

Newsletter

DUNSTABLE & DISTRICT
LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

N°18

September 2002



The Chairman's Report

This time last year, we began our association with the Salvation Army Hall. Our sessions have generally been very well attended and our speakers given a warm reception. Your committee is always on the look out for new and interesting speakers. Many of our members recommend people to us and several of last year's speakers were contacted as a result of information received. We have had several requests from other organisations to suggest suitable speakers who have gone down well with our members.

We experience occasional problems with the sound system and are still working out the best way of illuminating the speaker's notes during slide presentations. The Salvation Army are very keen that our members should enjoy their visits to the Hall and are always willing to help when we have problems. This winter's programme should see an upgrading of the audio system and I hope this will make it easier to hear what our speakers are saying. Many of the latter say they don't need a microphone but I do my best to insist that they use it.

I would like to thank all the members of the Society's committee and all of you who work tirelessly to build on the successes of the past. I would also like to thank those who agree to give the vote of thanks at the end of our meetings. It is a politeness to thank our speaker and it is important that this is done by the membership in general.

I know that it is a bit early to mention the AGM, but it is likely that we will have vacancies on the committee. It is important that the membership is properly represented at the conclusion of the AGM.

Our society was heavily involved in this year's History Week, which took place in May. I would like to thank all our members who took part in this event in any way. It was a great success, so much so, that it may well be repeated in some form in future years. Many people said to me how much they enjoyed the Week and several new contacts were made as a result.

The Dunstable Tudor Festival will take place this year on Saturday 23rd November. We are beginning to understand how best to put this event on and I hope that all the people who helped last year will join in again this year. I also hope that more of you will come and take part in the fun, either by helping to organise it, or by coming along on the day.

Our first summer outing was to Royal Gunpowder Mills at Waltham Abbey. It was an intriguing venue and those of us who went will remember that day for a long time. The coach, however, was only just over half full. This seems to be the trend on the June outing.

Perhaps we need to make some adjustments to this event in order to ensure a higher uptake by members. If you have any thoughts on this matter, or anything else, please talk to one of the committee about it.

On the evening of Tuesday 9th July, we went by coach to Newport Pagnell for a guided walk around the town. We saw the remains of the Royalist garrison, scattered among the fields and the cows. There was the old mill and the remains of the original bridge. Our guide pointed out the many disservices which recent architects have inflicted upon his town, and we could only sympathise. We finished a most pleasant evening in the local museum, which was packed with all sorts of local treasures. We expressed the hope that one day we might have such a place and this time it was his turn to sympathise with us.

Our August outing was to the Black Country Museum, in Dudley. The weather was wonderful and we were able to indulge in the innocent pleasures of trolley bus rides, fish and chips, Charlie Chaplin films, the village school and wandering about in old-time corner shops. The local volunteers were only too happy to talk about the restoration work they had undertaken and their plans for the future. For the brave-hearted, or fool-hardy, there was the half hour tour of the drift mine. The journey into and out of the refurbished canal tunnel was most spectacular. As on all our outings this year, we were well looked after by our coach driver.

Hugh Garrod

Manshead Archaeological Society 50th Anniversary Lecture

'Meet the Ancestors' by Julian Richards

Saturday 5th October at 2.30 p.m.

Queensbury School

Admission by tickets only, available from
Barry Horne — 01525 221219

The oldest recorded mechanical clock

Dunstable Priory 1283 — Omer Roucaux

In the year 1283 the chronicler of the Annals reports :

**Eodem anno fecimus horologium quod est supra
pulpitum collocatum.**

This can be translated : In the same year we made the "horologium" which is placed above the "pulpitum". Two words have not been translated because they need some explanation.

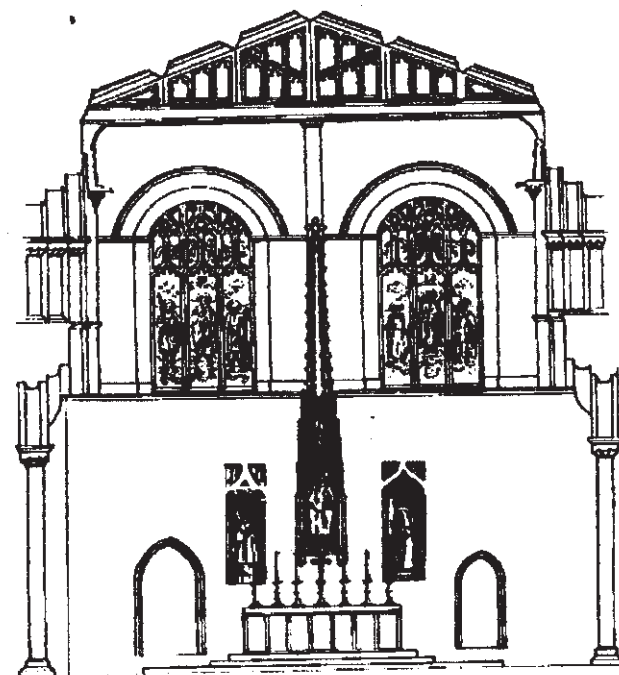
Since only external events and domestic affairs which were considered of importance were reported in the Annals of Dunstable, the making of a "horologium" must have been looked upon as an event of some significance.

At first we might be tempted to think of a sand glass or hour glass mounted on the pulpit. These were common in the 17th to the 19th century and were used to encourage the preacher to keep his sermon within limits. But there are two reasons why this simple explanation cannot be correct. Firstly, hour glasses, using sand flowing from one container to another, like our common egg timers, came into use only at the beginning of the 14th century and then were mainly used on ships. But the more important reason is the meaning of the word "pulpitum", which does not mean what we call a pulpit but a screen between the choir and the nave. The pulpitum was necessary in long churches; it divided the nave or people's church and the choir which was the part used by the monastic community. The organ was often placed on top of the pulpitum. We can still see this in Gloucester cathedral and in Cambridge's King's College Chapel. In Dunstable Priory church the east wall of the chancel is still the wall which divided the old church in two with the two equal arched doors now visible since the Victorian restoration (right). In St Albans church the 'pulpitum' is a big wall from floor to ceiling, once decorated with statues. So the 'horologium placed above the pulpitum' was most likely a mechanical clock; it would certainly have been a very awkward place for a waterclock.

But was it the first mechanical clock at all ? It is certain that it is the oldest mentioned in the documents though it is possible that we have lost references to older clocks of the same type. The earliest documents from this period use the same name 'horologium' or 'novum horologium' for mechanical clocks elsewhere. In the next 10 or 15 years there are others : Exeter in 1284 and St Paul's Cathedral, London in 1286, the first two following Dunstable. With the others installed before 1300 at Oxford, Norwich, Ely and Canterbury they were not too far removed Dunstable, in time and distance, so that "the probability nearly becomes certainty, that, at the beginning of the dark era 1276 - 1310, in one of the places of Southern England the principle of the

mechanical clock came to light. Only we do not know yet precisely, when and where, because we do not have anything similar to the Dunstable Annals, fortunately preserved."

Who built this clock ? In the Middle Ages monasteries were the centres of knowledge and all the skills were traditionally practised. But the Augustinians, the order in Dunstable were Regular Canons, that is priests living in a community. Their life was dedicated to pastoral care. There must have been a number of lay people dedicated to manual work, such as building and maintenance, cooking and looking after the guests and the sick. In the same community some of them would have been smiths and could have developed the refined skills to build a new mechanical time keeping device. If this is so the Annals could proudly proclaim : " We made a Horologium, a Mechanical Clock "



In the east wall of Dunstable Priory Church, below the stained-glass windows, the plastering hides the old massive stone wall which was the 'pulpitum'. It separated the east section of the nave, reserved to the monastic services, from the west, used by the parish. Two processional doors allowed passage between the two sections and their position is visible since the restoration at the end of the 19th century.

What was the clock like is a difficult question to answer. The first mechanical clocks were certainly weight driven, they did not have a clock face and their purpose was only to strike a bell at regular times. This was actually the main purpose of a new kind of clock, to call the canons to their prayer duties, day and night without one of them having to stay awake all the time. Actually some water clocks were already provided with a striking bell. This is what the name

'clock' means coming from the French 'cloche' which means 'bell'.

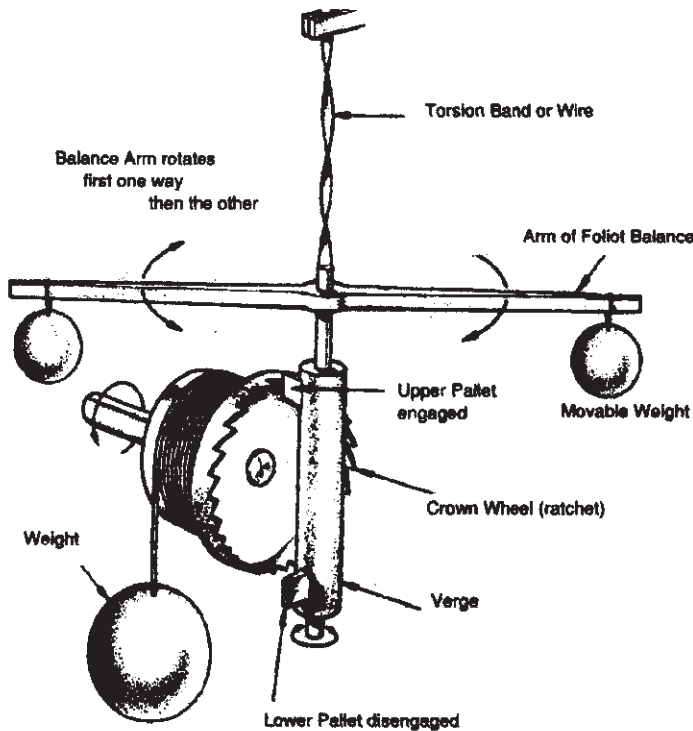
To slow down the falling of the weight there was an escapement probably of the 'foliot' type as this is the oldest type recorded. This consisted of a vertical axis (the verge) fitted with two pallets. When rotating back and forth, the pallets released the 'crown wheel' tooth by tooth. The 'crown wheel' with its triangular teeth was driven by a weight, and probably connected to the clock hand by gears of some sort. At the top of the bar there was some kind of mass slowing down the foliot by its own inertia. Since this mass had a period very difficult to

control the accuracy must have been very poor and an error of up to one hour a day could be expected. A replica of a clock of this type can be seen in the north transept of St Albans Abbey. It shows very well the escapement mechanism in action.

A manuscript of 1271 [*Commentary of Robert the Englishman on the 'Sphere' of Sacrobosco*] contains the following "Nor is it possible for any clock to follow the judgement of Astronomy with complete accuracy. Yet clockmakers are trying to make a wheel which will make one complete revolution for every one of the equinoctial circle (a day), but they cannot perfect their work.... The method of making such a clock would be this, that a man make a disk of uniform weight in every part so far as could possibly be done. Then a lead weight should be hung from the axis of that wheel, so that it would complete one revolution from sunrise to sunset.." There is no mention of an escapement in this description but how else could it be slowed down? It is only with the discovery of the regular motion of the pendulum in the middle 17th century that the ticking of the escapement started to give a correct time reading.

With the introduction of a spring as the driving force (Germany about 1500), the discovery of the regular oscillation of the pendulum was applied to clocks around 1650, and the invention of the 'anchor' escapement, in about 1670.

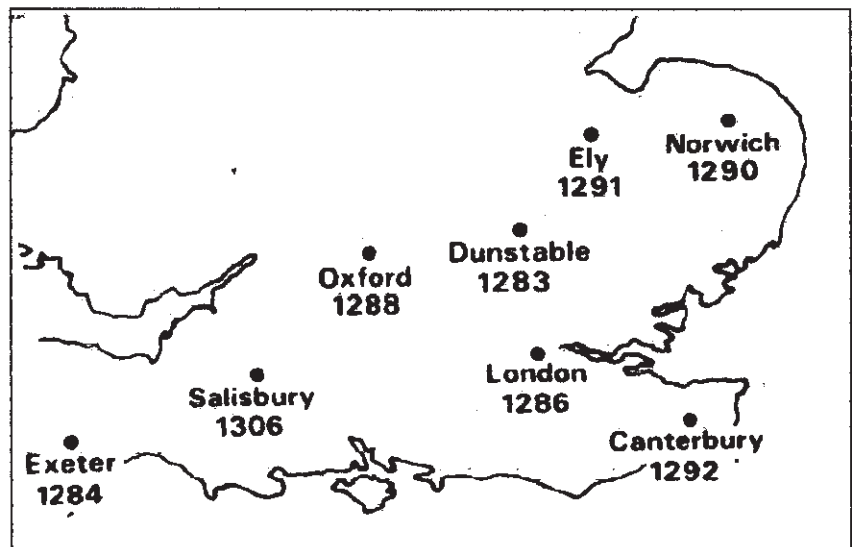
My main source is C. F. C. Beeson : *English Church Clocks 1280-1850* and the long comment of this article by Hans Von Bertele : *The Earliest Turret Clock ?* in *Antiquarian Horology*, Vol 10, 2, Spring 1977, p.189- 96.



List of the earliest written documents referring to the existence of clocks most likely to have been mechanical ones :

- 1283 : Dunstable Priory
- 1284 : Exeter Cathedral
- 1288 : Merton College, Oxford
- 1290 : Norwich Cathedral, Priory
- 1291 : Ely Abbey
- 1292 : Canterbury, Christchurch Cathedral

- After 1300
- 1306 : Salisbury Cathedral
- 1322 : Norwich Cathedral, Priory (clock with automaton and astronomical dial)
- 1324 : Lincoln Cathedral
- 1327 : St Albans Abbey (Richard of Wallingford gives the earliest detailed description)



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Mr. George CAVENDISH
An unrecognised famous resident of Dunstable
 John LUNN M.B.E. - 1998

Thanks to the research of numerous enthusiasts it is comparatively easy to list the wealthiest residents of Dunstable at the beginning of the 16th century. There is one man, however, who subsequently became important nationally and became a very respected resident of the town. He has not yet so far been recognised as having lived there. His name is George Cavendish.

George Cavendish was the eldest son of Thomas Cavendish of Glemsford, Suffolk. His father was clerk of the Pipe in the Court of Henry VIII. George was born in 1499 or 1500. With his father's background, it is not surprising to find him listed as a student in the Alumni Cantabrigienses, Pt 1, vol.1 in c. 1510. This was no doubt as a pupil at one of the 'Grammar Schools' attached to the Cambridge University. He did not continue his studies to take a degree, but, nevertheless, this indicates he had an interest in learning and could at least read and write. How he came to be living in Dunstable one can only surmise but by 1518 he had been there long enough to win the respect of one of the wealthier inhabitants to be lent money. In that year Robert Alee died and in his will he left the £5 to Sir Michael, canon of Dunstable Priory "which remained in the hand of Mr George Cavendish".¹

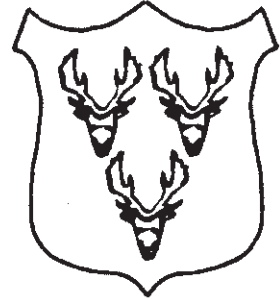
Living in Dunstable at this time was a Pynfold family, in East Street (Church Street). On the brass in the Priory Church, over the burial plot of Richard Pynfold who died in 1516, are his arms, above his figure, and those of his wife Margaret, above her figure. Margaret's arms are those of Spring. The Spring family were based in Lavenham in Suffolk not far from the Cavendish home. There is every possibility that George would have known Margaret Pynfold and therefore initially made his home with her family.

In 1524 George's life style changed dramatically with the death of his father at Wood Street, St. Albans. As the eldest son he inherited all the family property and thereby became a member of the landed gentry and as such was treated with increased respect by the tradesmen of Dunstable.

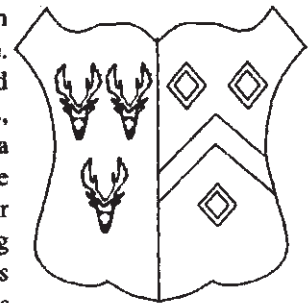
These influential tradesmen constituted the membership of the local Fraternity of St John the Baptist, which had been founded in 1442 and was still flourishing at this time. The Register of members for the last 60 or so years is still in existence. It begins in 1506 but does not become continuous until 1522. The entry for 1525 gives George Cavendish as the elected President for the year. This is the first fully illuminated page in the Register. As he would have been only about 25 years of

age, this indicates the importance the members attached to his new status.²

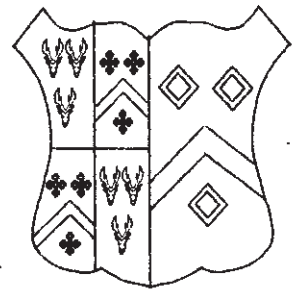
The illuminated borders of the double spread for his entry provide some interesting details of his life. Amongst the names listed are two of interest - Marjorie Pynfold, possibly one of Richard's seven daughters, and William Cavendish, George's younger brother. As it was customary, a miniature of George was included in the left hand page border and his arms in the centre of the border at the foot of the page (above). On the opposite page a miniature of a woman is included in a space reserved for the President's wife and in the centre at the foot of the page, the Cavendish arms are shown impaled with Spring (right). This suggests George married one of the Pynfold daughters, possibly the Marjorie listed as a member on his page in the Register, and like her mother she had retained the Spring arms. Further evidence of this marriage was found many years



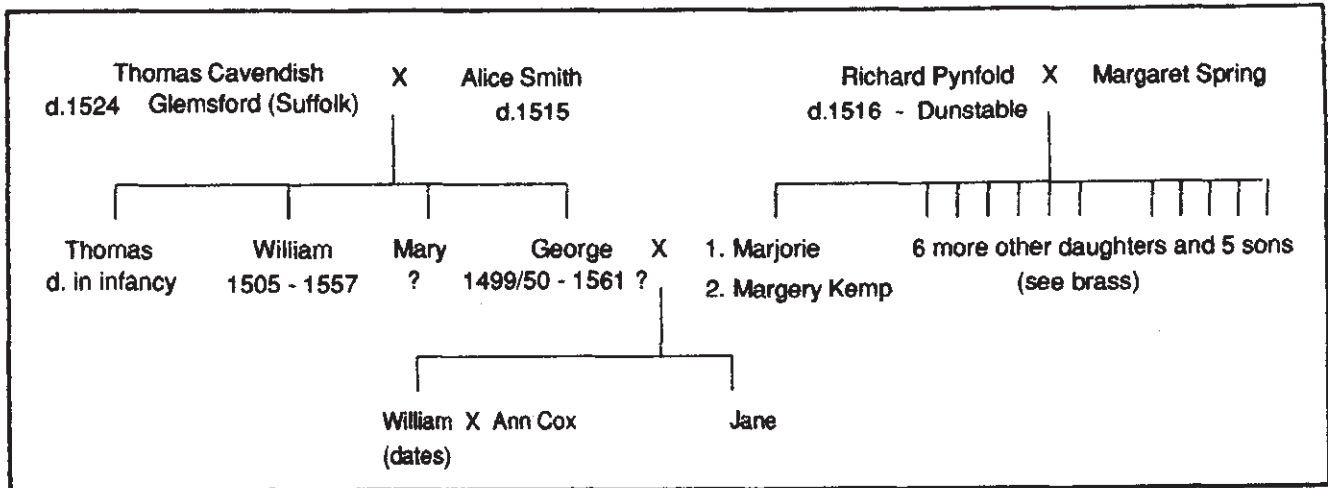
ago on a sculptured stone beneath the plaster from a chimney of a large mansion occupied by the Cavendishes of Overall, Suffolk. This showed the arms of Cavendish quartered with those of Smith (George's mother) and impaled with Spring. (below) The initials "G.C." were visible in gilding over the arms.³



Subsequent events show that there was a son, William, from the marriage, and possibly a daughter, Jane. Not to be outdone, the Register of the Luton Fraternity of the Holy Trinity, which is also still in existence and is complete for the period of the Fraternity's life, shows George Cavendish elected as a member in 1525, but does not mention his wife.

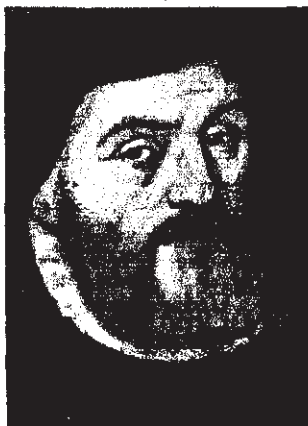


Meanwhile, what was George doing throughout all this early period of his life? No doubt through the influence of his father, circa 1520, he became a gentleman usher in Cardinal Wolsey's court. He remained so until the Cardinal fell from grace and died at Leicester Abbey on his way back from York to London for trial, on Tuesday 29 November



1530. As a young man in Wolsey's Court, one of only two gentlemen ushers, George would have been in a position to hear of many national events taking place. This information he was to make good use of later in his life. With the death of his master, George was offered by the King a post in the royal household, but this he refused, wishing instead "to return to my own country". This he did taking with him the six cart horses selected from the King's stables he had given him and one cart "to carry my stuff". He was also given 5 markes for the cost of his homeward journey. The King also gave him £10 for wages due and £20 for a servant. Contrary to what is stated in the Dictionary of National Biography "to my own country" does not mean to Glemsford, but rather to Dunstable.

It may be appropriate at this stage to give one more important piece of evidence that George made Dunstable his home town. In 1542 a rent list was prepared of properties formerly held by the Priory, for presentation to the Court of Augmentations [valuation of the dissolved religious houses] for the Honour of Ampthill. This listed a number of small properties and parcels of land "paid by George Cavendish as rents of Assize in Estestrete (Church Street) held by right of his wife". He also paid rent as Tenant at will in the same street for a "great Croft there". The Pynfold family had a tenement nearby in the same street.⁴



As a country gentleman, relieved of his duties at Court, George was now expected to fulfil commissions required of him for his local community. In 1530 he served a period as escheator [special tax collector] for Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire.⁵ A year later he was one of the witnesses of Thomas Knightly's will - a wealthy Dunstable resident. In 1535 he was a Commissioner for Bedfordshire with those making investigations into the Tenths of Spiritualities [a kind of parish tax]. A year later he was on the Commission investigating certain "articles" suggested to have been spoken against Cromwell by "Dan Aswell", the Test Prior of St Albans Abbey.⁶ In the local community he is listed in the Muster List for 1539, as a bylman [infantry man] - "Master George Cavendish & a

man".⁷

Meanwhile what was happening to his Suffolk estates? There is evidence to suggest that George's son, William, was resident there and supervising them. It may have been William that was responsible for the sculptured coat of arms referred to above.

Circa 1543 William married a certain Ann Cox. As part of their marriage settlement George transferred his manors of Overall and Netherhall to his son. From this time it would seem that George moved from Dunstable and made his home at Spains Hall in Suffolk. This belonged to Robert Kemp, the brother of George's new wife, Margery Kemp. When his first wife died is not known but from the above evidence the second marriage is unlikely to have been much before 1543. The evidence for this marriage is contained in the will of Arthur Kemp where he refers to "my sister Cauvendish". He also speaks of "Jane her daughter", but it is more likely to be a daughter from George's first marriage. Margery Kemp was the niece of Sir Thomas More, her mother's sister being his first wife. George may have met her at Court.

Further evidence of George residing at Spains Hall is given in the indenture of 1557 for the permanent grant of Overall and Netherhall to William.⁸ He was required to make a yearly payment of £40 to his father for life, beginning on 25 March 1558, to be paid "at

the site of the manor of Spaines Hall with-in the parishe of Finchingfeld" (Essex)

So far, nothing of George's life has warranted him achieving national importance. It was while living at Spains Hall and recounting his experiences at Wolsey's Court, no doubt spurred on by his new wife, that he began to write what became the first separate English biography, *The Life and Death of Cardinal Wolsey*. He was over 50 years old at the time (circa 1554) and was recalling events that had taken place some 25 years earlier. The only reference to himself and family, in the biography of Wolsey, are words reported to have being said by Wolsey in 1530 after his arrest at Cawood - the residence of the Archbishop of York -

"For", quoth he, "now that I see this gentleman (meaning me) how faithful, how diligent, and how painful since the beginning of my trouble he hath served me, abandoning his own country, his wife and children, his house and family, his rest and quietness, only to serve me, and remembering with myself that I have nothing to reward him for his honest merits, grieveth me not a little." ⁹

The intention of this article is not to discuss the contents of his work. Suffice it to say that the details of the earlier part are such that he must have had access to other people's work of that time. He appears to have completed the work by June 1558. There is no evidence of his date of death, but the absence of any mention of him in Arthur Kemp's will suggests that he was dead by that time (will proved 13 October 1562).

Due to the religious turmoil of the time the work remained in manuscript form, many copies of which were made. Not until 1641 did a printed copy appear, and even then a very inaccurate version. The first reliable version, produced from George's autographed manuscript copy, was printed in 1815.

In conclusion it is worth noting that George would have been in Dunstable when Cranmer arrived to set up his Court in the Priory Church Lady Chapel, which on 23 May 1533 declared Henry VIII's marriage to Katherine of Aragon null and void. George's writing suggests he was obviously sympathetic to Katherine's cause. What his feelings must have been at the time is impossible to say, loyalty and diplomacy prevented any mention of the occasion.

NOTES

- ¹ Bedfordshire Historical Record Society (B.H.R.S.) Vol.76, p.56
- ² Both Fraternity Registers held by Luton Museum.
Transcribed by the Author and published privately.
- ³ Gentlemen's Magazine, New Series, Vol. III, p.613
- ⁴ B.H.R.S., Vol. 64, p.122-3
- ⁵ Tenth Report of the Deputy Keeper of Records, App. ii, 6
- ⁶ B.H.R.S., Vol.71, p.39
- ⁷ Letters Patent (LP) XI, 354, ii
- ⁸ LP XX, Pt. ii, 901 (82)
- ⁹ The complete text and summary of George's life can be found in the following :
 - The Life and Death of Cardinal Wolsey by George Cavendish, edited by George Sylvester, Pub. 1959, reprinted 1961 by O.U.P. for the Early English Text Society.
 - The Life of Cardinal Wolsey by George Cavendish, to which is added Thomas Churchyard's Tragedy of Wolsey, with an Introduction by Henry Morley. Pub. by George Routledge & Sons Ltd. 1890

From

The Morning Chronicle,
Friday August 28th 1807.

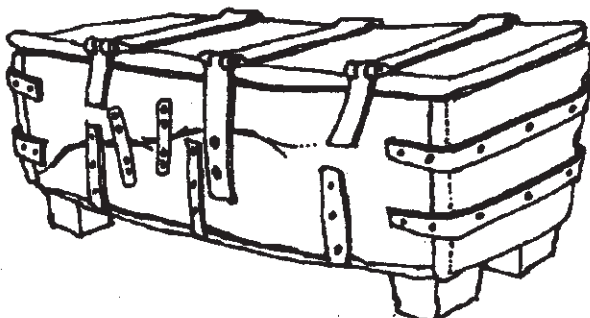
The Unknown Traveller

'A gentleman travelling in a stage coach was suddenly taken ill, on Wednesday, near Dunstable; and not withstanding every effort of a surgeon who was sent for, he died shortly afterwards. On searching the pockets of the deceased, there were found 25 shillings in cash and notes, but no letters or anything tending to identify his person, or to enable a stranger to communicate the melancholy event to his friends. He was accompanied in the coach by one lady only, to whom he was unknown; but finding death approaching, and sensible of his situation, he told his name and address, but the lady was thrown into such terror and agitation on the occasion, that she could not at all recollect either. One gentleman, on his road to London, thought it was a person resident there of whom he had some distant knowledge; and his shirt mark was examined to see if it accorded with the initials of his name; but proving otherwise, every mind capable of thought were left in painful doubt and uncertainty as to his person and residence.'

The Morning Chronicle was a broadsheet of 4 pages and cost 6d. The foreign news contains dispatches from the naval battle of Copenhagen and reports of Napoleon's disparaging comments on the governance of Britain. He could not understand the concept of a country having more than one political party.

In 1907 Mr. A. Weight-Matthews undertook a survey of the Priory churchyard. He records another death of a passenger travelling through Dunstable. A weathered tomb stone, dated 1759, recorded the sudden death of 'Mr. Vaughan' after 'falling out of his carriage'.

Hugh Garrod, with thanks to David Fowler.



A Parish Chest (14th-16th c.)

The archives of the parish vestry would have been kept under lock and key in such a reinforced chest.

WHO NEEDS LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICERS?

Joan Curran

Local Government Officers are a modern breed. Until about a hundred years ago the title had never been invented, but there had to be somebody responsible for running our towns and villages. So if it wasn't local government officers, who was it? The answer is, the Churchwardens.

In Tudor times the parish became the unit for what we would think of as local government, and over the years Churchwardens acquired a number of civic responsibilities as well as church ones. Gradually it became their job to supervise the maintenance of highways, to ensure that vermin were controlled, to oversee the provision and training of local militia and, perhaps the biggest task of all, to see to the welfare of the poor.

The Wardens did not actually do all of this on their own. They were the main officers elected annually in the church at the meeting known as the Easter Vestry, but to assist them there were Overseers of the Poor and Surveyors (when needed). Later on the Vestry also nominated the constables, twelve 'able-bodied men' between the ages of 25 and 55, though their appointment had to be confirmed by a local magistrate.

The Vestry meeting minutes were kept by a Clerk (paid a small salary) and we have a fascinating record of the kind of things discussed at Vestry meetings in Dunstable and the decisions taken. Meetings were held fairly regularly, either in church or, as the clerk recorded, 'by adjournment' at the Nag's Head, the Saracen's Head, the Red Lion, the Anchor, etc. (not in any particular order).

Inevitably much of the time was taken up discussing the welfare of poor. Since the 16th century the parish had had to provide a workhouse, which was at one time where Ashton Square now is, but by 1780 it was in such a bad state that it was beyond repair and the Vestry accepted the offer of a lease on what was then an Inn called the Star, next to the White Swan in High Street South. They eventually bought the building and it was in use until 1836, after which paupers were sent to the Luton workhouse. By then it was in an appalling state, having apparently stood there 'since the time of Queen Bess'.

Finding a suitable person to run the workhouse was a perennial task. By 1813 the going rate for the job was 10 shillings per week, the amount paid to George Oliver and his wife, 'with liberty to take two children with them - the whole of their own time and their children's, with all profits arising, to be at the disposal of the officers of the parish'. A doctor was also appointed to look after the health of the inmates, for an annual fee of £21 in 1812.

To provide funds for the relief of poverty the Overseers were empowered to levy a parish rate. Obviously it was in their interests to keep the rates as low as possible - putting up rates is never a popular move - so they made every effort to keep expenses down. Illegitimate children were always a drain on resources, and the Vestry acted as a sort of Child Support Agency. They would collect a lump sum of money from the father of a bastard child as an indemnity against future charges on the parish for the child's upbringing. There was no standard rate for this -

amounts seemed to vary from £25 to £50, perhaps adjusted according to the circumstances of the father. Then there was the constant problem of strangers who arrived here seeking accommodation in the workhouse. The common practice when this happened was to send them back to the parish where they were born, which was legally required to keep them. Occasionally the Vestry ordered a person to leave the workhouse if he or she was thought to be a malingeringer.

In the mid-19th century, after the demise of the coaching trade, unemployment was a big problem and the Vestry launched its own job creation scheme. They leased a chalk quarry on the Downs and set up a whiting works, in West Street. But the scheme was short-lived. Within a few years the government had passed the Poor Law and the Guardians of the Luton Union Workhouse took over the responsibility for the poor of Dunstable.

The Vestry also acted as a sort of Public Health authority. They had long discussions about the desirability of inoculation (a very controversial issue in the 18th century). They also had a problem with sparrows, at one time classed as vermin, and in 1790 they decided to encourage the destruction of the birds by purchasing the heads at the rate of two pence per dozen. They took action about stray dogs and the dumping of rubbish in the town ponds, the latter not so much because it was regarded as a health hazard but because it endangered the water supply needed in the event of a fire. In the later 1800s Vestry members spent much time discussing a new burial ground. The decision to provide this was taken in 1860, but committees took as long then as they do now and it was several years the cemetery was actually opened.

The Surveyors took responsibility for the roads and when repairs were needed they would allocate the responsibility for carting a given quantity of stone to every householder who was the owner of a cart. When Mr Cooper, the hat manufacturer, wanted to divert a length of highway that ran beside his factory he had to obtain the consent of the Vestry. New roads had to be accepted by the parish before they could become a public highway. Union Street, for instance, was accepted as a highway in 1847 as a shared responsibility with Upper Houghton Regis.

As the 19th century progressed the Victorians passed more and more legislation covering many aspects of local administration. Local government as we know it began to take shape, and by the end of the century the churchwardens and the Parish Vestry were virtually dealing with church affairs only. The duties of the Overseers, the Surveyors, the Constables, etc., had been taken over by paid employees of the local authorities. From then on the Town Council and the County Council were to be in charge.

Note : In 1998 John Lunn transcribed *The Vestry Minutes of the Parish of Dunstable for 1750 - 1819*. It is a fascinating 54 page - document with an index of the names of the members with their function, and another one of the subjects discussed. Ask the editor for more information.

Dunstable Borough Gazette

September 1902

Bedfordshire a Century Ago. An interesting survey A Writer's Reflection of Dunstable

I am indebted to an esteemed reader for the loan of a curiously interesting old pamphlet called "The Merchant's Miscellany" and giving a brief description of the county of Bedfordshire and the principal towns, with their leading tradesmen, in the year 1785. The author is John Franklin Henington, who, in a quaintly worded notice to the public, sets it forth that "having served an apprenticeship in the City of London to the Printing Business, and paid particular attention to the Auctioneering and Conveyancing, in town and country, he flatters himself he will be found duly qualified for the full performance of both." The author resided in Northampton, and his pamphlet is rudely printed in old-fashioned and irregular type.

The un-named reviewer says that the author gives a General survey of Bedfordshire which is "an inland and champaign county with a fertile and rich soil, producing not only great plenty of grain, but good pasturage; and the wheat and barley is esteemed as fine, if not superior, to any in the Kingdom. The prospects in every part are extensive and picturesque, most especially from the eminences of Souldrop, Sandy-warren, Dunstable, etc. Its principal manufacturers (and those not considerable) are straw hats and bone lace."

There follow descriptions of the County's rivers and judicial system. The pamphlet then has brief descriptions of Bedford, Ampthill, 'Wooburn', Leighton Buzzard, Dunstable and lastly Luton. The reviewer says, Modern Dunstablians will scarcely feel flattered by the reference made to this ancient town and its inhabitants.

Bedfordshire in the 1950s

There will be another exhibition, similar to the one produced on World War 2 two years ago, on the 1950s. The committee have agreed to put on a display about events in Dunstable during those years, so we are looking for photographs, memorabilia and personal reminiscences of the time. If you can help in any way, please let Joan Curran or Hugh Garrod know. We know that many of you were living here in the 1950s, so please help by turning out your cupboards and providing us with lots of material. The exhibition will be held in Woburn Village Hall on Saturday 15th March 2003.

Help!

The author says Dunstable was then 'A great thoroughfare, but not distinguished by peculiar good private houses or modern inns; and its manufacturers and trade are not in proportion to its population. Industry here, as in all post towns, receives a severe check from the laziness of many of the poor who, finding an asylum at the various inns for feasting on the remains of extravagance, at a small expense, causes a general pollution of the whole. Among other delicacies this place is distinguished by epicures for remarkable fine larks. The soil is chalky and the town being on an eminence, the inhabitants are much inconvenienced for water. Places adjoining are interesting to observers, by having been the station for the Romans.'

The author then lists notable residents of Dunstable. "Attorney-at-law, Thomas Cooke and John Hooper; brewer, Daniel Parkin; draper and woolstapler, Theo Leison Wright; grocer, William Coles, Mary Queenborough and Thomas Squires; manufacture of hats, Mark Brown; maltster, Richard Gutteridge and Thomas Miller; proprietor of wagons, Henry Pringle; surgeon, Thomas Noble and James Wood. The inns are Red Lion, George Fossey; Sugar Loaf, James Oliver; Bull, William Palmer; White Hart, Mark West."

The reviewer is not much impressed by the author or his pamphlet. He protests on behalf of the residents of the county at the slurs implied by the author. Having read the article several times, I am puzzled why the Gazette reviewed the pamphlet in the first place. Perhaps there was a shortage of copy for this edition.

Note

The text written by "the author" dates from 1785
The "reviewer" included some extracts in 1902,
these are in bold type.

Hugh Garrod summarised this article.
His text is in italics.

House Detectives

On Saturday October 5th there will be a workshop at the County Record Office on discovering the history of your house. There will be guidance on using deeds, plans, maps and other resources at the Record Office to find out about your house.

Further information available from the Secretary.

The editor, Omer Roucoux, would like to thank his very patient and understanding proof readers.
Joan Curran and Hugh Garrod.