

A personal selection of local, British Isles and world, history.

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## CLARENDON

We are lucky in Salisbury to have the site of Henry II's palace and hunting park on our doorstep. This article by Mandy Richardson was taken from the *Clarendon Palace News* of Autumn 2024: 'After I discussed wine provision at Clarendon in the previous newsletter, a reader commented that medieval Bordeaux exported around 20,000 tuns of wine a year to Britain. The impetus for that region's prosperity, and expanding wine export business was Henry II's 1152 union with Eleanor of Aquitaine. So it is no surprise that Clarendon's vast wine cellar was constructed under their rule c.1172. In 1252 their grandson Henry III doubled its length and ordered repair of the 'steps down into it' that can still be seen today.



The cellar is arguably the palace site's most striking feature, its depth prompting romantic tales of a vast dungeon there. A 'dungeon chamber' is mentioned in a 1680 inventory and the feature was termed 'the dungeon' early in the 1930s excavations. By 1938, however, Tancred Borenius was convinced this was 'the king's cellar... "La Roche"' referred to in 1227, its c.3.65-metre declivity ideal for storing wine. After all, Henry III had ordered the deepening of his cellar at Havering in 1251 since too much sunlight was

getting in.

We know some detail about the cellar's appearance. Henry III's extension was apparently complete by July 1253, when 40 oaks were ordered for works at a house above the cellar 'in Rupe' (of rock). Edward I's 1273 survey mentions a chimney, in 1276 two windows needed repair, and by 1354 it boasted a slate roof. By 1356 the cellar below it had a porch (with a pantry above), perhaps sheltering the paved area immediately to its north, probably laid so that wine could easily be unloaded after delivery by cart via an archaeologically elusive eastern postern gate.

Who resided in the house above the cellar is unclear, although this was perhaps the 'chamber of Hugh de Nevill' (King John's chief verderer) mentioned in 1273. However, other aspects insert a human element into the story. The difficulty of manhandling 252-gallon barrels of wine down the staircase is evident in the repairs confirmed by recent examination of its stonework - a mixture of Hurdcott (usually 12thC) and the generally later Tisbury/Chilmark. Anyway, stairs tend to evoke

the many feet that have trod them, perhaps including those of the holders of the manor of East Winterslow mentioned in the spring newsletter, obliged to draw 'from any vessel... as much wine as needful for' the king's pitcher of claret. Early records locate the vessels in question in the buttery, but a 1360s incumbent's name, 'John de la Roche', suggests an association with the cellar. His way downstairs would have been lit by lamps placed in two round-headed recesses just inside the main door. He would then have entered the cellar through heavy double doors, hung on wooden posts, after successfully navigating various security measures indicated by holes for metal bolts at the staircase's foot.

Concerns for security are similarly evident in the cellar's siting, about as far away as you can get from the palace's main, western gateway. The queen's apartments are also in this most 'deep' area of the site, least accessible via public routes, prompting the thought that what were most jealously guarded at medieval Clarendon were the royal wine – and the royal women.'



Ed: As a wine trade apprentice in the last days of importing casks I can assure Mandy that taking barrels down to the cellar would not have been a problem. Two hefty wooden rails would have been laid on the steps to provide a track and allow for the cask's curvature. Two ropes fixed at the top and running around the cask would have controlled the speed of descent. Incidentally, my own notes show that Bordeaux exported 80,000 tuns of wine in a year, a quarter of which was for England whose population was only 5 million. Bordeaux was not the defined appellation that it is today so much of the 'Claret' would have come from the hinterland, places like Cahors and the Dordogne. The photo above<sup>1</sup> is of a similar Medieval wine cellar at Winchelsea. The casks would have been placed on wooden or brick *scantlings* to keep them off the floor, again allowing for the curvature, and also to enable a jug to fit under the tap.

#### MONY A MICKLE MAKS A MUCKLE

**T**his is a story I picked up from an on-line course on *Bonnie Prince Charlie and the Jacobites* by the University of Edinburgh in conjunction with the National Museums of Scotland. In the spring of 1692, a young Scot, John Campbell of Lundie, set up business as a goldsmith-banker at the sign of The Three Crowns in Strand, London. In addition to supplying plate and jewellery, Campbell offered a comprehensive banking service – discounting bills, making loans

and taking deposits. Many of his customers were his fellow countrymen, including his clan chief, the powerful Duke of Argyll. Royal patronage began when Queen Anne commissioned Campbell to make the collars and badges for the Order of the Thistle (right). In 1708, he took another Scottish goldsmith, George Middleton, as partner. John Campbell died in 1712, and in the same year Middleton married the founder's daughter, Mary.



George Middleton was heavily involved with the affairs of the French financier, John Law who owed a great deal of money to the bank when the Mississippi bubble burst in 1720 and the English stock market crashed in the same year. This resulted in the ceasing of Middleton's payment for three years. In 1727, George Campbell, the founder's younger son, joined Middleton before welcoming a third partner, David Bruce, to the bank in 1744. The goldsmith practice had declined since the 1720s, so when Middleton died in 1747, the surviving partners called themselves simply 'Bankers of 59 Strand', the bank's home since 1739.



The name Coutts first appeared in the title of the bank in 1755. James Coutts, a Scottish banker, was taken into partnership by George Campbell upon his marriage to Mary Peagram, granddaughter of the founder (right). When Campbell died in 1760, James invited his youngest brother, Thomas, to join him and in January 1761 the bank became known as James & Thomas Coutts.

When James retired in 1775, the bank's title changed to Thomas Coutts & Company – remaining so until Thomas's death in 1822. The bank flourished under the lead of Thomas and his partners Edmund Antrobus, Edward Marjoribanks and Coutts Trotter. In the final decade of the 18th century, the premises at 59 Strand were significantly extended and profits rose from £9,700 in 1775 to £72,000 in 1821.

## TIME WAS



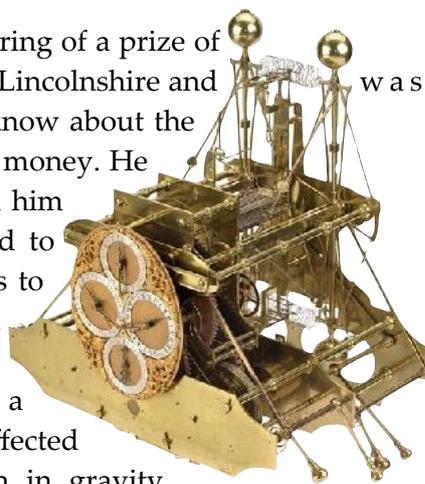
Harvard does a free course on the *Principles and History of Navigation* that I found most enlightening. The latest module was on the Longitude Prize and finishes up with a video interview at Greenwich Royal Observatory with the Head of Horology, Rory McEllroy and astronomer Chris Lintott. The story Rory unfolds is rather more complex and nuanced than given in the popular book *Longitude* by Dava Sobel (Fourth Estate 1998). Incidentally, the problem of Latitude had been solved by the *sextant*, still used for *sightings* today despite GPS.

In 1707 Admiral Sir Cloudesley Shovell was returning to England with his victorious fleet when he was shipwrecked off the Scilly Isles and nearly 2,000 sailors lost their lives. It was realised that the cause was faulty navigation due to the inability to calculate

longitude. The result was the Longitude Act of 1714 and the offering of a prize of £20,000 (over £2m today). John Harrison (page 3<sup>2</sup>) lived in north Lincolnshire and was an expert worker in wood - even making clocks. John did not know about the prize and even when he found out he was not motivated by the money. He took his ideas to Halley, the Astronomer Royal who introduced him to George Graham, London's finest clockmaker. George agreed to



finance John but it took five years to produce his first sea clock (chronometer) H1 in 1735 (right<sup>3</sup>). Previous makers had used a pendulum but these had been affected by rough seas and the variation in gravity caused by the shape of the earth. Before getting to this stage, John used wood and settled on lignum vitae as it was self-oiling as well as placing the clock in *gimbals* (as in a gyroscope) to cope with the ship's movement. His key contribution to modern clockmaking



was the *grasshopper escapement* above<sup>5</sup>. The Royal Society gave H1 a sea trial that at least showed its potential and John received £500 to keep experimenting.

His more ambitious H2 of 1739 (right<sup>2</sup>) followed but was abandoned. However by-products were his invention of the bi-metal strip that was not affected by heat fluctuations and the caged roller-bearing (1740) that reduced friction.



During the first sea trial he was up against a rival, Nevil Maskelyne, who



preferred astronomical methods. Nevil's idea worked but was very cumbersome in use and accurate to within 30 miles, compared with 10 miles for H1. also the Board of Longitude were concerned that John's work could not be replicated. The improved H3 of 1758 (left<sup>4</sup>) that took 19 years.

For his breakthrough work, John changed tack completely. He had a watch made to his own design by John Jefferys. Using the skills of London's finest watchmakers, he used the watch's mechanics with his own extensive fusee (chain driven) adaptations to produce H4 (page 5<sup>4</sup>) in 1759 and claim the prize. The watch kept going for 30 hours. However, Maskelyne was now Astronomer Royal and continually delayed payment until John's son William went to the King for justice.

The baton was taken up by John Arnold who managed to simplify

John's design and bring down the cost He was followed by Thomas Earnshaw who produced in quantity thereby reducing the cost even further.



After all this incredible work, the Admiralty did not take on chronometers (to start with, due to cost) until the nineteenth century. The initial beneficiary was the East India Company who realised that accurate navigation meant shorter times and thus less need for stores that could then be replaced by profitable cargo.

### FINDERS KEEPERS

The Dorset History Centre announced the finding by a detectorist of a rare coin (see below) that he has since sold at auction. Marcus Aurelius Mausaeus Carausius (died 293) was a rather thuggish military commander of the Roman Empire in the 3rd century. He was a Menapian from Belgic Gaul, who usurped power in 286, during the Carausian Revolt, declaring himself emperor in Britain and northern Gaul (Imperium Britanniarum). He did this only 13 years after the Gallic



of the Batavian Postumus was ended in 273 and probably because he feared arrest for his misdeeds. He held power for seven years, fashioning the name "Emperor of the North" for himself, before being assassinated by his finance minister Allectus.

### THE PLOT THINS

Sky History tells the story: Rewind to the early hours of 5th November 1605. Guy Fawkes had just been caught red-handed in the cellars of Parliament with 36 barrels of gunpowder, a fuse and a box of matches. His plot to kill the Protestant king and end the persecution of Catholics in England had gone up in smoke... and not in the way he was hoping. With Guy Fawkes imprisoned and the King's forces closing in, the rest of the conspirators fled London.

Robert Catesby, an Oxford University graduate and radicalised Catholic, led the escape. What many people don't know is that it was Catesby, not Guy Fawkes, who masterminded the Gunpowder Plot. The plan? Head north and stir up support. But first, a pitstop at Holbeche House. Unfortunately for Catesby and his fellow plotters, the plan fizzled out faster than a damp firework. They arrived at Holbeche House demoralised, weary and wet after travelling through heavy rain. A crackling fire provided a few moments of relief until, in a moment of cruel irony, their damp gunpowder ignited while drying out by the flames. Several men were seriously injured, including Catesby.

The Gunpowder Plotters hideout didn't stay a secret for long. By the early hours of 8th November, Holbeche House was under siege and surrounded by 200 of the King's men. Sheriff Richard Walsh demanded surrender, but knowing they had nothing left to lose and that their chances of survival were slim, the Gunpowder Plotters chose to fight. They fortified themselves inside the manor and used whatever furniture they could find to barricade the doors and



windows. Armed with muskets and swords, the Sheriff's forces advanced. The Gunpowder Plotters fired back with a motley collection of weapons, mostly pistols and a few matchlocks. It wasn't long before

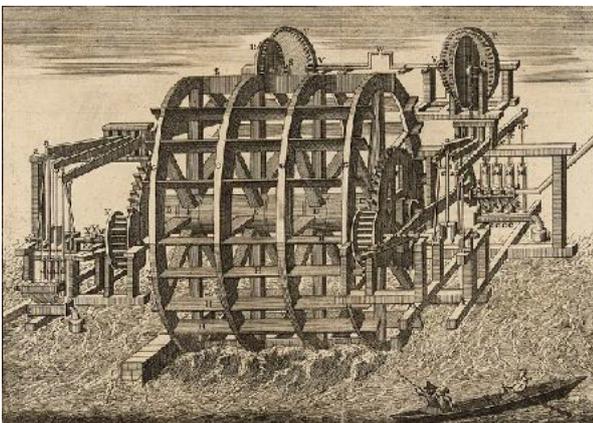
the King's men breached the manor. Thomas Percy and Christopher Wright were two of the first men to fall. Catesby, already wounded from the explosion the previous night, fought to the end. According to historians, he died clutching a picture of the Virgin Mary to his chest.

There was no escape, not to mention mercy, for the men captured alive. Back in London, execution by hanging, drawing and quartering awaited - a harsh reminder of the Crown's zero-tolerance policy on high treason. Guy Fawkes was sentenced to the same fate and his execution was scheduled for 31st January 1606. But instead of letting the executioner pull the rope, he jumped from the ladder on his way up to the hanging platform. He broke his neck and died instantly. Fawkes saved himself from a gruesome end but ultimately the Gunpowder Plot, meant to kill the king and ignite a revolution, instead sparked a nationwide crackdown on Catholics.



## LONDON BRIDGE

The cutaway diagram (right<sup>6</sup>) commissioned by Country Life shows the huge boat-shaped *starlings* (pontons) that supported the structure.



Those of you who have read *Mudlarking* by Lara Maiklem (Bloomsbury 2020), will know that the constriction of the water-flow caused many problems to wherrymen and wildlife trying to *shoot the bridge*. It also caused the outgoing tide to be dammed up which, due to the unmixed fresh water, allowed the river to freeze over. The situation was exacerbated in Tudor times when waterwheels (left<sup>3</sup>) to pump 'fresh' water were installed.

1. Courtesy of 1066 Country.
2. Courtesy of Wakefield Libraries.
3. Courtesy of Royal Museums, Greenwich.
4. Courtesy of Freed From time, Flamstead House.
5. quillandpad.com - Rick Hale wooden clocks.
6. A reconstruction drawing of London Bridge in about 1590 by Stephen Conlin, specially commissioned for Country Life.