

Social History

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Population [Anthea Jones]

The Domesday Survey recorded the servile population of Cirencester as numbering 54 under Edward the Confessor: 31 villains, 13 slaves and 10 bordars.¹ The lay subsidy of 1327 listed 91 taxpayers subject to individual assessment for the vill of Cirencester (including the wardens of the two hospitals in the vill and 7 subtaxers).² The individual poll tax assessment for Cirencester in 1379/80 taxed 574 people; another 42 were taxed in Bagendon and Wiggold.³ The military survey of 1522 for Cirencester was organised by street and thus individuals could occur more than once. The 94 entries listed for Cirencester in the survey may represent 87 individuals and institutions. The wealthiest men, Christopher Tolle, Henry Tapper and Hugh Nores all lived in Chipping Street and held land worth £280, £200 and £200 respectively.⁴ Another four men were listed under Chesterton.⁵ The returns for the lay subsidy of 1523 listed 10 men and women with goods or lands over £40 in Cirencester hundred, all of whom were 'de Cirencestre' and were listed in the military survey of Cirencester in 1522.⁶ In 1525 107 men and women had taxable wealth of over £1.⁷

<i>Value of Goods</i>	<i>Chipping Street</i>	<i>Abbot Street</i>	<i>Cricklade Street</i>	<i>Gosditch Street</i>	<i>St Cecily Street</i>	<i>Castle Street</i>	<i>St Lawrence Street</i>
£200+	3						
£100-£200				1			
£50-£100	5	1				2	
£20-£50	7	1	4	5			
£10-£20	3			3		1	
£5-£10	8	3	3	4		2	
£2-£5	4	2	1	3	2		1
<i>Geographical distribution of wealth in Cirencester, 1522</i>							

Charities

St John's Hospital

The 12th-century remains of the hospital and chantry of St John the Evangelist are on Spitalgate Lane,⁸ where there is also archaeological evidence of a chapel of c. 1320.⁹ The present roof is

¹ TNA, PRO E 31/2/1/6238.

² *Glos. Subsidy Roll, 1327*, 16-17.

³ TNA, PRO E 179/113/35A.

⁴ *Military Surv. of Glos. 1522*, 100-2.

⁵ *Military Surv. of Glos. 1522*, 106.

⁶ *Bristol & Glos. Lay Subsidy*, 5.

⁷ *Bristol & Glos. Lay Subsidy*, li, 395-7.

⁸ Verey and Brooks, *Glos. II*, 179.

⁹ R. Leech & A. McWhirr, 'Excavations at St John's Hospital, Cirencester, 1971 and 1976', *Trans. BGAS* 100 (1982), 191-

presumed to date from the mid-15th century, with some reuse of earlier timbers.¹⁰

In their 1342 bill of complaint the men of Cirencester claimed that Henry I founded the hospital in 1133 for the poor and sick who were to pray for the souls of the king and his heirs, giving the foundation a third of his demesnes of Cirencester and his entire demesne in the forest of Oakley.¹¹ Subsequently the claim in relation to Oakley was altered to three cartloads of underwood per week.¹² They further claimed that Henry I had established a chaplain as warden of the hospital to sing mass before the poor there for the souls of him and his heirs, and that this chaplain was to receive a livery in the abbey of Cirencester, taking such bread, beer and cooked meat as a canon takes every day, but that the office had long since been sold to laymen.¹³ In 1462 appointment to the chapel and wardenship of the hospital was in the hands of the archbishop of Canterbury, when Master Thomas Eggecombe was collated to that position.¹⁴ When Archbishop Morton made a visitation of the abbey in 1498, no *custos* of the hospital was listed.¹⁵ In 1538 the abbot and convent unanimously appointed Henry Hill, then in minor orders, to the wardenship of the hospital. They undertook to provide him with sufficient bread, meat and fish, as well as four cartloads of wood from 'Ockleywode' a year, and two cartloads of hay. If the payment of any instalments of his fee was more than six weeks in arrears, he was empowered to distrain the abbot and convent.¹⁶ In 1535 it was recorded that this fee was 40s yearly.¹⁷ In 1327 the warden of St John had been assessed for tax at 6d.¹⁸

An account of the foundation of the hospital from c.1320, when the abbot and convent of Cirencester licensed the daily celebration of the mass in the hospital, maintained mass had never previously been heard in the hospital.¹⁹ The bishop of Worcester's grant for this oratory confirms that the celebration of the mass at St John's, if it had ever been said, had long since ceased.²⁰ The abbot maintained that the poor, old and sick at the hospital had been supported by the income of the abbey, by the daily distribution of the almoner, and the alms and largesse of the faithful.²¹ The *Valor Ecclesiasticus* suggests that the surplus from rents specifically granted for the support of the hospital were returned to the general abbey coffers, which suggests that the hospital was indeed maintained from the abbey's general income,²² and with the abbot's view that any mortuaries

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¹⁰ A. Arnold, R. Howard, C. Litton, 'List 184: Dendrochronology Dates from Nottingham Tree-Ring Dating Laboratory', *Vernacular Architecture* (2007), 109.

¹¹ *Ciren. Cart. I*, no.124.

¹² *Ciren. Cart. I*, no.126.

¹³ *Ciren. Cart. I*, nos.124, 126.

¹⁴ Lambeth Palace Library, Reg. Bouchier, f.86A.

¹⁵ C. Harper-Bill, *The register of John Morton, archbishop of Canterbury 1486-1500* (Canterbury and York Society, vol. 78, 1991), no.465.

¹⁶ Bodleian, MS Rawlinson B. 326, 131.

¹⁷ *Valor Eccl.*, II, 468.

¹⁸ TNA, PRO E 179/113/5.

¹⁹ *Ciren. Cart. I*, no.361/314.

²⁰ E. Pearce (ed.), *Bishop Cobham's Register 1317-1327* (Worcs. Hist. Soc., 1930), 72.

²¹ *Ciren. Cart. I*, no.361/314.

²² *Ciren. Cart. I*, no.361/314.

received from those dying in the hospital belonged to the abbey.²³ Bequests to the hospital occur from the 13th to the mid-16th century.²⁴ Edward III's charter of 1343 supported the abbey's contention that the hospital was founded for the support of the poor, and its needs met by the alms of the abbot and convent and their predecessors who had provided custodians in the hospital as often as needed.²⁵

The men of Cirencester alleged in 1342 that the abbot had created a sorority in the hospital of women under an order associated with that of the abbey canons, and that the canons had committed acts of debauchery with the sisters in the hospital.²⁶ Whilst this allegation was not repeated by the Cirencester jury who travelled to Westminster, the 1352 ordinance for the future regulation of the abbey did specify that the sisters of the hospital of St John were henceforth, like those of the hospital of St Lawrence, to be over fifty years of age, poor, sick and unable to work.²⁷ The men of Cirencester did repeat an allegation that one Alice de Weston had paid the abbot £60 in order to appropriate the chantry to herself.²⁸

In 1535 the income of the office of the warden of the hospital was £6 5s 1d: £3 1s 9d from rents of assize in Cirencester, 13s 1d from rent of a close in Stratton, 11s from a portion of the tithe of corn at Northcote, and £2 from rents outside Cirencester received by the abbot. Expenses came to 5s 6d, and a regular annual payment to the hospital folk of 13s 4d for salt and meal to make 'olera' (vegetables). Alms of 6s 8d were made to the sisters of St John by the almoner. The abbot and convent paid a pension of 40 m. per annum to the master of the hospital.²⁹

On 1 August 1538 Henry Hill was appointed as custos of the hospital. His predecessor was Hugh ? Coct.³⁰

In 1546 the income of 'The Hospital of Seynt John the Evangelist' was recorded as £4 13s 7d. The hospital was 'the chirch for the said poor folk' and in ornaments and chattels had goods worth 26s 6d.³¹ According to an 18th-century catalogue of benefactions the hospital was founded for three poor men and three poor women.³²

St Lawrence's Hospital

The hospital of St Lawrence was founded as a leper hospital for men in the latter part of the 13th century by Edith Biset, lady of Wiggold.³³ As a leper hospital, St Lawrence's may have had a chapel,

²³ *Ciren. Cart. III*, no.315.

²⁴ *Ciren. Cart. III*, no.309, 324; Hockaday Abs. 155, 1397, 1402, 1406, 1410, 1498; TNA, PROB 11/2A/30, 11/2A/42, 11/2A/66, 11/2A/186, 11/2A/200, 11/2A/356; GA, D4590/1, D4590/3/1; Worcs. R. O., Wills, Walter Brede (1537), Gyls Paratt (1538); *Cal. Pat. 1301-7*, 419; W. Marett (ed.), *Calendar of Register of Henry Wakefield, Bishop of Worcester 1375-95* (Worcs. Hist. Soc., 1972), no.155.

²⁵ *Ciren. Cart. I*, no.123.

²⁶ *Ciren. Cart. I*, no.124.

²⁷ *Ciren. Cart. I*, no.172.

²⁸ *Ciren. Cart. I*, nos.124, 126.

²⁹ *Valor Eccl.*, II, 468-9, 471.

³⁰ Bodleian, MS Rawlinson B. 326, 131.

³¹ TNA, PRO E 301//21, no.37.

³² GA, P86/1 CH 20/2.

³³ *Ciren. Cart. I*, 126; Darvill & Gerrard, *Cirencester: Town and Landscape*, 93.

as suggested by Leland's notes.³⁴ The hospital and its chapel may have been pre-dated by a Romano-British cemetery church.³⁵ Certainly there was a chapel of St Lawrence in the mid-13th century when its income was accounted for in obediary accounts of Cirencester Abbey.³⁶ Its absence from 1268 suggests that it was converted to a hospital in the late 1260s.³⁷ The location of the hospital, on the corner of Gloucester Street and Barton Lane, may help to indicate the limits of Cirencester town in the late 13th century.³⁸ In 1327 the warden of the house of St Lawrence was assessed for tax at 7d.³⁹

Around 1336 the hospital was refounded as an almshouse for women by the abbot and convent of Cirencester. The townspeople alleged that the abbot had taken away the charters belonging to the hospital, which documented the 40s. worth of land and one acre of meadow near 'Clerkesmede', appropriated by the abbot, which the people of the town had granted to the hospital for its support, the rest of the necessary money coming from their alms. The master of the hospital, John Baudynton, ordained by Adam, bishop of Worcester in 1335, had been ousted by the abbot and his position given to a sister.⁴⁰ In their first complaint to the king the men of Cirencester implied that the abbot had converted St Lawrence's hospital into a house for fallen women and their children.⁴¹ The character of the women admitted to the house was not mentioned in the further pleading in Chancery, nevertheless in 1352 ordinances concerning the future regulation of Cirencester abbey during a time of vacancy stipulated that, as at St John's, women admitted to the hospital should be over the age of fifty, sick, poor and unable to work.⁴² Possibly the abbot had been trying to address a social problem which two 16th-century wills met by leaving money to support the marriages of poor maidens of good fame.⁴³

Edward III's charter of 1343 to the abbot and convent of Cirencester recorded that the hospital was founded for the sustenance of the poor and supported by the abbot and convent who were allowed to remove its custodians if there were reasonable cause.⁴⁴

In 1397 John Boyes left 6d each to the sisters of St Lawrence's hospital.⁴⁵ In 1410 Gilbert Glasyer left 6s 8d to the brothers and sisters of the hospitals of St John and St Lawrence.⁴⁶ At the time of Leland's visit there were two poor women resident in the hospital endowed with lands.⁴⁷ The *Valor Ecclesiasticus* noted that the abbey distributed alms of 8s 8d per annum to the sisters of St

³⁴ Leland, *Itin.*, I, 129.

³⁵ R. Reece and C. Catling, *Cirencester: the development and buildings of a Cotswold town* (British Archaeology Reports 12, Oxford, 1975), xx.

³⁶ Staffs. R.O., D(W)1788/P54/B8, 1-18.

³⁷ Staffs. R.O., D(W)1788/P54/B8, 19v.

³⁸ Darvill & Gerrard, *Cirencester: Town and Landscape*, 113.

³⁹ TNA, PRO E 179/113/5.

⁴⁰ *Ciren. Cart.*, I, 126.

⁴¹ *Ciren. Cart.*, I, 124.

⁴² *Ciren. Cart.*, I, 172.

⁴³ TNA, PROB 11/19/118; Worcs R. O., wills, Hugh Norres senior (1535).

⁴⁴ *Ciren. Cart.*, I, 123/73.

⁴⁵ TNA, PROB 11/2A/42.

⁴⁶ TNA, PROB 11/2A/356.

⁴⁷ Leland, *Itin.*, I, 129.

Lawrence.⁴⁸ The chantry survey of 1546 recorded that these lands were worth 66s 7d, and that this money was going to the support of only one poor woman ‘for the other is dead’.⁴⁹

Holy Trinity Hospital

There is a single reference to this hospital, found in the will of Joan Spicer of Cirencester (d.1445).⁵⁰ Possibly this was connected to the canons of the church of the Trinity, who petitioned Edward I for the confirmation of the charter granted to them by Henry III.⁵¹ Fuller concluded that the hospital mentioned in Joan’s will was probably the hospice on Gosditch Street which a 17th century survey identified as having been maintained by a fraternity.⁵²

Education

From the mid-13th century there was an abbey school, with the earliest known reference to the Master of the Scholars dating from 1242.⁵³ A Master Richard of Cirencester who granted land to the abbey in the early to mid 13th century may have been associated with this abbey school⁵⁴ and a strong scholarly tradition at Cirencester may have attracted men of the calibre of Alexander Nequam to the abbey.⁵⁵ In 1340 one Walter Brounyng of Sandhurst, aged then 21, began his studies.⁵⁶ The bishop of Worcester, Thomas Polton, supported a poor boy at school in Cirencester and left him £4 when he died in 1433 should he wish to continue his studies.⁵⁷ The master of a school for boy choristers received a pension, when the abbey was closed.⁵⁸

There was probably a free school in Cirencester from c.1457, when John Chedworth, bishop of Lincoln, was granted a licence to found a chantry in the church of St John the Baptist, Cirencester.⁵⁹ The *Valor Ecclesiasticus* recorded that ‘Humphrey ..., master of the grammar school there, has a certain annuity of £10 for his expenses paid by the monastery of Winchcombe forever by order and foundation of Sir John Chedworth, bishop of Lincoln’.⁶⁰ This £10 endowment was charged upon the manor of Sherborne.⁶¹ In 1487 the schoolmaster of Cirencester was Master Simon Moreland.⁶² In 1534 Elizabeth Tolle left £10 in her will for the repairing of a new school house in Cirencester.⁶³

⁴⁸ *Valor Eccl.*, II, 469.

⁴⁹ TNA, PROB E 301/21, no.37.

⁵⁰ TNA, PROB 11/3/518.

⁵¹ TNA SC 8/321/E468.

⁵² E.A. Fuller, *The Parish Church of St John Baptist*, Cirencester (Cirencester, 1882), 13.

⁵³ Hist. & Cart. Mon. Glouc. I, 281; I. Kirkby, *Diocese of Gloucester* (1968), 4-5.

⁵⁴ *Ciren. Cart.* I, 280/137.

⁵⁵ Evans, ‘Cirencester Abbey: From Heyday to Dissolution’, 117-122.

⁵⁶ *Cal. Inq. p.m.* XI, 124.

⁵⁷ *Reg. Chichele*, II, 492.

⁵⁸ *L&P Hen. VIII*, XVI, 27.

⁵⁹ Below, Bishop Chedworth's Chantry.

⁶⁰ *Valor Eccl.*, II, 447.

⁶¹ GA, D678/1 M1/2/11, m.1.

⁶² E. A. Fuller, ‘Cirencester Free Grammar School’, *TBGAS* 11 (1886-87), 117-118.

⁶³ TNA, PROB 11/25/212.