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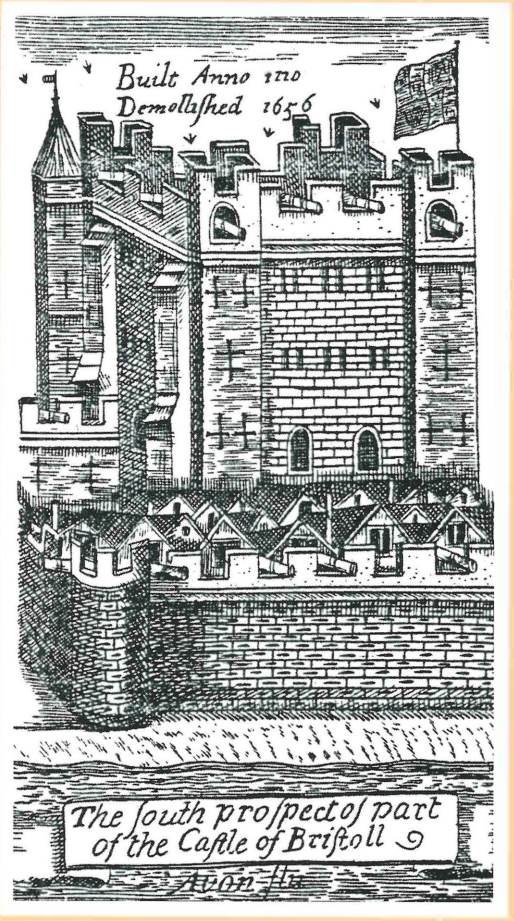
BRISTOL CASTLE: A POLITICAL HISTORY



PETER FLEMING

THE BRISTOL BRANCH OF THE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION
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Bristol Castle: a political history is the one hundred and tenth pamphlet in this series.

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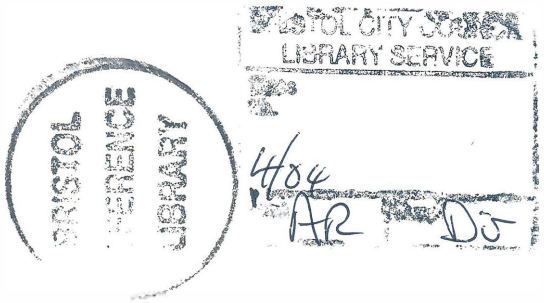


Cover illustration: The keep, after Millerd's plan of Bristol, 1673 (J. F. Nicholls and J. Taylor, *Bristol Past and Present* (Arrowsmith, Bristol, 1881), vol. 1, p. 75)

BRISTOL CASTLE: A POLITICAL HISTORY

For nearly six hundred years Bristol's skyline was dominated by its castle. For much of that time the castle also dominated the town's public life, and at certain moments it stood at the centre of political dramas on the national stage. In its heyday in the late thirteenth century it could rival all but the greatest of English castles. But today, despite the fragments of the keep and curtain wall left exposed in Castle Park, despite the city council's best efforts on the site, with display panels, castle-themed playground, and crenellated public lavatories, and even despite the presence of the castle - or at least its water-gate - on the city's arms, for many present-day Bristolians it is as though this once mighty edifice had never existed. The centre of Bristol now has a big open space where its castle used to be. If the city's history is left with a castle-shaped space at its centre, then it can never properly be understood. This pamphlet tries to go a little way towards filling that void.[1]

Building the Castle

Bristol castle began life between 1066 and 1088 probably as a walled enclosure within a moat supplied by the Frome. At a later date a motte, or mound, was raised to the west end. The Normans may have chosen a site already occupied by houses at the eastern end of the town; the forced clearance of these buildings would have been an unmistakeable, even brutal, manifestation of the new order.[2] This fortification stood until the early twelfth century, when an illegitimate son of Henry I, Robert Fitzroy, earl of Gloucester, replaced it with a great stone keep, part of whose foundations can now be seen on Castle Park. Earl Robert's building campaign probably took place at some point between 1110 and 1147.[3] A description of Bristol in 1138, written about ten years later, describes Earl Robert's new edifice as, 'a castle rising on a vast mound, strengthened by wall and battlements, towers and divers engines', straddling the landward end of a peninsula 'with two rivers [the Frome and the Avon] washing its sides and uniting in one broad stream lower down where the land ends', so that this natural moat 'hems in the entire circuit of the city so closely that the whole of it seems either swimming

in the water or standing on the banks'. Thus, Earl Robert's keep is described as the centre of a complex of walls and towers, itself protected by Bristol's natural water defences. The chronicler's picture of a mighty edifice is fully borne out by archaeological evidence.[4] Henry III (1216-1272), spent lavishly on additions to the castle, including a barbican before the main west gate, a gate tower and a magnificent hall, whose entrance survives today encased in an unimpressive brick and concrete blockhouse on the eastern edge of Castle Park.[5] Writing at he end of the thirteenth century, the chronicler Robert of Gloucester described it as '... an castel with the noble tour/ That of alle the toures of engelond is iholde flour'.[6] By then, Bristol had one of the strongest and most impressive castles in England.

The Castle's Administration[7]

Under Earl Robert and his son William, Bristol castle probably served as the administrative headquarters of the earldom of Gloucester, and may have housed the earls' exchequer. The castle continued as a treasury when the town and castle of Bristol were brought together with the King's Barton under unified royal lordship by King John. The Barton, a manor held by the king, covered over two hundred acres to the north and east of Bristol, including the hamlets of Mangotsfield, Stapleton and Easton. By 1217 this area was associated with Kingswood, and the whole agglomeration was administered by the constable of Bristol castle, so that the manorial profits supported the castle and its garrison. Queen Isabella held the castle as part of her dower from 1318, and thereafter, together with the town of Bristol, it normally formed part of the dower of English queens. Until the creation of the county of Bristol in 1373 mayors were sworn in before the castle constable, and he may also have had the right to appoint the town clerk.[8] Before the expulsion of the Jews from England in 1290 the constable's jurisdiction extended to Bristol's large Jewish population, whose members sometimes found themselves incarcerated in the castle. Occasionally chroniclers record that the town's entire Jewish community was imprisoned if they resisted royal demands for money; under King John wealthy Jewish businessmen are supposed to have been horribly tortured in the castle dungeons until they gave in to such demands.[9] The constable's influence over an urban community that was expanding and growing in confidence and ambition caused tensions that at times erupted into violence, and while considerably diminished after 1373, these persisted throughout the castle's existence.

While the earls of Gloucester relied on their tenants' feudal obligations of castle guard, under royal ownership the garrison's wages were paid by the crown. The constable was in charge of the royal

garrison, and was a crown appointment. His wages were set at £20 per annum in the mid-1350s, but he had to pay his staff, whom he himself appointed. These were few in number. Under Edward I, for example, the regular complement was a porter, two watchmen and the keeper of Lawford Gate. The keeper of Kingswood forest and Bristol's water bailiff (until 1499) were also part of the castle staff. The porter received wages of 2d. per day and the watchmen 3d. per day and ¼d. per night. A more substantial presence was obviously needed at times of unrest or when the castle played host to important guests or prisoners. In the 1220s four knights, three serjeants, thirteen squires, seven watchmen, four porters, a clerk, steward, two bakers, one gardener, one cook, two serjeant-carters, one laundress, one recluse(!), two ale-bearers, one purveyor of fodder, seventeen grooms and twenty five horses were deemed necessary for the safe and honourable custody of Eleanor of Brittany.[10] In 1286 the constable accounted for the daily wages of two knights, at 2s. each, eighteen squires at 1s. and forty footmen at 2d.[11] Feeding such large numbers sometimes meant that the resources of the Barton and the forest were insufficient. In the early 1320s the castle was supplied with victuals by the sheriffs of Gloucestershire, who were then reimbursed by the Exchequer, while in 1338 the constable, John de la Ryvere, was ordered to purvey wheat and salt, and was supplied with eight tuns of wine from the port of Bristol, in view of what was thought to be imminent danger of attack soon after the outbreak of war with France. Over the next four years de la Ryvere bought food in Bristol from the bishop of Worcester's manor of Henbury, John Trillek, dean of Westbury College, and John Canynge.[12]

The Castle under the Earls of Gloucester

Bristol castle's first appearance in the historical record comes in *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, which relates how in 1088, during the rebellion of Robert Curthose, duke of Normandy, against his brother King William Rufus, Robert's follower Geoffrey, bishop of Coutances, repaired to the castle (*castele*) with booty plundered from Bath and Berkeley. While he may have already been castellan of Bristol, it is also possible that he seized the castle during the rebellion.[13] After the collapse of Duke Robert's rebellion he was imprisoned in Bristol Castle. With Geoffrey's death in 1093 the castle and town of Bristol was granted by the king to Robert Fitzhamon, lord of Creully, who had remained loyal to William Rufus. Between Robert's death in 1107 and 1122 his daughter Mabel was married to Robert Fitzroy, one of Henry I's nineteen bastards, who was created earl of Gloucester in the latter year. By then he was a leading magnate, with extensive estates in England, Wales and

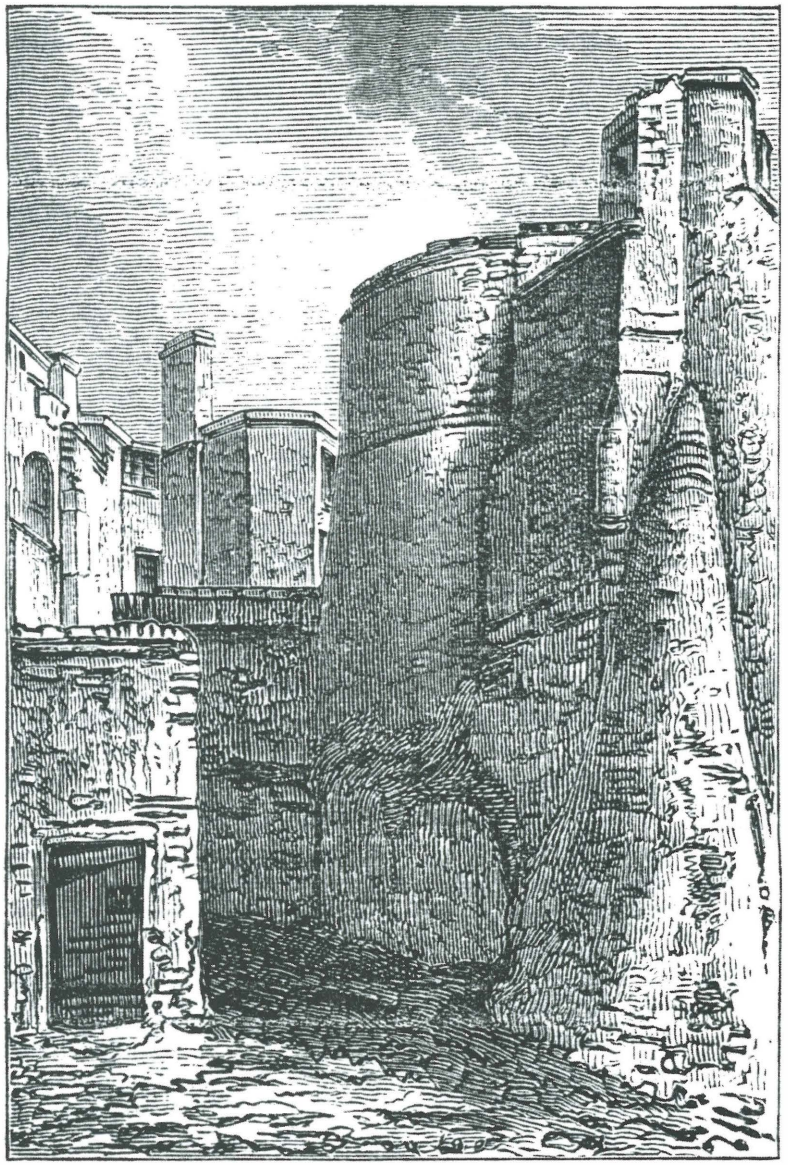
Normandy. Despite his undoubted potency the king was without a legitimate male heir, and so favoured his daughter Matilda, widow of the emperor Henry V, to succeed him.[14] By the time Henry I died on 1 December 1135 a rival for the throne had emerged in the shape of Stephen of Blois, Henry's nephew. Shortly before Christmas Stephen had himself crowned king at Westminster. The succession at first went remarkably smoothly, but in the spring of 1138 Robert earl of Gloucester declared himself for Matilda and raised rebellion in Normandy. His supporters in the west of England, led by Geoffrey Talbot, followed suit. Talbot was flushed out of Hereford and then Weobley castle, before finding refuge with his cousin, Gilbert de Lacy, at Bristol. The castle, under the (probably nominal) command of Gloucester's eldest son William, still only a teenager, was now the centre of English resistance to Stephen.

The king may have attempted to negotiate with the Bristol garrison, but then withdrew to London. In his absence the rebels began harrying the surrounding country. The *Gesta Stephani* pulls no punches in its highly partisan rendition of what followed.[15] Into the castle had been summoned 'a torrent of robbers and brigands', lead by Geoffrey Talbot, who was ready 'to breathe out everywhere the poison of his furious hatred and to do every cruel deed that a frenzied and unbalanced mind is wont to imagine'. The garrison's major exploit was an attempt on Bath, held by its bishop, a Stephen loyalist and possible author of this account:

> They arrived there in column unexpectedly at early dawn. Having brought scaling-ladders with them and other devices for climbing a wall they withdrew into a valley and waited a little while until scouts had examined the site of the town and the best way of taking it and they could all rush it together with an impetuous onslaught. So Geoffrey Talbot and his relative, Gilbert de Lacy ... were chosen as scouts. They made their way around the town slowly and cautiously, as they thought, when, behold, the bishop of Bath's soldiers, having caught sight of them, suddenly appeared. Gilbert got away from the midst of them, being more crafty and sharper than the others, but Geoffrey they surrounded and took, and after fettering his feet very tightly they thrust him into a dungeon under guard.[16]

The bishop, however, was then tricked into delivering himself up to men from the Bristol garrison, who threatened him with death if he did not order their comrade's release. Thereafter the men from Bristol:

> unrestrained in the commission of every crime, wherever they heard of lands or property belonging to the king or his supporters rushed thither greedily and quickly like starving and ravening dogs on a corpse that lies in their way.



A nineteenth-century view of houses built around a surviving castle tower (J. F. Nicholls and J. Taylor, 'Bristol Past and Present' (Arrowsmith, Bristol, 1881), vol. 1, p. 40)

Allegedly they ranged throughout England, kidnapping wealthy men and dragging them back to Bristol, 'there they wasted them with hunger or delivered them over to torments and extracted from them all they possessed to the uttermost farthing'. Hearing of these outrages, the king led an army to Bristol. Some of his advisors urged him to lay siege to the town, and recommended that he should dam the Avon below its confluence with the Frome so that at length the town would be flooded; he was also advised to erect fortifications at each bridgehead and place his army around the castle to starve out both townspeople and garrison. But Stephen agreed with those who doubted that Bristol could be taken by siege: men whom the gung-ho author of the *Gesta* accused of treachery. So Stephen withdrew, leaving Bristol isolated but defiant, a potentially dangerous outpost of rebellion.

Earl Robert and Empress Matilda returned to England in September 1139, and by January 1140 they were together in Bristol castle.[17] The political crisis swiftly escalated from rebellion to civil war. In February 1141 Stephen was captured at the battle of Lincoln. Gloucester 'put him under guard in the tower of Bristol to be kept there until the last breath of life'.[18] Here he was at first kept in honourable confinement but then, after he had strayed beyond his appointed bounds, he was loaded with chains and manacles.[19] However rigorous, his captivity lasted less than nine months. In September it was Gloucester's turn to be taken, trapped while covering Matilda's retreat from Winchester. As if in some gigantic game of chess, knight was exchanged for king. The manner of the operation was complicated, since neither side trusted the other to keep their word. Stephen's queen and one of her sons came to Bristol and were held hostage there, while the king went to Earl Robert at Winchester, who on Stephen's arrival went to Bristol, leaving his son William behind; when Robert reached Bristol, the queen was released, and when she reached Winchester, William was allowed to go free.[20]

The death of Robert, earl of Gloucester in 1147 was a body blow to Matilda, and she never managed to gain the crown. Stephen died in his bed, as king, in October 1154. But in the end it was Matilda, in retirement in Normandy, who came out on top, even after losing the war, for an agreement had been reached the previous year that recognised Stephen as king but named as heir Henry, son of Matilda. So it was that Henry II, first of the Angevins, succeeded to the throne. Henry knew Bristol well. Early in 1143 the nine-year-old had been sent to Robert's court in Bristol castle to further his education, and remained there for fourteen months under the tutelage of 'Master Matthew'. Robert's patronage was enjoyed by a number of leading intellectuals, and during these years Henry might have encountered Geoffrey of Monmouth,

author of the hugely influential *History of the Kings of Britain*, and Adelard of Bath, who dedicated his *On the Astrolabe* to the future king. We may suppose that these months at Bristol played their part in producing the cultured, intelligent, psychologically complex, adult king.[21]

Robert's son and heir William, earl of Gloucester, at length fell out with Henry II. Bristol castle may have lain at the heart of their quarrel. Henry embarked upon a policy of neutralising those castles that had played a part in the civil war between Stephen and Matilda, rather as Cromwell would do five hundred years later, irrespective of whether they belonged to friend or foe. These castles included Bristol. At some point (perhaps in the mid 1160s) he took the castle into his own hands and garrisoned it with royal troops. For many years Earl William swallowed his pride. In 1173 Henry faced a rebellion led by his son and heir, Henry the younger, who allied with King Louis of France in an attempt to secure from his father what he considered to be a position befitting his status. The revolt was joined not only by a number of disgruntled barons, but also by King Henry's own queen, Eleanor of Aquitaine. In England, it was mainly centred in the Midlands, and Bristol occupied a strategic position guarding the south-western approaches to this region. At first Earl William remained loyal, but by 1174 it seemed to him that his opportunity to shake off Henry's heavy hand had at last come, and he expelled the royal garrison. But he was mistaken, and the following year Henry, now once more back in control, demanded that he surrender the castle: William, 'wishing to please the king', obeyed.[22] And he was persuaded to do more by way of restitution. William had three daughters and co-heirs: Mabel, wife of the count of Amaury; Amicia, wife of Richard de Clare, earl of Hereford, and Isabel, still unmarried. In 1176 Isabel was contracted to marry Henry's son John, the future king, who was at that point named as heir to the earldom. This came at a time when Henry II was assembling a suitably impressive estate for his youngest son, and there can be little doubt that it was arranged more for John's benefit than Earl William's: the latter's new-found royal connection did not save him from arrest in 1183, and he died in prison the same year. The honour of Gloucester was confiscated by the king, and in 1189 Isabel and John were at last married, thereby giving the prince control of the earldom. However, Henry was not going to surrender so strategically important a place as Bristol, and he retained the castle in his own hands. From these events followed great consequences: Bristol had become a royal castle, and thus would remain until the seventeenth century, while the resentment of Earl William's heirs at its retention would fuel continuing tensions between the earls of Gloucester and the crown.

The Castle under the Early Plantagenets

With Henry II's death in 1189 the crown passed to his son Richard, 'The Lionheart'. John waited impatiently to become king, and when his elder brother was captured and held to ransom in Germany it seemed as though his time had come. Early in 1193 John raised rebellion. Among those who stayed loyal to Richard was William Marshal, earl of Pembroke, who as sheriff of Gloucestershire was responsible for Bristol castle. He immediately garrisoned the castle with ten of his knights and 50 serjeants, and with this force withstood a siege by John's supporters.[23]

In 1199 Richard was killed and John could at last take that for which he had so long schemed. In the same year of his accession John's marriage to Isabel was annulled on the grounds of consanguinity (Isabel and John were cousins), but both the earldom and the countess of Gloucester remained under his control, while as king he now had Bristol castle as well.[24]

Despite his earlier opposition, William Marshal supported John's claim to the throne against that of John's nephew, Arthur of Brittany, and he remained as sheriff of Gloucestershire, probably administering the castle through a series of deputies, until 1204. He may have been relieved of his duties in that year while he went to France to negotiate on John's behalf with Philip II: there is little evidence of a rupture between Marshal and his king before 1205, when he fell from favour having pledged homage to Philip in order to protect his Norman holdings. In 1208 the new sheriff of Gloucestershire and Bristol castellan was Gerard d'Athee. He was a Poitevan mercenary, whose ruthlessness was matched by his bravery and loyalty to John. D'Athee's kinsmen, Engelard de Cignone and Peter de Chanceaux, succeeded him in turn at the castle, so that Bristol was kept firmly in the grasp of royal henchmen until 1215. The notoriety of this trio is demonstrated by their being named in Magna Carta - despite d'Athee having died two years previously in 1213 - as particularly obnoxious, and to be removed from office.[25]

Magna Carta failed to bring peace between king and barons, and in November 1215 a detachment sent by Louis, son of the French king, landed in support of the rebels. Early the following year John garrisoned Bristol castle against Louis. The crisis came to an end with John's death in October. His nine-year old son Henry was crowned at Gloucester. A great council of royalist magnates and bishops was held at Bristol in November (probably in the castle), where the septuagenarian William Marshal was appointed keeper of the kingdom during the king's minority, and Magna Carta was reissued as a token of the new regime's good intent.[26]

There was unfinished business from John's reign. Eleanor of Brittany was the daughter of Geoffrey, King John's elder brother, and sister of the murdered Arthur. She therefore had a claim to the throne and was the focus of a number of plots, with the result that she spent most of her life as Henry III's prisoner. She had arrived at Bristol castle by 1224, where she remained, apart from a four-year sojourn in Gloucester castle, until her death in 1241. She was buried in St James's priory, Bristol, afforded the same royal state in death as she had been in life.[27]

The death of Isabel, countess of Gloucester, in 1217 prompted the regents of the young Henry III to make some limited restitution for the actions of her former husband, King John. They recognised her sister Amicia as countess, and her son, Gilbert de Clare, as earl of Gloucester, but Bristol was too valuable for the crown to give up, and the regents promised that Earl Gilbert would receive the Barton in recompense for the continued occupation of town and castle. Transforming good intentions into action proved impossible, however.[28] In 1218 the Barton was formally conferred upon Gilbert, but the constable, Hugh de Vivonne, ignored all orders to surrender his charge, claiming that he needed its revenues to support the castle. The following year a compromise was reached, whereby Hugh was left in possession and the earl was compensated. In 1221 Hugh was sent to Poitou as seneschal, and resigned the castle to the papal legate, Pandulf, on condition that he would have the custody, or that of an equivalent castle, on his return. The Barton remained in royal hands. In 1254 Bristol - town, castle and Barton - was among the possessions (including Gascony, Ireland and Wales) given by Henry to his son and daughter-in-law Edward and Eleanor. Bristol was now the key to controlling the core of Lord Edward's fiefdom in the West Country, Wales and Ireland, and the castle was home to his exchequer and chancery. Now it was the turn of a new earl of Gloucester, Richard de Clare, to demand that Henry give him Bristol, and his turn to be refused. In compensation he received the farm of the hundred, set at £40 19s. 5d. per annum. Understandably, he did not regard this as a satisfactory settlement: on financial grounds alone (and Bristol's significance was compounded of its prestige and strategic importance at least as much as its economic worth) this was not a good deal, since Bristol's annual value at this time may have been as much as £150.

In the autumn of 1259 a party of the earl's men attempted to take Bristol castle by force.[29] Some of them were captured and peremptorily hanged without trial by Edward's steward in Bristol, Roger Leybourne. Gloucester had doubtless been hoping to take advantage of the troubled political situation, for by this time a party of reformist barons had forced Henry III to accept a council ruling in his name, of which Gloucester

was a leading member. Henry's son, Edward, chafed mightily at the council's restrictions, particularly its attempts to gain control of his castles. The council had appointed Robert Walerand as Bristol's constable in July 1259. Walerand, though a member of Edward's entourage, was also the royal steward, and had been foisted on the prince by Henry and the council. The following December Edward sought to tighten his grip on Bristol castle by appointing his steward, Leybourne, as constable, having brushed aside Walerand's resistance. In May 1260 the council reasserted its authority, and Leybourne was removed from office, the order issued under Edward's name, but almost certainly at the prompting of Henry and the council. Whatever ill-feeling had arisen between Edward and Walerand over the constableship was soon abated, however, and the latter would prove himself among Lord Edward's most steadfast supporters.

Political tension exploded into open warfare with the outbreak of Simon de Montfort's revolt against Henry in 1263. The rebel barons forced Henry to come to terms, but his son remained obdurate. In June Edward established himself at Bristol castle, intending to use this as a base from which to attack the rebel marcher lords. However, his men so antagonised the townspeople that they rose up, besieging Edward in the castle. Humiliatingly, he was only rescued when Walter, bishop of Worcester, who had been sent by Montfort to negotiate with him, persuaded the Bristolians to allow their lord to leave with the bishop as escort. Some of Edward's household knights remained behind, under the command of Robert Walerand acting as the castle constable. Montfort's star was rising in the spring of 1264. Resentment over Henry's retention of Bristol played an important part in persuading Richard's successor as earl of Gloucester, Gilbert the Red, to throw in his lot with the rebels. On 14 May Henry and Edward were captured at the battle of Lewes. Edward's redoubtable knights in Bristol castle, however, continued to hold out against Montfort, and conducted pillaging expeditions into the Severn valley. In November they received news from Eleanor of Provence that her son was being held in Wallingford castle in Oxfordshire. With great daring Walerand and his companions attempted to rescue him. They fought their way into the inner ward of the castle, but when the defenders threatened to catapult Edward over the wall with a mangonel, and faced with his own desperate pleas from the battlements that they should back off, the doughty knights reluctantly returned to Bristol. Soon after this Simon de Montfort had Edward moved to the greater security of his own castle at Kenilworth.

Part of an attempt at a general settlement between Edward and Montfort in December was an agreement whereby Bristol castle would

be surrendered to the latter, but the garrison obstinately refused to budge. Another agreement made the following March had more success. By this, Edward was not required to relinquish his title to Bristol castle, but he did have to agree to it being administered by the council under Monfort's control, as surety for the full implementation of the national settlement. On Edward's express orders his knights at last relinquished Bristol, and in April the castle was delivered into Montfort's hands. He appointed a new constable, John le Ware, in May. By now, however, Montfort's power was waning. Gilbert, earl of Gloucester had deserted him in April, perhaps disappointed that he showed no greater inclination than Henry or Edward to restore Bristol castle to him, and the following month Edward escaped. He was joined by the former Bristol garrison and launched a counter attack. Support gathered behind Edward, and Simon de Montfort found his enemies closing in on him. In June 1265, after the fall of Gloucester, he tried to cross the Severn to reach Bristol. Opinion within the town was still largely in his favour, and the Bristolians provided a small fleet for his passage, but this was destroyed by Edward and the earl of Gloucester. After de Montfort's defeat, death and dismemberment at Evesham on 4 August, Bristol had to pay a heavy fine for having supported him.

In 1268 Earl Gilbert revived the Clare claim to Bristol; Henry allowed him to sue his case, but only on condition that, if successful, he would be awarded compensation rather than the town and castle itself. By the time the suit came to resolution in 1276 Henry had been dead for four years, and his successor, Edward I, had not forgotten his run-ins with Gilbert over the disputed castle. Much to Gilbert's chagrin, if probably not to his great surprise, his case was quashed, on the doubtless infuriating grounds that John and Henry had enjoyed continuous seisin of the disputed properties: possession, notoriously, being nine tenths of the law! By now Bristol castle had benefited considerably from royal investment in repairs and new buildings, and formed the headquarters of the king's own English estates, housing his exchequer, so he had no intention of surrendering it, whatever the rights and wrongs. Further considerable works were undertaken in the 1280s.[30]

The Castle under the Later Plantagenets

The 1270s saw the beginning of Edward I's conquest of Wales. Part of the overture came in 1275. Llewelyn ap Gruffudd, the Welsh prince against whom Edward's first campaign of 1277 would be launched, had contracted to marry Eleanor, daughter of Simon de Montfort. In December 1275 she and her brother, en route to her marriage in Wales, were hit by a storm in the Bristol Channel and waylaid by four Bristol ships. They and their party were delivered into the custody of the

constable, and were briefly imprisoned in Bristol castle before being despatched to Windsor and Corfe. While the main thrust of Edward's campaign would be in north Wales, he still thought it expedient in 1276 to reinforce Bristol's garrison, and in 1281 its constable was ordered to supply forty crossbow bolts to the defenders of Carmarthen castle.[31]

In 1282 one of Llewelyn's brothers, Dafydd ap Gruffudd, led a revolt in north and mid Wales against English rule. He was captured in June 1283 and later hanged, drawn and quartered. A quarter was sent to Bristol for public display. One hopes that it was not seen by his two young sons, Llewelyn and Owain, for they had been incarcerated in Bristol castle in July, two months before their father's execution. At the time they were less than five years old; they would spend the rest of their lives in captivity. Llewelyn died in 1287, and was buried in the Dominican friary in Broadmead. In 1305 suspicions of a plot to rescue Owain prompted the construction of a wooden cage, reinforced with iron, in which he was to be kept at night. He was still alive in 1325.[32]

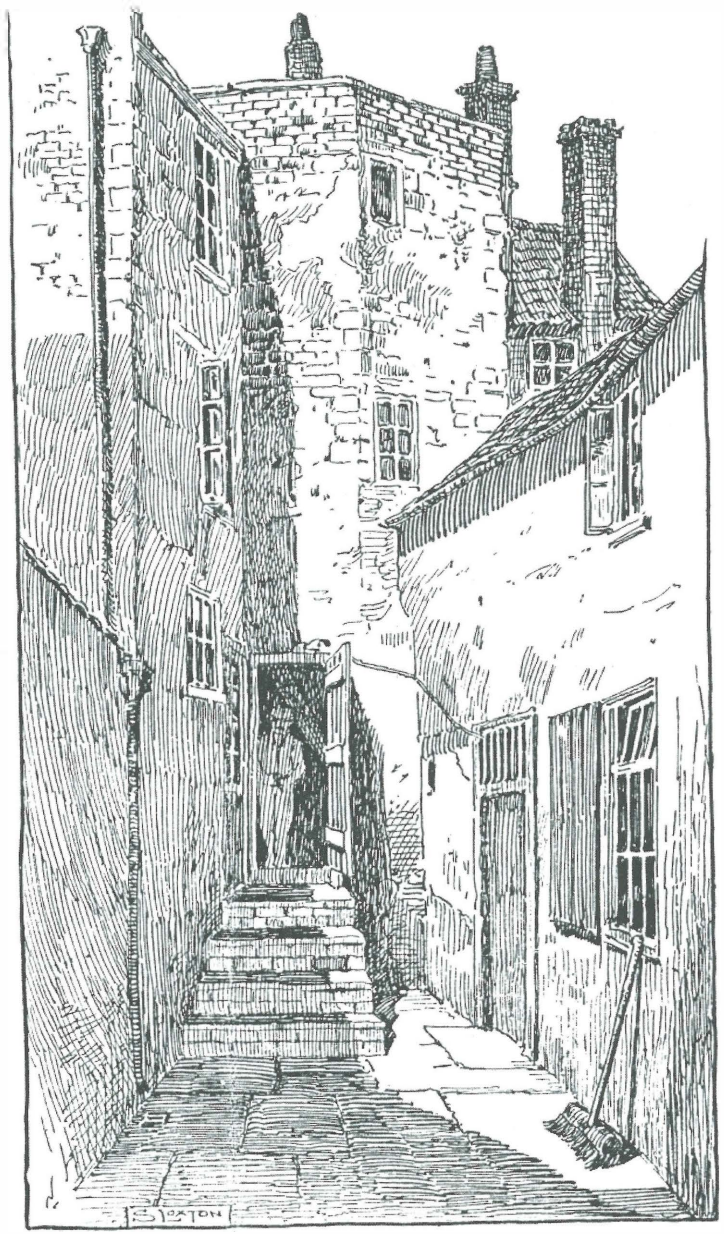
As Edward's wars in Wales and Scotland progressed, Bristol castle played host to a number of prisoners and hostages. These included two Scottish knights, Sir Richard Syward and Alexander Comyn, taken at the battle of Dunbar in 1296. Perhaps the most memorable of Bristol castle's involuntary guests in the 1290s was Ralph de Monthermer, formerly a knight in the household of Gilbert the Red, earl of Gloucester. In 1297 he contracted a secret marriage with Joan of Acre, the daughter of Edward I and widow of Gilbert, who had died two years previously. In July, on discovering the affair, but not yet knowing of the marriage, the furious king had Ralph imprisoned in Bristol castle. Twelve days later, realising that Ralph was actually his son-in-law, Edward had no choice but to release and pardon him. Bristol castle was also a royal residence at this time: Eleanor, Edward's firstborn, died there in 1297.[33]

Edward I's death in 1307 brought to the throne, in the person of his son, Edward II, one of the most incompetent of English kings. For Bristol, his twenty-year reign was marked by the most serious political crisis in its history: the great insurrection of 1312 to 1316.[34] While the revolt must be seen in the context of the baronial opposition to Edward and his favourites, its roots lay in long-running grievances between the townspeople and the castle constable over the levying of the Bristol farm, the town's annual payment to the king. Before the Barons' Wars in the mid-1260s the collection of Bristol's farm had periodically been let to the mayor and burgesses, a situation that gave them considerable independence from the castle constable. After 1265, however, the collection of the farm usually rested with the constable, perhaps reflecting the crown's continuing mistrust of the town following its

support for Simon de Montfort. This situation gave rise to constant irritation and disputes between townspeople and constables. For example, in 1283 the burgesses unsuccessfully petitioned Edward I for the fee farm. The following year he spent Christmas at Bristol, and the burgesses took the opportunity to produce certain articles before the king accusing the castle constable, Peter de la Mere, of infringing their liberties. In 1295 the king took the town into his own hands from April to June, 'because the men of the town had chosen mayors and bailiffs there without authority'. In 1309 Edward II further antagonised local opinion by giving the constable, Bartholomew Badlesmere, the castle, Barton and town at farm. Previously, the constable had been required to account in detail for the sums he raised, but now, provided he delivered the agreed sum of £210 each year to the Exchequer, there was no effective oversight of his methods of collection, nor of the amounts actually collected. The scope for peculation is obvious, and was doubtless so to the burgesses. Badlesmere executed his office entirely or in part through deputies, thereby increasing the number of purses into which the burgesses' money could find its way.

Resentment that had simmered for half a century reached boiling point in 1312. The previous year the baronial opposition, lead by Thomas, earl of Lancaster, had forced Edward II to accept a set of ordinances designed to limit his powers and to banish his hated favourite and probable lover, Piers Gaveston. January 1312 saw Edward try to fight back, with the return of Gaveston and, at Bristol castle, an attempt to replace the constable, Badlesmere, whose loyalty was now suspect, with a man judged more pliable to the royal will, Edmund de Mauley, steward of the Household. Badlesmere, an experienced soldier, was not the sort to go quietly, even at the behest of the king, and de Mauley probably never managed to execute his office. Edward gave up trying to oust Badlesmere in July, bowed to the inevitable, and re-appointed him. By then, rebellion had broken out in the town. The timing of the outbreak, coming in February, the month after the first attempt to replace Badlesmere, suggests that the rebels were seizing the opportunity presented by weakness at the centre and confusion in the provinces.

Exactly what sparked off the revolt is unclear, but irritation at the constable's grant of the farm may have been compounded by his interference in civic appointments and misappropriation of the wool customs. In the latter he seems to have colluded with a group of fourteen plutocrats who dominated town life, and who were bitterly resented by the majority of lesser burgesses. Gilbert de Clare, earl of Gloucester, made an effort to settle the dispute on his own initiative, but this was gainsaid by the insecure king, on the grounds that it would prejudice his royal dignity. Edward then did nothing until July, when a delegation



An early twentieth-century view of a surviving castle tower (S. J. Loxton, in G. F. Stone, 'Bristol As It Was And As It Is' (Walter Reid, Bristol, 1909), p. 99)

from the town was summoned to appear before him. Delay gave way to vacillation, as the custody of the town and Barton was given in August to the mayor and burgesses and then, in September, to Constable Badlesmere, now back in royal favour. A promise to settle the matter in parliament came to nothing. Townsmen and garrison had been ordered not to harass each other in the meantime. This was not merely a precautionary measure, since a young man had been killed by a crossbowman of the garrison. By now, the townsmen were in no mood for compromise, and in September elected as mayor John le Taverner, the rebel leader. He did not present himself before the constable, as required by charter, alleging - probably truthfully - that this was impossible since Badlesmere was absent. Le Taverner and his councillors then further provoked the king by refusing to obey his writ ordering their obedience to the constable, on the grounds that the document did not correctly name them as the commonalty of Bristol. Edward angrily dismissed this objection as frivolous, and re-issued the writ with amended wording, but the burgesses continued to ignore it.[35] They also prevented attempts to collect royal taxes. Open warfare broke out between town and castle. From September 1312 until the following May the townsmen attacked and imprisoned members of the garrison, tried to cut off the castle by erecting wooden barriers and towers around its perimeter, and even built a masonry wall, with crenellations, running parallel with the western castle wall, from which they could shoot into the outer ward. For his part, Badlesmere had made one engine of war, 'Prest' and had another, 'Hautepe', repaired.

In January 1313 the leader of the fourteen oligarchs allied to Badlesmere, William Randolf, complained to the king that their property in the town had been confiscated, and some of them arrested, on trumped-up charges that they had wrongfully imprisoned certain of their opponents in Bristol castle. Repeated royal commands to restore Randolf and his colleagues to their goods and liberty went unheeded, and in May Edward was reduced to ordering the sheriffs of Gloucestershire, Somerset and Dorset to take their posses to compel Bristol to obedience. At about this time le Taverner and some of his associates were arrested and imprisoned in the Tower. However, despite this setback the townspeople remained defiant. Le Taverner and his friends were bailed. The combined sheriffs' posse, if it ever reached Bristol, evidently made little headway, since in June a commission of enquiry headed by Thomas, Lord Berkeley, was despatched, with orders that in determining guilt it should take only the testimony of those outside the town, or of townsmen who had not taken part in the disturbances. This commission was doubly ill-founded. Not only did its terms arouse suspicions of a

jury picked to favour Randolf and Badlesmere, but Lord Berkeley was himself embroiled in a bitter dispute with the townspeople at the time, and so could hardly have been acceptable to them as an impartial judge.[36] When the commission set up its enquiry, probably in Bristol's guildhall, the results, as related in the *Vita Edwardi Secundi*, were spectacular, and largely predictable:

> The leaders of the commons ... were much distressed as they left the hall where judgements are customarily given, and spoke to the people saying, 'Judges have come favourable to our opponents, and to our prejudice admit strangers, whence our rights will be lost forever.' At these words the senseless crowd turned to rioting, and the whole populace trembled from fear of the disorder. Returning once more they entered the hall with a large following and there turned their rights to wrong. For with fists and sticks they began to attack the crowd opposed to them, and in that day nearly twenty men lost their lives for nothing. A very natural fear seized noble and commoner alike, so that many leapt out of the top-storey windows into the street, and seriously injured their legs or thighs as they fell to the ground. The judges, too, were afraid, humbly seeking to leave peacefully, but the mayor of the town, with difficulty repressing the frenzy of the populace, got them away safely.

More fruitless attempts to restore order followed. Once again the earl of Gloucester offered his help, and was once again rebuffed by a suspicious king. In November a commission of enquiry was held in Gloucester. Predictably perhaps, all of those indicted from among the followers of Randolf and Badlesmere were acquitted; le Taverner and his party failed to appear and were outlawed.

The following year, 1314, appears to have been lived in stalemate, with Bristol divided between two armed camps and the crown preoccupied with events elsewhere, notably the disastrous Bannockburn campaign. Crown and constable made little more progress in 1315. The sheriff of Gloucestershire made three attempts to arrest le Taverner and his fellow outlaws, now ensconced in the sanctuary offered by the guildhall. On his third attempt the sheriff found the town gates shut against him and the whole community prepared for war: the castle moat had been drained, the castle mill broken down, and a huge ditch cut before the castle gate, fortified with a strong tower; elsewhere were emplaced barricades and siege engines. The Bristol rebels were playing with fire: even with a king as weak as Edward II, they were still spurning royal authority. For all their brave talk of defending their rights and continued loyalty to the king, if not to his ministers, there could

have been few among them who really believed that a royal justice would construe their actions as anything other than treason, and these were mere townsmen, *bourgeois* rather than noble, who could expect savage punishment to redress the injured hauteur of their aristocratic opponents.

The endgame came in the summer of 1316. Aymer de Valence, earl of Pembroke, arrived outside the town walls with an army and prepared to mount a full-scale siege. When he began to seal off the roads and waterways supplying the town, intending to starve the rebels out, they had little option but to capitulate. As it transpired, the crown was perhaps surprisingly merciful, preferring its punishment in gold rather than blood. The town had to pay a fine of a little over £1,333, together with unpaid taxes and other dues: a massive burden, but if the coffers were empty, then so were the gallows. Le Taverner, his son and another associate were outlawed and forced to abjure the realm, but were pardoned in 1321. Yet the Bristolians were still defiant, and determined to have the last laugh: in 1322 le Taverner and another veteran rebel, John Frauncys, found themselves standing before the king, but this time not as rebels, but as Bristol's two members of parliament. Considerable damage had been inflicted upon the castle, and repairs continued into the 1320s.

Gilbert, the last of the de Clare earls of Gloucester, died at the battle of Bannockburn in 1314. His vast estate was inherited by his daughters, making them very attractive commodities indeed. His youngest daughter, Elizabeth, widow of John de Burgh, was being held in Bristol castle at the time of Gilbert's death while Edward II negotiated her marriage settlement. Despite this precaution, Theobald Verdun, lord of Ewyas Lacy, was able to abduct her from the castle and marry her without royal licence.[37]

However, the greatest beneficiary of Earl Gilbert's death was Hugh Despenser the younger, husband of Elizabeth's eldest sister Eleanor. After Bannockburn he inherited one third of Gilbert's earldom. By 1318 he had wheedled himself into the king's affections to become his favourite and - possibly - sexual partner. The Despensers, father and son, used their favour quite shamelessly to assemble immense power and wealth. A small part of this was the constableship of Bristol castle, first granted to Hugh the younger in 1320, and then regranted to him in 1322. His father, earl of Winchester, was given custody of Bristol castle and town in 1325. During their tenure the castle fortifications were strengthened, a new war engine was built and, with memories of 1312-16 fresh in everyone's minds, a palisade erected between the castle moat and the town. The garrison was also reinforced. The castle played a vital role in securing the Despenser lands either side of the Bristol Channel. By now, however, the Despensers had succeeded in alienating most of

the nobility. In 1322 things came to a head with the defeat at Boroughbridge of the opposition forces led by Thomas of Lancaster. There followed a wave of executions, some of them taking place at Bristol. Soon afterwards the earl of March, Roger Mortimer, in exile in France, became the lover of Edward's own queen, Isabella, who had been sent there to negotiate with her brother, the French king. In 1326 Mortimer and Isabella invaded England, quickly winning the support of a wide swathe of influential opinion. Edward and Hugh the younger tried to escape. The earl of Winchester was in Bristol castle at the time: he may have been there with Edward, before the latter's flight to Wales. This was not a good place for a Despenser to seek refuge. Three years earlier a royal enquiry had found many townspeople to be opposition supporters, with a local cult emerging around the gibbeted body of Henry de Montfort, one of the victims of the post-Boroughbridge purges. Isabella and her army reached Bristol prepared for a siege, but the castle garrison deserted Winchester, who was forced to surrender on 26 October. He was given a peremptory trial, followed by the full rigours of a traitor's death on the common gallows (presumably on St Michael's Hill), to the great delight of the mob. At the same time a baronial council was held at Bristol, where the king's young son, the future Edward III, was proclaimed keeper of the realm.[38]

With the return of somewhat quieter times, Bristol castle continued to serve as a royal prison, housing captives from the Hundred Years' War, as well as political prisoners.[39] Not just a prison, the castle also remained a royal residence, with visits from Richard II in 1382 (when he was accompanied by his queen, Anne of Bohemia), 1391 and 1398.[40] For this first visit extensive repairs and refurbishments were carried out. These came just five years after a restoration campaign that lasted from 1375 to 1377, when £66 13s. 6d. were spent on the castle, much of it on the drawbridge and the king's hall.[41]

Courtesy of Shakespeare, perhaps Bristol castle's most famous appearance in history came in 1399.[42] In the absence of a royal son and heir, and no immediate prospect of one (Richard II and his new queen Isabelle were thirty and seven respectively in 1397), two men emerged as rivals for the eventual succession: Roger Mortimer, earl of March (heir through the female line, and descendant of his namesake, the lover of Edward II's queen) and Henry Bolingbroke, son and heir to John of Gaunt, duke of Lancaster (heir through the male line). In 1398 Henry was exiled, and following Lancaster's death in February 1399 his inheritance was confiscated by the king. In June 1399 Richard went to Ireland and the following month Henry seized his opportunity to claim his lands and, as it turned out, the throne. He landed in Yorkshire and

headed south. Both Henry and the king's party expected Richard to return to England through Wales. Bristol was occupied by a force of Richard's diminishing band of supporters, led by the treasurer, William Lescrope, earl of Wiltshire, and three king's knights and royal councillors, John Bussy, Henry Green, and John Russell, who hoped thereby to establish a bridgehead for the return of the king to England. Henry moved to block him. At Berkeley Henry was joined by the king's uncle, the duke of York, who had been appointed regent while Richard was in Ireland, and from there they marched to Bristol, reaching it on 28 July.

Here they found the castle fortified against them. The constable, Sir Peter Courtenay, uncle of the earl of Devon, was a king's knight and a man reputed brave and chivalrous.[43] A fortnight earlier he had been granted £1,133 for provisions and weaponry. The garrison had been supplemented by a number of Ricardian loyalists, including the retinues of Wiltshire, Bussy, Green and Russell, so that the defenders were probably several hundred strong. Henry's force may have been numbered in the thousands, but a concerted defence of this mighty stronghold could have delayed him long enough for Richard's men to rally and, perhaps, secure victory. Alas for Richard, this was not to be. Henry arrayed his army outside the castle in all its daunting splendour, and on his behalf the earl of Northumberland, acting as constable of the realm,

> had it proclaimed outside the walls of Bristol castle to all those within that anyone who wished to leave the castle and come out to where he was would be permitted to go his way without bodily harm, but that anyone who refused to do so would be beheaded.

This had its desired effect: 'On hearing this, some came out to join the earl by lowering ropes from the castle walls, others through the windows, and others by the gate'. Constable Courtenay, mixing loyalty with pragmatism, only surrendered his charge when ordered to by York, who was still acting on his authority as the king's regent, despite his recent turn of coat. Wiltshire, Bussy, Green and Russell and a few of their die-hard friends found themselves left in an otherwise deserted castle, with no option but to surrender. Wiltshire, Bussy and Green were tried for treason the next day and beheaded. Russell was allowed to live, on the grounds that he was now insane: either he had been driven so by the terrors of the last month, or he pulled off a life-saving dramatic performance. The pro-Lancastrian contemporary chronicler Thomas Walsingham excused Henry's treatment of Wiltshire, Bussy and Green on two counts, firstly that had the lords not so acted, the Bristol mob would have torn them apart anyway, and secondly that with the imminent prospect of Richard's arrival with a large army it was not safe

to keep them alive. The events at Bristol were a turning point in Henry's campaign: not only had they greatly increased his chances of success, but the trial and execution of Richard's councillors for treason sent an unmistakeable message that his ambitions extended beyond the duchy of Lancaster to the throne itself.

The Castle under the Tudors and Stuarts

The heirs of Richard II and Henry IV revived their competing claims to the throne in the fifteenth century, during the Wars of the Roses, but in these Bristol castle played little part. The castle continued to be kept in repair up to the 1460s, with, for example, refurbishments ahead of Henry IV's visit in 1403, and an extensive programme of repairs in the 1440s and '50s, but thereafter it quickly fell into ruin.[44] The constableship became little more than a sinecure, an additional source of income for leading noblemen and favoured courtiers, with no presumption that they would exercise the office in person.[45]

On 12 September 1480 the Bristol-born antiquary William Worcestre made a detailed description of the castle. What he saw dismayed him. His overall impression was of a structure 'broken down and in an extremely bad state of repair': the hall, 'formerly splendid in length, width and height,' was now 'wholly ruinous'; a chapel and chambers on the north side of the hall, once 'splendid' and 'very beautiful', he describes as 'roofless, bare and stripped of floors and ceilings'; most tellingly, perhaps, the constable's quarters were entirely 'thrown down to the ground and ruinous, whence arises great sadness'.[46] There can be little doubt that the constable was now an absentee. Nor did visiting kings care to stay at the castle: when Henry VII visited Bristol in 1486 he lodged at the abbey of St Augustine's.[47] Significantly, when a rebel army approached Bristol in 1497, it was the mayor, rather than the castle constable, who supervised the defences, and it was in the town walls and the natural obstacles provided by the two rivers, rather than the castle, that he saw the town's main security.[48]

Henry VIII found a new use for Bristol castle. Faced with an economic crisis, the crown had turned to currency debasement as a way of balancing the books. The production of new coinage with decreased bullion content necessitated the establishment of provincial mints, and the castle offered a suitable location. Bristol had housed royal mints several times in the Middle Ages, and at least some of these had probably been located within the castle, but the mint established in April 1546 is far better documented than any of its predecessors.[49] The Bristol mint was under the control of William Sharrington, under-treasurer, with a team of five: a comptroller, assay master, teller, graver of irons, and

porter. This seemed an auspicious start, and the lavish entertainment which the civic authorities provided for Sharrington and his team on their arrival may have reflected their relief that the derelict castle was at last being put to good use. This was a substantial operation: between 1 May 1546 and 30 September 1547, 418 lb of gold and about 23,670 lb of silver were minted for English coins, and 3,657 lb of silver for Irish; in May 1547 over £6,666 was supplied to Ireland. Some of this metal probably had an earlier existence as church plate in the treasuries of Salisbury and Wells cathedrals and Bristol parish churches. Sir William Sharrington (he was knighted by Edward VI at his coronation in 1547) is now best known for two things: one is his sensitive remodelling of Lacock Abbey in Wiltshire; the other is the manner of his downfall. He received an annual salary of £133 6s. 8d. as under treasurer, but building a renaissance architectural masterpiece does not come cheap, and the temptation of all that precious metal and coin passing through his hands proved too much. Even more seriously, he embroiled himself in the plot of Lord Admiral Sir Thomas Seymour against Protector Somerset. He seems to have destroyed as many of his accounts as he could lay hands on immediately before his arrest in January 1549, but an investigation into his affairs the following month found that he held in the castle enough gold and silver to make £13 - 14,000 in coin, £200 in cash, and other goods to the value of over £1000; his companions had £1,500 in lead and £500 in cash, and he also owned two ships with ordnance at the quay worth at least £200 which had been given to him by Admiral Seymour. After Sharrington's removal the mint carried on under new management until its closure in October.

The coming of the mint did not please everyone. In about 1549 Walter Grene of Bristol petitioned the chancellor, Richard, Lord Riche, claiming that three years before the mint was established the castle constable, John 'Guyldmyne', had granted him the farm of the herbage of the castle grounds for life, in return for an obligation of £40 (incidentally, the fact that grazing rights within the walls could be leased out in this way suggests the extent to which the castle had lost its military character). When the mint was established the king's officers terminated the lease but did not return the obligation, for which Grene sought redress from Chancery.[50]

In July 1549, for all its use as a mint and for pasture, Bristol castle was still deemed of sufficient military value for Sir William Herbert to be warned not to denude it of artillery and munitions in his preparations to counter the 'Prayer Book' rebels from Devon and Cornwall. According to the seventeenth-century *Adam's Chronicle,* in this emergency 'The walls of Bristoll and the castle was armed with men and ordnance, and most of [the]

gates made new, with watch and ward every day for fear of rebellion'.[51] The establishment of the mint probably necessitated the provision of a new water supply to the castle, but in 1556 the lead from the castle pipes, cistern and conduit seems to have been stripped out, possibly for use in the refurbishment of the churches of St Nicholas and St Mary-le-Port.[52]

The charter of 1373 that gave Bristol county status exempted the castle precinct from the new county's jurisdiction, since at the time it was inappropriate to have a working royal castle under the control of the mayor and common council. The castle, therefore, became an island of Gloucestershire within the county of Bristol. This arrangement may have been at times irksome for the burgesses, but all the time the castle was garrisoned, it seems not to have caused any particular problems for the maintenance of law and order. By the sixteenth century, this largely derelict six-acre site in the heart of the city, rarely if ever visited by its absentee constables, was increasingly seen as an affront to civic pride and a challenge to local stability. The city authorities complained that the precinct had become the haunt of criminals, to whom it offered a kind of sanctuary, since even if they could be arrested and removed from within the castle walls, as residents of Gloucestershire they would have to be taken to the county court in Gloucester to be tried.[53] The first attempt to address this problem came when Henry VIII issued a privy seal writ giving the mayor and common council jurisdiction over felons within the castle.[54] While this writ would be produced as late as 1625 in negotiations between the city and the crown, by at least 1553 it had either lapsed or was considered insufficient by the corporation. In this year a delegation was sent to Westminster, 'to make sute for the Castell of Bristow'.[55] Nothing came of this visit, but it was the first of a series of negotiations culminating in the castle's incorporation into the city and the latter's purchase of the castle in 1629 and 1630 respectively.

No further approaches seem to have been made until 1611, when alderman John Whitson was despatched to Westminster to negotiate the purchase of the castle, either outright in freehold or in leasehold as a fee farm rent, or failing this to secure some kind of administrative reform on the model of the Henrician arrangements. At first things looked hopeful: in October surveyors were sent to inspect the castle in preparation for its imminent sale. When they arrived however, the constable, Sir John Stafford, or more likely his deputy, refused to admit them, on the grounds that they lacked the necessary warrant. The real reason was not official punctiliousness, but the constable's self interest. Stafford protested that he hoped the king was not intending to sell the castle of the second town in the kingdom, but then gazumped the city with a much higher offer, and the sale was abandoned.[56]

The city's purchase of the castle would have meant the end of his constableship with its £20 annuity.[57] Another reason for Stafford's objection to the purchase of the castle is revealed by the city's petition to the privy council delivered in 1620. This complained that Stafford, 'hath of late time suffred manie poore and indigent people to the number of 94 families consistinge of about 240 persons to inhabite within the said castle'. In 1624 it would be alleged that Stafford had pocketed about £1000 in rents from the forty houses he had erected to accommodate his tenants. In short, Stafford had indulged in a little private property development, and stood to lose these rents if the sale went through. The 1620 petition was not concerned with the ethics of Stafford's enterprise, but with its deleterious effects on local peacekeeping, for these 240 tenants were mainly 'persons of very leud life and conversacion, and noe way able to releeve themselves but by begginge and stealeinge, to the great annoyaunce of the cittizens'.[58] The city kept up the pressure with a further presentation to the council in 1622. But the showdown between city and constable never took place: Stafford died in September 1624 as Bristol corporation were preparing their Star Chamber suit against him.[59]

The following month the crown commissioned the mayor, Henry Gibbs, and alderman John Guy, together with two outsiders, Jerome Ham and James Dyer, to survey the castle.[60] This does not seem to have been merely a formal procedure routinely carried out between constableships, but an urgent enquiry occasioned by the series of complaints that had been made against Stafford. The articles which the commissioners were charged to investigate covered the state of the buildings, the financial value of the castle and its associated properties, the condition of the houses Stafford had erected, encroachments made into the precinct, and unpaid rents: a list that very much reflects the crown's concern for the castle's economic, rather than military value, a concern that would have been shared by its aspirant civic landlords. The commissioners' survey (in Latin) was produced in January 1625. Their conclusions were damning: the castle had suffered greatly from disrepair; roof lead was in many places missing; many walls were about to collapse, and stone, lead and other materials from the castle had been sold off.[61] There were about forty small cottages within the grounds in which lived paupers and their families, many of whom survived by begging. The commissioners calculated that, if properly maintained and the paupers replaced with respectable tenants, the castle could yield an annual income of about £40. Three months later - by which time James I had died and been replaced by his son Charles - a second commission was issued. The commissioners reported back on 29 April. The tenants of Stafford's cottages were listed by name and occupation, with the rents they paid.

While the commissioners found nine 'that live in hovellis, holes, corners and other obscure places', for whom no occupation was given, and therefore, presumably, were beggars (but who still paid annual rents of £1), the rest were described as various kinds of craftsmen, and paid annual rents ranging from 10s. to £5. This is not quite the community of paupers portrayed by the first survey. The rents were paid to Francis Brewster, yeoman, to whom Stafford had farmed the castle. Probably in response to this survey, Sir Thomas Fanshaw was commissioned to see that some emergency repairs were carried out. He would later confirm that he found the ruins to be exceedingly great, and the castle inhabited by people of a mean sort, many of them using the castle as sanctuary, and occupying little cottages piled one on top of another.[62]

While no longer considered of much military importance, Bristol castle remained a potentially valuable piece of real estate, but the surveys demonstrate that it had been allowed to become a wasting asset under the mismanagement of Stafford. The city's claim to be allowed to take over was immensely strengthened by these revelations, and the corporation wasted no time in pressing home its advantage. Ten days after the second survey was completed a petition was presented for the incorporation of Bristol castle within the city and county, and enquiries were made about the terms on which the fee farm could be acquired. This had no immediate effect, and in August 1626 the crown renewed Francis Brewster's lease as sub-tenant under the new constable, Sir George Chaworth, for a period of three lives or eighty years at an annual rent of £100. The city tried another route, and sought a reversion of the castle after the expiry of Chaworth's constableship, together with a reinstatement of the arrangements made under Henry VIII's privy seal. The reversion may have been granted, but this would only come into effect after Chaworth's tenure, and so did nothing to ameliorate the present situation.[63]

In the autumn of 1628 the corporation made a further effort to secure the incorporation of the castle.[64] In November the mayor and common council petitioned for the castle's incorporation. They presented their petition through the queen for, in time-honoured fashion, Bristol - the 'Queen's Chamber' - was part of her dower.[65] The petition was supported by a combination of old and new arguments: the 200 poor living within the castle, mostly beggars, were joined by

> a greate number of outlawed, excommunicated, and other lewde offendours that fly the face of justice (by whome God is dishonnored and the Comonwealth oppressed) doe there shelter themselves as in a place priuiledged and exempte of all government and authoritie, to the greate anoyance of your loyall subiects(;)

offenders had to be sent the thirty miles to Gloucester for trial; and,

finally, appealing most strongly to the crown's interest as its efforts to relieve the Huguenot stronghold of La Rochelle foundered,

> That vppon the late occasion of impressinge souldiers and marryners for your Ma[jes]ties service a greate multitude of able men fled thither [to the castle], as to a place of freedome (where malefactors live in a lawless manner), by meanes whereof Justice was affronted, the service delayed, and the gouernment of your said Cittie vilified and abused.

This had the desired effect, and after four months' consultation with legal opinion (which concluded that the petition could be objected to only by those 'who desire to liue dissolutely and without control of gouernment') a charter of incorporation was granted on 13 April 1629.[66] Henceforth, the castle precinct was to be under civic jurisdiction, and its inhabitants were to be citizens: 37 of them were subsequently admitted as freemen. However, they remained tenants of the crown, and the castle itself continued as part of the royal desmesne.

The city now had control, but not ownership, of the castle. In July 1630 the mayor and common council took steps to remove this last anomaly by presenting another petition to the king. In this they claimed that the exchequer owed them £759 for billeting and transporting Sir Piers Crosby's troops for Ireland in 1627; in recompense, they requested that the castle should be granted to them in fee farm at an annual rent of £40. The petition was referred to Richard Weston, the lord treasurer, who sought Sir Thomas Fanshaw's opinion. Fanshaw noted that the castle had been leased at £100 per annum, but believed that this rent was unlikely to be maintained, and that therefore there was no reason to think that such a grant would be prejudicial to crown interests. The following month the mayor and common council adroitly appointed Lord Treasurer Weston as the high steward of Bristol.[67] Once again, their careful lobbying - and judicial use of gifts, douceurs, or bribes, depending on one's sensibilities - paid off, but the crown drove a hard bargain. The charter of 26 October 1630 named the actual purchase price as £959, but with only £200 of this to be in cash, since the balance was to be made up of the remitted crown debt of £759. In addition, the city was liable for an annual fee farm rent of £40.[68]

The 1630 grant gave the city the reversion of Brewster's lease, but did not negate the lease itself, leaving him still in possession. Tension arose between the city and its new tenant, who in 1632 alleged to the privy council that, despite keeping the property in good repair, he had suffered obstruction from the civic authorities. This one last loose end was tied two years later. In October 1634 the corporation bought out the remaining years of the lease for £520 10s.[69]

The castle was put to use as a training ground and armoury for the trained bands, or civic militia. In January 1630 guns blasted out from the castle walls in salute as the funeral procession of John Doughty, captain of the trained bands, passed by. A visitor in 1634 noted how the militia,

> have their Armes lodg'd in a handsome Artillery House, newly built vp in the Castle Yard, where once in a yeere, they inuite, and entertaine, both Earles, and Lords, and a great many Knights and Gentlemen, of ranke, and quality, at their Military Feast; And this yard affoords them, a spacious, and a large place to drill, and exercise in.[70]

Bristol castle's swan song came in the Civil Wars.[71] The corporation began preparing for war before the arrival of parliamentary troops in December 1642. That October the common council had resolved to agree compensation with the occupiers of the cottages built within the castle so that they could be demolished (presumably to give a clear field of fire and manoeuvre); in November it had been resolved to repair the battlements and construct wooden gun platforms within the keep. In July 1643 ten guns were mounted on the castle walls and six on the keep. By 1644 the complement of guns in the castle and adjoining Newgate had been increased to sixteen. By this time houses that had been built over the moat had been demolished so that it could once again serve as a defensive feature, and an earthwork redoubt was constructed, probably to protect the castle's water-gate on its southern flank. The castle was only intended to provide a refuge of last resort, however, and it could do little to defend the city: seventeenth-century cannon could smash through stone, and mortars could lob missiles over the highest walls. The two sieges of Bristol were fought for possession of the city, not its castle. The construction of the city's main defences began in earnest in early 1643, and continued after the Royalist seizure in July. These consisted of an extensive line of earthworks upon the hills surrounding the city, as well as the Royal or Great Fort, one of the civil war's most imposing fortifications, built in 1644.

Contemporaries disagreed as to the castle's strength. During the trial of Colonel Nathaniel Fiennes, the parliamentary commander who had allegedly given up Bristol too easily in July 1643, a hostile witness described the castle in the following terms:

> The castle was a very large stronghold, fortified with a very broad deep ditch, or graft, in part wet and dry, having a very good well in it: the castle stood upon a lofty steep mount, that was not mineable, as Lieut-Col Clifton informed me, for he said the mount Whereupon the castle stood was of an earthy substance for a certain depth, but below that strong rock, and that he had searched

Colonel Nathaniel Fiennes, commander of Bristol's Parliamentary garrison (J. F. Nicholls and J. Taylor, 'Bristol Past and Present' (Arrowsmith, Bristol, 1881), vol. 1, p. 295)

purposefully with an augur and found it so in all parts; the foot of the castle upon a mount or rampart was fortified with a gallant parapet wall flanking, which with its wall scarping must needs strengthen it from battering, the parapet at the base being as I would guess twelve feet thick, the walls of the castle were very high, well repaired, stored with strong flanking towers and galleries on the top, and if a little earth lined, I am sure had been past the power of cannon to batter.

On reading this account we must remember that it was intended to damn Fiennes for surrendering a still-defensible position, and so is likely to exaggerate the castle's strength. A more reliable witness may be the royalist engineer Bernard de Gomme, for whom it was a 'large old Castle; but weake still; notwithstanding the Enemyes had something repayrd & fortified it'. While of questionable defensive value, the castle did function as military headquarters, arsenal, treasury and prison.[72] A Royalist mint was established there in August or September 1643 under Thomas Bushell. He escaped with his equipment to Lundy Island just before the city was taken by Parliament in September 1645.[73]

With the execution of Charles I in 1649, Parliament could contemplate a return to peace. In 1650 Cromwell's council of war considered whether Bristol needed both the Great Fort and the castle for its defence. The fort was reprieved for a while, with money being voted for its maintenance, but no decision was made on the castle's fate, and it continued to be garrisoned.[74] The renewal of fighting in 1650-1 halted the disgarrisoning and dismantling of fortifications.

Meanwhile, Bristol corporation was battling with the Commonwealth. The issue was the £40 annual fee farm rent for the castle. The mayor and common council claimed that ever since Colonel Fiennes had garrisoned the castle in March 1643 they had not received the £140 in rents due from the inhabitants, who had been moved out and their houses demolished (this may have been a somewhat skewed recollection since, as we have seen, the council itself took the decision to clear the castle precinct in October 1642). Since the castle had then ceased to produce any revenue, they had to find the fee farm rent from other sources. In April 1651 the mayor took soundings on the best way to ease the burden of the fee farm, and the following February his surveyors of the lands swore on oath that they could find no record of rents being paid after the castle had been garrisoned. This was of course not news to the mayor, but it did provide evidence in support of the city's case for relief, which was made in a petition presented in 1653. This described how houses had been built in the castle grounds 'by many honest tradesmen and other persons': either the hovels with their pauper inhabitants had been

swept away, or the city authorities did not want to admit that they once had such people as tenants. The city seems to have adopted the attitude of 'can't pay won't pay', since this document records how the right to collect the fee farm had been purchased from the Commonwealth by Oliver Wallis, a London mercer, who was now trying to prosecute Bristol corporation for non-payment. Three more years of negotiations and lobbying by Bristol's MPs brought a settlement in the summer of 1656, with Parliament pardoning the debt.[75] By then, however, the castle itself was little more than a stone quarry.

By 1653, with the Royalists finally defeated, the government could once again consider the fate of Bristol castle. The end came by degrees, attended by a certain amount of bureaucratic muddle. In January the Council of State required the Irish and Scottish Committee to consider Parliament's resolution that Bristol castle garrison be removed, but this proposal was countermanded by Cromwell, who commanded the governor of Bristol, Colonel Scrope, to disregard any such orders and await further instructions. In March the Ordnance Committee ordered the castle's artillery and ammunition to be sent to the Tower, and the following month the Irish and Scottish Committee ordered the gunpowder to be despatched to Ireland, along with the castle garrison. On 15 April the same committee was instructed by the Council of State to make arrangements with the Lord General and the mayor of Bristol for the dismantling of the castle. Another order to remove the garrison came on 27 December (so the April order to remove the garrison had clearly not been carried out in full, if at all) and the next day a warrant was sent to the corporation to demolish the castle. In January the corporation appointed a committee to oversee the process, but another committee, with a similar remit, was appointed in June, with the additional charge of letting the grounds for redevelopment. Labourers were still being hired for the demolition in October 1655.[76]

The Castle in History

There is a temptation to see in the story of Bristol castle a microcosm of great movements in English history. In the convoluted process by which the castle passed from baronial to royal ownership might be read the gradual consolidation of political and military power by the king and the extension of crown control over the feudal baronage: except that few serious historians today think that the relations between the baronage and the crown were that simple. However, certain broad conclusions may be drawn, with due caution. There is no record of Bristol castle ever having been taken by siege; and yet, as the earl of Winchester in 1326 and Richard II's courtiers in 1399 found to their cost, no amount of military

technology can indefinitely negate political realities. As for individuals, so for the castle itself, left behind by changing strategic and political imperatives. Before the triumph of gunpowder rendered all castles redundant as military strongholds (and military historians cannot agree when that decisive moment occurred), Bristol castle's pivotal role in English political life came to an end with the final conquest of Wales and the cessation of baronial resistance in the marches. By the mid fourteenth century, Bristol castle was no longer a pawn in power struggles between kings and magnates, nor of vital strategic importance in the English imperial project, now turned eastwards towards France. At some points in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the political history of England can be seen reflected in the history of Bristol castle, and for the first three hundred years of its existence the stories of town and castle were inextricably linked. The creation of the county of Bristol hastened the process by which the castle became for Bristolians little more than an irritating anachronism, but this did not begin in 1373. The power struggle between town and castle in the early fourteenth century might be seen as symbolising the growing confidence and economic strength of the former. Even though the burgesses suffered a partial defeat, they were still able to lock the constable and his garrison into a humiliating stalemate for several years. To conclude, however, that the story of the castle's last three hundred years was simply one of accelerating decline and redundancy would be to ignore its non-military functions. Another recurrent theme in the castle's story is its versatility. At various times it was a baronial or royal residence, an administrative centre, a prison, barracks, mint, arsenal, and, towards the end, the site of a rather shady property development. Finally, it became a quarry, supplying stone for the rebuilding of a city ravaged by the civil wars. An ignoble end, but in this respect the castle made a material contribution to the city's second golden age, and on its site arose the shops and houses that would form Bristol's retail centre until the 1940s.

Notes

1. This pamphlet makes no attempt to cover the castle's administrative, or structural history in any more detail than is necessary to provide a context for a political narrative. For these aspects, the reader should consult the introduction and notes to the edition of Bristol castle constables' accounts edited by Margaret Sharp (*Accounts of the Constables of Bristol Castle in the Thirteenth and Early Fourteenth Centuries*, B[ristol] R[ecord] S[ociety], 34 (1982); Margaret Sharp's papers related to this edition, including photocopies of several constables' accounts, are deposited with the B[ristol] R[ecord] O[ffice], as 37689), and Michael Ponsford's unpublished University of Bristol M. Litt. thesis, 'Bristol Castle: archaeology and the history of a royal fortress' (1979), a copy of which is available in the university library. I am immensely indebted to both of these works, and I am grateful to Dr Ponsford for advice on the castle's archaeology.
2. Ponsford, 'Bristol Castle', pp. 27-8; R. A. Brown, H. M. Colvin, & A. J. Tayor, *The History of the King's Works*, vol. 2 (HMSO, London, 1963), p. 578.
3. Ponsford ('Bristol Castle', p. 29) suggested a date within the period 1137 to 1147, but Good prefers an earlier date, and 1110 is the year traditionally cited for the construction of the keep: G. L. Good, 'Bristol Castle keep: a re-appraisal of the evidence and report on the excavations in 1989', *Bristol and Avon Archaeology*, *1996*, pp. 17-45, at 30.
4. *Gesta Stephani*, ed. & trans. K. R. Potter (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1976), pp. 56/7. Roger of Hoveden described the castle as it stood in 1138 as *'fortissimum castellum'*: *Chronica Magistri Rogeri de Hovedene*, ed. W. Stubbs (R[olls] S[eries], 1868), vol. 1, p. 193.
5. *King's Works*, pp. 578-9; Ponsford, 'Bristol Castle', pp. 33-4.
6. *The Metrical Chronicle of Robert of Gloucester*, ed. W. A. Wright, vol. 2, (RS, 1887), p. 636.
7. Unless otherwise indicated, the following section derives from Sharp, *Accounts*, 'Introduction', and Ponsford, 'Bristol Castle', pp. 180-202.
8. *Bristol Charters, 1155-1373*, ed. N. Dermott Harding, BRS, vol. 1 (1930), pp. 16/17, 122/123.
9. J. Samuel, *Jews in Bristol: The History of the Jewish Community in Bristol from the Middle Ages to the Present Day* (Redcliffe, Bristol, 1997), pp. 26-7, 34-5.
10. See below, p. 9.
11. N[ational] A[rchives] (formerly Public Record Office) E101/4/12
12. NA E43/12, E156/28/90, E101/15/32, 21/20, 21/34, 22/2; *C[alendar of] P[atent] R[olls], 1337-39*, p. 446. John Canynge may have been the wool merchant active in the 1330s and 1340s, and a probable ancestor of William, the great fifteenth-century merchant: J. Sherborne, *William Canynges, 1402-1474* (Bristol H[istorical] A[ssociation], 1985), pp. 1-2.
13. *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, ed. B. Thorpe, (RS, 1861), vol. 1, p. 356, vol. 2, pp. 191-2; *Symeonis Monachi Opera Omnia, Historia Regum*, ed. T. Arnold (RS, 1885), p. 215; F. Barlow, *William Rufus* (Methuen, London, 1983), pp. 82 & 321. For Geoffrey, see J. H. Le Patourel, 'Geoffrey of Montbray, bishop of Coutances, 1049-1093', *English Historical Review,* 59 (1944), pp. 129-61. For Bristol in this period, see D. Walker, *Bristol in the Early Middle Ages* (Bristol HA, 1971), and D. Sivier, *Anglo-Saxon and Norman Bristol* (Tempus, Stroud, 2002).

14. Much of this account of the earls of Gloucester before 1217 is based on *Earldom of Gloucester Charters: The Charters and Scribes of the Earls and Countesses of Gloucester to AD 1217*, ed. R. B. Patterson (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1973), pp. 3-9. For the events of the 1120s and '30s, see D. Crouch, *The Reign of King Stephen, 1135-1154* (Longman, Harlow, 2000), pp. 9-103. Bristol's role is also discussed by K. Nargote, *England under the Angevin Kings,* vol. 1 (Macmillan, London, 1887), pp. 295-6; H. A. Cronne, *The Reign of Stephen, 1135-1154: Anarchy in England* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1970), pp. 39, 45, and R. H. C. Davis, *King Stephen, 1135-1154* (2nd edn., Longman, Harlow, 1977), pp. 37-9, 54, 65.
15. The following (including quotations) is based on *Gesta Stephani*, pp. 57-71, with additional material from: *Rogeri de Hovedene*, p. 193; *Matthaei Parisiensis, Chronica Majora*, ed. H. R. Luard, vol. 2 (RS, 1874), p. 167; *The Historical Works of Gervase of Canterbury*, ed. W. Stubbs, vol. 1 (RS, 1879), p. 105; *Annales Monastici*, ed. H. R. Luard, vol. 4 (1869), p. 22 (Thomas Wykes' Chronicle).
16. R.H.C. Davis's introduction to the *Gesta Stephani*, pp. xviii-xl, makes a strong case for the bishop of Bath, Robert of Lewes (1136-66), as the author; he was a staunch supporter of King Stephen.
17. *Rogeri de Hovedene*, p. 197; *Gesta Stephani*, p. 88/9; *Gervase of Canterbury*, p. 110; *Henry of Huntingdon, Historia Anglorum: The History of the English People*, ed. & trans. D. Greenway (Clarendon, Oxford, 1996), p. 722/3; *Willelmi Malmesburiensis Monachi de Gestis Regum Anglorum*, ed. W. Stubbs, vol. 2 (RS, 1889), p. 556-7.
18. *Gesta Stephani*, p. 114/5; *Matthaei Parisiensis, Chronica Majora*, p. 173.
19. *The Historia Novella of William of Malmesbury*, ed. & trans. K. R. Potter (Nelson & Sons, London, 1955), p. 50; *Willelmi Malmesburiensis*, p. 572.
20. *Historia Novella*, p. 61; *Willelmi Malmesburiensis*, pp. 582-3.
21. *Gervase of Canterbury*, p. 125; R. Barber, *Henry Plantagenet* (Boydell, Cambridge, 1964), p. 33; Sharp, *Accounts*, p. xx; W. L. Warren, *Henry II* (Methuen, London, 1973), pp. 37-9, and passim for the standard account of the events of 1154-89. A. L. Poole, 'Henry Plantagenet's early visits to England', *English Historical Review*, 47 (1932), pp. 447-51, discusses the identity of 'Master Matthew' at 449-50.
22. *Chronicle of the Reigns of Henry II and Richard I: Benedict of Peterborough*, ed. W. Stubbs, vol. 1 (RS, 1867), p. 92; *Rogeri de Hovedene*, p. 78; J. Sherborne, *The Port of Bristol in the Middle Ages* (Bristol HA 1965), p. 3. The sheriff of Gloucestershire accounted for the castle in 1174-5, but it may have been returned to the earl soon afterwards, before being taken back by the crown in 1183: *Publications of the Pipe Roll Society, vol. 22, 1174-5*, p. 159; Sharp, *Accounts*, p. 73 n 9.
23. *Publications of the Pipe Roll Society, vol. 14, 1194-5*, pp. 29-30; S. Painter, *William Marshal: Knight-Errant, Baron, and Regent of England* (Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore, 1933), p. 96; D. Crouch, *William Marshal: Knighthood, War and Chivalry, 1147-1219* (2nd edn., Longman, London, 2002), p. 80.
24. W. L. Warren, *King John* (2nd edn., Methuen, London, 1978), pp. 30, 66, and passim for the events of 1189-1216.

25. Warren, *King John*, pp. 188-9; Sharp, *Accounts*, pp. xxi-xxii, 79-80, 87.
26. *Matthaei Parisiensis*, vol. 2, p. 656; *Historia Minor*, vol. 2, p. 181; Crouch, *William Marshal*, p. 127; F. M. Powicke, *King Henry III and the Lord Edward: The Community of the Realm in the Thirteenth Century*, vol. 1 (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1947), pp. 6-7.
27. *Chronicles of the Reigns of Edward I and Edward II*, ed. W. Stubbs, vol. 1 (RS, 1882), p. 38; *Annales Monastici*, vol. 1, p. 118; Sharp, *Accounts*, pp. xxvi-xxix; D. A. Carpenter, *The Minority of Henry III* (Methuen, London, 1990), p. 251.
28. This paragraph is based on *Historia Minor*, vol. 3, p. 336; *Matthaei Parisiensis*, vol. 5, p. 450; *Annales Monastici*, vol. 3, pp. 155, 158 (Tewkesbury), 64-5, 194 (Dunstable); *CPR, 1216-25*, pp. 203, 281, 306, 419, 429; D. A. Carpenter, *The Minority of Henry III* (Methuen, London, 1990), pp. 83-4, 105, 109, 118, 122-3, 147, 229; M. Howell, *Eleanor of Provence: Queenship in Thirteenth-Century England* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1998), p. 162; Powicke, *King Henry III and the Lord Edward,* vol. 1, p. 233; M. Altschul, *A Baronial Family in Medieval England: The Clares, 1217-1314* (Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore, 1965), passim.
29. This and the next two paragraphs are based on the following: *Gervase of Canterbury*, vol. 2, p. 221; *Chronica Monasterii S. Albani Willelmi Rishanger*, ed. H. T. Riley (RS, 1865), pp. 19, 29; *Flores Historiarum*, ed. H. R. Luard (RS, 1890), vol. 2, pp. 482-3, vol. 3, p. 3; *Royal and Other Historical Letters Illustrative of the Reign of Henry III*, ed. W.W. Shirley, vol. 1 (RS, 1862), pp. 90-1; Sharp, *Accounts,* pp. 71, 75, 82, 89; R. F. Treharne, *The Baronial Plan of Reform, 1258-1263* (Manchester University Press, 1971), pp. 164, 193-4, 233, 310; Powicke, *King Henry III and the Lord Edward*, vol. 2, pp. 450, 476, 486-9, 497-500, 787; Howell, *Eleanor of Provence,* pp. 170-1, 224, 228; D. A. Carpenter, *The Reign of Henry III* (Hambledon, London, 1996), p. 249; J. R. Maddicott, *Simon de Montfort* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 227, 282, 306, 319, 327-8, 332, 334-5, 338-9. For the period 1258 to 1307, see M. Prestwich, *Edward I* (Methuen, London, 1988), passim.
30. Altschul, *Baronial Family*, pp. 77, 127; *King's Works*, vol. 2, p. 580.
31. *Gervase of Canterbury*, vol. 2, p. 283; *Flores Historiarum*, vol. 3, pp. 46, 48; *Chronica Monasterii S. Albani, Rishanger*, p. 87; Sharp, *Accounts*, pp xxix-xxx; NA C47/10/43/6; R. R. Davies, *Age of Conquest: Wales, 1063-1415* (Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 327-8.
32. *Chronicles of the Reigns of Edward I and Edward II*, vol. 1, p. 91; Sharp, *Accounts*, pp. xxx, 17; Davies, *Age of Conquest*, pp. 348-54.
33. *Chronica Monasterii S. Albani, Rishanger*, pp. 173, 416. *Documents Illustrating the Crisis of 1297-98*, ed. M. Prestwich, Camden Society, 4th ser., vol. 24 (London, 1980), p. 103; *Flores Historiarum*, vol. 3, p. 103; Altschul, *Baronial Family*, p. 157. For further details of the arrangements made for prisoners, see Sharp, *Accounts*, pp. xxvi-xxxiv.
34. This account of the revolt is based on: *Vita Edwardi Secundi*, ed. N. Denholm-Young (Thomas Nelson & Sons, London, 1957), pp. 70-74; *Rotuli Parliamentorum*, vol. 1, pp. 359b-362a; *Annales Monastici*, vol. 3, p. 316 (Dunstable), vol. 4, p. 300 (Wykes); *Flores Historiarum*, vol. 3, p. 341; Sharp, *Accounts*, p. 82; Cronne, *Bristol Charters*, pp. 47-50; E. A. Fuller, 'The tallage

of 6 Edward II (Dec. 16, 1312) and the Bristol rebellion', *T[ransactions of the] B[ristol and] G[loucestershire] A[rchaeological] S[ociety]*, 19 (1894-5), pp. 171-278; Ponsford, 'Bristol Castle', pp. 206-14; M. Sharp, 'Some glimpses of Gloucestershire in the early fourteenth century', *TBGAS*, 93 (1974), pp. 5-14; *King's Works*, p. 580.

35. *Bristol Charters, 1155-1373*, pp. 48/9-50/1.
36. For Lord Berkeley's role and the dispute, see John Smyth, *Lives of the Berkeleys*, ed. J. Maclean (John Bellows, Gloucester, 1883), pp. 196-200, 229-30.
37. Altschul, *Baronial Family*, pp. 168-9.
38. *Chronica Monasterii S. Albani Thomae Walsingham*, ed. H. T. Riley, vol. 1 (RS, 1863), pp. 181, 183; *Chronica Monasterii de Melsa* ed. E. A. Bond, vol. 2 (RS, 1867), p. 352; *Annales Monastici,* vol. 4 (Oseney), p. 347; *Flores Historiarum*, vol. 3, p. 234; J. C. Davies, *The Baronial Opposition to Edward II: Its Character and Policy* (Cambridge University Press, 1918), pp. 94-5, 103; N. Fryde, *The Tyranny and Fall of Edward II, 1321-1326* (Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 152-3, 189-90. Hugh Despenser the younger's account for victuals as constable, 1321/2, is NA E101/15/32; it shows corn received from the sheriff of Somerset, and total expenses of £8 6*s.* 3*d.*
39. Examples include: Hugh Despenser, son and namesake of the man executed in 1326, in 1331 (*CPR, 1330-34*, p. 141, *C[alendar of] C[lose] R[olls], 1330-33*, p. 325); Sir Geoffrey de Mowbray, 1339 (*CCR, 1339-41*, p. 248); Sir David Arnand of Scotland, 1347 (*CCR, 1346-49*, pp. 319, 457); John de Kendale, who in 1356 was pardoned for breaking out of the castle in consideration of his good service in the wars (*CPR, 1354-58*, p. 465); Sir John Heron, 1364 (*CCR, 1364-68*, p. 84); Sir James Berners and Richard Mitford, 1388 (*CCR, 1385-89*, p. 394); for these last two see *Knighton's Chronicle, 1337-1396*, ed. G. H. Martin (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1995), p. 428/9.
40. *CPR, 1381-85*, pp. 92, 178; *CPR, 1388-92*, pp. 386-8, 392; *CPR, 1396-99*, pp. 319-20, 327, 331.
41. NA E101/542/6, E364/15 m. 7^{v}; *King's Works*, p. 581.
42. This and the following two paragraphs are based on: *Chronicles of the Revolution, 1397-1400: The Reign of Richard II* ed. C. Given-Wilson (Manchester University Press, 1993), pp. 34-7, 120, 128, 133-4; and M. Bennett, *Richard II and the Revolution of 1399* (Sutton, Stroud, 1999), pp. 159-61. For the wider context of Richard II's reign, see N. Saul, *Richard II* (Yale University Press, New Haven & London, 1997). Shakespeare's portrayal of the events at Bristol castle is in *King Richard II*, III.i.
43. In 1388 Sir Peter had been granted the reversion of the constableship on the death of John de Thorpe: *CPR, 1385-89*, p. 79.
44. *King's Works*, p. 581.
45. Fifteenth-century constables included: Richard Beauchamp, earl of Warwick, appointed in 1437(*CPR, 1436-41*, p. 82); John St Lo, esquire of the body, appointed after Warwick's death in 1439, and John's son Nicholas, holding jointly with him, 1440-3 (*CPR, 1436-41*, pp. 257, 366; *CCR, 1441-47*, p. 103; *CPR, 1441-46*, p. 142); Edward, earl of March (the future Edward IV), appointed 1460 (*CPR, 1452-61*, pp. 632-3; *CCR, 1454-61*, p. 467); Sir Giles Daubeney, appointed 1485 (*CPR, 1485-94*, p. 43; *CCR, 1485-1500*, no. 29).

46. *William Worcestre: The Topography of Medieval Bristol*, ed. F. Neale, BRS, vol. 51 (2000), nos 422, 437. Worcestre's opinion was confirmed fifty years later by John Leland, who found that Bristol castle 'all tendithe to ruine': *King's Works*, p. 581.
47. *Records of Early English Drama: Bristol*, ed. M. Pilkington (Records of Early English Drama, Toronto, 1997), p. 14.
48. *The Maire of Bristowe is Kalendar*, ed. L. Toulmin Smith, Camden Society, new series, vol. 5 (1872), pp. 48-9.
49. See L. V. Grinsell, *The Bristol Mint: An Historical Outline* (Bristol HA 1972), passim, and pp. 12-16 for the mint established in 1546. The patent letters and other crown documents relating to the mint are calendared in *L[etters and] P[apers,] F[oreign and]D[omestic, Henry VIII,] 1546*, nos. 35, 37-42, 44, 47, 49, 320, 650, 716; *C[alendar of] S[tate] P[apers] D[omestic], 1547-53*, nos. 30, 119, 188, 205; *A[cts of the] P[rivy] C[ouncil], 1547-50*, pp. 92-3, 167, 253, 283. *Adams's Chronicle of Bristol*, ed. E. Salisbury & F. F. Fox (J. W. Arrowsmith, Bristol, 1910), begun in 1623, notes the king's establishment of the mint in the castle, and adds, intriguingly, 'and there likewise put printing in practice' (p. 97).
50. NA C1/1223/39. The castle constable in this period was John Gilmyn (appointed in 1508): perhaps 'Goldmine' was a Freudian slip on Grene's part? The document also suggests that the constable's jurisdiction over the castle may have been suspended during the lifetime of the mint.
51. *CSPD, 1547-53*, no. 331; *Adams's Chronicle* p. 100.
52. NA E117/14/33; *City Chamberlain's Accounts in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, ed. D. M. Livock, BRS, vol. 24 (1966), pp. 37, 39.
53. Unless otherwise stated, this and the remaining paragraphs are based on *Bristol Charters, 1509-1899*, ed. R. C. Latham, BRS, 12 (1947), pp. 74-77; J. Latimer, *The Annals of Bristol in the Seventeenth Century* (William George's & Sons, Bristol, 1900), pp. 43-4, 90, 113-4.
54. The constableship continued to be granted to absentee magnates and courtiers: Sir John Seymour in 1509 and 1517 (*LPFD, 1509-13*, p. 80, *1517-18*, p. 1105); Sir William Herbert in 1550 (*CPR, 1549-51*, p. 329); Henry, earl of Pembroke in 1570 (*CPR, 1569-72*, no. 567).
55. BRO F/Au/1/6, Mayor's Audits, 1553, p. 95.
56. BRO M/BCC/CCP/1/2 Common Council Proceedings, 1611, ff. 21b-22; *CSPD, 1611-18*, pp. 79, 81, 107.
57. Latham, *Bristol Charters*, pp. 229-30, gives the text of Herbert's appointment of 1550, including the £20 p.a. fee. Stafford's main claim to fame was that he was the first infant to have been baptized in the English congregation in Geneva, and had Calvin as godfather; nothing in the rest of his career lived up to its beginning. His appointment to the constableship in 1601 may not have been welcomed by those Bristolians who remembered how, fifteen years earlier, the privy council had ordered his relative, Edward, Lord Stafford, not to molest Mayor Richard Cole and his brother Thomas, whom he claimed as his villeins: P. W. Hasler, *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons, 1558-1603* (HMSO, London, 1981), vol. 3, pp. 432-3; G. E. C., *Complete Peerage*, vol. 12, pt. 1, pp. 185-7; *APC, 1586-7*, p. 153.
58. *APC, 1619-21*, p. 364; NA E178/3871.

59. BRO M/BCC/CCP/1/2, ff. 106, 107, 120.
60. This paragraph is taken from NA E178/3871.
61. The crown itself had been implicated in this last practice: in 1615 Sir George Chaworth was granted the reversion of the post of constable after Stafford; the following year the crown made a free gift to him of stone from old walls and decayed towers within the castle (*CSPD, 1611-18*, pp. 277, 360, 385-6).
62. *CSPD, 1629-31*, p. 298.
63. BRO M/BCC/CCP/1/2, ff 127b, 128, 139b.
64. In Michaelmas quarter £5 was paid in expenses for procuring the government of the castle: *City Chamberlain's Accounts in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, ed. D. M. Livock, BRS, 24 (1966), p. 106.
65. The petition and associated texts are printed in Smith, *Maire of Bristowe is Kalendar*, pp. 113-8; see also *CSPD, 1629-29*, pp. 394-5.
66. Latham, *Bristol Charters*, pp. 144-9.
67. *CSPD, 1629-31*, p. 298; BRO M/BCC/CCP/1/3, f 25.
68. Latham, *Bristol Charters*, pp. 150-62. The entry recording the receipt from the king on account of the purchase of the castle of the sum of £752 19s. 1½d. owed for the transport of troops to Ireland appears in BRO F/Au/1/21, p. 13. Details of the bribes paid in securing the charters of 1629 and 1630 are given in Latimer, *Annals*, pp. 91, 113; they included, in addition to cash payments, silver plate, wine, oil, sugar, and a Persian carpet.
69. BRO M/BCC/CCP/1/3, f 51; F/Au/1/21, p. 243; 00861 (Brewster's assignment of lease); *Adams's Chronicle*, p. 239. By now Francis had evidently been succeeded by his heir (and probable son), John.
70. *Adams's Chronicle*, p. 224; P. McGrath, *Bristol and the Civil War* (Bristol HA, 1981), p. 9.
71. Unless otherwise stated, the following is based on: Latimer, *Annals*, pp. 196-205; McGrath, *Bristol and the Civil War*, passim; J. Lynch, *For King & Parliament: Bristol and the Civil War* (Sutton, Stroud, 1999), pp. 34-7; J. Russell, *The Civil War Defences of Bristol: Their Archaeology & Topography* (published by the author, Bristol, 1995), pp. 31-2.
72. For the last, see *The Deposition Books of Bristol, Vol. I, 1643-47*, ed. H. E. Nott, BRS, 6 (1935), p. 89. The castle continued to house prisoners until at least December 1653: *CSPD, 1653-4*, p. 289. In October 1644 there was an outbreak of plague in the castle, which might well have originated among the prisoners: Nott, *Deposition Books*, p. 14.
73. Grinsell, *Bristol Mint*, pp. 17-8.
74. *CSPD, 1650*, pp. 8, 387; *CSPD, 1652-3*, p. 76.
75. BRO M/BCC/CCP/1/5, p. 19, CT04376, pp. 4, 12, 58, 66-8, F/Au/1/6, p. 95; Latham, *Bristol Charters*, p. 77; Latimer, *Annals*, pp. 237-8.
76. BRO M/BCC/CCP/1/5, pp. 77, 84, 00766(9)a; *CSPD, 1652-3*, pp. 76, 280; Latimer, *Annals*, pp. 238, 257-8; Lynch, *King & Parliament*, pp. 171-2. Stone from the keep may have been used to build nearby houses: Good, 'Bristol Castle Keep', p. 32.

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