishop of Bath and Wells, transferred many other properties to him. In October 1549 Somerset was toppled and sent to the Tower, but was released in February 1550. His estates were restored in June, but he was effectively excluded from power, which may have led him to concentrate on developing his Somerset fiefdom. He embarked on an interesting experiment within Glastonbury Abbey itself, of which more anon, but he had little time to enjoy his estates. In October 1551 he was

once more sent to the Tower, and beheaded in January 1552; Glastonbury thereupon returned to the Crown.³ In June 1559, the revenues and rents were granted to Devonshire loyalist Sir Peter Carew by the new queen Elizabeth for twelve years, a prudently short lease,⁴ and in May 1572, to Thomas Ratcliffe, third earl of Sussex.⁵ The grant was made in recognition of the earl's service "as our Lieutenant General of the North parts of our Kingdom of England in the overthrow of our profligate subjects and the destruction of our rebels", and at the same time he was granted the manor of Marshfield, Glos (sold in 1574) and the Abbey site and manor of Cleeve, near Minehead.⁶ On one occasion at least Cleeve and Glastonbury were bracketed together for accounting purposes, which suggests that they shared a steward.⁷

Sussex was heavily in debt, and in September 1582 the Queen granted him the estate in fee simple, apparently for the sole purpose of helping him to pay his creditors. On 26 October he drew up a document for his executors specifying that the income from Glastonbury was to be set aside for this purpose. He died the following June, and by July 1585 the fourth earl, his heir and brother, had managed to make 'speedy payment' of £4000 to the Crown, and was consequently allowed to retain the freehold "for the advancement of his howse and possessions".⁸ His debt burden remained crippling, however, and in 1587 he wrote a pitiful letter to the Queen claiming that his annual debt repayments to the Exchequer alone exceeded his modest income, pleading for better terms. His son Robert, fifth earl, who succeeded in 1593, was forced to sell off the bulk of the family estates.⁹ The turn of Glastonbury came in 1596, when it was sold to William Stone, a London clothier, for the sum of £5000.¹⁰ Stone, a future Master of the Clothworkers' Company and knighted by James I, mercer to both Elizabeth and Anne of Denmark, was a "noted creditor of the nobility",¹¹ and it is possible that Glastonbury came to him as security on a loan that could not be repaid. Stone sold it on three years later, on 28 June 1599, to William Cavendish.¹² According

to this agreement the price was again £5000, but Cavendish's own household accounts put the figure at £4000. However, as Philip Riden points out, the legal expenses, recorded in meticulous detail, added almost £1,000 to the cost of buying the estate,¹³ so perhaps the actual price paid was adjusted accordingly. It is still surprising to find Stone so willing to sell on a property so recently purchased for no apparent profit.

Cavendish was the second son of the famous 'Bess of Hardwick' and her first husband, Sir William Cavendish. Estranged from her eldest son, Elizabeth, who had a distinct knack for property, gave a considerable amount of land to William and his brother Charles, later duke of Newcastle, and both brothers bought a lot more themselves during the 1590s. William's acquisitions were focussed largely, though not exclusively, on Derbyshire, and at first sight the purchase of Glastonbury seems anomalous. However, the estate was very close to a swathe of Somerset manors that had belonged to his uncle, Bess's second husband William St Loe. This 'Western Estate' was granted to Charles, not William, by their mother in 1586, but the decision was being contested in the courts as late as 1612; and it seems likely that William's purchase was made in anticipation of eventually receiving the St Loe 'Western Lands' inheritance.¹⁴

Once the purchase was completed, references to Glastonbury in Cavendish's household accounts become scanty and enigmatic: thus, under February 1612, a payment of £10 13s 4d "rated upon my lord's land at Glastonbury for the late inundation", which is probably a reference to repairs to the sea wall levied following a possible tsunami of 1607 in the Bristol Channel, when the flood waters reached St Benedict's church. In December 1618 Silvester Smith, an estate official or agent, was paid £6 for a round trip from Hardwick to Glastonbury and London, and it is possible that one purpose of this visit was to appoint a bailiff, since John Gouch or Gutch is first recorded as such in November 1619, when "his whole years' fee" amounted to 10s.¹⁵

A series of rentals survives for the years 1601–1613,¹⁶ but thereafter the impression is one of declining interest and neglect, with the exception of one decade. William Cavendish, who became first earl of Devonshire, died in 1626; his son, the second earl, died just two years later, leaving the estate saddled with massive debts. The third earl was then just ten years old; his mother, the countess dowager Christiana, won praise from all quarters, including Charles I, for her thorough stewardship

of her son's estate, and it is probably no coincidence that her son's accession coincided with a new series of annual rentals that once more included this far-flung corner of the Cavendish domain.¹⁷ The rentals follow the sequence established in William Senior's survey of the Glastonbury estate. Senior, a pioneering cartographer and estate surveyor, began surveying the vast Devonshire domains in 1609, but Fowkes and Potter are probably right to suggest that the Glastonbury survey was made in 1628 or very shortly before it. The title of the survey, in which Glastonbury is described as "parcell of the inheritance of the right Honorable William Earl of Devonshire", suggests that it may even have been timed to aid the countess in her work to redeem the family fortunes. Senior produced a detailed and colourful estate plan which includes the first known illustrations of Tor, Abbey and possibly the Holy Thorn: arguably the Cavendish family's most enduring legacy to Glastonbury (fig. 1).¹⁸

The third earl came into his majority in October 1638 and the rentals peter out soon afterwards: the last that has so far come to light for Glastonbury is dated 1641.¹⁹ Forty years later, with his own end in

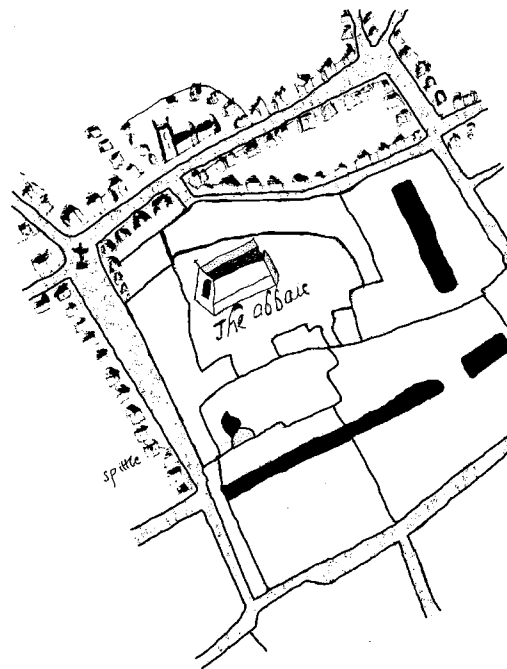


Fig. 1 Glastonbury Abbey precinct, redrawn from William Senior's map of c1628. Features coloured in blue are here shown in black

sight and perhaps because he was concerned that his son was taking after his father (he was alleged to be 'the most dissolute man in London'), the earl earmarked the income from the Glastonbury estate for the use of his grandchildren during their lives, but only so long as it was let out on leases for lives. The grandson, who became the second duke of Devonshire in 1707, found this to be burdensome, and his lawyers accordingly drew up a Bill for Parliament to break the 1678 settlement on the grounds not just that the lands at Glastonbury "do lye far distant from any other part of the said now Duke of Devonshire's Estate", but also because it yielded "such small yearly Income".²⁰

This was the nub of the problem. Until 1799, the Abbey sat at the heart of a somewhat motley estate called the Abbey Demesne. The 2250 acres at which Peter Lery estimates the demesne at the Dissolution was reduced by the loss of the parks at Sharpham (1547) and Norwood (1563) and Pilton (1580), but seems to have remained substantially unchanged thereafter until the 19th century. Estimates of the total acreage varied considerably, but it was somewhere around 900 statute acres, scattered across the parishes of Glastonbury and Meare. As well as the site of the Abbey itself, with its 40-acre precinct, the demesne included much of the land immediately south and west of the Abbey precinct (Wirral Park and Vynyards or Winyates, Actis, much of the South Field), and lands at Backwear, Waterlease, New Close, Bridehill, Broad Brindham, Spotts, Studlease, New Dairy (or Wick), Torfield and East Fields, Hay Crofts and Little Eastfield.²¹

From 1582 if not before, most of the demesne was let out on beneficial leases.²² In return for a combination of generous entry 'fines' and very low annual ('ancient' or 'reserved') rents, leaseholders acquired thorough-going rights and responsibilities in their property for a specified number of up to three named lives (usually close relatives of the lessee). When a life was 'used up', more lives could be added for an appropriate payment. Under this system, tenants "enjoyed what was in effect hereditary tenure, and they therefore had as good a reason as the latter for wanting to maintain their premises in good order by undertaking the necessary repairs." Life-leases required minimal involvement on the part of the landlord, which made them very attractive to remote landowners.²³ Equally, it was hard to break the leasing cycle to impose rent increases; there was little incentive to landlords to invest, and remote and marginal estates such as Glastonbury were left to stagnate.

Although the demesne was in 1613 already said to be "worth above £600 per annum", its value was assessed at £50 a year when William Cavendish acquired it.²⁴ This was close to the total rental of £52 13s 5d recorded for 1600-1601, £53 8s 4d (1632), £52 8 s 0d (1639) and £56 19s 4 (1640).²⁵ Seventy years later, the "ancient Rents" were pretty much unchanged at £53 6s 0d.²⁶ At a time of rapid agricultural improvement, when landlords were being advised to instruct their tenants "in all the thriving Arts of making the best of their Farms" and so woo them away from their "Easie Old Rent",²⁷ the second duke's advisers calculated that the Glastonbury estate was being let for less than 10% of the "improved Value". Several copies of the duke's Bill survive at Chatsworth but it was never presented to Parliament, probably because he acquired a zealous tenant for the Abbey site itself, and almost half the estate was re-let on life-leases in this duke's life-time.²⁸ But his son, when he became third duke in June 1729, lost no time in putting the estate up for sale. A survey survives from Christmas of that year, amongst the papers of the duke of Somerset, who was then actively looking for new property. (The lineal descendant of the Protector, whose family titles and much of whose lands were restored in 1582, Somerset owned the adjacent manor of Meare and in 1736 even shared the services of the Glastonbury bailiff, John Applin).²⁹

Humphrey Smith, the Cavendish agent, was even more optimistic than the second duke's advisers had been. He calculated that the reserved rents were worth only 5%, not 10%, of the improved value, which he put at £1169 9s 6.5d. With neither heriot to pay nor tithe, Glastonbury tenants were unusually fortunate. Certainly, Smith found not only that existing lessees would be keen to renew, but that they would also be willing to pay more in entry fines because "money is grown more plentiful, & the Interest abated from 8pCent to 4pCent". The estate was duly valued at £13,589 9s. The duke of Somerset's agent, perhaps predictably, felt that these figures were too high. A third of the estate was susceptible to flooding, or 'drowning' as his agent called it, and after several wet years there was "Great Discouragement. Many Tenants Broke. Others not able to half stock their Lands. This part of Country but in a Poor Way, & Great Scarcity of good and substantial Tenants at a Rack Rent, and then many Deductions". Nonetheless his enquiries suggested that the estate could be worth 20s an acre, and Somerset duly offered a sum of £11,000

for the whole estate. This was refused; in November 1731 the price was dropped to £12,321 10s,³⁰ but nothing came of it, and it was another year before the demesne finally found a buyer: Thomas Bladen, who paid £12,700 for the estate on 26 March 1733.³¹ The story told in Glastonbury was that the Duke had lost it “at a Cast or two of the dye in as little time as a man could smook a pipe of Tobacco” and this may have been true: two chitties survive in the Chatsworth archives, IOUs to Bladen for sizeable sums of money just before the sale (1728: 3000 guineas) and after it (1735: £2950 10s), which may well have been gambling debts.³²

Bladen, son of a wealthy American colonist, was educated in England but retained his connection with Maryland and in 1737 he married a close relative of George Calvert, Lord Baltimore, the colony’s proprietary owner. Through his Calvert connection he was appointed Governor of Maryland in 1742 and stayed there for five somewhat inglorious years dominated by controversy surrounding the building of a vastly-over-budget Governor’s House nicknamed ‘Bladen’s Folly’. “Tactless and quarrelsome”, he was dismissed in 1747 and returned to England, where he lived firstly in London and then in Leyton, where he bred racehorses until his death in 1780. The estate was inherited by his two daughters: Barbara, wife of General Henry St John, and Harriet, wife of the Earl of Essex; the latter’s death in March 1799, after a lingering illness, probably triggered the sale of the estate a few weeks later.³³

Bladen’s interest in acquiring Glastonbury Abbey might just have been prompted by the Calvert connection, since Baltimore’s ancestor had been granted the short-lived Province of Avalon in Newfoundland, “a place so named by him, in imitation of old *Avalon* in *Somersetshire*, wherein *Glassenbury* stands”.³⁴ Bladen was certainly proud of his purchase; his tombstone at Leyton describes him as “of Glastonbury Abbey, (late governor of Maryland)”.³⁵ But he is also remembered in Maryland as a hard-headed land speculator, acquiring and selling over 20,000 acres during his lifetime³⁶, and his record at Glastonbury shows that he was a thorough-going moderniser. When the duke’s hereditary bailiff died in 1739, there was a lot of competition in Glastonbury for the job. William Blake “bid fairest & obtained it” for a salary of £6 a year;³⁷ he certainly had to earn his money, for the St John’s parish rate-books reveal that Bladen’s agents were systematically taking the demesne in hand. Already by 1736, when the rate-book sequence

begins, Bladen was rated directly for 137 acres in 13 plots; these figures increase steadily year on year until 1772 when the sequence stops.³⁸ A random rate-book survives for 1789, in which year Bladen’s heirs were being rated on a total of 671.25 acres in 30 plots, distributed amongst 11 tenants.³⁹ Ten years later, only one life leaseholder remained, John Creighton, paying a reserved rent of 6s for eleven acres of marsh at Back Wear. Creighton was aged 70, potential purchasers were reassured; otherwise, apart from two small lets of recent date, ‘Every Part of the Estate will be out of Lease at Christmas’.⁴⁰

In 1729, Humphrey Smith put the improved value of the estate at £1169 9s 6d. The 1799 rent-roll amounted to £1788: a rise of 65%. The 1799 sale price itself, however, was £40,500 – over three times its 1729 value, yet even this was considered to be a bargain. “It is supposed to be worth nearly double”, the *Bath Chronicle* observed.⁴¹ The buyer, George Cox, who owned silk mills at Evercreech, bought the estate by private purchase before the auction.⁴² He was proud enough of his purchase to commission the plan now in the Bristol Record Office, with his name prominently placed and three illustrations of the ruins by way of ornament; but by October he had sold it on to a Bristol property developer, Richard Hart Davis, for an extra £10,000.⁴³ It seems that he regretted doing so, for between 1806 and 1808 he bought the estate back from Hart-Davis for £75,000, and sold it off piecemeal. The Abbey kitchen went to James Rocke, his agent and business partner, together with a one and a half acre plot: for this, and thirteen acres across the road in Wirral Park, Rocke paid £1452 10 0.⁴⁴ The rest of the Abbey site he sold to the tenant, John Down, in October 1808, who raised a £4000 mortgage in order to buy it. These dramatic price increases reflect not just the soaring value of farmland during the Napoleonic wars, but also the development potential of this town-centre site. In 1812 Down sold the plot of land on which the Town Hall was built to Glastonbury Corporation, and he himself built six houses opposite Street Road.⁴⁵

2. THE OCCUPANTS

Henry VIII kept the site of Glastonbury in hand, unlike many dissolved religious foundations: according to Maurice Howard, getting on for half were put to new uses.⁴⁶ This may have been because Glastonbury possessed a substantial Abbot’s House, a three-storeyed building with gabled ends; “as near

as I can remember”, wrote Charles Eyston who saw it just before it was demolished, the house “had ten large stone windows on each floor in the front. To come into this apartment, you mounted half a dozen or more large handsome stone steps, which let you into several stately rooms, which for the most part were all wainscoted with oak, the ceilings as well as the sides of the rooms”.⁴⁷ The royal Commissioners, writing in 1539, described it as “a house mete for the King’s Majesty, and no man else”.⁴⁸ The Abbot’s House at Reading was “reservyd & kept for his maiesties accesse”⁴⁹ and it is possible that Henry had similar plans for Glastonbury.

When Protector Somerset took possession, he granted a house called ‘le Galley’, a barn, 28 acres outside the precinct and ten acres within to Peter Wolfe, from Brabant.⁵⁰ Wolfe had with him seven other ‘Strangers ... beyng more in dett than they be worth’, as the 1549 Subsidy Roll sourly noted.⁵¹ This small community was soon augmented by a larger influx of French-speaking weavers, who were to be given Wirral Park for their sustenance as well as garden grounds and the use of buildings within the Abbey precinct. The duke appointed Henry Cornish, a trusted follower, who had just returned from Jersey where he had served as Governor under Somerset’s direct authority, “to oversee them, and further their trade” in the words of Valérand Poullain, the Superintendent. This suited neither Cornish nor Sir Thomas Speke, who had been granted stewardship of the land by Henry VIII in 1540 and at first refused to surrender it, saying that “that he wold wyshe my Lords officers wold pluck from other as well as from hym”. Cornish himself, who was heavily out of pocket after his service in Jersey, saw his grant as a personal estate, and did his best to undermine the project, especially once the duke had been imprisoned for the second time in October 1551. Poullain thereupon lobbied a sympathetic Council of State, who set up a commission of influential local people to look after their interests, arrange for homes to be built and to coerce Cornish into treating them more fairly. But the King himself died in 1553 and with the accession of Mary, Poullain’s flock had to leave the country.⁵²

Mary, keen to restore the monasteries, succeeded in refounding Westminster; and four of its monks, formerly monks of Glastonbury, were encouraged to believe that the restoration of Glastonbury was in hand. In November 1556 they signed a plea to the Queen from which it appears that work might even have begun, but “all now stands at a stay.” A

legacy towards the Abbey’s “edefyenge” was made the following July, but otherwise no more is heard of this project.⁵³ This is probably because her reign came to an end soon afterwards, but it is curious that Mary herself confirmed leases that would have seriously impeded any short-term resurrection of the abbey. Peter Wolfe’s lease was confirmed for 21 years in 1554,⁵⁴ even though he had served as Poullain’s steward, negotiating with Cornish and Speke over the allocation of land for the settlement; and when things went badly wrong with Cornish he had been “dispatched” by Poullain “to relate the evil deeds of this man”. Wolfe was clearly a Protestant, described by Poullain as “a good man, and a great sufferer”;⁵⁵ it is interesting that he preferred to remain and serve a hostile Catholic monarch rather than return to Europe with Poullain – and equally, that Mary herself was willing to confirm a grant to a Protestant ‘stranger’. Even more surprising is Mary’s grant of “the Keepership of the capital house of Glastonbury and the other buildings of the abbey” to one William Abbot, esquire, in return for “good trewe dylygent longe and dayly service”. The grant fell through: the redoubtable Henry Cornish took his claim to the high court in Chancery and had his own prior grant confirmed in his possession ‘for term of three score years’⁵⁶ but the fact that Mary was willing to countenance a new grant of what had been the country’s second largest abbey into secular hands is unexpected and difficult to explain.

Cornish died before 1559, when Sir Peter Carew was granted the “revenues and rents” of the Abbey by Elizabeth, but his wife Margaret was apparently still in residence.⁵⁷ It is not clear when she died, and there were still members of the Cornish family in Glastonbury several decades later,⁵⁸ but according to the Chatsworth rentals the lessee of the Abbey in 1600 was one Robert Wardall. He was paying 56s 8d a year for the “Scyte and pigeon-house”.⁵⁹ This was considerably more than his successor Thomas Brooke, who paid 40s in 1628;⁶⁰ since, as we have seen, the overall estate rental remained virtually unchanged, Wardall must have been renting a lot more land outside the Abbey precinct. Wardall was still there in 1613, when the gap in the Chatsworth rentals occurs, but Brooke was ensconced by 1623, described as ‘of Glastonbury Abbey’ in the Heralds’ *Visitation of Somerset*.⁶¹ He was the great-grandson of John Brooke, who lies buried with his wife beneath a fine brass in the chancel of St Mary Redcliffe church in Bristol that proclaims him to have been “Chief Steward of that honourable House

and Monastery of the Blessed Mary at Glastonbury in the County of Somerset".⁶² The family retained strong links with Glastonbury. John's son, David or Davy, a judge, was the one Glastonbury citizen singled out for mention by Fuller in his *Worthies of England* and churchwardens' accounts and parish registers show that the family remained numerous and locally influential.⁶³ Brooke's three-life lease on the Abbey passed to his children Arthur and Mary when he died in 1643.⁶⁴ No new 'lives' were added, perhaps because the £195 fine that Arthur had to pay in 1648 for having taken arms against Parliament damaged his finances irreparably,⁶⁵ or perhaps because they both died without issue: a visitor the following year acknowledged the hospitality he had received from Brooke and "his good Sister"; which suggests that they were both unmarried at that point.⁶⁶

In 1657, a new three-life lease was granted to John Pester, a Bristol draper. Within two months Pester used the lease as security for a £400 loan from John Browning of Cowly, Glos; in default of which Browning took rents from Abbey tenants and established an interest in the property. On 12 July 1669 Pester signed two indentures with Samuel Astry of Aust, Clerk to the Crown; one to raise a mortgage and the other to repay an outstanding debt. Three years later Astry paid off Pester's debt to Browning and thereby became *de facto* lessee of the Abbey. On 7 June 1697, Astry paid an entry fine of £310 for two extra life-leases after the death of Margaret Jett, John Pester's daughter, on behalf of his step-daughter, aged 3 and his own daughter, aged 12. It is probably safe to assume that neither Pestors, Jetts nor Astrys had much to do with Glastonbury beyond collecting the rent from under-tenants whose names are unknown except for the last, William Vincent, a member of Glastonbury corporation.⁶⁷

Vincent was required to vacate the site by the new lessee, Thomas Prew, who was of a very different ilk to his predecessors. Born in Martock in 1671, Prew had by 1705 become established in Glastonbury, when he was named as a junior burgess of the corporation, established in that year.⁶⁸ Prew was clearly a man of some substance. He was usually described as 'gentleman', but on one occasion was also referred to as "clothier" and "dyer", which last suggests that he may have owed his wealth to the booming local industry in quality "Spanish medley" cloth, described by Defoe as "the mix'd Colours and Cloths, with which all the Gentlemen and Persons of any Fashion in *England*

are cloth'd".⁶⁹ He was equally clearly determined to get hold of the Abbey. On 13 December 1707 he bought the two leases from Astry's widow and from Margaret Jett for the sum of £500, and on January 10 1708, in return for the surrender of these leases and £50 in money, he obtained a three-life lease from the duke of Devonshire in the name of himself, his wife and his younger brother Francis. Several covenants were stipulated, now lost apart for the all-important requirement "to lay out £100 in building an additional [*sic*] house to his owne he then lived in",⁷⁰ the starting-point for his later notoriety.

Thomas Prew died in 1737. His wife Rebecca was already dead, and Francis died in 1765/6.⁷¹ There is a dearth of documents for this period (the Abbey site, being extraparochial, was exempt from parish rates and therefore does not figure in the rate-books), but from the evidence of his own tombstone (see below) it is pretty certain that the new tenant was John Down. The tombstone suggests that he was born in 1742, so he was a very young man when he came into possession of the Abbey, perhaps installed by a relative. His family were landlords of the *George*, and his father, also John, was something of an entrepreneur, responsible for building a substantial stone-built windmill on Wirral Hill in 1741.⁷² Down was probably paying a rack-rent for the Abbey site from the beginning; in 1799 he was paying £140 a year for it (considerably more than the £100 improved value that the Cavendish estate had placed on it in 1729); and in 1808, as we have seen, he bought the freehold.⁷³

3. THE "PLUKYNG DOWNE OF GLASTEN"

According to Howard Colvin, Henry's commissioners made a clear distinction between secular and religious structures when issuing instructions as to the fate of the monasteries: "in the 'certificate' returned by the commissioners appointed in 1539 to take the surrender of the monasteries in Hampshire, Wiltshire and Gloucestershire, they specify which buildings were 'deemed to be superfluous' and which were 'assigned to remain'. In virtually every case the superfluous buildings comprised church, chapter house, dormitory, frater and infirmary, while the abbot's lodging was 'to remain undefaced', obviously because it was likely to be an eligible dwelling for a gentleman."⁷⁴ This rule was clearly observed at Glastonbury, and there may have been

other grand secular buildings within the Precinct besides the Abbot's House. In 1585 the Glastonbury estate was said to comprise "Two Messuages, Two Gardens, Two orchards one Dovehouse" and the land.⁷⁵ This second message might refer to 'le Galley' that had been let to Peter Wolfe; or perhaps to the 'priory house' still standing in 1550, which was deemed an appropriate habitation for the Superintendent of the Strangers' Mission. Other buildings may have been adapted to provide accommodation for the weavers: the Commissioners of 1552 were asked to "consydre the voyde roomes and places about the monasterie of Glastonbury" for this purpose; these may perhaps be represented by the lightly-built partition walls that Wedlake found dividing some of the southern bays of the dormitory undercroft into separate rooms, some of which had cobbled hearths." Two dyehouses were set up for the weavers, "on the south side of the monastery where the brewhouse and bakehouse were, enclosed by a stone wall".⁷⁶

Other secular structures to survive included the Abbot's kitchen, the vaults and the end wall of the Great Hall, still standing to "46 feet broad, 80 foot high" a century after the Dissolution⁷⁷ and the Court House, rebuilt after 1503 by Abbot Beere to serve the local administrative needs of the abbey. There has been some confusion about the exact location of the Court House and the 'Galley', presumably the "galery" which Leland recorded as also having been built by Beere. Wedlake thought that the Galley might be well within the Abbey precinct, east of the abbot's lodging. The Victoria County History says that the Court House was in



Fig. 2 Initials 'TR' and date on the Abbey gateway

the High Street, "on an adjoining site" to the pre-1503 building, although Dunning in 1991 showed that it was "built elsewhere", but a document of 1640 document shows that the half-acre plot of land, called the Gallarye and by then devoid of buildings, was immediately adjacent to the Court House or Town Hall; this was located between the Chain Gate, on the west (Magdalene Street) frontage of the Abbey, and "the house of Thomas Rodway". The Abbey gatehouse has the initials "TR 1639" on the front gable, so this was presumably Rodway's house; separated from the Abbey at an unknown date, ownership passed with the manor and not the demesne (fig. 2). The building was substantially altered in the mid 17th century, and by 1686 it had become an inn, known first as the Royal Oak and later the Red Lion.⁷⁸

The Demolition Process

The existence of the Abbot's house at Glastonbury gave the precinct a ready-made 'gentry' quality to it, emphasized by the survival of the enclosing wall, "at least a thousand paces, an English mile about", marvelled Brereton, "as high a stately wall as I have seen".⁷⁹ The presence of both wall and house suggest a good deal of control over the demolition process. What happened within the precinct was systematic and sanctioned: as Jerry Sampson observes, "the remarkable symmetry of the surviving ruin suggests that this is the result of the deliberate 'farming' of the stone in the great church while it was being used as a quarry".⁸⁰ When demolition work began, however, is less obvious. In 1539, the year of Glastonbury's dissolution, the King's commissioners nationwide were instructed to "pluck down nothing unless commanded",⁸¹ and apart from one individual who went berserk in St Joseph's Chapel⁸² there is no record of any demolition work at Glastonbury until after Henry VIII's death. In 1549-50, lead was being stripped from the Chapter House roof and transported to Wells Cathedral, and in April 1550 Sir Hugh Pullet, who had not only succeeded Henry Cornish as Governor of Jersey but had been appointed to keep an eye on his dealings with the weavers at Glastonbury, was ordered by the Privy Council to take 20 'fodder' of lead from Glastonbury and to use it for the fortifications at Mount Orgeuil.⁸³

In October and November 1550, after the duke of Somerset had been confirmed in his lands, Henry Cornish wrote to Somerset's steward, Sir John

Thynne, to explain why he had already removed some valuable items from “the churche”. From his letters we learn that the building had been “uncoveryd”, and he had had to remove the fittings which would otherwise “have been lyttyll worthe be reason of rayne and spoyle of laborers”. The bells were in the process of being melted down, and likewise the gilt from the images and two altars, although he was able to reassure Thynne that there was no fine gold – “hytt butte be angell golde and no better”. Cornish also urged that “the tymber of the churche” – presumably roof-joists – should be taken down as soon as possible because the building was becoming unsafe: “the vaughts be so slender and all redye so openythe that fewe wol deale there with.” It is unlikely, however, that much more demolition took place before the duke’s final fall from grace eleven months later. He was a marked man, with enemies in high places, and his more lowly dependants were very much aware that his Glastonbury projects were dependent on the favour – and the health – of the sickly king. Lord Stourton, Mary’s future Lord Lieutenant of Somerset, warned the steward in Cornish’s presence against taking part in the “plukyng downe of glasten”: “yf owght shold come at the kyngs grace, god save hym, what wolbe com of the duke of Somerset?”⁸⁴

It is clear that serious demolition work did not begin until Elizabeth’s reign. Although some stone had been taken to build habitations for Poullain’s followers, in January 1552, the Commissioners appointed to run the duke’s affairs told the Privy Council that they had “put off building, that the late abbey should not be spoiled of timber or stone or touched in any way until your pleasures there are known”.⁸⁵ The wording of the Marian monks’ plea in 1556 confirms that the buildings had not by then been damaged beyond redemption: “we would haply prevent the ruin of much, and repair no little part of the whole”.⁸⁶ The main culprits were probably the fourth and fifth earls of Sussex, expressly charged by the will of the third earl to make as much revenue as they could from Glastonbury to pay his creditors; but although neither the wealthy William Cavendish nor, arguably, the Brookes with their family connections to the Abbey, had the same incentive, it is possible that major demolition work continued into the next century. Jerry Sampson’s discovery of graffiti dated 1638 on the crossing of the Great Church about twelve feet above present ground level has prompted him to suggest that some systematic demolition may still have been going on at that date.⁸⁷ However, to set against this

is Brereton’s observation of 1634 that the Church by then was “utterly demolished, save some small parcels of the walls at the sides and ends, which represent the dimensions and proportion of it”.⁸⁸ Peter Mundy, who visited the Abbey in 1639, reported that “they Now digge For stones For other buildings”, the word ‘digge’ perhaps implying that standing structures were untouched. Mundy did note that the fabric was said to be “dayly decaying”, apart from the Abbot’s Kitchen, “repayred and kept uppe” for use as a fuel store for the Abbot’s House.⁸⁹

Thomas Brooke was clearly very proud of his residence, and he or his predecessor may even have been responsible for adding a tower to the building.⁹⁰ Large quantities of late sixteenth/early seventeenth pottery has been unearthed which, although poorly provenanced, is most likely to have come from Wedlake’s excavation of the Abbot’s Lodging, including high-status imports such as Malling jugs and Montelupo maiolica; such finds, together with the pigeon house or dovecot, testifying to the ‘genteel’ nature of the Abbey’s occupancy at this stage.⁹¹ To begin with, indeed, Brooke tried to assert himself as *de facto* lord of the manor of Glastonbury. The manor was a separate entity, belonging to the Crown, but Brooke exercised the lord’s right to cut timber on the common of Hulkmoor, and took tolls and rents on fairs and markets, fishing, hawking and fowling, which rights he claimed to have been leasing from the Crown. But in the 1630s the manor was sold to Sir James Cambell and the energetic and assertive William Strode, who challenged Brooke’s rights in a court case in the Exchequer in 1640. Proceedings revolved around the Court House or Town Hall. Though the public entrance was in the street, the building was situated within the Abbey precinct and indeed Brooke had been renting out the lower rooms, formerly a prison, for twenty shillings a year. In about 1637 Strode’s men took down the roof and removed the floorboards of the first floor, the carpenter claiming that they were “decayed and like to fall downe”; Brooke responded by removing the windows.⁹²

Although no record of the court decision has survived it is clear that the decision was in favour of the manor since various other properties on the east side of Magdalene Street were later recorded as part of the manor.⁹³ The Court House did not long survive the demolishing tendencies of the rival claimants. At some point before 1689 William Strode built a Market House in the middle of Magdalene Street.⁹⁴ In the 18th century it was said that the stone to build it had come from the Great Hall, the end wall of

which was “throwne down” not long before 1660;⁹⁵ but it seems probable that much of it came from the ruins of the Court House.

Neglect set in soon after the Brooke family left. By 1662 the Abbot’s Kitchen had been pressed into service as “a sider mill”,⁹⁶ and from Eyston’s description of the Abbot’s House just before it was demolished in 1714 it is clear that it had not been lived in for a long time: “This apartment was much out of repair when I saw it; it rained in in many places by the roof’s being faulty in many places; several pannels of the wainscot were shattered; the windows were much broken, and some of them were unglazed.”⁹⁷

Stone-taking continued, perhaps in more piecemeal fashion, though still controlled. Masons would come to buy freestone from the ‘Renter of the Abbey’, according to Paschall,⁹⁸ but William Strode’s transformation of ‘superfluous’ Hall into modern Market House may well have inspired both Thomas Prew and his ground landlord. Caricatured by William Stukeley as the “demolisher of the Abbey”,⁹⁹ Prew, as required by his covenant, had by 1714 built himself a substantial house on Magdalene Street; and he did so by demolishing the Abbot’s House and using the stonework. To add insult to injury, he “placed in the front and walls the Armes Cyphers & other decorations figures of the abbots priors etc of this once so famous a monastery & which was in the old Building”, in John Cannon’s words, and he did not stop there. Prew also “pull’d down and sold vast quantities of Stones & rooted up the Vaults by blowing them up with Gunpowder for the mortar with which it was builded was of such a Strength that it was as hard to break in whole stone as at a joynt ... many other stones he sold to mend the roads and highways & to the townspeople with which many houses have been built”.¹⁰⁰ It was probably during Prew’s time that the two stone cross-shafts near St Joseph’s Chapel, said to have been the ‘pyramids’ that marked the place where Arthur had been found, were “dragged away, though some of the most celebrated monuments in Britain, to make a post to a field, or form a prop to a cottage.”¹⁰¹

Prew was a ‘gentleman’; perhaps a self-made one, but with the means to buy the leases, pay the entry fine and build his new house. Thereafter he could sit back and enjoy possession of Abbey and precinct at its ancient rent of 39 shillings a year.¹⁰² John Down had no such luxury. He was a notch or two down the social ladder: Prew’s imposing home was in 1780 described as ‘now converted into a farm house’,¹⁰³

with a clear loss of status implied, but John Down was by local standards a very substantial farmer, in 1799 renting about 220 acres of extra land from the estate and paying a total of £844 a year in rent, of which the Abbey site accounted for only £140.¹⁰⁴ He was an improver, perhaps an exemplary one since in 1797 he was appointed an enclosure Commissioner for common land in Street.¹⁰⁵

Within the Abbey precinct, he planted a substantial orchard: a four-acre field behind the house became ‘the Abbey Old Orchard’ before 1799, and an adjacent three-and-a-half acre plot had become the ‘Abbey Young Orchard’ by 1825; several plots of garden ground were by then being sublet to the north of the Great Church.¹⁰⁶ Before 1799, however, John Down’s main subsidiary enterprise was stone-getting; and in this he became every bit as notorious as Prew had in his day. Down also contracted to carry stone and on at least one occasion to build with it: in 1784 he was paid £1075 to construct a “good firm and substantial one arch bridge” to carry the Meare road the River Brue,¹⁰⁷ but it is his relationship with the Wells Turnpike Trust that has cemented his reputation.

The Trust’s account books for the 1770s show that they were paying labourers a shilling a day to break stones in the Abbey. Stone-taking continued throughout the 1780s and especially the early 90s, when the new Wells road was being built around Edmund Hill. On 28 May 1791, Down was paid for 1147 loads of stone; on June 2 1792, for 1245 loads.¹⁰⁸ A stone coffin was found in 1792 by the north-east corner of the Abbey church “when the ground adjoining these ruins was levelled”, and “vast clumps” of the tower piers were said to have been blown up with gunpowder,¹⁰⁹ which suggests that this part of the Abbey suffered most from Down’s endeavours: the part closest to the new road.

Down was paid 6d a load, and 4d a load for those which his men “raised” themselves; he contracted his cart out for 5s a day. Between May 1791 and April 1796 Down received a total of £713 3s 7d. It was a lucrative business. This was improvement in action, and much to be encouraged. Down’s landlords were certainly impressed, and may have had a share in the proceeds: the estate agent’s particulars of 1799 emphasised the “vast Quantity of Stone in the Ruins”.¹¹⁰ What use was it to anyone for all those rolling Abbey acres to stay forever cluttered up with the remains of a redundant building? As the county historian John Collinson put it on the eve of Down’s second onslaught, most of the abbey had been

“reduced to a heap of rubbish, loading the surface of its scite with unseemly ruins.”¹¹¹

4: GLASTONBURY AND THE PROTESTANTS: ICONOCLASM AND REVERENCE

The dramatic fate of Abbot Whiting, hanged upon the Tor, was one of the decisive moments of the Dissolution. The destruction of Glastonbury Abbey was hugely symbolic, a fact not lost on Mary’s monks: “if there hath ever been any flagitious deed since the creation of the world punished with the plague of God, in our opinion the overthrow of Glastonbury may be compared with the same”.¹¹² The abortive project to revive the Abbey may have induced Elizabeth to insist on full-scale demolition, but it is worth noting that the Great Church was not completely destroyed. William Prynne, writing in 1646, saw such remains as *memento mori*, valuable “monuments of our indignation and detestation against them”. Perhaps some similar motive was already at work here, the unarched span between the two massive baulks of the crossing towers a visible, tangible measure of a collapse that was as much moral as physical. “O Glastonbury, Glastonbury”, lamented John Dee in 1577, “How Lamentable is thy case, now? How hath Hypocrisie and Pride, wrought thy Desolation?”¹¹³

One religious structure, however, was not demolished. This was St Joseph’s Chapel (recorded as such in 1520,¹¹⁴ its original dedication to St

Mary thereafter forgotten for centuries). It was held to be the site of the Old Church, where Joseph of Arimathea had brought Christianity to Britain before the polluting taint of Rome, “at the very spryng or fyrst goyng forth of the Gospell, when the churche was most perfyght”, in the words of the zealous John Bale.¹¹⁵ Small wonder, then, that this building was treated differently from all the rest. Small wonder, as the Arimathean legend took hold in Elizabeth’s reign, that dedicated Protestant courtiers and their tenants, did not feel like tearing down the birthplace of British Christianity (fig. 3).

Although the unusual survival of this building has regularly been noticed,¹¹⁶ it is quite remarkable how little speculation there has been as to why it should have been spared. Yet its importance was spelt out by Camden: *The first land of God, The first land of Saints in England, The beginning and fountaine of all religion in England, The tombe of Saints, The mother of Saints, The Church founded and built by the Lords Disciples*.¹¹⁷ Resonant words that clearly influenced such visitors as Lieutenant Hammond in 1633: “The First place I entred into (as is generally receiued for truth) was the first religious Fountaine, and holy Foundation in this Kingdome, Joseph of Arimathea’s Chappell; where the first Groundsill of our Faith was layd ...”.¹¹⁸ St Joseph’s Chapel had become an Anglican shrine.

Glastonbury’s status as both Christian cradle and Catholic temple may well explain why the duke of Somerset chose it as a place to ‘showcase’ the new religion. No less a figure than John Calvin urged him



Fig. 3 St Joseph’s Chapel (the Lady Chapel)

to interpret his release from prison in early 1550 as a token from God “to induce you to do better than ever, your duty is to strive to the uttermost and with all your energy, so that so holy a work as that which he has begun by you may be carried forward.”¹¹⁹ His exclusion from national power may have helped him to focus on his religious projects; and it does seem that the weavers’ settlement carried particular religious significance. Glastonbury was not the first monastery to be appropriated for the cloth trade. The former abbey of Malmesbury had in 1546 been converted by William Stumpe into a highly successful cloth factory¹²⁰ and the example was surely in Somerset’s mind when he invited the weavers to Glastonbury. What made the Glastonbury experiment different was the combination of work and religion, of technical training and practical devotion. The wording of the original grant claimed “that no greater benefit can be conferred on any people than the introduction of crafts, of which none is more useful than weaving”, and Poullain’s weavers were described as “quiet, honest, diligent in bringing up their youth to labour”,¹²¹ keen to share their skills with local people – an exemplary colony of the Protestant ideal. Valérand Poullain, the Superintendent, was a Reformer of some renown, a friend and ally of Calvin’s, who had carried out diplomatic missions for him;¹²² he may well have been recommended to Somerset by Calvin himself. The *Liturgia Sacra* he produced for the Glastonbury congregation was published in February 1551 probably to influence the revision of the Prayer Book; it was held up by William Whittingham as “the purest Reformed Church in Christendom”.¹²³

Poullain’s grant allowed his flock to hold their church “in some suitable consecrated building”; according to Andrew Spicer this was fairly common practice for Strangers’ churches.¹²⁴ It is tempting to suggest that Poullain might have made use of St Joseph’s Chapel itself, thereby quite deliberately rooting the Reformed religion in the place where Christianity had first been brought to England. On the face of it, the structural evidence is not compelling. Not just the lead, but the roof vaults too, were removed and it is hard to think of a time when this is more likely to have been done than during the ‘plucking down’ of 1549-50 when other roofs went. Jerry Sampson, however, thinks that the survival of medieval paintwork means that even if the lead was removed “a roof of some sort would have been substituted... the building would have been rendered relatively weatherproof”,¹²⁵ in which

case the Chapel could quite well have been pressed into service by Poullain. But Spicer elsewhere points out that exile communities in some places, Canterbury, Sandwich and Rye for example, had to share the parish church;¹²⁶ and a good case can be made to suggest that the same happened at Glastonbury. St John’s church was granted to the reforming bishop Barlow by Somerset himself, and the fact that the church has to this day a chained copy of Erasmus’ *Paraphrase of the New Testament in English*, which they acquired in 1548, suggests that Barlow took his mission seriously. The church also possesses a piece of late-medieval Flemish plate which has plausibly been seen as a donation by the weavers. An early Protestant re-use of St Joseph’s Chapel remains no more than a tantalising possibility.¹²⁷

Protestant industry

When the strangers were permitted to depart they were specifically instructed to leave their cauldrons (‘chaldrons’) behind. Peter Wolfe was granted denizenship by Queen Mary in 1554 on condition that he paid “customs and subsidies for his goods and merchandise which aliens pay”¹²⁸. It is quite likely, therefore, that Wolfe continued to dye cloth on the Abbey site throughout the Marian period and possibly for longer; and in fact there are a few teasing pointers to suggest that cloth-working of some kind might have been a recurrent feature of post-Dissolution activity at the abbey, if not necessarily a continuous one. It is interesting that William Stone, the London mercer who bought the Abbey in 1596, was an active buyer of ‘Spanish Cloths’ made in Somerset;¹²⁹ it is interesting that two later lessees, John Pester and Thomas Prew, were both clothiers. William Senior’s plan of the Abbey site (fig. 1) shows a long artificial cut coloured in blue just east of the Great Church site, an enigmatic feature that might be explained as a fulling-trench, and John Allan points out that a furnace-like structure has been built into the south-west corner of the former dormitory which might have been used for dyeing; there is another similar-sized heap of stones nearby (fig. 4).¹³⁰ Against this must be set a total lack of positive evidence. None of the many later accounts of the abbey alludes to cloth-making in any way.



Fig. 4 Possible dye furnace built into the edge of the former dormitory undercroft

There is other evidence of Protestant innovation at Glastonbury Abbey, however. According to a much later proverb, ‘Hops, Reformation, Carp and Beer Came into England the same year’; whether true or not, it is certainly possible that Peter Wolfe’s small community may have introduced hops to Somerset. In the winter of 1550–51, four “Duchemen” were “sent by Flemysshe Woulphe from Glastonburye to turne ground for hoppes at Longleat”, home of the duke’s steward, Sir John Thynne. When Wolfe’s lease was renewed in 1554, he was granted “all such woods, underwoods, and ‘lez pooles’ in the wood called ‘Sudemore’ in Glastonbury as are necessary for ‘lez hoppes’ and for fuel (*focali*) there”. Since, a century later, it was said that wood from South Moor had been used to serve the Abbot’s Kitchen, the last item raises the intriguing possibility that the Kitchen might have been adapted for use as a hop-kiln. It may be significant that a seven-acre close within the precinct just north of the Great Church was still known as ‘the Hop Yard’ in 1825.¹³¹

Less savoury is the patent granted in 1573 to John Payne for a treadmill, the prototype for which he “by hys greate chardges and travell devysed and buylded withyn the precyncte of the scyte of the late monasterye of Glastonbury”. This charming innovation was said to be “good for places where water mylles and wyend mylles ar not. Good for Gentyllmens howses that have noe mylles to occupy the Rogges [rogues]”.¹³² The patent was granted

by William Cecil, Lord Burghley, well known for his encouragement of new industrial ideas; he had been the duke of Somerset’s secretary at the time of the weavers’ experiment and may well have been responsible for the recent grant of Glastonbury to the earl of Sussex, his friend and ally.¹³³ In the context of prevailing notions equating Catholicism with idleness (to Simon Fish monks and friars were a “greedy sort of sturdy idle holy thieves”),¹³⁴ and growing concerns about the rise of ‘sturdy beggars’, the choice of site suggests that people in high places were still seeking to use Glastonbury Abbey as a place to promote Protestant ideas of work and industry.

Rich pickings

There were other ways in which a dissolved monastery could be turned to good account. Alchemists such as Elias Ashmole had no difficulty in believing that monasteries had been centres of alchemical research. Writing in 1652, he found it “generally reported that *Doctor Dee*, and Sir *Edward Kelly* were so strangely fortunate, as to finde a very large quantity of the *Elixir* in some part of the *Ruines of Glastenbury-Abbey*”,¹³⁵ which eventually yielded “almost an *Ounce* of most pure *Gold*”. Ashmole later realised that Dee and Kelly could not have been at Glastonbury at the same

time, but both of them worked closely with a much more local alchemist, Edward Dyer of Sharpham Park,¹³⁶ and it is quite possible that Dee and Dyer were prospecting in the Abbey ruins. In 1617 the Queen's lady-in-waiting Mary Middlemore was granted the right to search for "certeyn Treasure-Trove supposed to be found in or about certeyn of the late Abbies": four were named, of which Glastonbury was one.¹³⁷ Several decades later, stories were circulating about how gold was to be found within the very stones of the Abbey. At the Royal Oak Inn, once the Abbey gatehouse, "a treasure of Gold Coyn" was found inside "an Old Stone Pedestall which had been turned upside down". Other versions claimed that the gold was found inside a mantel piece, others that it was to be found within the very stone itself.¹³⁸ Three coins found their way into the hands of an anonymous gentleman, who in 1684 offered to send Andrew Paschall "an Original Old Manuscript, or Copy of it, lately found by Labourers in *Glastenbury Abby* – it promises Health and Wealth to the Finder of a Treasure near."¹³⁹ Was this the same hoard that Celia Fiennes heard about fourteen years later, located in a deep cellar somewhere in the Abbey precinct where "the Country people says its the Devil set there on a tun of money which makes the noise Least they should take it away from him"?¹⁴⁰

Iconoclasm

Ashmole's belief that the abbots may have dabbled in alchemy was buoyed by the suggestion that the miraculous winter-flowering thorn on Wirral Hill was the result of an experiment "made of the Vegitable Stone", an idea already mooted by Hugh Plat in 1608.¹⁴¹ The Glastonbury Thorn, first mentioned in 1520, became renowned over the next century. Visitors of all kinds came to admire it, break off twigs or carve their initials in the boughs. They included puritan sympathisers such as Sir William Brereton, but it is no surprise to find that this anomalous shrub attracting unwelcome attention from the zealous. One bough was apparently struck off in Elizabeth's reign, and in the Civil War the original plant was entirely destroyed.¹⁴² This is a reminder that iconoclasm was anything but mindless vandalism. To many Protestants, effigies and ornament remained a 'fretting leprosie' to be cast down as opportunity allowed; and it is quite likely that small-scale, ad hoc iconoclasm continued throughout the late 17th

century, since the unknown under-tenants of the Abbey were clearly sympathetic to Dissenters. In 1683 the Quakers, strong in Glastonbury, were meeting in the Abbey Kitchen, and two years later the duke of Monmouth's hapless army stayed in the precinct, where they built "great fires to dry and refresh the men"; it may be no coincidence that the Quaker Thomas Plaice came to see the duke there, and offered to set aside his pacificism and raise an army of club-men.¹⁴³

Thomas Prew's antiquarian contemporaries were convinced that he was driven by religious fanaticism, John Cannon, William Stukeley, John Stevens, Thomas Hearne and his correspondents all made a point of stressing Prew's religious convictions: he was "a rank Presbyterian",¹⁴⁴ and he was certainly a leading member of Glastonbury's growing Presbyterian congregation, leaving an annual legacy to the minister in his will.¹⁴⁵ He came from a family with strong Dissenting credentials: a Thomas Prew of Glaston was a Parliamentarian sequestrator in 1649-50; one of Judge Jefferies' victims was called John Prew, and his own father was ominously noted as having been 'absent from home' during the Monmouth Rebellion; at least one of the five men that Jefferies had hanged at Glastonbury was a Presbyterian.¹⁴⁶

Remembering that the Monmouth rising was driven by Protestant reaction to the new king James II's Catholicism, it would not be surprising to find a Presbyterian wanting to wreak revenge on the fabric of a Catholic Abbey. In short, there is much to be said for John Stevens' appraisal of Prew as one of those "who cannot or will not distinguish between Sacrilege and Reformation, and therefore look upon the Destruction of Churches, and other Places dedicated to God, as Heroic Actions",¹⁴⁷ but this is not the whole story, a point to which we will return. Stevens was a Catholic, and most of Prew's antiquarian critics were high churchmen or Catholics with a particular fear and loathing for Presbyterians, whom some held responsible for both the 1689 *coup d'état* and the Hanoverian succession in 1714. Defoe, a fellow-Presbyterian, rather significantly comments not at all on Prew's activities in his *Tour thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain* (1724).¹⁴⁸

Backlash: "A haunt for Owls Catts and Spirits"

A rival narrative was developing, however, predicated on feelings of guilt, disquiet and

disgust. In the mid 17th century the jurist Sir Henry Spelman began collecting accounts of the misfortunes that befell people who had benefited from the Dissolution. A selection was eventually published as *A History and Fate of Sacrilege*. It has little to say about Glastonbury, perhaps because the ground landlords were actually doing rather well, but Spelman did collect a very outré story in 1637 from an Oxford clergyman called Taylor which I cannot resist quoting in full. Taylor had heard that some thirty years previously

A certaine gentleman living in the Abbey yard of Glastonbury in a house standing upon holy ground had plowed up some of the consecrate ground lying before his house, and found a great many of the Monks bones, which he layed in one heape threatening to digge up all the bald friers skuls, and intending to have them throwne away. It happened not long after that he making merry with some gentlemen that came to visit him, at supertime somebody knockt at the doore 3 loud knocks. Some of the servants going to see who it was, found nobody. And so did the second time. The third time the Master of the house arose from the table and called for lights purposing to search, for he imagined some thieves to have beset his house. With him arose the rest of the gentlemen and all went with him. When they had opened the gate that leads into the Abbey yard, they saw a sight as of a great many Abbots in rich miters and copes together with many Monks as going in procession, about the Abbey yard, and taking the bones of the Monkes which were layd in a heape and solemnly interred them, and in the morning the ground that was plowed up was layd even, and no sign of a plow remaining. The Gentlemans friends that were with him perswaded him to make a pious use of it, and not to continue his sacrilegious possession of that place. But he thought it to be but witchcraft, until he found a harsh experience of the ill effects of his sacrilege. For in very few yeares, he spent a great estate, and no man knew how, for he was no way lavish in his expences.¹⁴⁹

There is unfortunately no other corroboration of this story; but it is interesting that almost two centuries later there was said to be “an ancient tradition still prevalent, relating to an *abbots head*”, associated with the north-east corner of the Abbey Church. It was called “*the haunted corner* ... supernatural sounds, resembling the roaring of a furnace, are frequently heard in a recess, which still remains nearly intact”.¹⁵⁰ Some certainly felt that the Abbey was an unlucky place to live. In 1714, Eyston was told that no-one wanted to live in the Abbot’s

House, “it having been observed that never any body that had dwelt there had ever thrived; nay, I was then and there told that the inclosure there had never continued in one family thirty years together since the Abbey was dissolved.”¹⁵¹

By the 18th century, it had become quite commonplace in Glastonbury to believe that meddling with Abbey stones was sacrilegious. “Common Tradition” had it that the town’s trade had collapsed since the Market House was built from the ruins of the Great Hall (a sacrilege perhaps compounded in the minds of some by the fact that Dissenters had been meeting in there since 1689 at least).¹⁵² The mason who found the Royal Oak gold “dyed miserably poore”; Paschall’s gentleman with the document that promised “Health and Wealth” was “so hated” that his attempts to find the treasure “would not be endured.”¹⁵³ Houses built from Abbey stone “did not long stand nor the possessors thrive”, according to Cannon; Stukeley was told that “an unlucky fate attends the family where these materials are used”.¹⁵⁴ For many townsfolk the Abbey had become a disturbing, unsettling place. When the saddler William West was bewitched at Street revel in 1740, he found himself compelled to return home, dogged by uncanny mishaps until finally he “was by an invisible hand hurried into the abbey over gates, stiles, rubbish & the ruined walls”. The abbey, Cannon lamented, had become “A haunt for Owls Catts and Spirits”.¹⁵⁵

Notions of divine displeasure were assiduously fostered by Prew’s antiquarian critics; Eyston specifically invoked Spelman to explain why the Market House was failing.¹⁵⁶ They were actively servicing a growing tourist trade, the “great concourse of strangers” said by Stukeley to come to the town “purposely to see this abby, which is now the greatest trade of it”.¹⁵⁷ The White Hart, which stood on the site of the present Assembly Rooms, rented a garden between the inn and St Joseph’s Chapel from the lessee; its access to the Abbey was one of its selling point.¹⁵⁸ Locals such as John Cannon were happy to show visitors around the ruins. Many of these were Catholic,¹⁵⁹ their appetites perhaps whetted by Charles Eyston’s *History and Antiquities of Glastonbury*, published posthumously and anonymously in 1722 by Thomas Hearne, and condemned by Anglican critics as “poor Legendary Stuffe”, written by “some very superstitious R. C.”.¹⁶⁰ In 1750 Richard Pocock was shown “a square nich on the north side of the high altar” which had once contained the two vials that Joseph of Arimathea had brought with him, “from

which nich the Papists have scraped away the free stone and broken off pieces of a harder stone at bottom to carry it away out of devotion".¹⁶¹ In the same year, a local farmer, Matthew Chancellor, driven to distraction by his long-term asthma, was guided in a dream to drink the water flowing out from the Abbey precinct by the Chaingate in Magdalene Street: "Where this Water descends from, is holy Ground, where a vast Number of Saints and Martyrs have been buried". He was cured; the miracle was publicised; in June/July 1751 over 20,000 visitors flocked to Glastonbury to sample the waters. The bubble soon burst, leaving critics to jeer at the "Popish Invention", but John Collinson, writing a generation later, believed that "the whole story was designedly trumped up with a view of bringing custom to the town"; this, if it were true, suggests that the town's leaders were becoming more comfortable with its controversial legacy, and more willing to exploit its possibilities.¹⁶²

Gilpin: a new sensibility?

Religious controversy subsided as the 18th century progressed. John Down's critics damned him for his avarice, not his religious zeal,¹⁶³ and 'Gothic' ruins became more attractive as their religious import subsided. Though he derived "moral and religious satisfaction" from the disappearance of the culture of idleness fostered by the great abbeys, William Gilpin's well-known formulation of the 'picturesque' marked a new sensibility in which ruins were to be appreciated for their aesthetic qualities. Glastonbury Abbey, it has to be said, did not score too highly: "in that part of the tower which remains, there is rather a formality. Two similar points, which have been the shoulders of a Gothic arch, arise in equal dimensions, and do not easily fall into a picturesque form." Gilpin's lukewarm verdict was published in 1798 and his views might help to explain why the sale particulars of 1799 make so little of the Abbey's aesthetic potential. He did suggest that the abbey precinct, although of "no particular beauty", might nonetheless "be improved into a very grand scene, if it were judiciously planted, and laid out with just so much art, as to discover the ruins to the best advantage. But such schemes of improvement are calculated only for posterity."¹⁶⁴ It took another generation for such a buyer to appear. This was John Fry Reeves, senior partner of the Glastonbury and Shepton Mallet Bank, who in 1825 bought the

ruins from Down. He commissioned a well-known Gothic artist, John Buckler, to design the present Abbey House and, in Richard Warner's words, went to much "expense and trouble ... in disencumbering and unfolding these beautiful remains of ancient Gothic Architecture, and preserving them for the inspection of the curious, and the contemplation of the thoughtful, for ages yet to come".¹⁶⁵

It is important, however, to avoid setting up a simplistic dichotomy between 18th-century demolishers and 19th-century conservationists. Despite Prew's reputed taste for gunpowder, it is instructive to note just what this 'rank presbyterian' did *not* destroy. William Stukeley, who visited in August 1723, reported that "every week a pillar, a buttress, a window jamb or an angle of fine hewed stone is sold to the best bidder. Whilst I was there they were excoriating *St Joseph's Chappell* for that purpose, and the squared stones were lay'd up by lots in the abbot's kitchen." The emphasis on architectural salvage is interesting. There was clearly a demand for ornamental stone that required a more sophisticated approach than gunpowder would allow. Richard Gough noted that blue marble pillars from the arcading in St Joseph's Chapel had been "removed"; the word 'excoriation' suggests that Prew may have been responsible. Perhaps some were sold for incorporation into Palladian colonnades.¹⁶⁶

And as with John Down, Prew's landlords were enthusiastic supporters of his industry. Humphrey Smith's survey in 1729 computed the Abbey's improved rent at 40 shillings an acre, a fifty-fold increase on the ancient rent, and even the duke of Somerset's gloomy advisor had to agree that for this small part of the Estate at least "The Value per Acre might hold as Survey'd". It appears that the duke of Devonshire assumed that the whole site would or could be cleared, since Smith's valuation made a point of factoring in the value of the stone: "The Abbott's Kitchen built and arch'd with Stone all intire, & cost at least £2000 building. The Stones of St Josephs Chappell & the remains of the Abbey Church; Together with the Elme Timber, all computed to be worth £200".¹⁶⁷ A visitor in 1725 was indeed told that Prew "intends in a little time to pull down the Kitchen, still standing".¹⁶⁸ But St Joseph's Chapel still remains, as does the Abbot's Kitchen. A decade after Stukeley's visit John Cannon, no sympathiser of Thomas Prew, reported that the Kitchen had become a store for "Lumber and the like".¹⁶⁹ Prew's onslaught had clearly past its peak. Despite the high value his landlord placed on



Fig. 5 S and N Buck, 'The South View of Glastonbury Abby', in the County of Somerset'. Ruins of Abbot's House in foreground. The 'avenue' features prominently.

the stone still to be found in the standing structures, he was not interested in taking them down.

This suggests an altogether more complicated relationship between 'demolisher' Prew and the Abbey he was so proud to inhabit. He was brash, *nouveau riche*, one of those West Country clothiers sneered at by an anonymous contemporary for having made good and 'daily set up for gentlemen'.¹⁷⁰ Re-using the abbey heraldry may have been highly pretentious, but it was also a form both of acknowledgement and of preservation, one perhaps shared by some of his customers. There are still many buildings in the town with pieces of ornamental Abbey stone in prominent positions on facades, which is not only tangible refutation of the claims of Prew's critics that people were afraid to re-use it but also suggests that their owners felt pride in the town's past and a desire to save something from ruin and decay.

There is other evidence to suggest that Prew's relationship with Glastonbury and its legendary past belies his iconoclastic reputation. In 1780, Samuel Saunders, a visiting botanist, reported that "the oldest and largest" specimen of the Glastonbury Thorn to be found in the town was in Prew's former garden: "This plant is about eighteen or twenty feet high, trained to a straight stem, and full head, after the manner of standard fruit trees".¹⁷¹ This specimen, if not actually planted by Prew himself, was certainly there in his day. Half a century after the original Thorn had been destroyed by puritan zeal, one of the town's foremost Presbyterians was happy to propagate a descendant. There are even hints that he might have been trying to

landscape the estate. Contemporary illustrations of the ruins from the south¹⁷² made a prominent feature of an avenue of small trees, perhaps fruit trees but certainly kept very neat and trim: a well-maintained landscape feature (fig. 5). One end ran to the ruined Abbot's House; the other crossed the Abbey through a breach at the western end of the nave, and headed straight towards St John's Church. There is to this day a wicket gate in the wall at that point, and the street beyond is called Hanover Square, by its name not just a vestige of a grandiose development that failed to be realised, but one that was probably begun soon after the accession of George I in 1714. It seems possible that both avenue and 'square' were planned at the same time, to function as a formal approach to and driveway across the Abbey precinct. Equally curious is the fact that this notorious gunpowder-user and seller of stone should only have *half*-demolished the Abbots House. Twenty years after he built his new house, the Bucks' drawing shows that the back wall of this huge building was still standing, and would have been very prominent from the windows of Prew's new residence. Whether by design or default, Prew had added to the ruins of his park: a *memento mori* of his own creation to stand beside the Abbot's Kitchen, the cradle of British Christianity and the remains of Catholic pride.

John Down, too, believed that he was improving the ruins. A statue of an abbot, unearthed in 1793, was by him mounted on the wall of the Abbot's Kitchen and features prominently in Rooker's painting of c1795; it is true that Down was using it as a cowshed but visitors' expectations were

in some wise catered for.¹⁷³ He impressed the antiquarian David Thomas Powell, who found him knowledgeable and interested, respectful of the ruins “not as a brutal grazier but as a Christian”. After the turnpike stone takes of 1792-4 “much obloquy fell upon him, but he declared to me he had rather added to what was actually standing than pulled down”; and indeed had “been at some expence” to maintain the two surviving towers of St Joseph’s Chapel.¹⁷⁴ A cursory comparison between the standing ruins of today and those apparent in drawings made before the onslaught tend to confirm Down’s own assessment. Some of the demolition work traditionally ascribed to Down was actually done by others: the Magdalene Gate was substantially altered in 1810 by the building’s owner, (it was then the Red Lion Inn), and the precinct wall along Magdalene Street in front of the Abbot’s Kitchen was demolished about 1808 by James Roche.¹⁷⁵

John Down was certainly not ashamed of his efforts. The single achievement recorded on his imposing tombstone, still to be seen in St John’s Churchyard, is that “he was in possession of the ancient ABBEY in this Town Upwards of 60 Years”, a statement for which he has been as roundly mocked as Prew had been for his adopted armorials.¹⁷⁶ But Down was as much a victim of the new economic order as he was a perpetrator. Lamenting the fact that the Abbey’s venerable walls “are now actually beating to pieces to mend the roads”, the *Bath Chronicle* commented acidly that “We hope it will not be recorded to future generations, the penuriousness of its owner could have been the cause of so disgraceful an act”.¹⁷⁷ Whether penurious or otherwise, Down’s landlords were certainly exacting. With a rent that was seventy times greater than Thomas Prew’s had been, Down had little option but to make his holding pay in any way he could; and once again, the miracle is not that so much went, but that so much survived.

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ENDNOTES

¹ See for instance M. Howard ‘Recycling the Monastic Fabric: Beyond the Act of Dissolution’ in D. Gaimster and R. Gilchrist (eds.), *The Archaeology of Reformation, 1480-1580*, (Leeds, Maney 2003) 221-234; Hugh Willmott and Alan Bryson ‘Changing to

suit the times: a post-Dissolution history of Monk Bretton Priory, South Yorkshire’ *Post-Medieval Archaeology* 47/1 (2013):136-63; H. Colvin, ‘Recycling the Monasteries: Demolition and Reuse by the Tudor Government, 1536-1547’ in his *Essays on English Architectural History* (Yale University Press 1999):52-66; Wilson-North and Porter ‘Witham, Somerset: from Carthusian Monastery to country house to gothic folly’ *Architectural History* 40 (1997): 81-98.

² Jerry Sampson, ‘An Architectural Study of the Crossing Piers and Nave Arcade of the Great Church (2005) and ‘The Painted Decoration of the Lady Chapel’ (1995), Stewart Brown Associates, ‘Excavations at St Patrick’s Chapel’ (2008/9) and ‘Abbot’s Kitchen’, *forthcoming*; Downland Partnership, ‘Topographic Survey’ and ‘Photogrammetric Survey’ (2010), all online at

http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/glastonbury_abbey_2007/. Gilchrist, R and Green, C, *Glastonbury Abbey: Archaeological Excavations 1904-1979*, (2014 in prep, Society of Antiquaries of London Monograph Series). Jo Cox (ed) *Glastonbury Abbey Conservation Plan* (Exeter, Keystone Historic Buildings Consultants, 2004) is a useful compendium; James Carley, *Glastonbury Abbey: The Holy House at the Head of the Moors Adventurous* (Glastonbury, Gothic Image 1996) remains a very convenient historical summary.

³ *Calendar of Patent Rolls* Edward VI 1 (1547-8, London: H.M.S.O., 1924), 128-9; J. Collinson, *History and Antiquities of the County of Somerset* (Bath, 1791), 3, 395-6; P. Hembry, *The Bishops of Bath and Wells 1540-1640: Social and Economic Problems* (London, Athlone 1967), 105, 114-121; B. L. Beer, ‘Seymour, Edward, duke of Somerset (c.1500-1552)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004.

⁴ *Calendar of Patent Rolls*, Elizabeth 1 (1558-60, London: H.M.S.O., 1939), 83-4.

⁵ Above, *op. cit.* note 4, 83-4. This was almost a year after Carew’s twelve-year lease had expired, suggesting that he had obtained an extension; which would explain the payment by Sussex of “a certain sum of money” for his rights to Glastonbury in April 1573. See S. M. Doran, ‘The political career of Thomas Radcliffe, third earl of Sussex (1526?-1583)’, unpublished PhD thesis, University College London 1977, 417-8.

⁶ Doran, *op. cit.* note 5, 417-8; Somerset Heritage Centre (SHC) DD/SAS/C795/CH/11.

⁷ Essex Record Office, D/DP F240/1.

⁸ SHC, DD/SAS/C795/CH/11 (transcript); Doran, *op. cit.* note 5, 428, 437-40; Essex Record Office, *op. cit.* note 7.

⁹ Doran, *op. cit.* note 5, 441; W. T. MacCaffrey,

- 'Radcliffe, Henry, fourth earl of Sussex (1533–1593)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004.
- ¹⁰ SHC, M/1528 box 2, Indenture 23 May 1596. I am indebted to Dr Robert Dunning and Janet Bell, Director of Glastonbury Abbey, for guiding me to the Abbey deeds, as yet uncatalogued.
- ¹¹ B. Coward, *The Stanleys, Lords Stanley, and Earls of Derby, 1385-1672* Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1983, 50; http://www.stonefamilyassociation.org/index.php?pr=Sir_William_Stone.
- ¹² SHC, M/1528, Box 1, A1059.
- ¹³ Chatsworth, Hardwick MS 10a, f. 18v, 21v, 22; cf note 53 to Philip Riden's forthcoming transcript of this document by the Derbyshire Record Society. I am very grateful to Dr Riden, of the University of Nottingham, for generously allowing me to compare my notes with his own, for sending me copies of work both published and unpublished, and for sharing his unrivalled knowledge of the Chatsworth archive.
- ¹⁴ P. Riden, 'Bess of Hardwick and the St Loe inheritance' in P. Riden and D.G. Edwards (ed.), *Essays in Derbyshire History presented to Gladwyn Turbutt* (Derbyshire Record Society, xxx, 2006), 80–106; Notts. Archives, 157 DD/P/48/22, cited in Riden (unpublished), 'Sir Charles Cavendish and the creation of the Welbeck Abbey estate', 27.
- ¹⁵ Chatsworth, Hardwick MS 29, London Payments for February 1612, December 1618, November 1619.
- ¹⁶ Chatsworth, Hardwicke MS 22 (1600-01 to 1610-11). 1612-13 is in an unnumbered volume, inside box marked 'A Brief Catalogue of the Rentals (1612-13) (1623-26) (1626-1630 at back)'.
- ¹⁷ V. Stater, 'Cavendish, Christian, countess of Devonshire (1595–1675)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; Chatsworth, Hardwick AS 1009 provides details for the Glastonbury estate for 1628 and 1632. An unnumbered volume entitled 'A Rentall of the States of the Countess Dowager of Devonshire for the years 1634, 1635, 1636, 1637, 1638' covers the years named.
- ¹⁸ Chatsworth, *Survey of the Devonshire Estates by William Senior, c.1609-1628*; cf D.V. Fowkes and G.R. Potter, eds, *William Senior's Survey of the Estates of the First and Second Earls of Devonshire c.1600-28* Chesterfield, Derbyshire Record Society, 1988, xvii, 193-201.
- ¹⁹ Chatsworth, Hardwick AS 1010, 'A Rentall of the Estate of the Earl of Devonshire for the years 1637 1638 1639 1640 and 1641'.
- ²⁰ V. Stater, 'Cavendish, William, third earl of Devonshire (1617–1684)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; Chatsworth, L/49/32; cf SHC, M/1528 box 2, 'Indenture Quadrupartite made 5 Sept 1678'.
- ²¹ P. Lery, *The Wealth and Estate of Glastonbury Abbey at the Dissolution* Sutton Bridge: Curlew Publishers, 2003, 61; R Dunning (ed.), 'Glastonbury: Parish', *A History of the County of Somerset: Volume 9: Glastonbury and Street* (2006), 43-58 <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=117176>; Collinson, *op. cit.* note 3, 481. William Senior put the total at 1033 customary acres (Fowkes and Potter, *op. cit.* note 18, 201) and the 1799 Sale Particulars (SHC, DD/MY/35) at 1041 customary acres (853 and 867 statute acres respectively). The indentures of 1585, however, (note 6, above), and that of 1678 (note 19, above) total 1606 acres and 1500 acres respectively. These larger figures appear to include rights of common ("500 Acres of Furze and Heath and Common of Pasture" in 1578).
- ²² Essex Record Office, D/DP F240/1.
- ²³ C. Clay, 'Lifeleasehold in the Western Counties of England 1650-1750', *Agricultural History Review* Vol. 29, No. 2 (1981), 83-96, 94; M. E. Turner *et al*, *Agricultural Rent in England 1690-1914* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, 31-2.
- ²⁴ Chatsworth, Hardwick MS 10a, f 21v; Dorset Record Office, D/WLC E190
- ²⁵ Chatsworth, Hardwicke MS 22 (1600-1, my calculation); AS 1009 (1632) and AS 1010 (1639 and 1640).
- ²⁶ Chatsworth L/49/32.
- ²⁷ Edward Laurence, *The Duty and Office of a Land Steward* (London: 1727), 3.
- ²⁸ West Sussex Record Office (WSRO), Petworth House Archive, PHA 10976.
- ²⁹ WSRO *op. cit.* note 28; John Money (ed) *The Chronicles of John Cannon, Excise Officer and Writing Master, Part 2: 1734-43 (Somerset)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2011), 289.
- ³⁰ WSRO *op. cit.* note 28.
- ³¹ SHC, M/1528 box 2, 26 March 1733 Duke of Devonshire to Thomas Bladen Esq.
- ³² Money (ed) *op. cit.* note 29, 431n; Chatsworth, 163.115 and 163.116.
- ³³ E. C. Papenfuse, 'Bladen, Thomas (1698–1780)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; *Courier and Evening Gazette* March 6, 1799, 4.
- ³⁴ D. Lloyd, *The states-men and favourites of England since the Reformation* (London, 1665), 527.
- ³⁵ D. Lysons, *The Environs of London 4* (London, 1796), 172.
- ³⁶ Papenfuse, *op. cit.* note 33.
- ³⁷ Money (ed), *op. cit.* note 29, 431 and n, 492.
- ³⁸ SHC, D/P/gla.j 13/1/2.
- ³⁹ SHC, DD/DN 177.
- ⁴⁰ SHC, DD/MY 35.
- ⁴¹ WSRO *op. cit.* note 28; SHC, DD/MY 35; *Bath Chronicle* 20 June 1799.
- ⁴² J. Doble *et al* *The Silk Industry in Evercreech*.

- (Evercreech: Evercreech and District Local History Society, 2001); *St. James's Chronicle, or the British Evening Post*, April 27 – April 30 1799.
- ⁴³ Bristol Record Office, 08539, Wall Maps: Glastonbury, Abbey lands of Mr George Cox; SHC, M/1528, A1078.
- ⁴⁴ SHC, DD/SAS/C/795/SE/7.
- ⁴⁵ SHC, M/1528, A1073, A1075; Probate Office, Will of John Down, proven March 7, 1829; SHC, DD/GS 23.
- ⁴⁶ M. Howard, *op. cit.* note 1, 221.
- ⁴⁷ R.W. Dunning (ed), *A History of the County of Somerset: Volume 9: Glastonbury and Street* (2006), 11-16 'Glastonbury: Abbey', online at <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/source.aspx?pubid=1250>; anon [Charles Eyston], *The history and antiquities of Glastonbury* (Oxford, Thomas Hearne 1722), 73.
- ⁴⁸ Carley, *op. cit.* note 2, 81.
- ⁴⁹ National Archives E 318/11/507.
- ⁵⁰ SHC, DD/SAS/C795/CH/11 (transcript); John Strype, *Memorials of the Most Reverend Father in God Thomas Cranmer, sometime Lord Archbishop of Canterbury*. 2 (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1840), 89.
- ⁵¹ W. Page (ed.), *Letters of Denization and Acts of Naturalization for Aliens in England, 1509–1603* (Lymington: Huguenot Society, 1893), xxix.
- ⁵² On the Glastonbury weavers, see Strype, *op. cit.* note 50; H J Cowell, 'The French Walloon Church at Glastonbury, 1550-1553', *Proceedings of the Huguenot Society*, 13 (1928), 483-515. For Cornish in Jersey, see Colin Platt (ed.) *The Mont Orgeuil Dossier* Bognor Regis: Woodfield 2003, 6. For Speke see J. Gairdner and R. H. Brodie (eds). *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 15 – 1540*, 298, and Longleat House TH/VOL/II 1542-1557, 24 (a) letter from Henry Cornish to Sir John Thynne 11 Oct. 1550, f. 157.
- ⁵³ E. Taunton, *The English Black Monks of St Benedict*, (London: John C Nimmo 1897), 181-3; W. Page (ed.) *A History of the County of Somerset: Volume 2* (1911), 82-99 'Houses of Benedictine monks: The abbey of Glastonbury', online at <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=40921>.
- ⁵⁴ *Calendar of Patent Rolls, Philip and Mary* 1, 240.
- ⁵⁵ Strype, *op. cit.* note 50; Longleat House, *op. cit.* note 52, ff. 156, 156v.
- ⁵⁶ National Archives C1/1329/1-3.
- ⁵⁷ *Calendar of Patent Rolls Elizabeth 1558-60*, 83-4.
- ⁵⁸ eg Francisca, daughter of Richard Cornishe, baptised in St John's Glastonbury 31 Oct 1605: St John's Parish Register, SHC, D/P/gla.j 2/1/1.
- ⁵⁹ Chatsworth, Hardwicke MS 22.
- ⁶⁰ Fowkes and Potter, *op. cit.* note 18, 193.
- ⁶¹ F. T. Colby (ed) *The visitation of Somerset in the year 1623* (London: Harleian Society 1876), 15.
- ⁶² W. H. H. Rogers, 'Brooke, of Somerset and Devon, Part III' in *PSANHS* 3rd series, 6 (1900) part ii, 109-24, 110-111.
- ⁶³ T. Fuller, *The History of the Worthies of England* (London, Thomas Tegg 1840) 3, 97; many entries in St John's Parish Register, SHC, D/P/gla.j 2/1/1; cf D/P/gla.j 4/1/18 Churchwarden's records 1583.
- ⁶⁴ National Archives, PROB 10/639, f. 371-3.
- ⁶⁵ *Journals of the House of Commons* 6 (London, House of Commons 1803), 40.
- ⁶⁶ J. Taylor, *John Taylors wandering, to see the wonders of the west*. (London, 1649), 6.
- ⁶⁷ Bristol Record Office, AC/AS/4/15, AC/AS/36/3/a; W Phelps, *The history and antiquities of Somersetshire* 1 (London, 1836), 501.
- ⁶⁸ Phelps, above, note 67; John Cannon (SHC, DD/SAS/C1193/4, f. 362) confirms that Prew's first wife was called Rebecca. Thomas Prew of Martick (Martock) of Somerset married Rebecca Priddle at Sherborne in 1699 (Sherborne marriages, online at <http://www.opcdorset.org/SherborneFiles/SherborneMarrs1685-1719.htm#1685>). He was the eldest son of Abraham and Edith Prew of Martock (SHC, Dr Campbell's Index).
- ⁶⁹ SHC, DD/BR/u 11; A Gentleman [D Defoe], *A Tour Thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain* (London, G Strahan 1724), 1, 27-8.
- ⁷⁰ Bristol Record Office, AC/AS/4/15. The duke's lease is lost; we owe this information entirely to the prudence of John Cannon, who was asked to transcribe it for Prew's widow and copied these notes into his Memoir: Cannon, *op. cit.* note 68, f. 362.
- ⁷¹ Cannon, *op. cit.* note 68, f. 279-80 (edited version in Money (ed), *op. cit.* note 29, 296); M. McDermott and S. Berry (eds) *Edmund Rack's survey of Somerset* (Taunton: SANHS 2011), 147; SHC, D/P/gla.j 13/1/2, f 460.
- ⁷² Money (ed), *op. cit.* note 28, 255, 259, 498, 503. I am indebted to John Down's descendant, Ian Gartlan, for sharing much useful information about his family.
- ⁷³ WSRO *op. cit.* note 28; SHC, DD\MY/35; SHC, M/1528, A1073, A1075.
- ⁷⁴ H. Colvin, *op. cit.* above, note 1, 56.
- ⁷⁵ Above, *op. cit.* note 7.
- ⁷⁶ Cowell *op. cit.* note 53, 493, 494; W J Wedlake, 'Reminiscences' 1980, Glastonbury Abbey Museum MS A628, p38; *Calendar of State Papers Domestic, Edward VI, 1547-1553*, (London, 1992), 229. The 'priory house' was presumably the prior's office built by Abbot John of Breynton: see Carley, *op. cit.* note 2, 45.
- ⁷⁷ T Hearne, ed, *Walteri Hemingford, Canonici de Gisseburne, Historia de rebus gestis Edvardi I. Edvardi II. & Edvardi III* 2 (Oxford 1731), 680-685; Hawkins E (ed) *Travels in Holland, the United Provinces, England, Scotland and Ireland, 1634-1635*,

- by Sir William Brereton, *Bart* (Manchester: Chetham Society, 1844), 172-5. Stewart Brown's survey of the Abbot's Kitchen has revealed traces of later roof-lines abutting onto the north and south walls, and a substantial wall that bisected the southern doorway. On aesthetic grounds he thinks that these structures must post-date the Dissolution (*pers. comm.*), but the split entrance seems unnecessarily complicated and inconvenient for access to an outbuilding, and to my mind is more likely to have been associated with a late but still pre-Dissolution adaptation of the Kitchen itself that required differentiated access, perhaps from inside and outside the monastic enclosure. As late as 1826 "the marks of a separating barrier, which divided two of the chimnies from the others" were still to be seen within the building: R. Warner, *An History of the Abbey of Glaston, and of the Town of Glastonbury* (Bath: Richard Cruttwell, 1826), xlv.
- ⁷⁸ Dunning (ed.), *op. cit.* note 21 'Glastonbury: Parish'; Wedlake, *op. cit.* note 76, 49; R. W. Dunning, 'The Tribunal, Glastonbury, Somerset', in L. Abrams and J. P. Carley, *The Archaeology and History of Glastonbury*, (Woodbridge : Boydell Press 1991), 89–96, p 92. For Beere, see conveniently http://glastonburyantiquarians.org/site/index.php?page_id=212 (Court House) and http://glastonburyantiquarians.org/site/index.php?page_id=182 ("the galery"). The 1640 document is National Archives, E 134/ 16Chas1Mich/2. The initials on the gatehouse have been wrongly read as 'T B' and therefore taken to be those of Thomas Brooke, then lessee of the Abbey, creating a certain amount of confusion: J Cox (ed), *op. cit.* above note 1, 96; R Dunning (ed), *A History of the County of Somerset: Volume 9: 'Glastonbury: Town'*, pp. 16-43. For the later history of the inn, see SHC, M/1528 box 2 A1020-1024.
- ⁷⁹ Hawkins, *op. cit.* note 77
- ⁸⁰ J. Sampson, 'Glastonbury Abbey: North East Crossing Pier Archaeological Survey 2005', 48a. Online at http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/glastonbury_abbey_2007/report1/downloads.cfm?CFID=2031&CFTOKEN=BA1D8AA3-52A0-4288-A541C72838742DC5.
- ⁸¹ Colvin, *op. cit.* note 74, 56-7.
- ⁸² "a wicked man, one William Goals." See J. A. Robinson, *Two Glastonbury Legends. King Arthur and St Joseph of Arimathea* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1926), 47.
- ⁸³ W. E. Daniel, 'Dismanteling of Glastonbury Abbey' *Notes and Queries for Somerset and Dorset* 12 (Sherborne, 1911), 249; *Acts of the Privy Council of England, 21547-1550* (London, 1890), 429.
- ⁸⁴ Longleat House *op. cit.* note 52, fol. 157, 157v, 160; Longleat House TH/VOL/II 1542-1557, 24 (b) letter from Henry Cornish to Sir John Thynne 16 Nov 1550, ff. 159 and v. The reverberatory furnace found by Wedlake in the porch of the Hall may perhaps have been used for melting bell-metal (Glastonbury Abbey Museum MSS A 350, A350. My thanks to John Allan for this reference).
- ⁸⁵ *Calendar of State Papers Domestic*, Edward VI, 1547-1553, (London, 1992), 221.
- ⁸⁶ Taunton, *op. cit.* note 53.
- ⁸⁷ Sampson, *op. cit.* note 80, 48.
- ⁸⁸ Hawkins, *op. cit.* note 77.
- ⁸⁹ R. C. Temple (ed.) *The Travels of Peter Mundy in Europe and Asia 1608-67* 4 (Cambridge: Hakluyt Society 1925), 4-6.
- ⁹⁰ Dunning (ed), *op. cit.* note 47, suggests that the tower "was apparently added after c. 1600".
- ⁹¹ John Allan *et al.*, in Gilchrist, R and Green, C, *op. cit.* note 2, 'The Post-Roman Pottery: Online Report', especially Appendix 4: Italian Wares (Hugo Blake) and Appendix 8: The Sixteenth-Century Redwares (David Dawson and Oliver Kent). My thanks to Dr Allan, Archaeological Consultant to Glastonbury Abbey, for this and many other helpful references, and for his close reading of an earlier draft of this paper.
- ⁹² National Archives, E 134/16Chas1Mich/2.
- ⁹³ SHC, M/1528, A1045.
- ⁹⁴ SHC, Q/RRW/1 no. 38.
- ⁹⁵ Hearne 1732 *op. cit.* note 77; Eyston, *op. cit.* note 47, 104; Cannon, *op. cit.* note 68, f. 204; W. Stukeley, *Itinerarium curiosum. Or, an account of the antiquitys and remarkable curiositys in nature or art, observ'd in travels thro' Great Brittan* (London, 1724), 145.
- ⁹⁶ Bodleian Library, MS Rawl D 1481, f. 348.
- ⁹⁷ Eyston, *op. cit.* note 47, 74.
- ⁹⁸ A. Paschall, letter to John Aubrey, Nov 11 1684, printed in anon., *Miscellanies on several curious subjects: now first publish'd from their respective originals.* (London, 1714), 54-58, 57.
- ⁹⁹ W. C. Lukis (ed) *The family memoirs of the Rev. William Stukeley, M.D., and the antiquarian and other correspondence of William Stukeley, Roger and Samuel Gale, etc* 3 (Durham: Surtees Society 1887), 496.
- ¹⁰⁰ Cannon, *op. cit.* note 68, f. 208.
- ¹⁰¹ J. Whitaker, *The Life of Saint Neot, the Oldest of all the Brothers to King Alfred* (London: 1809), 35.
- ¹⁰² Above, note 28.
- ¹⁰³ S. Saunders, *A Short Description of the Curiosities of Glastonbury, in Somersetshire. Taken from Inspection, Description, Tradition and Record* (London 1780), 23.
- ¹⁰⁴ Above, note 40.
- ¹⁰⁵ 37 George III c. 16 *An act for dividing, allotting, and inclosing a certain parcel or tract of commonable*

- ground, formerly part of King's Sedgmoor, lying in the Parish of Street
- ¹⁰⁶ SHC, M/1528, A1078.
- ¹⁰⁷ SHC, DD/SAS/C795/SE/82, opposite page 240.
- ¹⁰⁸ SHC, D/T/WEL 9, 25.
- ¹⁰⁹ SHC, T GLA T 726.72, grangerised copy of W. Robinson *Glastonbury Abbey* (1844), MS note inserted at page 17; British Library, Add MS 17463, fol. 118-169, 120 and 120v.
- ¹¹⁰ Above, note 40; above, note 108. A payment on August 29 1778 was made to "Jn Down for Thos Bleadon Esq" and another on June 2 1792 to "John Down for earl of Essex".
- ¹¹¹ Collinson, *op. cit.* note 3, 2, 261.
- ¹¹² Taunton, *op. cit.* note 53. For what follows, cf A. Stout, 'Grounding Faith at Glastonbury: Episodes in the Early History of Alternative Archaeology', *Numen*, 59, 2012, 249-269.
- ¹¹³ M. Aston 'Public Worship and Iconoclasm' in D. Gaimster and R. Gilchrist (eds.), *The Archaeology of Reformation, 1480-1580*, (Leeds, Maney 2003), 9-28, 17; Carley, *op. cit.* note 2, 169-70.
- ¹¹⁴ W. Skeat (ed.), *Joseph of Arimathea; otherwise called The Romance of the Seint Graal, or Holy Grail* (London: Early English Text Society 1871), 368.
- ¹¹⁵ J. Bale, *The actes of Englysh votaries...* (Wesel, 1546), 14.
- ¹¹⁶ eg Samuel Gale, in B. Willis, *An history of the mitred Parliamentary abbies, and conventual cathedral churches 2* (London, 1718-19), 197-8; A. Watkin, *The Story of Glastonbury* (London: Catholic Truth Society 1960), 14; J Sampson, 'Glastonbury Abbey: The Painted Decoration of the Lady Chapel' 1995/2007:19-20 http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/catalogue/adsdata/arch-770-1/dissemination/pdf/lady_chapel/1995_report_-_rejjged_for_ADS.pdf.
- ¹¹⁷ W. Camden, *Britain, or A chorographical description of the most flourishing kingdomes, England, Scotland, and Ireland, and the ilands adioyning, out of the depth of antiquitie* (London, 1610), 226.
- ¹¹⁸ L. G. W. Legg (ed) *A Relation of a short survey of the Western Counties made by a lieutenant of the military company in Norwich in 1635* (London, Royal Historical Society 1936), 79-80.
- ¹¹⁹ J. Bonnet (ed) *Letters of John Calvin 2* (Edinburgh: Thomas Constable, 1847), 246.
- ¹²⁰ H. Miller, 'Stumpe, William (c.1497-1552)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004.
- ¹²¹ *Calendar of State Papers Domestic, Edward VI, 1547-1553*, (London, 1992), 215-222.
- ¹²² A. Spicer, 'Poullain, Valérand (c.1509-1557)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004.
- ¹²³ R. Jackson, *The Liturgy and Order of the Mid-Sixteenth Century English Church in Geneva* Unpublished MTh thesis, University of Stellenbosch, 2012, 8; A. C. Duke, *Reformation and Revolt in the Low Countries* (London : Hambledon, 1990), 283.
- ¹²⁴ A. Spicer "'God Will Have a House": Defining Sacred Space and Rites of Consecration in Early Seventeenth-Century England" in A. Spicer and S.M. Hamilton (eds), *Defining the Holy. Sacred Space in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* Aldershot: Ashgate [2005] pp 207-230, 220.
- ¹²⁵ Sampson, *op. cit.* note 116, 19-20.
- ¹²⁶ A. Spicer "'A Place of Refuge and Sanctuary of a Holy Temple": Exile Communities and the Stranger Churches" in N. Goose and L. Luu (eds) *Immigrants in Tudor and Early Stuart England* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2005), 91-109, 96.
- ¹²⁷ Thus correcting my over-optimistic assessment in Stout, *op. cit.* note 112, 253. Cf Hembry *op. cit.* note 3, 114; 'The Church of St John the Baptist, Glastonbury. Visitors: Brief Tour', online at <http://www.stjohnsglastonbury.org.uk/visitors.php>; Phelps *op. cit.* note 67, 504.
- ¹²⁸ Cowell *op. cit.* note 52, 493; above, *op. cit.* note 54
- ¹²⁹ E. Kerridge, *Textile Manufactures in Early Modern England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, c1985), 37.
- ¹³⁰ Chatsworth, *Survey of the Devonshire Estates by William Senior, c.1609-1628* (map); John Allan, *pers. comm.*
- ¹³¹ Longleat, TH/BOOK/141 f.18b (on the verso of a document dated 8 Nov 1550); SHC, M/1528, A1078; above, *op. cit.* note 54; National Archives E134/1654/East 15
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- ¹³³ W. T. MacCaffrey, 'Cecil, William, first Baron Burghley (1520/21-1598)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004.
- ¹³⁴ L. Woodbridge, *Vagrancy, Homelessness, and English Renaissance Literature* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 81-5
- ¹³⁵ E. Ashmole, *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum* (London, 1652), 481-2.
- ¹³⁶ S. W. May, 'Dyer, Sir Edward (1543-1607)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004.
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- ¹⁴⁹ Norfolk Record Office MS 7198/116, quoted in Carley, *op. cit.* note 2, 152-3.
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