



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

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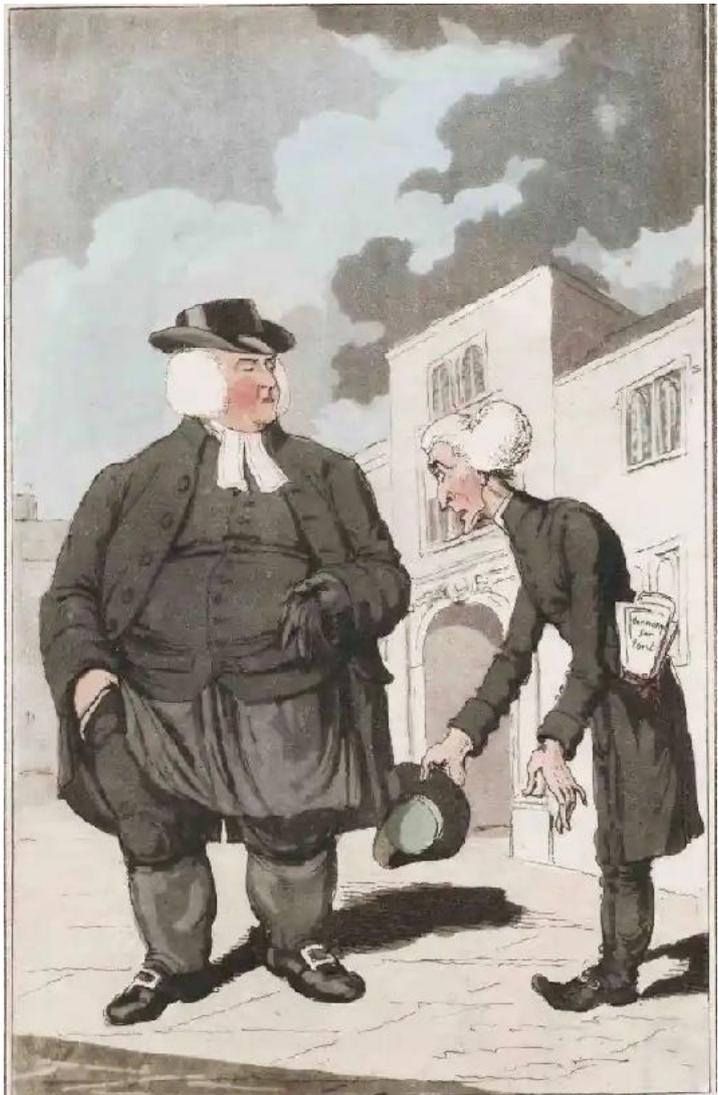
INCUMBENTS

In my work at the Salisbury Cathedral archives, I am examining the Chapter minutes from the eighteenth century when they first started to write in English. One thing I noticed was the names of the vicars and rectors appointed to each of the Chapter-owned parishes, especially during Victorian times.

Take 1882 as an example. Revd. John Smith installed into the prebend/canony of Alton Australis. There were two grades of Canon, residential and non-residential. The latter only came to Chapter meetings twice a year unless a new Dean or Bishop had to be elected. Residential canons lived in the Close and ran the Cathedral, presided over by the Dean. A prebend was a parish where the revenue went to the incumbent as his income. Unusually, in Salisbury's case the Bishop was assigned a prebend (Potterne) which meant that he also had *a seat and a voice* at Great Chapter meetings, usually November and Pentecost (49 days after Easter).

The point I am making is that a name like John Smith was highly unusual. In the

same year Revd. Charles Humphrey Cholmeley was installed at Bedminster and in the previous year Lionel Digby William Dawson-Damer went to Yetminster Secunda; Digbys being the descendants of Sir Walter Raleigh at Sherborne and Damers the great family at Blandford Forum. So the Church was beginning to favour clerics with three Christian names. In 1895 Hon. Revd. Bertrand Pleydell-Bouverie was presented to Chesembury and Chute. The Pleydells and Bouveries form part of the Earl of Radnor's titles. In 1898 Revd. Arthur Barugh Thynne went to Grantham Borealis. The Thynnes are the family at Longleat.

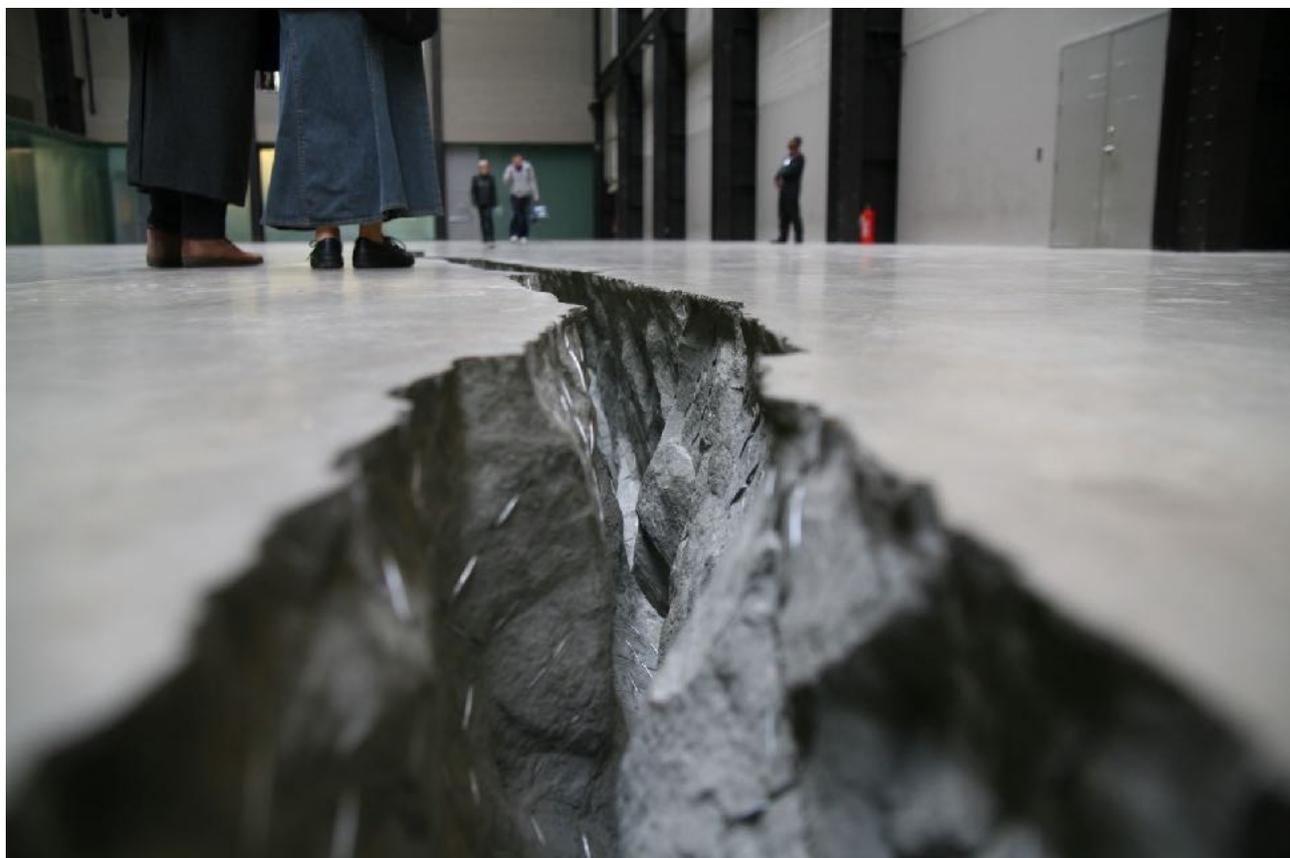


In 1908 Revd. Wyndham Arthur Seinde Merewether, vicar of North Bradley was given a better living at Bradford-on-Avon. In May 1914 he was promoted to St Thomas' in Salisbury and again in 1919 to Preston. The Wyndhams were a prestigious Salisbury Family whose home is now council offices. I am not sure how the fashion for family surnames being used as Christian names arose but in my family the menfolk have taken Lockwood (as in actresses Margaret and Julia) as a second name. The Lockwoods form a good chunk of my Mothers' family tree; Smiths also but strangely their name has not been made use of. Anthony Trollope satirised the Anglican clergy of Victoria's reign so well and the illustration above complements it.¹

Oddly, incumbents could be bishops: Right Revd. Louis George Mylne was appointed to Wilsford and Woodford in 1899 and Right Revd. Right Revd. Frederick Wallis, Dean of Caius College, Cambridge was given the prebend of Beminster Secunda in 19132. Albert Ernest Jocellyn was installed at Yatesbury in 1915. Their bishoprics had been in the Empire, Mylne from Bombay , Wallis from New Zealand and Jocellyn from Jamaica.

SHIBBOLETH²

One sometimes uses words without realising their origin. Shibboleth as I expect you know, refers to a worn-out or discredited doctrine. The Biblical Ephramites could not pronounce this word; it meant flood or stream, so their enemies, the Jephthah and Gileadites used it as a password at the ford of Jordan (Judges 12:6).



A modern interpretation: Doris Salcedo's *Shibboleth*, an art installation in Tate Modern's Turbine hall in 2007. *By creating the crack on the floor, the Colombian artist wanted to mark the divide that has existed between whites and non-whites throughout history. According to the artist, the history of racism has always coincided with the history of modernity, but there has always existed a dark side of racism that has remained hidden and untold.*

RECEIVED WISDOM

A chance Oxfam purchase of *Salisbury Cathedral, A Reflective Guide* by Sydney Evans (Michael Russell 1985), has led to a bit of an eye-opener. It has been the accepted story that Salisbury's extended tower, and spire were added some hundred years after the Cathedral was 'completed' even though there are no records of a date. However, Evans quotes Gleeson White and Roy Spring (Clerk of Works writing in 1982) as saying that this was highly unlikely as it would have encountered the Black Death plague which reached Salisbury in 1348.

Our in-house architectural historian John Elliott referred me to Tim Tatton-Brown's introduction to Tim Ayers' *Salisbury Cathedral, The West Front* (Phillimore & Co. 2000). Tim was the Cathedral Archaeologist and is highly respected. His carefully argued time-line looks like this: Work started with the laying out of the foundations up to the wall bench level, and also the floor. The official foundation stones were laid in 1220. The eastern end of the Cathedral, along with the crossing and first two bays of the nave were probably complete by 1236. In 1245 Elias of Dereham dies and in 1246 a new bishop (William of York) arrives along with Elias' replacement Master Ralph (with Master Nicholas) of York. From 1247 onwards the York group finished the nave and the West Front - the porches may have been completed in 1246. The Chapter House was not only built by the York group but designed by them as well after having seen the Westminster version. TTB believes that only the central high gable and spirelets of the west front spilled over into the 1250s. Dendrochronology for the triforium timbers give a date of 1251-2 for the roof west of the north porch. The Cathedral was consecrated in 1258.

A marginal note in Bishop Martival's Book of Statutes says that *the church of Sarum was begun in the reign of King Richard, continued through the reigns of three kings, and was completed in 1266*. Richard died in 1199. The 1266 date would most likely have seen the completion of the cloisters and chapter house.



In the early 1300s 275 feet of masonry was added to the lantern tower. The embellishment used is known as *ballflower* (right³) which came in around 1300 as part of the Decorated Period in architecture. TTB believes that it was built and financed by two bishops: Simon of Ghent and Roger Martival (1297 - 1330). The figures on the west front were probably added at this time.

It is interesting to note that in building both the chapter house and the tower/spire, the designers' ambitions appear to have been greater than their capabilities, leading to centuries of remedial work.

1225 AND ALL THAT⁴

Sean McGlynn, author of *Blood Cries Afar* (Spellmount 2015), writes in History Today Volume 75 Issue 3 March 2025: The Magna Carta of 1215 is celebrated globally as the foundation of modern liberties and rights for its stipulation of equality before the law and its placing of monarchs and rulers under it. However, significant as the 1215 charter is, the document sealed in June of that year between King John and his rebellious barons was a



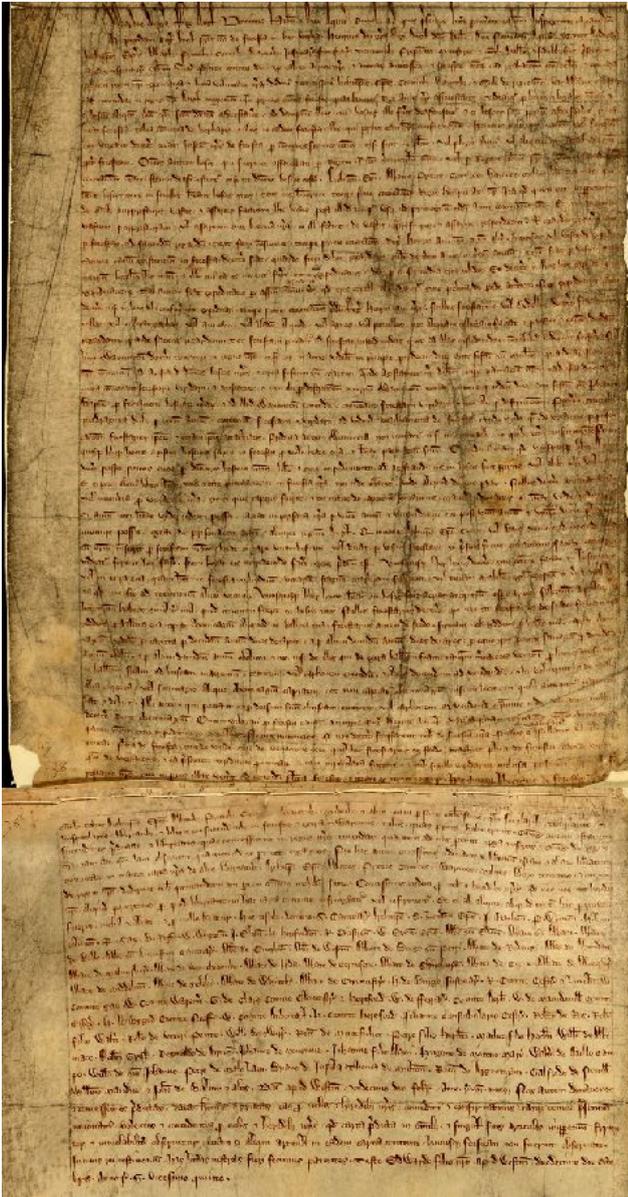
prototype, far from the final version set out in law. That came ten years later in 1225.

The 1215 text was not even named *Magna Carta*, but the *Articles of the Barons*. Its 63 clauses agreed between John and the barons arrayed against him did not survive much beyond two months, as the opposing forces were soon back at war with each other. Capitalising on the civil war in England a French invasion followed. John's death in October 1216 did not end the conflict, though a revised Articles of the Barons – with one-third of the original causes dropped – was issued in Bristol in November by the new king, Henry III, then only nine years old. It was only after the defeat of the barons and the expulsion of their French allies a year later that we arrive at 'Magna Carta', the 'Great Charter', when in November 1217 a further four clauses related to forest laws and rights were transferred to a new Charter of Forest Liberties. What was left, the larger part, became the Great Charter, marking the peace settlement at the end of the civil war. But Magna Carta still had one more stage in its evolution before achieving its final form. That came on 11 February 1225 (right).

father's: he needed the consent of his subjects to impose new taxation on them, in order to fund war against the French. (In 1215 John's punitive fiscal demands that caused so much backlash arose from the need to finance military campaigns in a vain attempt to win back the lands he had lost in France.) Although in the preamble to the last version Henry III declares that he is reissuing it 'of our own spontaneous good will', once again, the reason was French military pressures.

Prince Louis, the invader of England in 1216-17 and now King Louis VIII, was conquering English lands in France; he had already taken Poitou. Henry urgently required money to hold Gascony. The final clause of the 1225 Charter states: *For the concession and gift of these liberties and the other liberties contained in our charter of liberties of the forest, the archbishops, bishops, abbots, priors, earls, barons, knights, free tenants, and all of our kingdom, have given us a fifteenth part of all their movables.*

This 'fifteenth' raised £40,000, enough to secure victory for the English through a major expedition later that year which retook Gascony. The magnates had agreed to this not only 'for the tranquillity and protection of the kingdom', but also in exchange for the permanence of the liberties in the Great and Forest Charters (left). Magna Carta was thereby ensured and enshrined as part of England's ill-defined constitution. As both 1215 and 1225 show: no French, no Great Charter.



This final Charter was much the same as the 1217 one, although 47 clauses had become 37. The document is considerably less radical than the 1215 one, especially in terms of consent for taxation and restraints on monarchical power. Yet, beyond the dominant feudal and economic concerns of its age – such as inheritance, wardship, knights’ service, castle-guard, and scutage – the Charter contains powerfully enduring concepts such as the liberty of the Church, no arbitrary legal punishment for anyone ‘except by the lawful judgment of his peers or by the law of the land’, and no legal corruption: ‘To no one will we sell, to no one will we refuse or delay right or justice.’

In one key aspect the final Charter of 1225 is more radical than its predecessors: it was granted to ‘all of our kingdom’, and not just its ‘free men and women’ (Ed, I am not aware of any reference to Free Women); over half the people of England previously excluded from the liberties of Magna Carta were now included – primarily all villeins and serfs.

Henry reissued his final Magna Carta nearly a dozen times during his long reign; in the 1250s it appeared not only in Latin and French but also English, to ensure all understood it, thereby embedding it further into the consciousness of the people. Edward I granted his own reissue in

1297 – for war taxation to fight the French again. By the time of its final reissue in 1300, Magna Carta had become a permanent feature of England’s constitutional landscape.

However, under the increasingly strong and centralised government of the Tudors in the 16th century, Magna Carta lost its relevance; it does not even merit a mention in Shakespeare’s *The Life and Death of King John* (c.1595). It owed its return to relevance and fame to lawyers responding to what they perceived as the tyranny of a new John: King Charles I in the clash between Crown and Parliament. In 1628 the jurist Edward Coke declared: ‘Magna Carta is such a fellow, that he will have no sovereign.’ The rebelling colonies in America felt the same way, deeming the Charter to be fundamental law that took precedence over both Crown and Parliament.

By 1970 UK legal reforms had whittled Magna Carta down to just three-and-a-half clauses from 1225, concerning the liberties of the Church and London and due process of law. Nonetheless, it is the Magna Carta of 1225 that has been enacted and invoked down the centuries – a truth worth remembering on its 800th anniversary.



VEGETATING⁵

Fermented cucumbers were drunk by the Ancient Egyptians. Roman Emperor Tiberius grew them in carts, moved by slaves to catch the sun. Samuel Johnson in 1773 wrote *A cucumber should be well-sliced, and dressed with pepper and vinegar, and then thrown out as good for nothing.*

Rhubarb, known first in the 16th century for its medicinal properties was not regarded as an ingredient until the 19th century. Benjamin Franklin sent a consignment to John Bartram in Philadelphia in 1770, the first ever in the US. Although botanists know it as a vegetable, the US Customs Court made it a fruit in 1947.

The first imported Tomatoes were golden in colour and nicknamed *golden apples*. The Italian for tomato is still *pomodoro*. Americans believed they were poisonous until 1820.

According to Irish folk tradition a drunkard named Jack trapped the devil in an oak tree but when he died he was denied entrance into Heaven or Hell so he roamed the world lighting his way with a coal in a pumpkin. Hence our Halloween custom.

An old folk remedy recommended carrying potatoes in your pocket to prevent rheumatism. Until the 18th century, the French even believed that potatoes caused leprosy. Marie Antoinette promoted potatoes by wearing their blossom in her hair. This story brings us nicely to Antoine-Auguste Parmentier (portrait⁶ left) 1737 - 1813. He was a French pharmacist and agronomist, best remembered as a vocal promoter of the potato as a food source for humans in France and throughout Europe. His many other contributions to nutrition and health included establishing the first mandatory smallpox vaccination campaign in France (under Napoleon beginning in 1805, when he was Inspector-General of the Health Service) and pioneering the extraction of sugar from sugar beets. Parmentier also founded a school of bread-making and studied methods of conserving food, including refrigeration.

He was a great publicist He gave bouquets of potato blossoms to the king and queen, and surrounded his potato patch at Sablons with armed guards during the day to suggest valuable goods, withdrawing them at night so people could steal the potatoes. The same story exists in Germany about Frederick the Great and I was taught at school the same trope about the Irish. Today you will see his name attached to many potato dishes. He is buried in Paris' Père Lachaise cemetery.

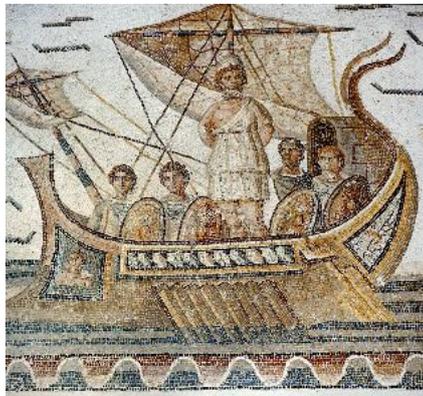
1. The Worldly Bishop and the Godly Curate (1810-1820) satirises the inequality of Church of England posts in the 1800s. Courtesy of The Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University.
2. Doris Salcedo – Shibboleth, 2007, 167 meters (548 feet) crack, installation view, Tate Modern, London, 2007-2008, photo: CC BY 2.0 by wonderferret.
3. Ballflower at Gloucester Cathedral courtesy of Wikipedia.
4. 1225 Magna Carta and Forest Charter in Public Archives, Public Domain.
5. Courtesy of Mr Hartston's Most Excellent Encyclopedia of Useless Information (Metro Publishing 2006).
6. Portrait of Parmentier, as Académicien with the Légion d'Honneur by Francois Dumont (1751 - 1813), Palais of Versailles in Public Domain.



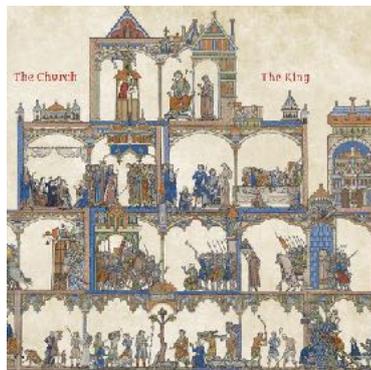
Orkney's incredible Skara Brae.



The Angevins' Clarendon Palace and the art of coppicing.



A new angle on Homer's Odyssey.



The English of the first millenium.