

An **Exeter** memories eBook

Historic Buildings of **Exeter**

David Cornforth



Historic Buildings of Exeter

A historic guide to buildings that have gone, and those that remain

Whether you live in the city, or are visiting, this guide covers Exeter's best loved buildings

Written and photographed by David Cornforth



Historic Buildings of Exeter

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An **Exeter Memories** digital book

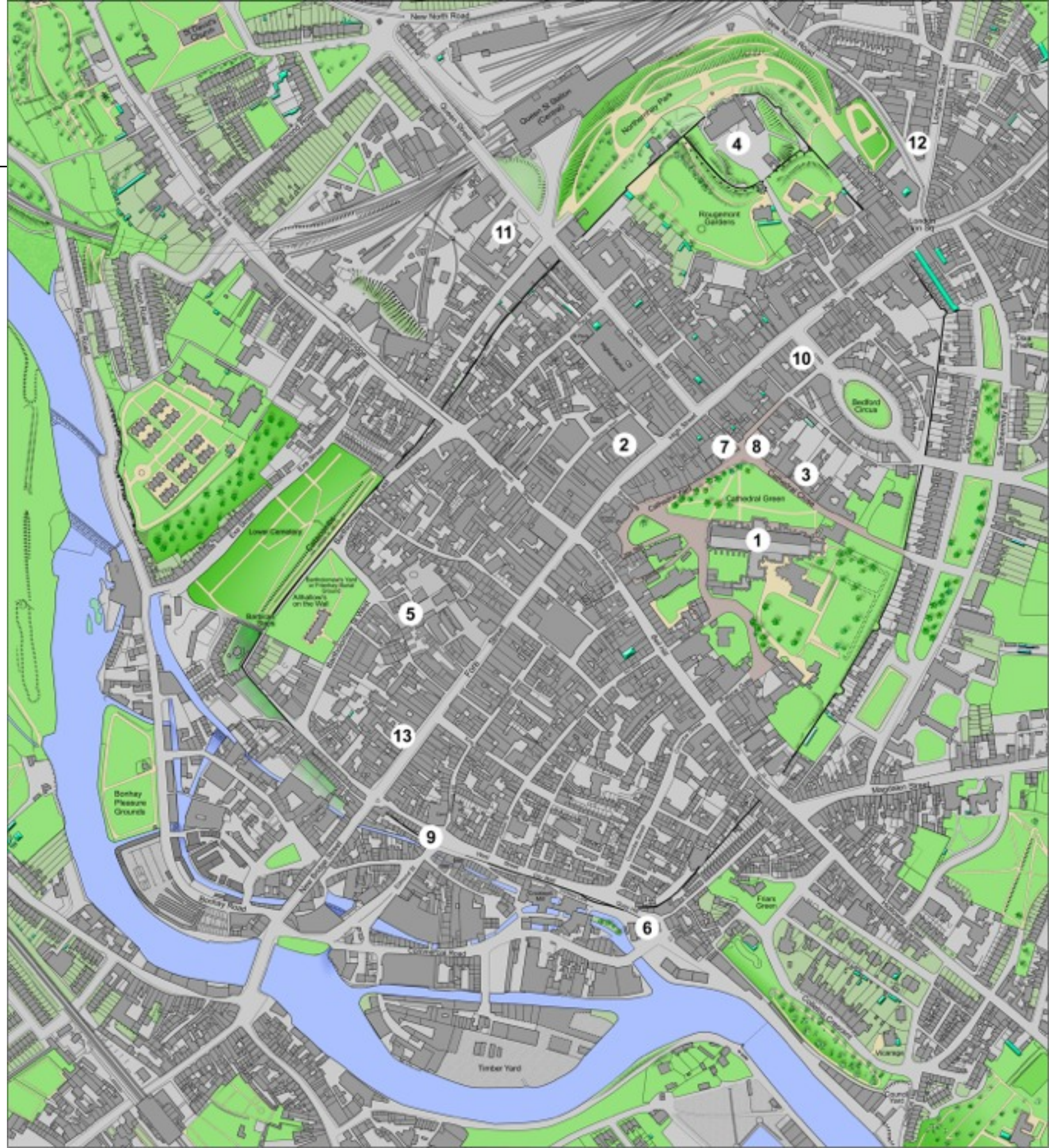
I would like to express my thanks to Dick Passmore and Julia Sharp for their many suggestions to improve the text, both for clarity and historical accuracy.

SECTION 2

MAP OF EXETER

- 1—St Peter's Cathedral
- 2—The Guildhall
- 3—The Devon and Exeter Institution
- 4—Rougemont Castle
- 5—St Nicholas' Priory
- 6—The Custom House
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- 8—Mol's Coffee House
- 9—The House that Moved
- 10—Deller's Cafe *
- 11—The Rougemont Hotel
- 12—The Theatre Royal *
- 13—Tucker's Hall
- * no longer exists

Based on the 1905 Ordnance Survey map.



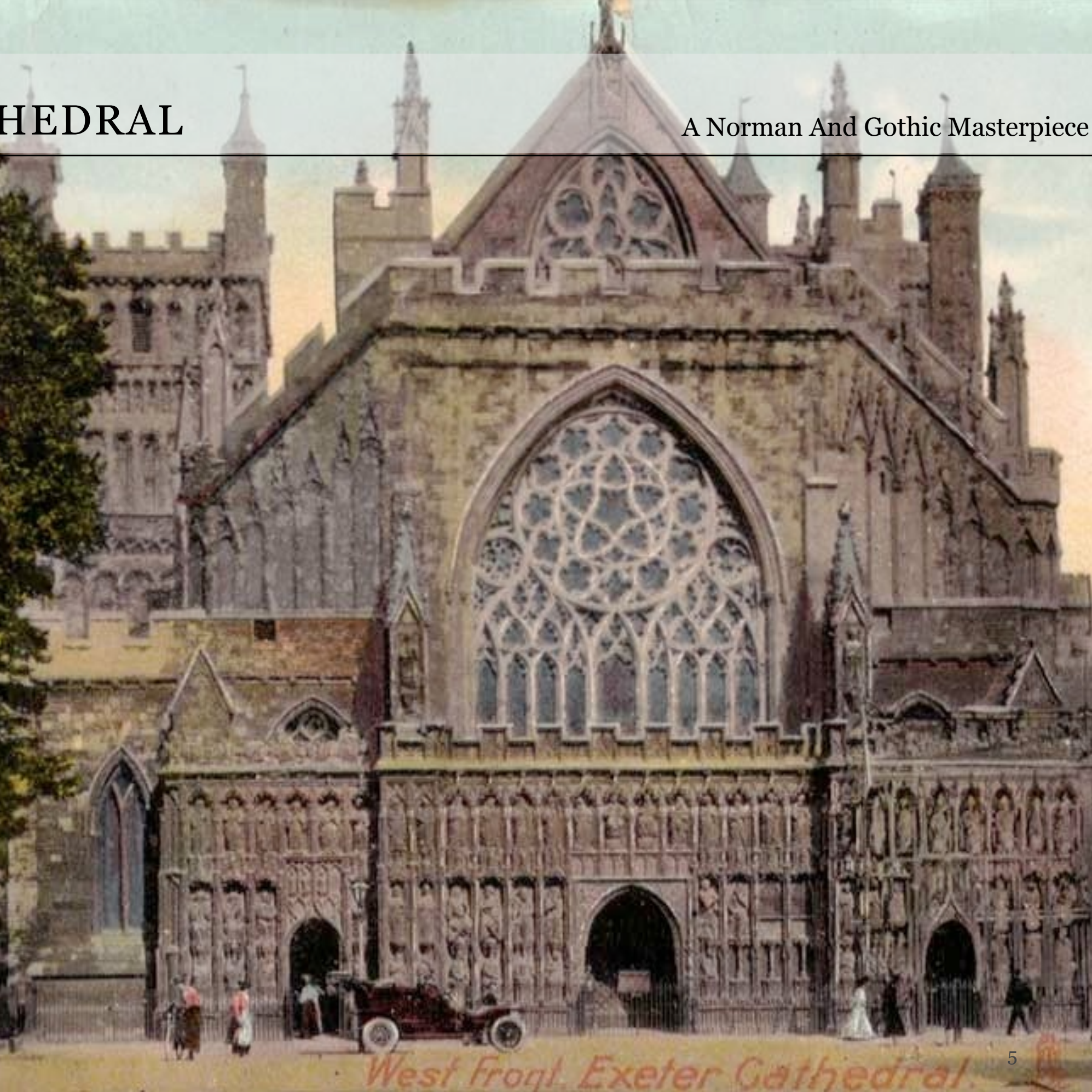
Church & Civic Buildings

There are still traces of Saxon construction in some of Exeter's surviving ancient buildings. The Normans added the Cathedral and the the Castle. There ia also the surviving St Nicholas' Priory, a fine Guildhall, and other later buildings to be discovered in this section.



ST PETER'S CATHEDRAL

A Norman And Gothic Masterpiece



ST PETER'S CATHEDRAL

Exeter Cathedral has been at the heart of the city since Roman times—indeed the first Roman stone structure in their new Britannic conquest, was a bathhouse, just yards from the site from which would rise the Cathedral. They had burial sites outside the city walls, in Magdalen Street, Holloway Road and off South Street. Figurines and other objects, that had religious significance, have been found alongside the cremated remains of soldiers.

However, the Cathedral area was not a centre of Christian worship until Saxon times. Evidence of Saxon Christian burials in Cathedral Yard were found in 1971 on a grassy area close to the Devon War Memorial, and the foundations of a Minster or monastery which was established in the late seventh century overlaid the same site. The Crediton born St Boniface, the patron saint of Germany, was educated at the Minster in AD 680.

Apart from the Minster, Exeter was more or less abandoned and the town did not start to regenerate until the time of King Alfred the Great, AD 871-899. After the Vikings burnt down the Minster in 1003, things started to improve.

By about 1000 AD, Exeter was the sixth most prosperous city

in Britain. It continued to grow and by the 11th century, tin was the basis of the city's wealth. The increase in size was such that the city had as many as 30 churches, with Preston Street, being the street of priests!



The Roman Bathhouse dig revealed this burial in 1971.

THE BISHOP COMES TO EXETER

Edward the Confessor appointed Leofric as Bishop of Crediton and Cornwall in 1046. In 1050, Leofric, gained permission to move the Bishop's stool' from Crediton to Exeter, as Crediton becoming more lawless than the walled city of Exeter. Leofric converted the existing Minster into his cathedral. Crediton still has its own suffragan bishop who resides at 10 The Close.

Leofric was enthroned by the King. The Leofric Missal in the Bodleian Library records that "*...with the king leading the bishop on his right hand and the most noble queen Edith on his left, they installed him in the episcopal throne in the aforesaid monastery in the presence of the chiefs and many men of rank of the English people... the honourable man*

Leofric was thus enthroned with great pomp and became the first bishop of Exeter."

Leofric worked to increase the income of his cathedral, both in land and in ecclesiastical vestments. A bibliophile, he

St Peter's Cathedral surrounded by the old houses of Cathedral Close including the Devon and Exeter Institution with the glass dome.



collected many manuscripts; some he gave to the cathedral library, including a manuscript of poetry, known as the Exeter Book. When Leofric died in 1072; he was buried in the Minster. His remains were moved to the new Cathedral, which was built after his death, but the location is no longer known and the current tomb is not his actual resting place.

NORMANS GET IN ON THE ACT

After the Norman invasion, a programme of church building was embarked upon in England, to add to the many Saxon churches already in existence. William gave the monks of Battle Abbey in Sussex, St Olave's Church. They established St Nicholas' Priory nearby. In 1114, Bishop Warelwast, nephew of the Conqueror, started building a new Cathedral church in the popular Romanesque style. The quire was consecrated in 1133, allowing the clergy to worship in their new building for the first time. In 1136 a major fire caused damage to the nave, during a siege by King Stephen, against Baldwin de Redvers, who defended Rougemont Castle for three months. Stephen built the siege castle known as Danes Castle, before the defenders capitulated due to a food and water shortage.

All this warfare delayed the completion of the Cathedral nave until the end of the 12th century. The two massive square towers are the main surviving structures from this period of building, being completed by 1170-80. The towers have round arched, Norman windows, whereas the later parts of the Cathedral have Decorated Gothic pointed arches. The fifty or so carved misericords date from 1230-1270, one of which, is the earliest known depiction of an elephant in the country.



The Great West Window from the Nave

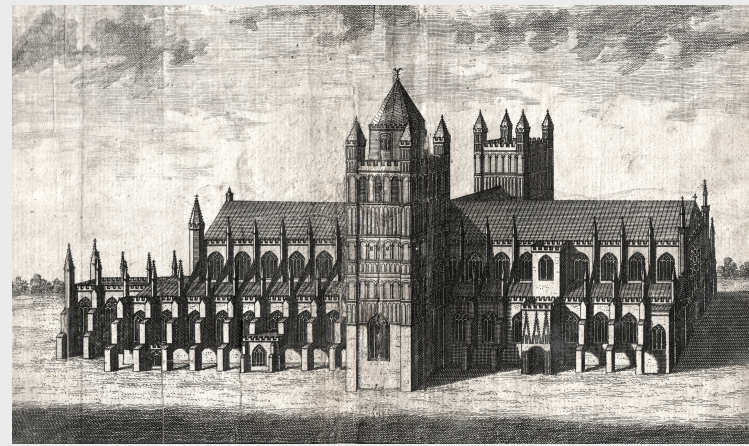
The 18 m (59 feet) tall Bishop's Throne in the quire was constructed from Devon oak, between 1312 and 1316.

Bishop Branscombe expanded the Cathedral with the remodelling of the **Quire** and construction of the Lady Chapel in 1270, in Decorated Gothic style. The Cathedral Fabric Rolls (dating from 1279-1353), held in the Cathedral Archives, provide a written history of the rebuilding. Progress was slow and by 1280 the Lady Chapel was only at window height.

MURDER AND MAYHEM

The whole of Cathedral Close became a huge building site, attracting commerce to the area. Revelry and bad behaviour of the labourers, artisans and traders caused much concern for the Bishop.

In 1283, John Pycot, a local, was elected Dean of Exeter in doubtful circumstances. The then Bishop Peter Quinel cried 'foul' and attempted to have Pycot removed from office. This caused dissent in the chapter and controversy throughout the city, leading to the murder of one of the Bishop's henchmen, Walter Lechlade.



Print from 1724



The Cathedral Clock

He was hunted down by Pycot's men and stabbed to death, when walking across Cathedral Close, from matins, in the early hours of 5 November 1283. Lechlade's family were obviously a little upset by the turn of events and they brought proceedings against Pycot, the city Mayor Alured de Porta, and nineteen other plotters.

The case dragged on for two years until Bishop Quinel asked Edward I to intercede and judge the case against the plotters. The King arrived with Queen Eleanor and three of his daughters on 22 December, 1285. He listened to the case on 24 December, and had Christmas Day off to attend services and have dinner. The next day he sentenced five plotters and the Mayor to hang, with John Pycot banished to a monastery, where he eventually died.

Alured de Porta has the distinction of being the only Mayor of Exeter to be hung as a common felon, when he went to the gallows on St Stephen's Day (26 December). Not a very happy Christmas for some. Exeter was without a Mayor until the beginning of Lent when a tailor,

named David Cissor was chosen for the office. It also demonstrates that it pays to be in a member of the clergy when it comes to capital punishment.

On 30 December, Edward gave permission for Bishop Quinel to enclose the Cathedral Yard with a 12 feet high wall with seven gates that would be closed from dusk to dawn. Thus, the Cathedral gained its own wall within the great city wall.

Thus, how events shape a space, and a space shapes a people. The sites of Broadgate, Palace Gate, Bear Gate, Little Stile, St Martin's Gate, St Catherines Gate and St Petrock's Church still exist. Over the years, cottages and shops have been built against the wall, lining the close, making it the beautiful area that we see today.

The gates were removed in the nineteenth century, for better access to the Close. Posts replace the gates at Broadgate, Martins Lane, and Palace Gate. When Prince Charles visited in 1979, a ribbon was tied between the Broadgate posts to symbolically represent a chain, which was once used to close Cathedral Close off, after the gates were taken down.

A COLOURFUL FLOURISH

Work restarted to build the present quire after the death of Roger, the master mason at the time. The nave was completed by 1310. The high altar was dedicated in 1328. Bishop John Grandisson added the West Front by 1342, a beautiful façade in which many carved stone saints, kings and biblical figures were painted in a rich rainbow of colour. The completion of the West Front in 1342 coincided with the death of the Master



The Norman North Tower



The Lady Chapel

Mason Thomas Witney, who had started work on the Cathedral in 1316. The major construction was now complete, which was just as well, because many of the band of craftsman were decimated by the black death which hit Exeter in 1348.

The Minstrels Gallery dates from 1350-1360.

A building swan song occurred when the twelve apostles and Christ were added to the West Front in 1460 to 1480.

REFORMATION AND WAR

Between 1530-1550, the non-monastic and more secular Exeter Cathedral escaped the worst ravages of the English Reformation. However, the high altar was dismantled, the reredos stripped of gold, silver and jewels and the images and effigies of the Virgin Mary and the saints were damaged or destroyed.

When the English Civil War was raging between 1642-1646, and Exeter was held by Parliament, the Cathedral suffered some limited damage. After forces loyal to the King took Exeter, his wife Queen Henrietta Maria, fleeing from Oxford, gave birth to a daughter, in Bedford House. The Queen fled to France, leaving the infant child to be cared for by a nanny – she was baptised Henrietta Anne in the Cathedral on 21 July 1644. The medieval cloisters were demolished in 1657, during Cromwell's Commonwealth.

The Cathedral organ was completed on 27 May 1665, by Barnstaple-born, John Loosemore, at a cost of £847 7s 10d. It replaced an organ that had been vandalised during the Civil War.

A FEW FEATURES

Exeter Cathedral has the longest unbroken stretch of Gothic stone vaulting in the world, measuring 96 m or 315 feet.

The clock in the North Transept dates from 1376 and was probably constructed by the monk, Peter Lightfoot. It is one of only four of its type in England. In the centre of the face, the moon rotates around the earth. It was not until 1760 that the minutes were shown. The door below the clock has a round hole near its base that was cut during the early seventeenth century for the Bishop's cat. It was brought in to deter rats that were attracted to the animal fat used to lubricate the clock mechanism.

The Cathedral suffered a direct hit in the 4 May 1942 blitz destroying St James' Chapel. The Muniment room above the Chapel was damaged, and two flying buttresses were almost completely destroyed. If a third flying buttress had been destroyed, the Cathedral would have collapsed. Rebuilding and repair of the damage took place between 1945 and 1953. The job of maintaining the Cathedral requires the full time employment of many craftsmen, including carpenters and stone masons.

Exeter Cathedral is a magnificent structure that charts the long and turbulent history of the English people and is a *must* place to visit when in the City.

SECTION 2

THE GUILDHALL

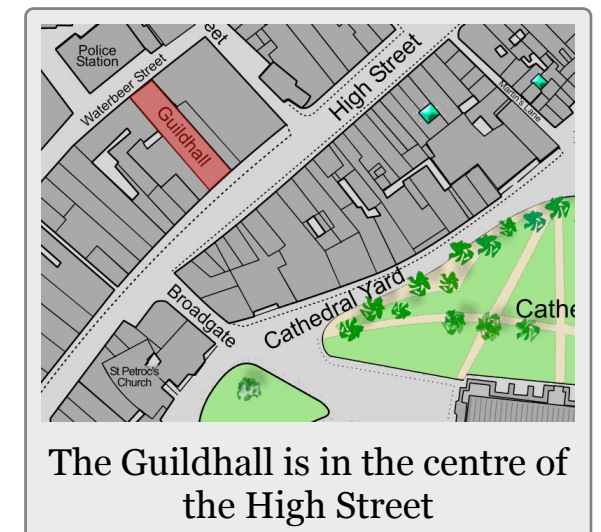
The Oldest Civic Building Still In Daily Use

THE GUILDHALL

Apart from the Cathedral, Exeter's Guildhall has witnessed more historic events than any other building in the city. It is the civic centre of Exeter, and historically, the secular counterbalance to the ecclesiastical power emanating from the Cathedral.

It has functioned as a prison, a court house, a police station, a place for civic functions and celebrations, a city archive store, a woollen market hall, and as the meeting place for the City Chamber and Council. On an upper balcony in the main hall, there is on display the City's silver. A Long Sword and Cap of Maintenance that were said to have been presented to Exeter by Henry VII, after Perkin Warbeck tried to usurp the throne in 1497, when Exeter defiantly defended itself against the impostor are proudly displayed. A sword that belonged to Admiral Nelson and the silver control handle from Exeter's first electric tram in 1905, are also housed in the display cases.

The ancient office of





Coats of Arms of the Weavers Tuckers & Shearmen, the City of Exeter and John Spicer, Mayor

Recorder of Exeter presided at the Guildhall from 1352 at a then cost of £3 per year. The Guildhall also contains the Mayor's Parlour, where Mayors, ancient and modern, have entertained guests of the city.

It is known there was a Guild in Exeter by 1000 AD, and the site of the Guildhall may have been in use as a hall from then. Parts of the Guildhall can be traced back to 1160, although in common with many ancient buildings, it has undergone 'makeovers' through the ages, creating a patchwork of styles and additions. John Hooker's history noted:

1330—that this year the Guildhall of the city of Exeter was builded—Hooker

He was probably referring to a major reconstruction of the existing structure. The roof timbers and walls are thought to date from 1466. Dendrochronology or tree-ring dating of the timbers give a range between 1463 and 1498.

1466—Memorandum this year order was taken for new building of the Guildhall which was then very ruinous and in great decay and forthwith all things necessary for the same was provided and the house builded.—
Hooker

THE FRONTAGE

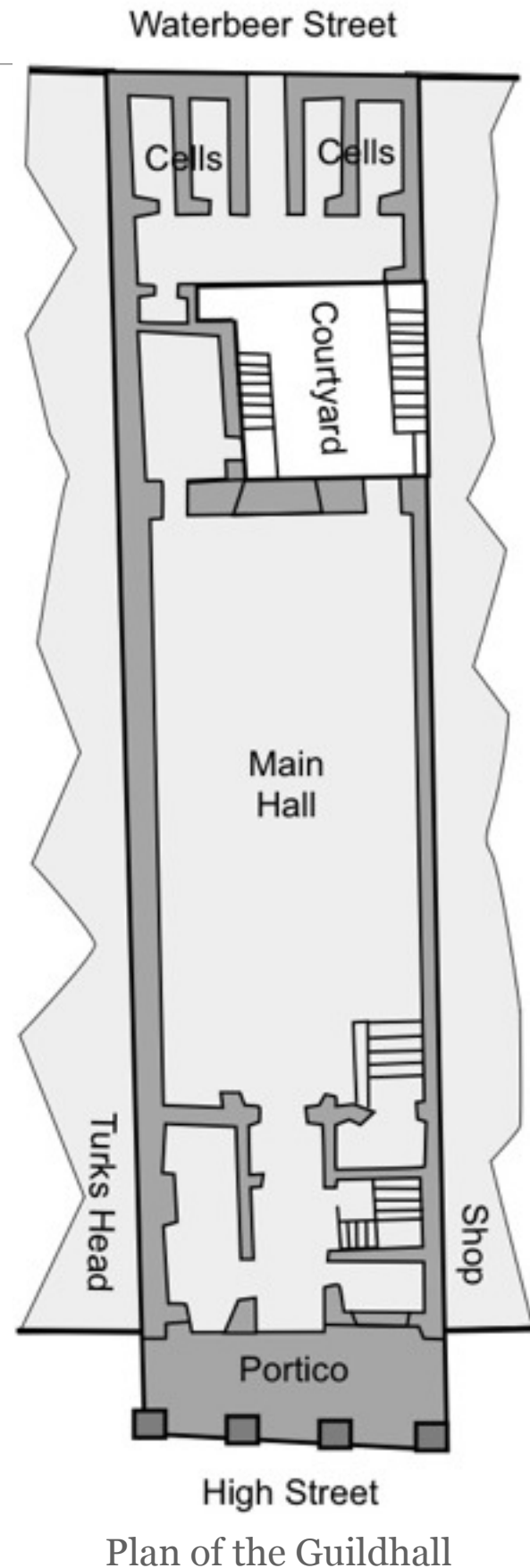
Richard Crossing wrote in 1591 "*The front of the Guildhall pulled down & begun to be built.*" Then Richard Izacke noted in 1592 "*The fore part of the Guildhall was new built. Our citizens paid their wages for this service in Parliament at 4s per diem.*" Even the Elizabethan citizens had to cough up for the City Council's building schemes! This work resulted in the distinct stone pillars and arched entrance that has become the hallmark of the building. And through its entrance have passed many, to be lauded and some to be condemned, in the long history of the City.

THE PORTICO

It is thought that before the portico was constructed, the Guildhall contained a chapel and council room, with a modest covered way over the street, of stone posts and a pitched, lead roof.

The present structure has four granite columns dating from 1593, which, along with the columns at each end of the front wall, cost £19 19s –the granite came from Blackingstone quarry on Dartmoor. Forty loads of Beerstone were purchased for the corbels and upper structure, while oak from the then city owned Duryard woods, to the north, was also used. The total cost of the rebuilding was £791 6s 7d which was met by the City with contributions from the guilds. The front was once richly coloured and traces of blue, cream, red and gold have been found on the stonework. The High Street was the venue for the weekly market before it was moved to the Higher and Lower Markets in the 1830s.

The front of the Guildhall was the focal point for the market—there is still a hook in the ceiling that was used to hang the scales for weighing meat, wool, corn and other goods.



Plan of the Guildhall

There was originally a second storey over the portico, which had a central stone Royal Coat of Arms by mason Arnold Hamlyn who lived in Guinea Street. It cost, along with the carving of the capitals on the façade, 6s 8d. The top storey was removed in 1709 and replaced with a balcony with a stone balustrade and two flagpoles.

The huge, oak carved door to the interior dates from 1593 and was made by Nicholas Baggett. The walls are constructed of Heavitree stone from Exminster, although they are plastered over. The walls and windows on each side date from about 1460, while the main window at the end of the hall is Victorian. The main hall was regularly used for Courts of Quarter Sessions and Courts of the Assizes, where cases ranging from disturbing the peace to murder were held. The oak panelling around the main hall probably dates from 1594 when the portico was added. In the centre of one side is a niche containing a bust of Queen Victoria to commemorate her Golden Jubilee in 1887. The Mayor's chair is surmounted with the City arms and the inscription '*Chr Bale: Mayor 1697*'.

The roof timbers consist of moulded arch-braces that rest on stone corbels carved into the heads of rampant beasts, and dates from 1467–1469. Over the portico is the former Council Chamber, and from 1903, the Mayor's Parlour—it is now used for



The City's silver is displayed in the Gallery at the front of the Hall

smaller receptions and civic occasions.

Over the cells, at the rear, there was built the city water tank, a large, lead container that was filled by the water engine, constructed in 1694, just below Head Weir.

Elm log pipes, 18 inches in diameter, transported the water to the tank, from where water-bearers would fill their buckets in Waterbeer Street, to supply those rich enough to pay for the service. When Celia Fiennes visited Exeter, a few years after the tank was completed, she wrote that it could contain 600 hogshead (31,500 gallons) of water. The tank was removed in 1838, to the relief of the prisoners below who had to suffer from drips and dampness, when the water supply for Exeter was moved to Pynes after the cholera outbreak of 1832. A jury room, and later, a muniments or records room replaced the tank. The room is now used as a Committee Room and for weddings. The oak panelling was taken from Polsloe Priory and is seventeenth century. The police station moved from the Guildhall to Waterbeer Street, at the rear of the Building, in 1888.

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Three portraits of past Mayors hang in the Committee Room

at the rear of the Guildhall, while a portrait, painted by Samuel Cooper, of Princess Henrietta Anne, (1644 to 1670) who was born in Exeter, hangs in the main hall. A portrait of General Monk KG who was instrumental in restoring the monarchy in 1660, and founding the Coldstream Guards, also hangs on a side wall.

Admiral Nelson, was given the freedom of the city in the Guildhall in 1801, before dining at the Royal Clarence. The officers and men of HMS Exeter, marched with fixed bayonets down the High Street to the Guildhall, where Captain Bell was presented with a silver bottle, in the shape of the Guildhall, for their action against the German pocket battleship, Graf Spee in 1939. The cameras of Pathe News filmed the event, which was held on a platform outside the Guildhall. They were described as "*citizens of Exeter, afloat*" by the Mayor.

THE COURT

Judge Jeffreys, presided over the 'Bloody Assizes' at the Guildhall, after the defeat of the Duke of Monmouth's rebellion of 1685. Within the walls of the main hall, criminals were sentenced to transportation, prison and the gallows.



Workers constructing
the brick, 'Blitz,' shield 1940

A cellar beneath the mace sergeants office, at the front of the building dates from the 14th-century. It was used as a prison and referred to as the '*pytt of the Guyldhall*.' The City's stocks, pillory and armour were all stored there.

The rear of the Guildhall contains four, ground floor female cells, that replaced in 1838, two cells from 1558. The cells were last used in 1887, although prisoners on remand were still incarcerated in them until more recent times—they are now a store.

The last to be sentenced to hang for murder, at the Guildhall, was 20 year old Brian Gordon Churchill, who on the afternoon of Thursday 30 October 1952, was sentenced by Judge Mr Justice Devlin to the ultimate penalty. He had been found guilty of stabbing to death 17 year old Jean Agnes Burnett on the top floor of a bus, in the High Street. His sentence was reprieved by the Home Secretary on the 17 November. The last time the building served as a court was in 1971.

In earlier times, the City stocks were placed beneath the central arch of the entrance — handy for hecklers. James Cossins' described the scene in 1830:

Occasionally a member of the feminine sex had to undergo the same degrading position, much to the amusement and jests of a gazing crowd, the salutations were numerous, such a Molly, Betty, &c., "She arn't there for taking too much tea," "Look at her boxey ancles," or, "What a beautiful lark heel she has, any

body can see she belongs to the aristocracy, being decorated with a garter.

The Guildhall survived the bombing of the Second War—one Exonian wrote at the time to her son in the RAF:

"The Guildhall has been bricked up, It is like going through a tunnel on the pavement under the arches."

The sandbags and bricks have long been removed and we are left with the oldest civic building in the country. Many locals have never been inside the Guildhall, which is a shame, as so much of Exeter's history revolves around this ancient centre of civic pride.

The Guildhall has been listed Grade I since 1953, and is a scheduled ancient monument.



SECTION 3

DEVON & EXETER INSTITUTION

For The Arts And Sciences



THE DEVON AND EXETER INSTITUTION

The Devon & Exeter Institution occupies a Grade 2* listed building at No.7 The Close, that can trace its heritage back to well before the sixteenth century. Originally built to house cathedral clergy, the building was remodelled in the sixteenth century. The Parliamentary General, Sir William Waller, as a young man, travelled to the continent as an English volunteer. He was knighted in 1622 for his foreign adventures, and married Jane Reynell, the daughter of a Devonshire family. The couple made this building their home.

In 1662, the Earls of Devon or Courtenay family, a name long associated with Exeter, acquired the building as their town house.

The house was used in April 1782 to “*lay in state at his Lordship's house in St. Peter's Churchyard till the next morning, when the funeral procession left in great state for Powderham*” the remains of Frances, Viscountess Courtenay who had died at her house in Grosvenor Square.

The Courtenay's started devolving some of their land and property, for in 1807, the Courtenay estates in Ireland were sold for £200,000.

No.6 The Close, known as the Subdeanery, was increased in size, through the purchase of part of No.7 Cathedral Close.

Several rooms, including a brewhouse and kitchen, were absorbed into the boundaries of No.6 and demolished.

A NEW INSTITUTION

On 24 August 1813, an advert appeared in Trewman's Exeter Flying Post stating that a committee had been formed to investigate the founding of a Scientific and Literary Society.

"...form a set of rules for the government of the institution... Gentlemen wishing to become Proprietors who have not yet subscribed their names, are requested to signify their intention to the Right Worshipful the Mayor..."
Signed T Dyke Acland



A bust of Sir John Bowring, a former member of the Institution

At an inaugural meeting at The Hotel (Now the Royal Clarence) on 12 August, shares were issued at a cost of £25 each. By January 1814, 51 members had paid for their full allotment of shares, while 76 had purchased a portion with their first years subscription.

£2,560 was raised, of which, £2,000 was invested in exchequer bills, until such point that the funds were needed.

Originally the Institution occupied two rooms in Mrs Bath's establishment in the High Street. Early contributions included a sledge and canoe from the Arctic for the fledgeling

Institution.

However Mrs Bath's patience broke when she answered the doorbell to find a 7ft stuffed bear standing on her doorstep, and a carriage pulling away in the darkness.

The 'house committee' purchased the lease for the Courtenay town house, and plans were drawn up to add galleries for the proposed reading rooms, a library, lecture room and museum. It was hoped that part of the house would be occupied by the spring of 1814.

When the Institution first occupied the property it consisted of the house with a hall and kitchen surrounding a large courtyard. The rooms for the library were constructed in the courtyard—there is a gallery around each library and both are naturally lit from above. The front of the building was given a Georgian makeover.

LECTURE ROOM

Plans were made to add a lecture room to the Institution in 1834. However, as there was no space at No.7 The Close, it was decided to buy a suitable site elsewhere. A plot, next to the Episcopal Chapel, or Atheneum, in Bedford Circus, was acquired and approval given by the owner, the Duke of Bedford. The building was designed by John Tyrrell Esq., and built by Mr Thomas Wills Horrel. The building was lost in the May 1942 bombing.

The aim of the Institution was to promote the arts and

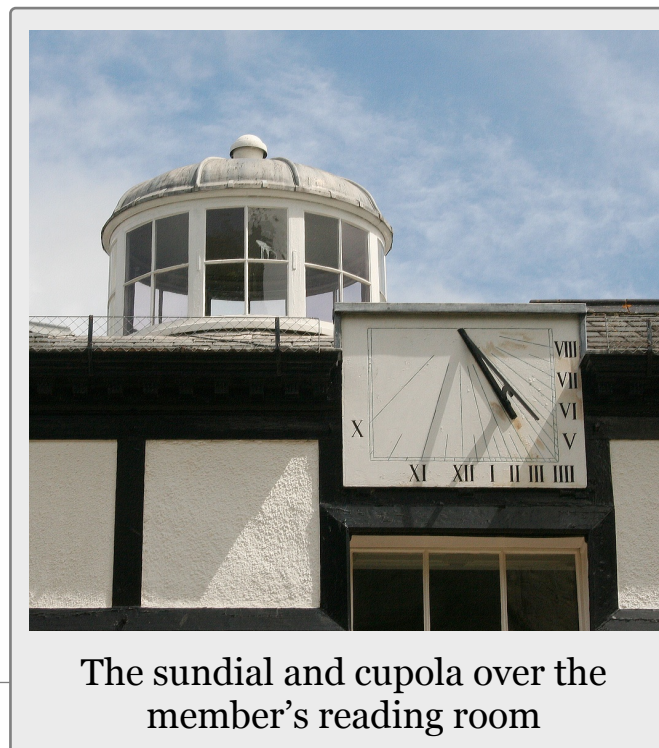
sciences in the west country, and provide a meeting place for gentlemen to meet and discuss both local affairs and affairs of state. Although there was no lecture room in the building, an early talk was given in November 1815 by Mr Bakewill on geology.

Members donated specimens in natural history, medals, coins, pictures, drawings, engravings, manuscripts, and other objects for the formation of a 'respectable library and an interesting museum'.

Originally the Outer Library housed the books and the Inner Library displayed the specimens and artefacts, including an Egyptian mummy and an ichthyosaurus. Some members thought more room should be devoted to the book collection, and less to the museum objects, a problem that would not be resolved until several years later when in June 1866 an article in the Exeter and Plymouth Gazette appeared stating:

Albert Memorial Museum. —A large donation of interesting objects, has been presented by the committee of the Devon and Exeter Institution, including an Egyptian mummy, an Esquimaux canoe, Burmese goddess, skulls of walrus, Narwhale, &c.

William Kendal was an earlier benefactor to the Institution when he donated a number of books during its first three months. He also donated two important paintings by Luny,



The sundial and cupola over the member's reading room



The Devon and Exeter Institution in Cathedral Close with the domes over the library and reading room, from the North Tower.

one of which depicted the siege of Algiers. On another occasion he gave £100 to expand the library, a large sum at the time. His philanthropy ended in March 1832, when he was found drowned at Knowles Bridge in Bovey Tracey.

By 1828 the library had over 10,000 books on science and literature. There were *‘several’ good paintings, some excellent models, and many valuable English and foreign curiosities.* There were 22 proprietors, as members were known, paying an annual subscription of £2. (Besley’s Directory)

There is still a voting box in which members once used black and white beans, denoting *nay* or *yea*, for a prospective member.

In August 1820, it was proposed to ban all Exeter papers from the reading room because the *Western Luminary* had *"grossly abused many of the Members,"* including Lord Clifford, and had libelled Her Majesty the Queen. Objections were raised, that an institution devoted to the...

"... collection of materials for local history, has been deprived, for the purpose of screening it, of an infinite variety of current facts, which are no where preserved, but in the County Papers."



The lamp at the entrance to 7 The Close

The ban was not implemented, and the Institution has the finest collection of bound copies of the major Exeter newspapers for the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The next year, in coldest January 1821, Captain Parry of the Northern Expedition visited the Institution to consult the

library. He was dressed as though it were a hot summer day, having become accustomed to extreme cold during his first expedition, as commander of HMS Hecla, to the North West Territories of Canada, in search of the elusive North West Passage. The *Caledonian Mercury* noted that on Wednesday 22 January, the Institution's meteorological station recorded a temperature of 22 Fahrenheit (-5.5 Celsius), so the Captain must have been feeling quite uncomfortable in the unaccustomed heat.

Many of the members of the Institution travelled the world, either as collectors or in the British Army and Navy. They brought back many unique items, which they donated to the Institution. The Devon and Exeter Institution donated more of its collection to the new museum in Queen Street, including the large

Caleb Hedgeland model of Exeter in 1872, thus relieving the pressure on the bookshelves.

THE WEATHER STATION

In the 19th-Century, the Institution ran a meteorological

station in the garden, with measurements recorded by the librarian, which were published every week in the Flying Post, as interest in natural phenomena and weather forecasting expanded. In October 1862, a wind speed reached the limit of the anemometer, and the barometer fell to 29.020 inches (mean for month 29.902), both measurements obviously worthy of comment.

The librarian, Mr Parfitt, wrote a piece for the Flying Post during the July 1870 heat wave, when he reported the maximum temperature reached was 85.5 F. In the true spirit of analysis he stated that in July 1835 it had reached 86 F.

Meteorological measurements were still being made, and reported, as late as the 1950s.

THE LIBRARIAN

The librarian is an important post and during the 19th-Century, three librarians in particular are remembered. Mr

Squance held the post for many years, and on his death in December 1849, his daughter Miss Squance was elected in his place.

Mr Parfitt replaced Miss Squance, and was just as active, with the meteorological station. He had an inquisitive mind and in 1873 he investigated a vein of quicksilver, said to exist at Head Weir; he concluded that the quicksilver had been placed there or had arrived by accident. Mr Parfitt died in February 1898

and Mr Alfred Richard Allinson MA, succeeded him.

In the same month that Mr Parfitt died, the Committee decided to divide off part of the reading room as a smoking room for the use of members, a concession that no longer applies in modern times. Electric light was installed by 1897, supplied from the generating station in New North Road.

A story goes that when the Institution first installed a telephone in 1899, some members were keen to use the new device, as few of them had a telephone at home.

Some circumvented this inconvenience by going to the Devon and Somerset Stores, who also had a phone, and browsed the goods in the shop. They would then return to the Institution and loudly phone the shop to make their weekly order, ensuring their fellow members could hear their conversation.

An imperfect copy of a fourth folio Shakespeare, from 1685, was sold at Sotherby's in August 1919 for £60. It had been presented to the Institution

by Lady Collier in 1829.

The Devon and Exeter Institution is still running, and its library, holding 40,000 books devoted to Exeter and the West Country, and its historic newspapers from Exeter and the south west, is an important resource for anyone studying local history. Since 1989 it has been a registered charity and has in excess of 700 members.



A corner of the Reading Room.

ROUGEMONT CASTLE

Constructed By The Normans

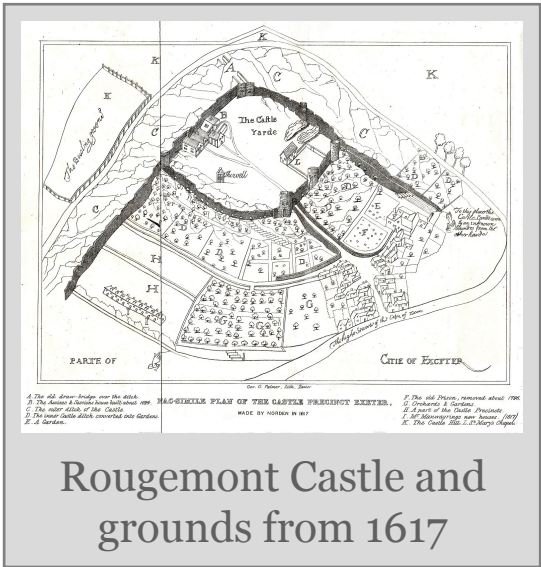


ROUGEMONT CASTLE

Rougemont Castle is built on a knoll known as *rouge mont* in Norman French, because of its red rock. It is the remains of a volcano that erupted about 290 million years ago.

The Romans built a rectangular fort at Isca Dumnorium (Exeter) when they arrived in 49AD. They used volcanic stone from the Rougemont Quarry to extend the settlement with a stone wall, around about 120AD, that encompassed Rougemont. It is debatable whether the Romans specifically fortified Rougemont, apart from constructing the outer city wall. In 926AD the Britons inhabiting Exeter were driven into Cornwall by King Athelstan. When he returned to Exeter he set about rebuilding the Castle and city wall.

Athelstan's Tower, on the opposite side of the Castle, dates from when Athelstan occupied the city during his reign between 924 and 939. It was Athelstan who changed the name of the town from Monkton to Exancaester, in 940AD. He also established two mints in Exeter, where Saxon



Rougemont Castle and grounds from 1617



silver coins were struck. The tower was the highest point in the walled city and still commands a fine view over Northernhay Park and across the Longbrook Valley. Until recent times there was a custom of a bugler playing from the tower, for the annual City Remembrance Day service on the 11 November, held below in Northernhay Park.

William I took the city in 1068, after a siege lasting seventeen days. He ordered Baldwin de Brionne, the Sheriff of Devon, to build a castle at Exeter, on the high ground of Rougemont. According to Domesday, forty-eight houses were demolished to make way for it. A deep ditch and internal rampart were dug between the northwestern and northeastern city walls, creating a roughly square enclosure measuring about 300 feet per side.

THE GATEHOUSE

The gatehouse of the castle, the first part to be built by the Normans, is also said to be the earliest Norman stone structure in the country. It is a square three-storey gatehouse with an arched entrance that is the oldest non-ecclesiastical Norman arch in existence. The gatehouse had three internal wooden floors and a wooden drawbridge that crossed a moat. The gatehouse still has Saxon-style, triangular windows, and short and long quoins dating from the Norman build when Saxon techniques were still used by local builders. The tower is constructed from a mix of stone, some recycled, including the volcanic stone favoured by the Romans.

By the early 1500s, the original gateway was no longer in use,

and its entrance blocked up, in favour of a smaller, adjacent archway. This in turn was replaced with a new, crenelated entrance, built of reclaimed stone with a false portcullis, in the early seventeenth century.

King John's Tower dates from the thirteenth century; constructed on the north east side of the castle wall, overlooking New North Road, it was part of the continual work to keep the defences up to date. There was also a second entrance to the castle close to this tower, with its own drawbridge that was removed by 1751.

With the 'gentrification' of the old castle and the construction of the law courts in 1773, the need for strong fortifications had passed. In the late eighteenth century, King John's Tower was converted into a gazebo.

THE WITCHES

There is a plaque by the gatehouse to commemorate Temperance Lloyd, Susannah Edwards, Mary Trembles and Alice Molland, all from Bideford, who were tried in the castle for witchcraft. Mary Trembles was charged with "*suspicion of having used some magical art, sorcery or witchcraft upon the body of Grace Thomas and to have had discourse or familiarity with the devil in the likeness or shape of a black man.*" Lloyds, Edwards and Trembles were found guilty and were hanged at the Heavitree Gallows for the crime, on 25 August 1682.

Alice Molland, a later case, was the last to be hanged for witchcraft in England, in 1684.

RICHARD THE THIRD

In Shakespeare's *Richard III*, the king recalls a premonition of his own death when he is shown Rougemont Castle:

*"Richmond – when last I was in Exeter,
The Mayor in courtesy showed me the castle,'
And called it – Rougemont: at which name I started,
Because a Bard of Ireland told me once,
That I should not live long after I saw Richmond."
Act 4 Scene 2*

A CASTLE UNDER SIEGE

The castle survived a siege by King Stephen in 1140, for which



The remains of King Stephen's, Dane's Castle



Both Norman and Saxon style features are found in this photo of the Gatehouse

a temporary structure was thrown up at Dane's Castle, on the other side of the valley—once referred to as New Castle—just to the North. Archaeologists discovered that foundations for a wooden gatehouse had been dug, but the structure was never completed, probably because the three-month siege had finished. After the dig, Danes Castle was landscaped, and it was registered as a Scheduled Monument.

The castle was badly damaged during the Second Cornish Uprising of 1497. Perkin Warbeck, the Pretender to the Throne, proclaimed himself Richard IV, in opposition to Henry VII, and with 6,000 Cornishmen entered the city.

In late 1642 Parliament authorised the use of £300 of funds to fortify the city and make repairs to the castle. Although there were at least four artillery batteries placed within the fortification, the city fell to Prince Maurice, after a sixteen day siege in 1643. Parliamentarians retook the city in April 1646 after the Treaty of Exeter was signed at Poltimore House. The gatehouse was used as a prison during the Civil War.

In 1607, a Sessions House was constructed in the inner **bailey**. In 1683, the accounts of Christopher, the Duke of Albemarle and the Lord Lieutenant of Devon, who was the son of General George Monck, indicate he paid £600 for repairs to the two drawbridges, the second being at an entrance at Northernhay. Andrew Brice chronicled in his *Gazeteer* of 1751 that the two drawbridges no longer existed.

An Act of Parliament was passed in 1711, allowing Queen Anne to grant a lease of the castle for 99 years, for the use of the County of Devon.

In 1773, the Sessions House was demolished and a **Palladian**-style, Portland stone, Devon County Courthouse planned, that was designed by Philip Stowey. This original design was considered to be too elaborate, so James Wyatt was brought in by the authorities to reduce the cost of building, resulting in the more austere structure we see today. In 1895 the building was enlarged and again in 1905, when a neo-Palladian wing was added.

ENTERTAINMENT

The grounds of the castle have been used for some odd events. A sheep-shearing competition was once held in the grounds and it was the venue of the first Annual Exhibition of the Devon Agricultural Society, which has since become the Devon County Show.

For those interested in aviation, the castle yard was used for launching several balloon ascents, the earliest being in 1786 by a Monsieur St Croix. The *Morning Chronicle* reported the event on the 23 June 1786.

... So greatly was the publick curiosity excited that the shops were close shut up during the time it lasted. Mr. St. Croix has been very handsomely repaid all expenses as he cleared upwards of £150 by showing his balloon previous to his ascension and yesterday about 4,000 persons paid half a crown each for admittance to the Castle Yard.

Coldplay, supported by Lily Allen played a charity concert in the grounds in 2009. The show for 500 was held in a marquee.

A new Crown and County Court was opened during 2004 at the eastern end of Southernhay, and the old court in the Castle was closed. The grounds of the castle are at present used as a car park. A temporary ice-rink was set up one winter, with mixed results due to the mild New Year.

In 2011, the former Court 1 reopened as the Ballroom. The former holding-cells for prisoners have been converted into lavatories, and the old Court 2 opened as the Gallery. Twelve apartments have been created within the buildings inside the walls of the castle.

The main structures of the Castle are all either Grade I or Grade II* listed.



Ice skating inside the Castle Grounds at Christmas



St John's Tower

SECTION 5

ST NICHOLAS' PRIORY

Founded By William I



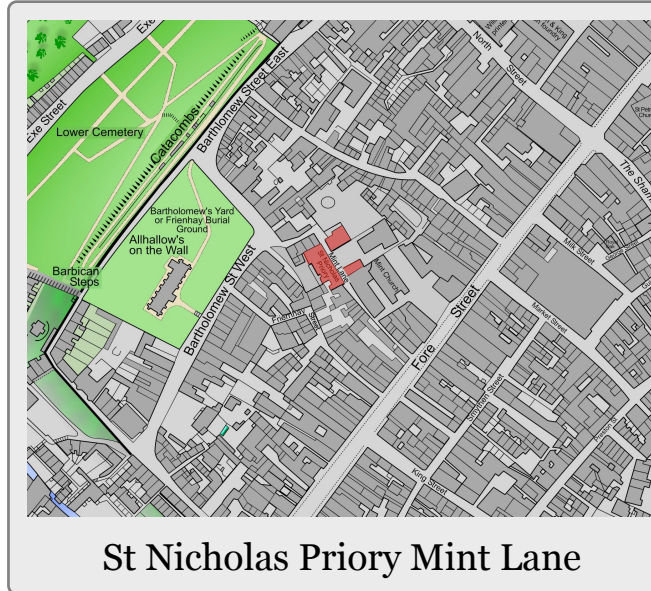
ST NICHOLAS' PRIORY

St Nicholas' Priory, is now only a quarter of the size of the original Priory founded by the Monks of Battle. Having suffered the tribulations of Henry VIII and domestic misuse over the intervening years, careful work by the Royal Albert Memorial Museum, has restored much of what remains to how it would have been in Elizabethan times.

The building that survives, was the guest wing of the complex, along with a kitchen at the northern end, which fed the refectory in 21 the Mint. Visiting pilgrims and other important guests were provided hospitality in the guest wing. At the centre of the priory were the cloisters, a cobbled courtyard surrounded with a covered way, in which various culinary and medicinal herbs were grown. In the southern range was sited the Priory church while on the east side were the monks warming-house, so named for the large fire that kept it warm—the chapter house which was a meeting place for the Priory's governing body, and the monks' dormitories on the first floor.

THE RISE & FALL & RISE AGAIN

When William the Conqueror invaded



England in October 1066, he founded Battle Abbey in Sussex, on the site of his victory over Harold's army, near Hastings. William sent his armies out to pacify the rebellious population. In 1068, William was in charge of the siege against the rebels of Exeter - Gytha, King Harold's mother was living in Exeter at the time, directing the defences. However, William's superior tactics drove Gytha out.

Exeter at that time had several small Saxon churches, one of which was St Olaves.

William gave St Olave's to the monks of Battle Abbey. They quickly despatched a contingent of six monks to Exeter and founded in 1087, on land close to the church, a priory which they dedicated to St Nicholas'.

The first Prior was named Guntirus and the second called Cons—as they were Normans they had a difficult relationship with the locals. The priory expanded through the twelfth and thirteenth century. The monks followed a simple life, as laid down by the sixth century St Benedict. They prayed, worked and followed a life of chastity, poverty and obedience. They also offered hospitality for passing pilgrims and travellers, and accommodation for important visitors. The monks of St Nicholas' were very privileged in



The ceiling in this room is decorated in authentic Tudor style, original to the Priory.

comparison with the general population, for in 1226 they were one of the first to receive a fresh water supply from the new underground supply originating in St Sidwell's.

The tolls of markets and fairs for all towns belonged to the King, who granted the tolls to the Priory for St Nicholas' Fair, and a part share in a fair held on the Crollditch, (now called Southernhay) which became Lammas Fair—Henry I was fond of granting favours to the church at the expense of the people.

In 1321 the belfry of the church fell down, causing a good deal of damage. To pay for the repairs, the Bishop of Bath and Wells granted twenty days of indulgence. The tower on the south-west side of the present building was added in the fifteenth century.

THE PRIORY IS DISSOLVED

Things started to change in 1530, when Henry VIII sought a divorce from Catherine of Aragon, to marry Anne Boleyn. In Catholic England, only the Pope could sanction a divorce, and he refused. Cardinal Wolsey, the King's confidante and adviser, negotiated for an annulment from the Pope, but failed. Wolsey suggested that to divorce, Henry should break with Rome, and become the Supreme Head of the Church of England. He could then grant himself a divorce. Thus, major changes that shaped the very nature of the nation were brought into action.

Henry also wanted to break the stranglehold that the Church had over the country by confiscating their assets, including the ownership of many monasteries, abbeys and priories with

thousands of acres of land. In 1536, he dissolved the monasteries and had the monks driven out. St Nicholas' Priory was valued at the time £147 12s. When the King's men arrived at the priory, to remove the rood loft and image of Christ, a mob of enraged and poor local women, who had in the past received food and succour from the monks, broke down the door and attacked the workers. One worker leapt out of a window, breaking a rib. The Mayor was called, and the women arrested and jailed, allowing the quaking henchmen to emerge. The workers returned and after completing the task, requested that the women be released.

The church and cloisters of the priory were eventually demolished and the western and northern sides given to Sir Thomas Dennis, Sheriff of Devon. Strangely, stones from the demolished priory were used to repair the Exe bridge after one of the central arches had collapsed in 1539. Thus, an old prophecy was fulfilled that said that one day the Exe would flow under St Nicholas'.

The parlour ceiling at St Nicholas' Priory is from this first phase of domestic use, and maybe the earliest surviving decorative plasterwork ceiling in Exeter. William Hurst lived there with his family between 1574 and 1602. He sat in Parliament for Exeter and was Mayor three times.

THE PRIORY BECOMES A MUSEUM

Over the years, the buildings became increasingly dilapidated. Then in 1820, the Wilcocks, a family of bankers and merchants, purchased the West Range—the building was



The roof of an upper room with the panelling at the south end

divided into five premises and rented to bootmakers and upholsterers. The Priory was eventually sold to the nuns of St Wilfrid's who used part as a children's home and rented the rest to local families.

In 1912, Exeter Corporation were advised to buy the priory, by the Town Clerk, H. Lloyd Parry, which they did for the princely sum of £850. On 1 November 1916 the restored Priory was opened to the public as a small museum by Mayor James Owen. The first year of opening saw 5,000 visitors, at a time of wartime austerity.

Maud Tothill (1872-1957) was the curator of the Priory between 1916 and 1939. It was she who made the building a grand Tudor townhouse, and to this end, was responsible for collecting many of the pewter flagons and plates, along with authentic furniture.

She kept a couple of pet ravens, and was said to give tours of the building with one of the ravens on her shoulder. At the end of the tour, the bird would grab her hat and hop among the visitors, hoping for a tip. The ravens became well known, and in 1928, the Express & Echo printed an obituary for the female, Martha. She is now on display, stuffed, in a glass case, at the Priory. Martha's companion, George, lived until the early 1950s.

What is known as Toisa's Cross was placed in the courtyard of the Priory in 1916. A Saxon or Hiberno-Saxon granite cross-shaft, it was originally placed near the Old Bridge, by the West Gate. In the nineteenth century it was removed and placed on the corner of Gandy Street and High Street to protect the

corner from carts. It has since been removed to the Royal Albert Memorial Museum.

The Priory remained open during the Second War, until it was forced to close after the May 1942 blitz. It was reopened to the public in April 1943, no doubt as a morale booster.

THE REFECTORY, 21 THE MINT

In the meantime, the old refectory of 21 the Mint had fended for itself, with some wealthy owners putting in some fine Georgian windows, doors and mantelpieces and generally making the building fit for a Georgian family. Time moved on and it, too, suffered from the ravages of use. The remains of the cloisters, which had been restored in the seventeenth century with fine cobbled paths, became weed choked and then a dumping ground for the builders of the replacements of the east and south ranges of the old priory. The east range contains a former Catholic church, and the south range some Victorian dwellings.

By 1993, 21 the Mint was owned by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Plymouth, before becoming the home to the Exeter College School of Printing, but was soon to be sold for redevelopment. A local city councillor, Carol Griffiths, created the Exeter Historic Buildings Trust and with funding of £850,000 from the Lottery Heritage Fund, English Heritage and the City Council among others, the building was acquired and restored.

The priory's refectory, comprised a large high-ceiling hall that was constructed in 1070. The chief Abbot would sit on a dais,

reading from the scriptures to the silently eating monks. Even though they made a vow of chastity and poverty, the Benedictines allowed themselves the luxury of a more ornate decoration in their priory and, a lighter style of worship and chanting. They were the coolest monks in town.

In the middle of the fourteenth century, the Black Death made recruitment more difficult. There is evidence that the refectory may have been converted into a large office type space so that the Prior could interview prospective tenants for the monastic lands and receive their rent at Michaelmas and Ladyday. In the fifteenth century a major makeover was made with the arch braced roof constructed from pairs of opposed curved wind-braces.

Nowadays, the roof can be closely inspected from a false floor that was constructed when the building was divided up internally in 1650, and the sockets and peg holes are still clearly visible. On the east wall of the hall was added plank-and-muntin panelling, with carved bosses. The panelling served as a dark wooden backdrop for the Prior when conducting business, no doubt to give him extra gravitas.

At the opposite end, by the exit that led to the



Toisa's Cross stood in the Priory courtyard



The roof of 21 The Mint



21 The Mint from the rear

kitchens was a Screens Passage. They also constructed an Oriel, or a glass walled room which allowed light to flood the interior.

So, 21 the Mint had been saved, a wonderful example of architectural history with early Norman stonework, medieval fourteenth century roofing, from a refectory for a band of monks, to a Tudor des-res, to a fine Georgian town house and finally an art school.

VISITING THE PRIORY AND MINT

St Nicholas' Priory is now a Grade 1 listed building, and is run by the council owned, Royal Albert Memorial Museum.

21 the Mint has been partly converted into modern living accommodation, while preserving and protecting many features of the building. The roof space is open to the public for inspection of the arch-braced roof, for a limited time each month.

The building is jointly managed by the Trust and St Olaves Court Hotel, and part is leased as living accommodation. In April 2004, Carol Griffiths' had the pleasure of escorting the Prince of Wales around the building.

SECTION 6

THE CUSTOM HOUSE

For The Port Of Exeter



THE CUSTOM HOUSE

This handsome building, on the Quay, dates from 1680 to 1681. Previously, excise duty on imports through the port of Exeter were levied from Topsham, and before that, from Mol's Coffee House in Cathedral Close. Built next to the Watergate, it was well placed to control the importation of goods and assessing them before they were transported into the city. At the same time, the Quay was isolated from the river with infill, creating a new Quay away from the old city wharf.

Designed by North Devon builder, Richard Allen, The Custom House is thought to be the oldest brick building still surviving in Exeter. The Chamber expended £3,000 on its construction. H. M. Customs and Excise used it until 1989, to monitor goods imported to the Quay for customs duty.

Originally, the arches at the front were open, allowing goods to be stored out of the rain. On the ground floor, to the rear of the front storage area, was installed the King's Stove, said to be used to burn contraband goods. There is a fireplace with cast iron door and flue in a rear room, but archaeologists are not certain if it is the actual stove.

The building has three fine interior plaster ceilings created by North Devonian, John Abbot (1639-1727). He was paid £35 for the three ceilings which are some of the finest of their type in the country. One, in the surveyors room, has an octagonal centre piece surrounded by plaster flowers and ribbons and a variety of outer panels. The largest in the main hall on the first floor is adorned with intricate masks, and four serpents with

rather strange eyes. The third over the stairwell, is the simplest, and in some ways the most elegant, of the three. Another John Abbot ceiling can be found at Downes House, Crediton, the former home of General Sir Redvers Buller.

Celia Fiennes described The Custom House thus:

"... just by this key is the Custom House, an open space below with rows of pillars which they lay in goods just as its unladen out of the ships in case of wet, just by are several little rooms for Land-waiters, etc., then you ascend up a handsome pair of stairs into a large room full of desks and little partitions for the writers and accountants, its was full of books and files of paper, by it are two other rooms which are used in the same way when there is a great deal of business;"

THE WORK OF THE CUSTOM HOUSE

The Port of Exeter includes the Exe Estuary and extends from Teignmouth through to the east of the River Axe, at the Devon and Dorset boundary. Up to 1832, all merchants had to report for clearance, and pay dues, to the Exeter Custom House.

In September 1843, men of the Preventive Service, based at The Custom House, discovered ninety seven, four gallon kegs of foreign spirit that had been sunk near the Fair Way Buoy, Exmouth. Then in April 1844, ninety-four kegs of contraband spirit were taken at Budleigh and conveyed to The Custom House. These two cases indicate how far the jurisdiction of



A plaster ceiling by John Abbot 1639-1727 in the Custom House

The Exeter Custom House stretched.

The men of The Custom House had a real job to do, catching smugglers and overseeing imports from the Quay.

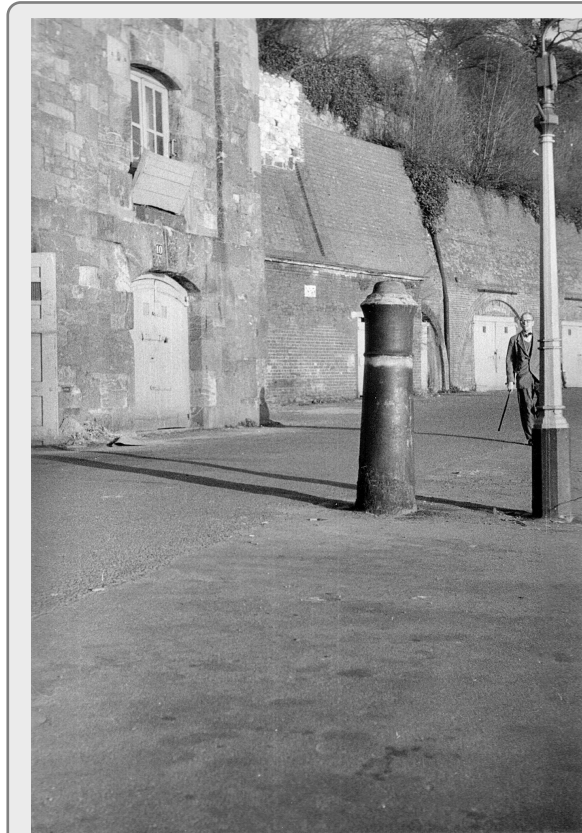
Things could get very busy if there were a change in the rate of duty. In April 1854, the duty on tea was reduced by 4d per pound, and the custom's records show that the day after the reduction, £4,630 was collected in duty on tea cleared through the port; it was rare that such a run occurred due to a reduction in duty.

Twenty years later, in April 1877, The Custom House officials collected more than £6,200 in four days between April 9 to 12, before duty was increased by the Chancellor. The breakdown of goods cleared from the bonded warehouses was 7,500 gallons of spirits comprising brandy £2,200, whiskey £1,031, and rum £612, wine £108, and tea and tobacco £2,274. There were so many traders trying to remove their goods out of the bonded warehouses that many could not clear in the time, due to the pressure on the custom's officials.

It was not just wine and spirits, tobacco and tea that passed through Exeter. The Custom House oversaw the importation of coal from South Wales and Sunderland—between 1758



One of the Russian Cannons



One of the cannon when it was a bollard on the quay

and 1784, the tonnage increased from 4,266 to 17,143 tons.

THE RUSSIAN CANNON

In the front of the building, are two cannon originally thought to have been used at the battle of Waterloo—they were two of a batch that had been sold to Russia in 1789 to arm their fleet at Archangel. They were returned to England after Napoleon was defeated, as by then they were obsolete. It was intended to use four on the Wellington Memorial, in Somerset. Fifteen were shipped to Exeter Quay in 1819.

The committee overseeing the memorial, discovered that they had not been used at Waterloo and refused to take them. After five years of looking after them, the City Council decided to sell them to pay for their storage, but in fact they were never sold. Four were used as bollards at the Quay, and the rest buried.

In the early twentieth century the cannons were excavated and four mounted at the Wellington Memorial. During the Second War the cannon were melted for scrap, leaving only the Exeter cannon surviving. The cannon have since been removed from the Quay side, and mounted and placed in the front of The Custom House.

Secular Buildings

Exeter still has several buildings surviving from the fifteenth century. Tudor buildings can also be found, and some fine Georgian structures are scattered around the city. The Victorians also added a few of note—the next section has at least one example from each period.





THE ROYAL CLARENCE HOTEL

The Royal Clarence Hotel was built by William Mackworth Praed in 1769 as the Assembly Rooms. Soon after, on 7 September 1770, an advert placed by the landlord, Frenchman Pierre Berlon, appeared for a *hôtel* in the building, the first use of the word in England. William Praed also established the Exeter Bank, the city's first, on the corner of the current hotel on 9 July 1769.

In July 1776, the former proprietor of the Swan Inn situated in the High Street, Richard Lloyd, announced in the Old Exeter Journal that he had "*now taken the HOTEL, in St Peter's Church-Yard, which is fitted up in the most elegant manner.*" The advert ends with "*The CHAISES, COACHES, DILIGENCE, &c, will continue at the Hotel, as before.*"

Initially called 'The Hotel,' it later became 'The Cadogen Hotel' for a short time. The manager of the 'The Cadogen Hotel' was an ex-waiter, Thomas Thompson, who renamed it 'Thompsons.' Twenty years later it became, 'Phillips Hotel.'

Jenkin's 1806 History of Exeter described the hotel:

"The only house, worthy of notice in its parish is, The Hotel, a large commodious Inn, with elegant apartments and Hotel accommodation for people of the first quality, with a large assembly room in which assize balls, concerts and assemblies of the most distinguished

persons of City and Country take place, in the front is a neat coffee room. The situation of 'The Hotel' is very pleasant as it opens to the parade and commands a noble view of the Cathedral."

Finally, it was named after the Duchess of Clarence, the future Queen Adelaide, wife of the future William IV, who stayed there in July 1827.



The Royal Clarence Hotel
On Cathedral Green—1950s

Admiral Nelson received the freedom of the city in 1801, after the Battle of the Nile, when he was to be entertained with dinner at the Guildhall. However, he insisted in returning to the Clarence, to address the gathered newspaper correspondents, before dining at the hotel. It was in the Royal Clarence in 1815, that a meeting was held to plan the introduction of gas to light the streets of the city. In August 1840, Franz Liszt gave a piano recital in the Clarence while touring England.

He later wrote to his mistress that English cathedrals were not so crowded with shops and houses as those in France and therefore appeared more impressive.

The Royal Clarence has had one strange visit from royalty; Edward, the Duke of Kent and father of the future Queen Victoria while travelling to Exeter to receive the freedom of the city, died while staying at Sidmouth on 23 January 1820. His body was transported to the Royal Clarence where it was embalmed before transportation to his funeral at Windsor.

During the age of the stage coach, the Clarence was the terminus for the Royal Bath and the London Mail service. After a particularly frightening accident, when a Clarence-bound coach ran amok across the Close, after it clipped the narrow entrance of the Broadgate, the city authorities decided to demolish the gate and ease the entrance. For a time, coaches had to use the narrow St Martin's Lane.

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

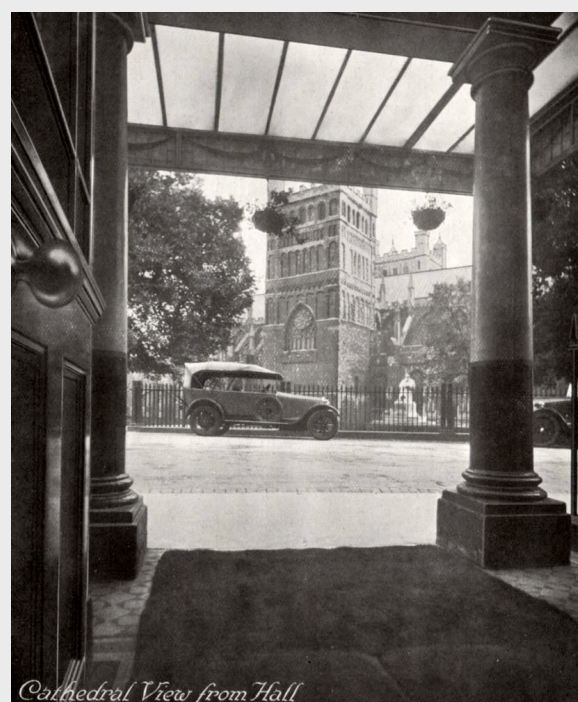
Thomas Hardy stayed at the hotel, with his second wife, in 1915 while visiting a friend in Torquay.

In 1916, the Clarence opened the first cocktail bar, the Zodiac Bar. During 1939 exotic drinks, such as Tugboat Annie, the Corpse Reviver and Gloom Chaser, were concocted to cheer up Exonians heading into the Second World War. It was the talent of Mr 'Ginger' Wood, who invented the Gloom Chaser, that made the bar a success, offering a range of fifty-one cocktails. The bar was later named the Bishop Bar before closing in the 1980s.

It was during the Second War, when the Americans were based in Exeter for D-day, that Clark Gable and Gary Cooper, who were serving in the US Air Force stayed at the



The Hotel's garage parking in Southernhay



A view across the Green from the entrance—1929

Clarence.

BANKING AND PUBS

As previously mentioned, the Exeter Bank was situated to the right of the hotel. It became the first Deller's Café in Exeter during 1906. The building is now part of the Royal Clarence and is run by Michael Caine, the Exeter-born celebrity chef, as the Café Bar.

On the opposite side of the hotel, the Well House Tavern is also owned by the Clarence. The original building was a Norman hall constructed on part of the medieval burial ground before tenements were built in the fifteenth century. The upper floors were added in the seventeenth century. Veitch's, the nursery and seed merchants occupied the shop. In the 1980s it briefly became an estate agent, a bookshop and then the Well House in 1984.

Finally, the Royal crest on the front façade of the building dated from when the hotel gained royal patronage from the Duchess of Clarence. In 1989, the crest was in poor condition, so it was removed and refurbished. The Vulcan Works in Water Lane took three months to make an exact copy out of fibreglass.

SECTION 2

MOL'S COFFEE HOUSE

The Myths And The Truth



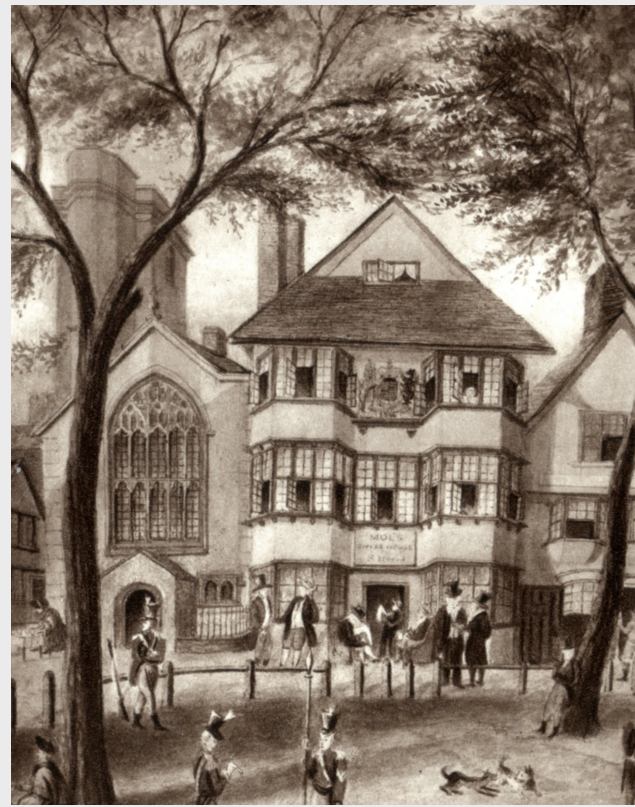
MOL'S COFFEE HOUSE

Many guide books to Exeter refer to Mol's as a coffee house opened by an Italian called Mol in the sixteenth century. They also state that Elizabethan seafarers such as Drake, Raleigh and Hawkins met to discuss their victory over the Armada, in the upper oak-lined room of Mol's. However, new research has shown that much of the history of this building was concocted by a Mr Thomas Worth, who ran a gallery from the premises, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

So what is the true history of Mol's Coffee House?

AN ECCLESIASTICAL BUILDING

In the year 1410, Bishop Stafford granted the Cathedral's chantry priests, known as Annuellars, this small corner of the Cathedral Close for use as a residence. The complex became known as the Annuellars' College. By the sixteenth century Nos.1-5 Cathedral Close were all part of the College. It was during the Reformation of the 1540s that the practices of the Annuellars were banned and the buildings housing the priests were taken over for other purposes.



Mol's before the Dutch style gable was added by Thomas Burnett Worth



In 1885 the Royal Coat of Arms replaced the original from 1596

The various buildings of the College were sub-let after the Reformation and the tenants undertook, over the years, various modifications.

THE 'REAL' ARMADA CONNECTION

It was in 1585 that a yeoman of the city, John Dyer took out a lease on the building. In November 1588, Dyer was also a Receiver of the City and became involved in negotiations with the government over the payment of the city's contribution for ships for the Armada, and it may have been in a building on the site of Mol's that negotiations were conducted.

Exeter in fact supplied one ship while Topsham supplied and equipped three ships—The Rose, The Gift and The Bartholomew to fight against the Spanish invasion fleet.

The Royal Coat of Arms over the front of Mol's was put in place by Dyer in 1596, when the building was totally remodelled. The building work included a completely new façade and interior, and came to look like it does today, apart from the top floor. It was at this time that the ground floor was leased for use as a custom house, and it is probable that Dyer wished to indicate this official function with the arms.

The first-floor room is one of the finest sixteenth-century panelled rooms in Exeter. Although still mistakenly called the 'Armada Room' in some tourist guidebooks, the room contains panelling of oak—it consists of small rectangles divided by carved and fluted pilasters. Set into the frieze around the top of the panels are 46 shields painted with the coats of arms of various Devonshire families.

There is also a geometric, single-rib decorative plasterwork ceiling from the same period. In the nineteenth century, a section was cut out to make a hatch to the room above. This allowed the lowering of large pictures from a store above.

The building remained in use as a Custom House until 1660, when the Revenue moved to Topsham, before the new Custom House was built on the Quay in 1680.

The year after the Custom House moved out, in 1661, Mols became an apothecary, and a year later a shoe shop. It was noted as a haberdashery in 1715.

MOL'S BECOMES MOL'S

It was in December 1726 that an advert first appeared in Brice's Weekly Journal for



Looking towards Mol's in 1927



The showroom with the ceiling containing a hidden hatch

Mol's—a Mary Wildy had leased the building in the previous June. And what of the mysterious Italian, mentioned at the beginning. The likely truth is that Mol's was derived from Mol or Molly, a shortened versions of Mary.

It is thought that the first coffee house in England was the Grand Cafe in Oxford in 1650—it was mentioned by Samuel Pepys.

For the next hundred or so years, the coffee house was run by six women, providing a quiet meeting and reading place for the gentlemen of Exeter. Some of the owners would act as a ticket office for concerts at The Hotel (Royal Clarence) and the Theatre in Bedford Street, and as a place to subscribe to public appeals. The proprietors can be listed thus:

- 1726 - 1752 Mary Wildy (circa 1752)
- 1752 - 1787 Margaret Wildier
- 1787 - 1789 Mrs Vinnicombe. Died 5 Nov 1789.
- 1789 - 1792 Mary Murch. Died November 1792.
- 1793 - 1817 Miss Sarah Hurd (Heard) Died 21 May 1817, aged 77.
- 1820 - 1832 Mrs Mary Commins - moved business to 253 High Street in July 1827. This advert appeared in December 1824.

MOL'S COFFEE-HOUSE, Situated in the Cathedral Yard of the City of Exeter City of Exeter. The above Premises are held by Lease under the Dean and Chapter, for the residue of a Term of 40 Years Term Of 40 Years, (about, 38 of which are unexpired) subject to the yearly rent of 10s. The house has been for upwards of a Century past and still is occupied as a Subscription Coffee House, is frequented by the County Gentlemen and Barristers at the Assizes and Sessions, and has a spacious Room on the First Story capable of being converted into an excellent Billiard Room.

Mrs Commins took the name of Mol's with her, to her new premises in the High Street. Her niece Mary Sparkes announced that she was taking over the business in October 1832, where she continued to trade until it closed in 1837. However, the old Mol's retained its name through usage.

During the first decade of the nineteenth century other institutions opened such as the Public Select Library in 1807 and the Devon & Exeter Institution in 1813, giving gentlemen alternative places to meet.

A CENTRE FOR ART

It was in 1833 that Mol's became the centre for art and a leading gallery in Exeter. The Exeter-born artist, John Gendall, moved into the premises as a teacher, an illustrator and carriage painter, as well as running drawing classes in Cathedral Close. He lived there with his wife Maria, and in

1861 was employing 7 men and 4 boys in his business as landscape painter, carver and gilder. He also acted as an agent for the County Fire Office and Provident Life Office, probably to supplement his income from his main business, during the first few years of his occupancy of Mol's.

His drawings of Exeter during this time are unparalleled and much of what we know of the Exeter buildings in the nineteenth century is due to his artwork. It is John Gendall who is said to have painted the 46 Devonshire family coats of arms, including that of Drake, that line the first floor, oak-panelled room. Gendall died in 1865 and Mol's was taken over by Henry Hodge, '*bookbinders, stationers and gilders*'.

WORTH'S – THE MAKING OF MANY MYTHS

The next occupier of Mol's was Worth and Hewett, of Worth's Gallery, who moved in during 1873. By 1876 Hewett was no longer a partner. Thomas Burnett Worth (1827-93) ran a highly successful business, printing postcards, guidebooks and other material about Exeter. It is Worth's efforts to promote his business for the growing tourist trade that led to many of the myths associated with Mol's and the Ship Inn. He is also attributed with adding the third storey, Dutch style gable to the building in 1879.

There are over 230 panes of glass in the Tudor and Dutch style windows, none of which are square. Picture framing was done on this third floor and it was said that the narrow stairs, meant after framing, large pictures had to be lowered through holes in the floor with rope and pulleys. After his death in

1893, the business was continued by his son, also known as Thomas Burnett Worth.

Worth's often employed local artists to paint local buildings, which they published as postcards. Sidney Endacott is one such. They also had small ceramic models of local buildings, such as the Guildhall and St Mary Steps Church, made in Bavaria for sale to tourists both before and after the First World War.

Fortunately, despite the destruction of several buildings within yards of Mol's in the bombing of 1942, the building survived. Worth's closed in 1958 and was replaced by the Fred Keetch Gallery.

Nottingham and Walsh, the jewellers, were the next to occupy the premises from about 1987 and then the old established Exeter stationers and map dealers, Elands, moved from Bedford Street into Mol's. They seemed set to last for ever in this old building, and were a perfect fit in the corner of Cathedral Close, but they too closed in 2007.

The business that now trades from this fine Grade I listed building sells bespoke handbags, luggage and other leather goods.



Oak panelling and coats-of-arms in the first floor showroom

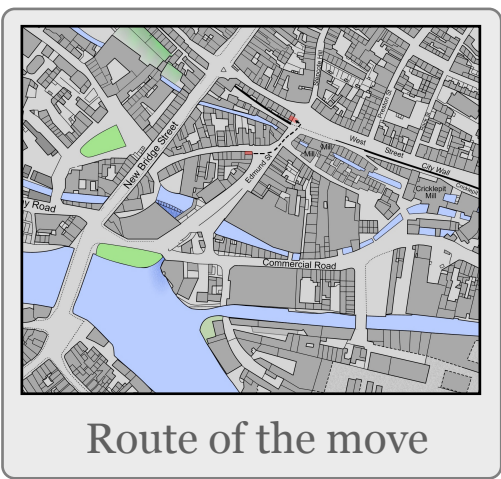


THE HOUSE THAT MOVED

Exeter has long been famous for its ancient and historic buildings. However, the slum clearance of the 1920s and 30s around Exe Island and the West Quarter, followed by the bombing of May 1942 saw many historic buildings disappear. When the post war road system from the Exe Bridge, bypassing the town centre was planned, a new inner bypass was to be constructed, with the loss of more historic buildings.

A HOUSE FOR SAVING

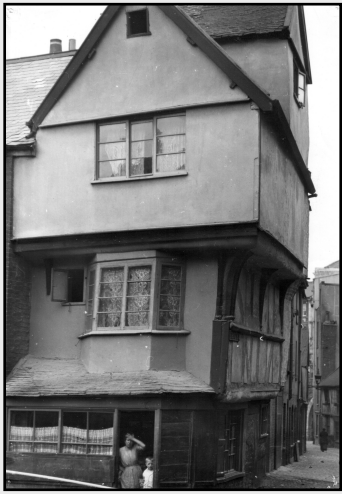
Number 16 Edmund Street, or Merchant House, was in the way of the by-pass to the new Exe Bridges and was scheduled for demolition. It dated from about 1500, although some thought it may be as early as the fourteenth century. It was one of the oldest surviving houses in Exeter. In a poor state of repair, it didn't seem that important a loss. However, with



Route of the move



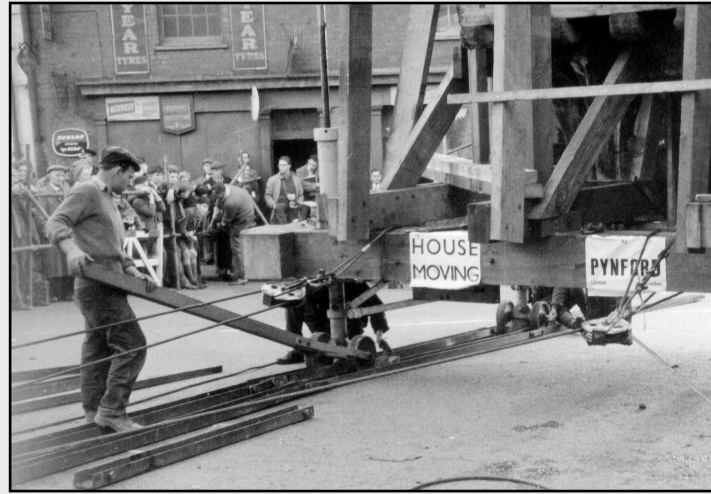
St Mary Step's Church behind



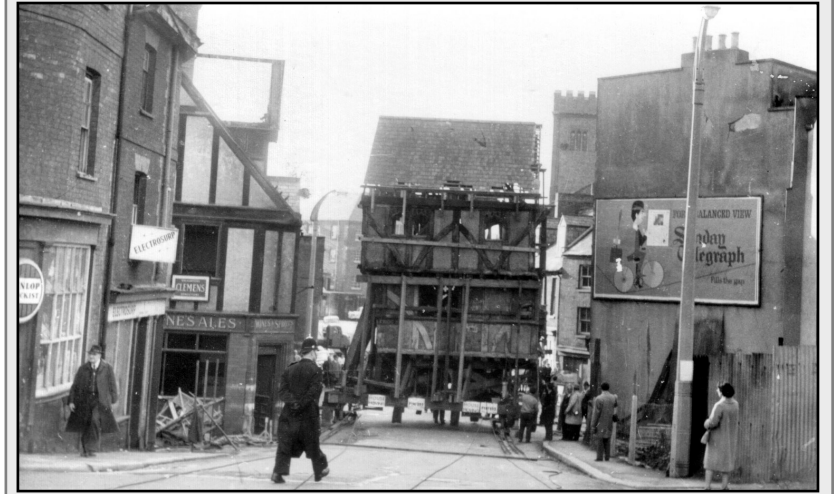
The house in the
1920s



The house before the
move



A worker adjusts the wheels



Hauled up Bridge Street

pressure from archaeologists, it was listed, just in time, as an important building of architectural and historic significance, and the demolition was halted. Exeter City Council, with help from the government decided to spend £10,000 to have the house moved out of the way of the new road.

A London company headed by Mr Fordham Pryke was contracted to move the house about 70 metres up from its site on the corner of Edmund Street and Frog Street to a new position by the old West Gate, at the bottom of West Street. It took several weeks to prepare the house for the move – the timber framework of the house was crisscrossed with strengthening timbers, and iron wheels attached to hydraulic jacks were placed at each corner. No iron bolts, screws or supports were used against the original timbers, to prevent damage. The structure was top heavy, so during the move, the jacks would be used to ensure that it was always kept perfectly vertical, with frequent checks made using spirit levels.

THE MOVE STARTS

On Saturday 9 December 1961, the move started—the house was raised a few centimetres. On the Sunday and Monday, it was moved to the edge of Edmund Street, prior to its journey up the hill. On Tuesday the 13th, the police closed Edmund Street to traffic and the house was gingerly moved to the centre of the street on iron rails. The rails and wheels were turned through 90 degrees, to face up Edmund Street and the long haul began. Air compressors drove the winches and the house was slowly dragged on the rails, up the street, which in parts had a gradient of 1 in 10. All the time, the corner jacks were being adjusted to keep the structure upright.

WHERE'S THE CAT?

The move was watched by newspaper reporters and cameramen from all over the world. Pathe News had their cameras there, in one of the rare visits to Exeter for the news

organisation. Their cameras managed to film a mouse hiding in the timbers, and the tongue in cheek narrator commented “*hope they've not brought the cat!*”. Some joker chalked a sign on the back with the words ‘*On Tow.*’

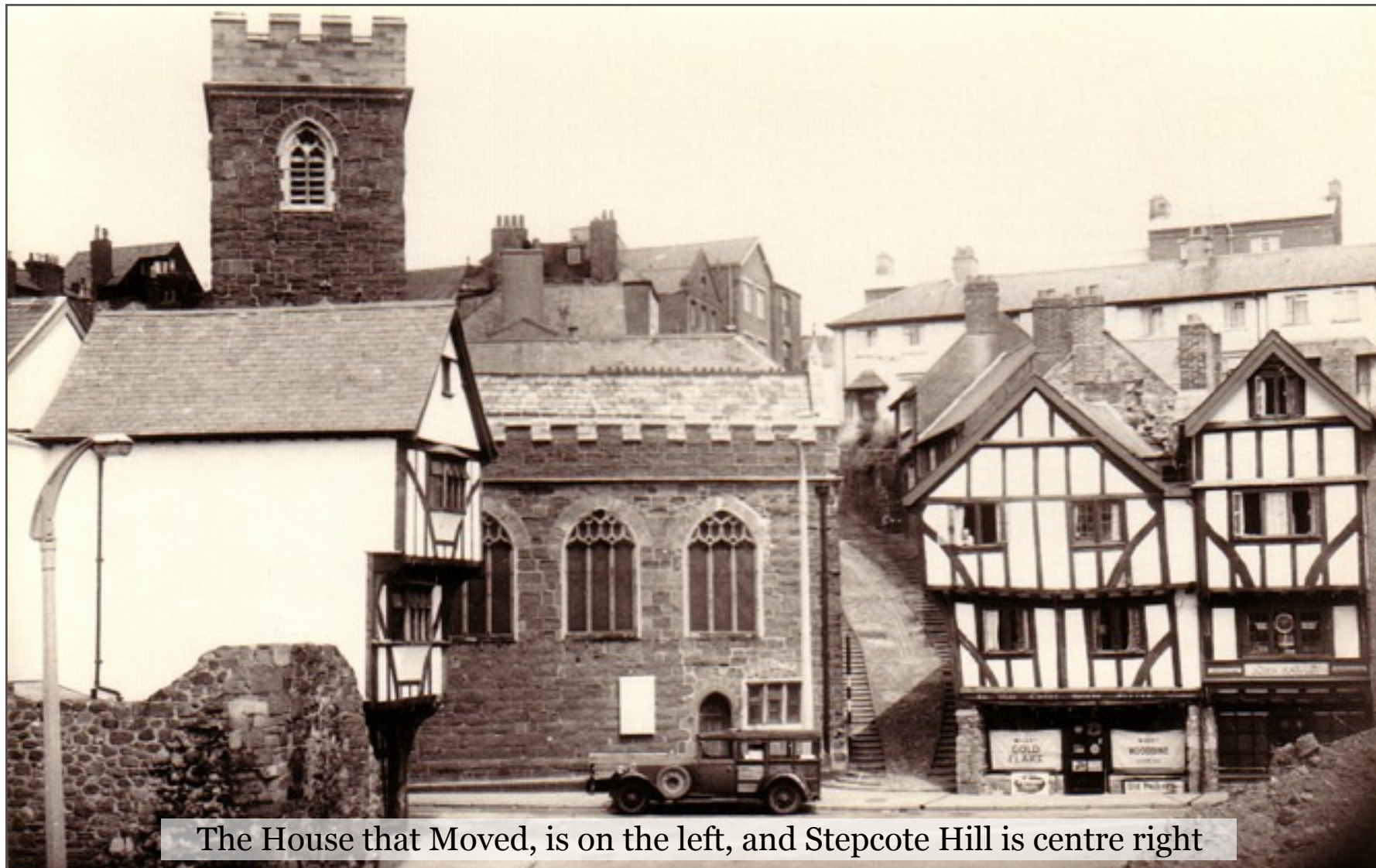
It was estimated that the house weighed 21 tons and the timber cradle an additional 10 tons. The move up West Street was completed by the Wednesday and the house was carefully placed in its new position. Allowing for corners, the house was moved 90 metres. Restoration was carried out, along with a thorough treatment for woodworm. A leaded-light window

that had been removed to the museum before the move for safe keeping was reinstalled in the building.

The House That Moved, looks like it has always been in its present position and is a favourite on the tourist itinerary. It was at first occupied by an antique dealer, followed by a gem dealer, but now it is a wedding dress shop. Its layout consists of a rear kitchen, and a first floor hall, or principal living room. On the top floor was the solar, or principal bedroom. Close by are the historic St Mary Steps Church, Stepcote Hill and No 10 and 11 West Street, two similar houses, making a

very interesting, and historic group. Who could ask for more?

Photographs were taken by Mr Cecil Brewer, a boot repairer, of 58 West Street, of the move. Mr Brewer also bred homing pigeons from his premises, and during the Second World War supplied pigeons to the RAF for use in their aircraft. Dick Passmore, then a young police officer was on duty helping to police the move. He also took the opportunity to photograph the house being hauled up Edmund Street, some of which are reproduced here.



The House that Moved, is on the left, and Stepcote Hill is centre right

DELLER'S CAFÉ

Café Of The West



Deller's Café, Exeter, 1911

DELLER'S CAFÉ

In 1868, a 20 year old Ipplepen man, named William Lambshead, was employed to manage the Deller's grocery store in Winner Street, Paignton. He married the owner's daughter, Elizabeth Ann, giving him the opportunity to expand the business into other areas. A prominent Methodist, Lambshead, along with other similar-minded entrepreneurs, was largely responsible for the expansion of Paignton town centre around the site of Lloyds Bank and Palace Avenue. He was also chairman of the committee that built Venford reservoir to supply water to Torbay, and was instrumental in introducing electricity to Paignton.

Lambshead's two sons, Herbert and William, were brought into the business. They were charged with opening branches elsewhere, and it was Herbert who decided that Exeter would be a good place for a Deller's Café.

THE FIRST DELLER'S CAFÉ

On Wednesday, 31 October 1906, Deller's opened its first café in the old Exeter Bank premises, next door to the Royal Clarence Hotel, and on the corner of Martin's Lane. A few years later, Deller's decided to build



A colour postcard from about 1920 showing the interior



The grand entrance in Bedford Street

another café, this time on land next to Lloyds Bank. The premises would be substantial and part would be on top of the bank to create a large café, complete with function rooms.

On the corner of High Street and Bedford Street had stood the Half Moon Hotel, until 1912. It opened in the mid-seventeenth century as one of the largest hostelries and coaching inns within the city. Local merchants would meet in the early part of the nineteenth century to talk business, and enjoy a glass of grog and a clay pipe of tobacco. Arthur Sullivan, of operetta fame, first performed the music of *The Mikado* to W. S. Gilbert in the hotel. The hotel was demolished in 1912 and replaced by the single-storey Lloyd's Bank.

Built in the grand baroque style, the building was opened in December 1916. The Paignton architects Hyams and Hobgen, who were also responsible for Torbay Picture House in Paignton, designed the building. Local firm W. Brock & Co., fitted out the ballroom and supplied furnishings, blinds and curtains for other parts of the café. Advertised as 'one minute from Trams', the grand entrance of the *Café of the West* was in Bedford Street, next to the bank. It fast became a meeting place for the local young people of the time, and a



Deller's was host to many special events

favourite of visitors. There were ornately decorated balconies around the main atrium, where patrons could enjoy a light lunch, or tea, to the sound of the in-house 'Gwen Master and her Orchestra', who performed between 1 and 2, 3.45 and 5.45, and 7 to 8 in the evening.

Many a romance blossomed within the walls of Deller's, and for 25 years the café was the centre of social life in Exeter. A discreet meeting for tea and patisseries, and perhaps a cigarette, led to many a happy marriage, at a time when it was shocking for a lady to smoke. They also catered for the sweet tooth with a confectionery branch at 48/49 High Street. In 1920, Deller's four cafés were bought out by Chards.

Agatha Christie lived at Greenway Estate, Paignton from 1938 to her death in 1976, and would have been familiar with



Dressed as the Queen of Sheba ready for a ball at Deller's Cafe

Deller's Café when she visited Exeter. One chapter in 'The Sittaford Mystery', entitled 'At Deller's Cafe.' has two of the characters meet for afternoon tea at Deller's Café.

THE END OF DELLER'S

Deller's was a favourite at the outbreak of war for the many displaced souls, and evacuated to the city. The Women's Land Army were guests at the café, along with evacuated children, and servicemen meeting their sweethearts.

Deller's was the venue, on the 28 March 1942, for a meeting of committees concerned with Anglo-Soviet Unity – this was the last advertised function at Deller's before the fateful night of the 4th May. On the day of the conference, the 'Café of the West' advertised for an assistant chef, oblivious of the fate that awaited their business.

Although Deller's did not receive a direct hit during the May blitz, the building was badly damaged by fire that spread from adjacent properties, probably setting light to cooking oil in the kitchen

"Bobby's spread to Messrs Deller's Café through the

portion of the building above Lloyds Bank. The fire guards at Deller's Café consider that an oil bomb fell through the roof of their building, but it is very probable that the mass of flames spreading from Messrs. Bobby's, together with I.B.s started a fire in the kitchen portion where certain inflammable materials would have caused the effect mistaken for an oil bomb."

The building was strong, and although largely burnt out, could have been refurbished. However, in early June 1942, demolition commenced on the ruins, in a City Council policy of clearing the bomb-damaged ruins throughout the city. The owners had appealed for the work to be delayed, hoping to retain their license. Thus was lost a building that had found a special place in the heart of many Exonians and visitors.

Deller's continued to trade in Exeter, from 48-49 High Street, which was expanded in the June of 1942 to make up for the loss of the main cafe. The business continued to trade until the 1970s.



Deller's Café after the May 1942 bombing raid

SECTION 5

ROUGEMONT HOTEL

Opened For The Railway



THE ROUGEMONT HOTEL

This prominent hotel is situated in Queen Street, opposite the Central Station. In 1818, Exeter Borough Prison was built on the site to replace the old Southgate Prison in the old South Gate. Until quite recently there were shackles in the cellar that had survived from the prison. The prisoners were moved to Devon County Gaol in September 1863, and the prison closed.

The Devon and Exeter Hotel Company started construction of a 28,859 square foot, hundred bedroom hotel—the foundation stone was laid in April 1877 and construction of brick with white Beer and Bath Stone dressings started. In May 1878, John Howard of Coombe Street, a worker on the construction fell from some scaffolding and was thought to have been killed. Two days later, the Western Times reported that he was alive and in hospital. Work was progressing well and the builders were advertising for ten plasterers. In September, the provisional manager, Mr Edwin Fewings was applying for a license with a view to opening in February 1879.

Progress slipped on the construction, and on the 18th March 1879, the Mayor and magistrates visited the almost completed hotel. They were shown the new electrical bell apparatus to summon a member of staff—there were eight miles of wire for the device. They also inspected the billiard and smoking rooms, obviously a priority for the city officials.

COMPLETION

The main, ground floor entrance hall is 60 ft (18 metres) long, 20 ft (6 metres) wide and 30 ft (9 metres) high. The first floor

is supported on Doric columns while the second floor is over Corinthian columns. The coffee room on opening was 60 feet long, again, with four Doric columns supporting the box girders of the panelled ceiling.

The hotel was designed by Mr Charles Edwin Ware AICE of Exeter and constructed by Mr James Matcham of Plymouth. Mr E. Whipple of Plymouth supplied the bell apparatus and gas-fittings, and the lifts were from Waygood and Co., of Leeds. Local firm, Garton and King, fitted out the kitchen, in the basement, with two ranges, and also fitted out the laundry and drying room. It seems that the company was lavish with their requirements, and there probably was not another hotel in Exeter that had the same level of equipment at the time.

At completion, the hotel had cost £21,000, plus £5,000 for fittings, and £6,000 for furnishings. A grand dinner was given at the opening in May 1879.

The building was only the first phase of a planned, much larger, hotel. There were to be other wings, and a circular tower. In addition, the owners had plans to buy the land that became Queen Street Station and turn it into a park with a fountain, giving the patrons of the hotel a pleasant view and an area to walk, a project never realised.

The conference rooms are all named after the Duke of Devonshire's family and estate—Devonshire, Hartington, Burlington, Chatsworth, Cavendish, Derby and Compton. There is also a series of paintings of the Devon countryside by W. Widgery in the Cavendish Room - although not valuable,



The Dining Room at the Rougemont Hotel in the 1920s

DINING ROOM, ROUGEMONT

they are considered an important part of its heritage.

OPENING

On 27 May 1879, the hotel held its first property auction, a sign that it was well and truly open for business. It was soon playing host to many conferences, a source of valuable revenue. Within the first few months, the Western Counties Dental Association held its annual meeting in the function rooms, and the British Medical Association held a dinner.

In 1887 a ballroom was added to the facilities, and on the 10 January 1888, its first ball was held for 420 County families. In subsequent years it became the Annual Christmas Ball, a highpoint for County society.

During the years between 1914 and 1918, the hotel was used to help those affected by the war, or for fund-raising. Madame Adele Vilas Hoare also held her popular dance classes through these austere years.

SAVED FROM THE FIRE

In 1919 the neighbouring Victoria Hall caught fire, and burnt down. The heat from the fire broke every window and seared the painted surfaces in the window sashes on the side of the hotel that faced the blaze. The fire crews had to direct water jets at the eaves of the roof to prevent it catching fire.

Although the Rougemont never suffered a hit during the May

1942 bombing raid, it is interesting that the only published photograph taken of the city that night, was taken from the top floor of the hotel. Against a black night sky, it shows the Cathedral and St Mary Major Church with huge clouds of smoke billowing above the flames.

In 1940, the hotel opened the Drake and the Golden Hind bars, to celebrate Exeter's association with naval history and

Sir Francis Drake. There is also a stained-glass window of interest at the top of the central staircase. Designed by Mr Frederick Drake, it shows an incident when Richard III visited the city and was shown around Rougemont Castle - the inscription reads: "*....a bard of Ireland told me once I should not live long after I saw Richmond*". Richard had confused Rougemont and Richmond. The window was removed to the cellar for safety during the war.

Some rooms in the hotel were used for businesses that had been bombed. Most mentions of the Rougemont in the newspapers were adverts, as news events were censored.

In 1963 The Beatles stayed at the Rougemont Hotel when they played a concert at the ABC Cinema. Word got out they were in residence, and soon screaming fans were converging on the hotel.

The hotel is now known as the Rougemont Thistle



Part of an advert showing the Frederick Drake stained-glass window

THE THEATRE ROYAL

The Theatre.

Exeter.

After Tragedy Came Joy



THE THEATRE ROYAL

The third Theatre Royal is still remembered with affection by older Exonians, as it was only demolished in 1962. For more than 70 years, the theatre entertained Devonians with a mix of variety, revue, stage plays, concerts, pantomime and film. This theatre replaced the notorious second Theatre Royal which was destroyed in a disastrous fire in September 1887 with the loss of nearly 200 lives.

This was the third theatre in Exeter to be destroyed in this way. In 1820, the New Theatre in Bedford Street was lost in a conflagration, and then in 1885, the first Theatre Royal also in Bedford Street was lost to fire—luckily, only a pig belonging to a clown perished in the blaze.

A NEW THEATRE BURNS DOWN

A hurried replacement, also called the Theatre Royal, was built at the top of Longbrook Street. With a capacity for 1,500, the theatre was constructed with little regard to fire safety – lessons had not been learned from the fire the previous year in Bedford Street.

The Exeter Theatre Company moved in during 1886, and on the 5 September 1887, on the first night of a romantic comedy called *Romany Rye*, and with an audience of over 800, a naked gas flame ignited some drapes in the flies. Within moments, panic broke out as the flames spread. Despite the valiant efforts of the West of England Insurance Company "Little West" fire engine, and other local appliances, the flames spread through the building.



A graphic account of the fire from The Illustrated Police News—10 September 1887

On the first alarm. Mr Pople, landlord of the New London Inn "*brought six or eight ladders, by which fifty or sixty people were rescued; he also gave the services of his entire household to the reception of the dead and living sufferers.*"

Of the almost 200 victims, many were from the upper gallery. They could not escape because of poorly designed exits – numerous victims were suffocated in the crush. Most were buried in several mass graves in Higher Cemetery and a memorial cross carved by Harry Hems placed over the spot.

The Times reported on the 8 September:

"The unidentified remains were buried yesterday afternoon at the Higher Cemetery, at the Heavitree end. It is computed that about 2,000 persons were present. Fourteen coffins contained the charred remains of 46 persons, and were interred in seven graves..... Most of the inscriptions on the coffins ran as follows:- "Remains of six unidentified bodies of persons burnt in a fire which destroyed Exeter Theatre, September 5, 1887."



The forlorn Theatre Royal awaits demolition, as a new store is constructed opposite –1962

This disaster was the worst theatre fire in British history, and Parliament quickly legislated to bring in stringent safety precautions for all British theatres.

THE NEW THEATRE ROYAL

The rebuilt theatre had electric lighting, following the building of Exeter's first electricity power generating plant, just 200 yards, down New North Road. A combination of new safety regulations and sensible design ensured that the new theatre would provide a safe environment for its patrons. It was not such an ornate interior as the previous theatre, with none of the elaborate plaster relief designs along the circle, and on the ceiling. The new theatre was built on the Irving-Darbyshire (actor Sir Henry Irving and the architect Alfred Darbyshire) safety principal at a cost of £15,000.

The theatre was opened in 1889 on the existing Longbrook Street site that had seen so many deaths just two years before. The stage was the first to have a safety curtain, after it was made mandatory for all theatres of more than 500 seats. The curtain had to be raised and lowered for each performance to test its efficacy, and to show the audience it was there for their safety, it had 'Safety Curtain' painted in large letters across the lower half. There was a greater use of brick and concrete to prevent the flames spreading, and outward opening fire exits. The theatre was also lit throughout with 510 electric lights, being one of the first customers for the new electricity service. It was a gas light that had caused the disastrous fire, so the introduction of electricity was a great safety improvement.

THE FIRST PERFORMANCE

The first production opened on October 7 1889, with The Yeomen of the Guard, performed by the D'Oyly Carte Company. When the safety curtain was raised for the first time it revealed a picture of Dartmoor by Mr William Widgery, father of F. J. Widgery, who became Mayor of Exeter in 1903. The painting formed the Act Drop, which was lowered between acts to hide scene changes.

In 1905, Sir Henry Irving appeared on the stage and was just one of many well-known actors to tread the boards. The locally-born sisters, Violet and Irene Vanbrugh, played The Theatre Royal, with Violet playing the lead in *The Woman in the Case* in 1911. Irene's last appearance was in 1945. The 1914 production of Mother Goose was from the Fred Karno studios, even though Karno at that time ran the Hippodrome, nearby, in London Inn Square.

A who's who list of actors who appeared at The Theatre Royal includes Noel Coward, Alistair Sim, Tommy Trinder, Henry Hall, George Formby, Dame Anna Neagle and Arthur Askey.

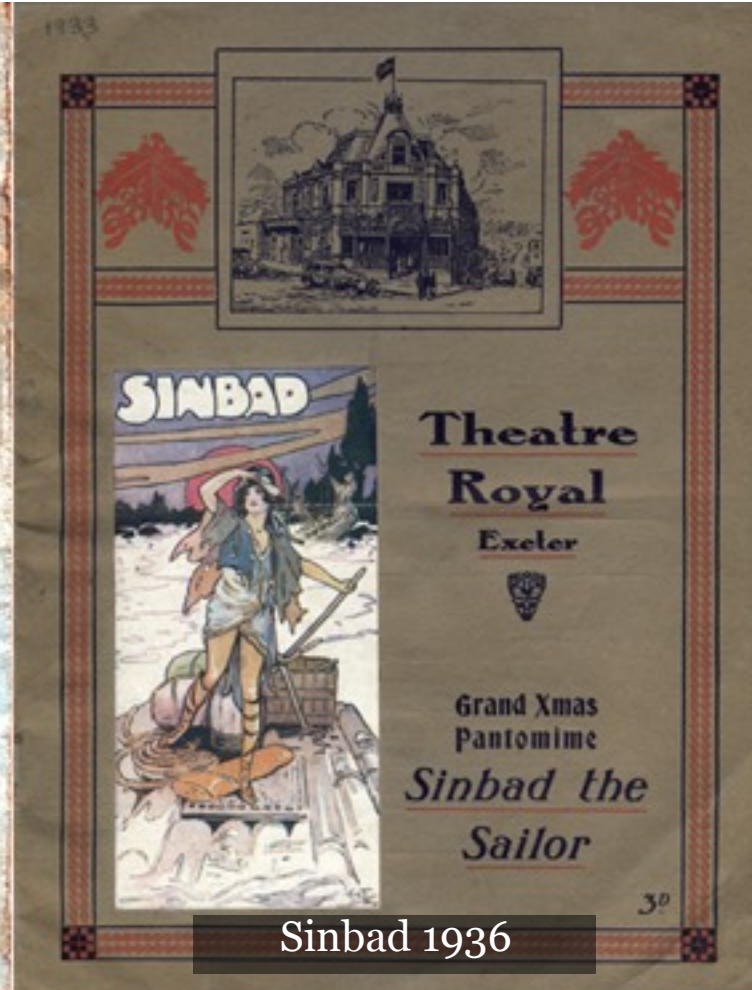
Not only were there famous actors appearing at The Theatre Royal, but occasionally animals would be brought onto the stage through the specially constructed 'elephant doors'. The stage was specially strengthened to remove its natural bounce before the elephants were let on to it. The elephants were often borrowed by Maude's Garage next door for promotional work.



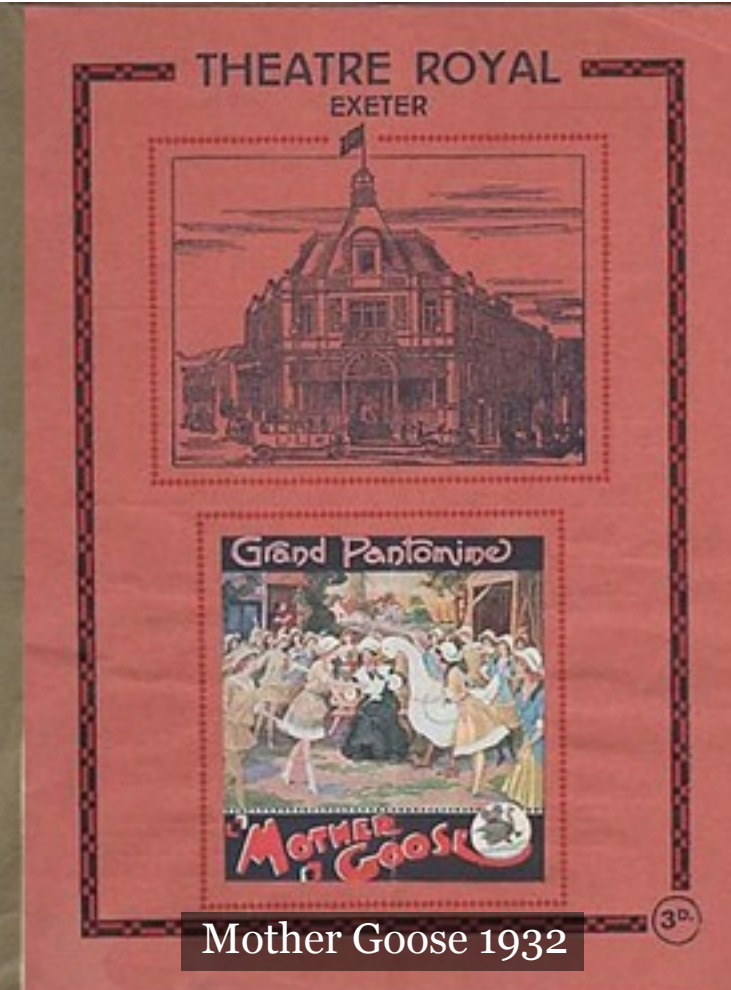
Cinderella (printed on silk) 1909



Humpty Dumpty 1925



Sinbad 1936



Mother Goose 1932



As You Like It 1930



Lilac Time 1935



Babes in the Wood 1934



Cinderella 1936

PANTOMIME

The first pantomime at the theatre was Jack and the Beanstalk in 1889 and the last, Ali Baba in 1961. It is interesting to note how the cover of the pantomime programme seemed to burst out in colour after the war, a reaction to the more formal pre-war period, and the austerity of the forties.

Coaches, full of excited children and anxious parents, would pull up at the theatre from all over Devon during the pantomime season – and for many, it was their only visit of the year to the city. From 1909, until his death in 1940, Percy Dunsford produced the annual pantomime. From 1945, the cigar smoking, portly, Cliff Gwilliam, the former manager of the Odeon in Sidwell Street, was responsible for the theatre until it closed.

AND FILM

The first known film shown at the Theatre Royal was on 7 November 1896, when a notice appeared in the Flying Post for the Theatre Royal Grand Hospital Week fund raising event. It stated "... *animated photographs including... How they Nurse the Baby*" and "*Four fingers and a thumb.*" were to be shown. In February 1901, three weeks after the death of Queen Victoria, they presented film of her funeral, with 60 animated scenes of army life and the opening of Parliament.

The 1909 Cinematograph Act required cinemas, and other places that showed film to the public, to construct fireproof projection rooms. The Theatre Royal replaced some private

boxes at the rear of the auditorium with a projection room, and started to show films on a more regular basis.

From 1911, performances would start at 7.15pm when a short film show would be given before that night's live act. In 1912, the Gaumont Graphic, an early newsreel, was shown during the interval of the main performance. For a week in May 1912, the theatre presented the £6,000 Selig production of Christopher Columbus from the New Century Film Company.

After the Second War, the theatre continued to double as a cinema. In 1954 an agreement was made with the Rank Organisation and Twentieth Century Fox to show Cinemascope films, the first being the biblical epic, *The Robe*.

However, as the fifties drew to a close, the competition from the other cinemas in the city, and from television, brought about a reduction in audiences. Among the last performers to appear on the stage in the late 1950s were Harry Secombe and Morecambe and Wise.

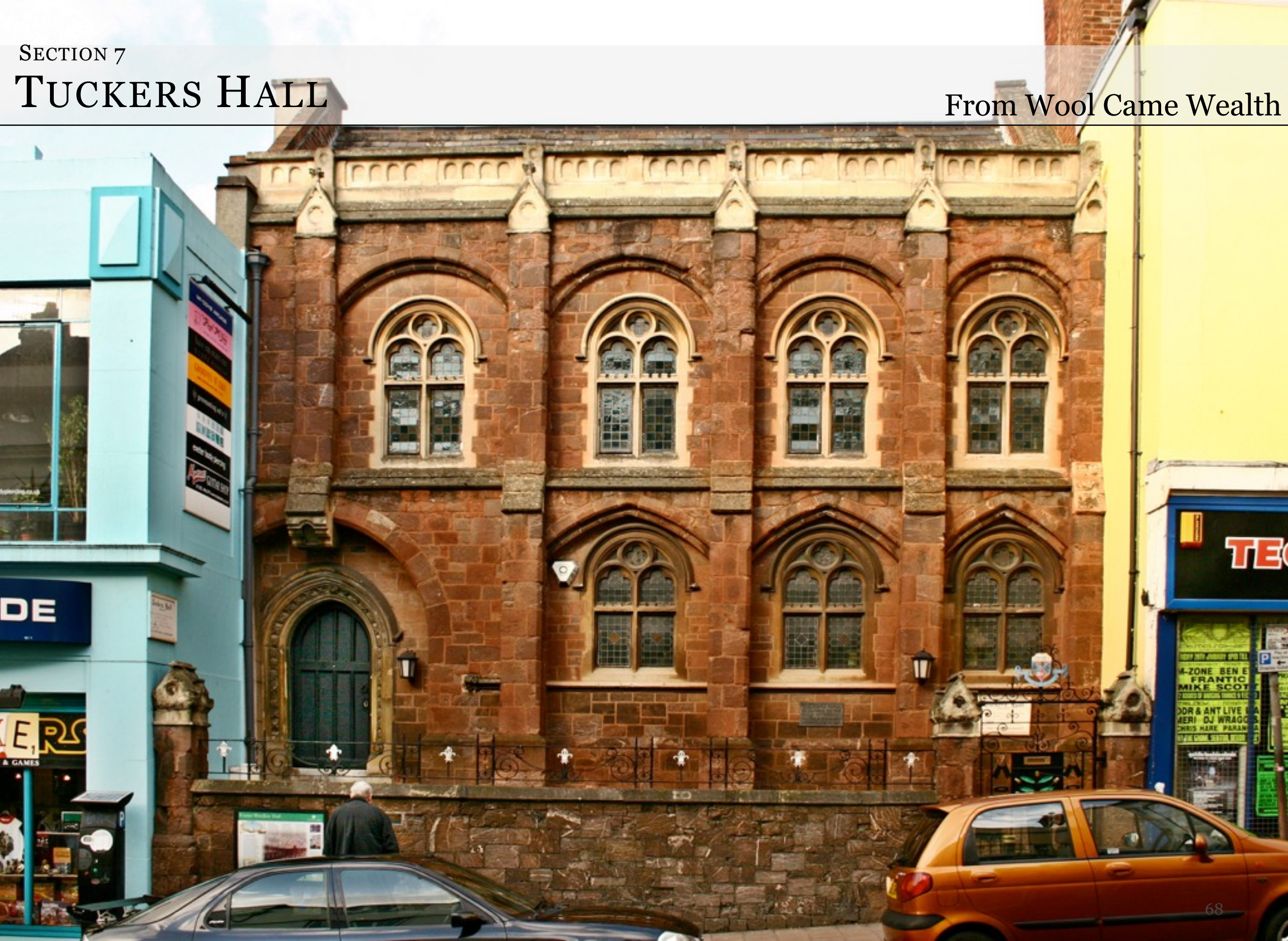
THE FINAL CLOSURE IN 1961

The last show at The Theatre Royal, was Twinkle, a 1962 summer show by Clarkson Rose, which ran for eleven weeks. One afternoon there was a shareholders meeting, and the theatre closed for the last time. Some of the projection equipment was saved, and ended up in the Theatre Museum in Covent Garden, although that too, sadly, recently closed.

In 1962, The Theatre Royal was sold for £85,000, and replaced in 1963 by an ugly office block. The planners and architects should hang their heads in shame!

TUCKERS HALL

From Wool Came Wealth



TUCKERS HALL

This rather modest looking building from the outside, is situated towards to bottom of Fore Street. It was built by the Guild of Weavers, Tuckers and Shearmen as a chapel and meeting hall.

The earliest known reference to the Weavers, Tuckers and Shearmen was in 1458, when a dispute as to precedence given to the Guild over the cordwainers in the Mayor's procession, on Midsummer Night, broke out.

A controversy now happened between the Cordwainers and-the Tuckers of this City, contending which of their Companies should have the preheminnence in their March, in the Mayor's watch, upon Midsummer-Eve for the present appealing of which discord, 'twas ordered that both Companies should march together, one of either Company

Twelve years later, the Guild of Weavers Tuckers and Shearers were given a piece of land in Fore Street by William and Cecilia Bowden, in October 1471, on which they built a chapel, now Tucker's Hall. The space was originally a simple hall with a fine wagon roof and six vertical windows.

The earliest regulations of the Guild date from 1483 when a Master and Wardens were appointed to maintain the standards of craftsmanship of the three crafts. The building was both used as a chapel for special occasions through the year by the fraternity, and as a meeting place for Guild

business. After the Reformation the religious use of the building was dropped and it became used exclusively for more secular, trade related affairs

The hall, which measures 18ft by 30ft, originally had three full length windows on each of the long sides. The upper floor was added in the 1570s, and the wood panelling was installed between 1634 and 1638, while much of the furniture dates from the same period. It was on this panelling that the Masters of the Guild had their initials and coats of arms painted. The Guild was granted a Coat of Arms in 1564, which within its design, showed a weavers shuttle, two burling irons, teasel frames and a pair of tuckers shears.

THE BUILDING IS ALMOST LOST

Even though it was a chapel, the Guild managed to retain the building after the Reformation, but in 1574, Elizabeth I granted the building to Anthony Kynwelmarsh of Gray's Inn, who in turn conveyed his interest to Edward Auleby of Rockbeare. This was a blow for the Guild, who took legal advice, to retain their interest in the building, and other lands mentioned in the conveyance. The situation was very confusing, partly because of the vaguely worded 1574 documents, but in 1579 agreement was made with Auleby to sell the property back to the Gild for the sum of £20.

The hall was divided up horizontally and the upper floor utilised as a meeting place for guild members.

Exeter became a rich city through the production of Serge. When Daniel Defoe the diarist and essayist visited the City he



The Main Hall and its magnificent oak panelling from the 1630s

recorded seeing over 300,000 pieces of cloth in the market:
“*second only to the Briggs Market in Leeds.*”

Celia Fiennes wrote in her journal on her visit to the city:

... then they soap them and so put them into the fulling-mills and so work them in the mills dry till they are thick enough, then they turn water into them and so scour them; the mill does draw out and gather in the serges, its a pretty diversion to see it, a sort of huge notched timbers like great teeth, one would think it should injure the serges but it does not, the mills draws in with such a great violence that if one stands near it, and it catch a bit of your garments it would be ready to draw in the person even in a trice; when they are thus scoured they dry them in racks

THE SCHOOL

The ground floor was used as a school between 1675 and 1841, for the sons of poor freemen belonging to the guild. The boys were taught reading, writing, and arithmetic, plus navigation, mensuration and other practical skills. The boys ranged in age from six up to eleven, when they were expected to start working, often undertaking a seven year apprenticeship in one of the trades of the woollen manufactory.

The master was paid £15 per year, but the addition of twenty private pupils increased his income. He lived in an apartment on the upper floor—the school closed upon the retirement of

Philip Gove, the last school master.

THE FREEMASONS

The Hall and premises were refurbished for a cost of £150 after a special meeting in December 1842, so that it could be let to raise some income. The City Lodges of St John's and St George's Freemasons leased the Hall for £20 per year, allowing the Guild access on the last Thursday in August and the 5 November, for their gatherings.

The Freemasons installed an organ in the Hall to conduct their meetings, and then would retire to a local hostelry for dinner and drinks. The Star Inn on the corner of John Street was a favourite dinner venue after a Masonic meeting. The Freemasons continued to lease the Hall until 1875. From 1875 to the end of the century, the lower hall was used as a Sunday School at a rent of 5s annually.

THE VICTORIAN MAKEOVER

John Hayward, the architect, surveyed the building in 1853, and found the façade of the building on the street was in poor condition. The wall was bulging, and daylight could be seen between the roof and wall. In 1875–76 both the interior and exterior were restored and cleaned, at a cost of £350.

Unfortunately, the new front wall was built in Victorian Gothic, by the builder, Ware. Much of the ancient interior fabric was retained. Further repairs were made in 1901 to 1902, including the removal of a plaster ceiling to reveal the fifteenth century rafters, and apparently, some sixteenth

century weapons and pieces of armour, that had been hidden there. In 1907 the porch was renovated and a new oak stairway installed, up to the Main Hall. The building was given its first electricity supply in 1931.

In 2011, extensive work was made to the building to allow it to be opened to the public. The lower hall has been turned into an interpretation centre with a working, half size pair of stocks, interactive maps and displays, historic artifacts, and samples of serge. The Main Hall is still used by the Guild for meetings and dinners.

THE WOOL INDUSTRY

After the Civil War, the woollen merchants of Exeter controlled the whole process; they purchased the fleece, sent it for carding and combing, and had it spun and woven into cloth before finishing in Exeter at the fulling mills. The most important cloth from Exeter was a type of serge.

After the capture of Calais in 1558, the weaving industry expanded as Calvinist serge weavers were driven out of the Low Countries by the Eighty Years War to Exeter.



The Coat of Arms of the Guild at the head of the Hall

The woollen industry flourished and serge was exported to France, and Spain. In a short depression in trade after the war, the merchants were forced to find new markets in Holland. The market would vary from year to year, dependent on which country England was at war with at the time, but the Dutch were the main market until the end of the eighteenth century.

The export of serge supported the ports of Topsham and Exeter, allowing the merchants'

ships to return with a variety of imports including wine from Bordeaux and the Canaries, canvas and linen from Normandy, and tiles and bricks from Holland.

MEMBERS OF THE GUILD

It is estimated that the Guild had about a hundred members, or about 10% of the male population of the city, when Tuckers Hall was built in 1471. The Guild had to pay 50% of its income to the Council for the City—in 1620 James I granted them a Royal Charter, thus ending their contributions to the City.

Many were of some wealth within the city, and those who were merchants financed the woollen industry. The craftsmen

often leased or owned their mills, but were at the beck and call of the merchants.

The Guild was governed by a Court of 26, which included the Master, Head and Under Warden and Assistants. Today, the Guild also has a legal officer called the Clerk, and a Beadle who runs the Hall. The earliest recorded Master of the Guild was the tucker, Richard Dixston in 1525. They are elected annually by members of the Guild.

Guild members in the eighteenth century were known as the 'Golden Tuckers' because their wealth allowed them to clear the market of the most expensive items. The Guild had many customs, one of which was 'nutting day.' James Cossins remembered the day as it was celebrated in the 1820s.

*The last Thursday in August was a gala day many years since for the Tuckers, Weavers, and Shearmen, of the City, called "nutting day;" it was kept by them as a grand holiday. After lunch at the Windmill Inn, Holloway street, they went to some of the woods in the neighbourhood nutting, returning home to dinner at the above-named inn. The room was decorated, flags hung out of the windows, and young trees were planted in front of the house. The late Chas. Bowring, Esq., usually occupying the chair. After the repast the loyal toasts, &c., were proposed, and well responded to; then the senior member was called on for their standing song. The chorus was—
And this is law I will maintain*

*Until my dying day, sir;
That whatever king shall reign,
I'll drink my gallon a day, sir.*

The emblem of the Fullers worn was a green apron with white serge strings; the Dyers, a blue apron and red serge strings.

Since the demise of the woollen trade at the end of the eighteenth century, the Master and members have been mostly drawn from Exeter's commercial world. John (1756) and Charles Baring (1771), of Baring and Sons, were both masters, and working fullers and merchants. Their brother, Francis Baring founded Barings Bank. Anthony Gibbs (a weaver and merchant), the father of William Gibbs of Tyntesfield, was Master in 1778. William was the richest man in England, in the nineteenth century by importing guano.

By 1700, the City was exporting about 300,000 cloths a year, or about one quarter of the nations wool output, while the membership of the Guild was four hundred craftsmen. By the end of the eighteenth-century trade was reduced by the Napoleonic Wars and the success of first Norwich, and then the northern wool towns. Even with the decline of the woollen trade from Exeter, the Guild continued to function, mainly to administer various ancient charities, and provide relief for members families who were going through hard times.

SECTION 8

GLOSSARY

ANNUELLERS

Annuellars attended to the last wishes of benefactors to the Cathedral. They would conduct duties requested in the will of the deceased, visit and comfort relatives and keep a candle lit in remembrance.

APOTHECARY

Chemist or pharmacy shop.

BAILEY

Originally, an enclosed courtyard, surrounded by a protective ditch and wooden wall. The wooden wall was often replaced by stone, giving a classic castle.

BEERSTONE

Type of limestone from a quarry, a mile West of the village of Beer in Dorset. First exploited as a building stone by the Romans.

BISHOP'S STOOL

The Cathedral is the Seat or See of a Bishop. The centre of episcopal power; a diocese; the jurisdiction of a bishop.

BURGH

An old term for 'borough.' More common in Scotland.

CELIA FIENNES

Celia Fiennes travelled around England on horseback between 1684 and 1703, chronicling her journey. Her journal was intended for private use. It was first published in 1888 under the title *Through England on a Side Saddle*.

CORBELS

A piece of stone or timber protruding from a wall to support a roof timber or arch.

CORDWAINERS

A cordwainer is a shoemaker or cobbler who makes fine leather shoes and other footwear articles. The word comes from "cordwain," or "cordovan," the leather produced in Córdoba, Spain. The term was first used as early as 1100 in England.

DEAN

The Dean is the principal clearl of the Cathedral. He directs the life and work of the Cathedral and its estates.

GUANO

A fertiliser containing high levels of phosphorus and nitrogen, derived from bird droppings. It was imported from Peru.

GUILD

An association of craftsmen in a trade. The earliest guilds were formed as confraternities of workers. They were organized in a similar manner as trade unions, or a cartel. They were granted letters patent by a monarch to enforce the flow of trade to their fellow members, and to have ownership

of the tools and the supply of materials. A legacy of traditional guilds are the guildhalls constructed and used as meeting places. Alternative spellings are Gild and Guiold.

HABERDASHERY

In England a haberdashery is a shop that sells small articles for sewing, such as needles, buttons, ribbons, zips , etc.

HEAVITREE STONE

Heavitree stone is a red sandstone that was quarried in the area of Heavitree near Exeter. It was used to construct many of Exeter's older buildings. It does not weather well, and when exposed, will easily crumble.

INDULGENCE

An indulgence is the remission of punishment for sinning. Money raised by indulgences was used for many religious and civil building projects.

JAMES COSSINS

Cossins wrote a series of articles for the newspaper, Trewman's Exeter Flying Post, in the 1870s entitled Reminiscences of Exeter. His memories record many of the personalities in the City during his childhood, the customs and events. They were published in a book called Reminiscences of Exeter Fifty Years Since in 1878.

LADY CHAPEL

Chapel at the east end of the Cathedral. Bishop Bronescombe (1258 to 1280) built the Lady Chapel. He is buried there, along with his successors, Peter Quinil (1280-91), and

Thomas Bitton (1292-1307) who was buried near the high altar.

MATINS

Matins is a night time public worship (liturgy), ending at dawn. Mattins, is the Anglican Morning Prayer which combined the hours of Matins, Lauds and Prime.

MENSURATION

The branch of mathematics that deals with measurement, especially the calculation and use of algebraic formulae to measure the areas and volumes of geometric figures. It was often taught to help calculate the trajectory of cannon fire, and was a hangover, as a subject for boys, from the Civil War.

MINSTER

Minsters were created by royal foundation charters of the 7th century. Although associated with monasteries, it can also be any settlement of clergy living a communal life.

MUNITIONS

A room in a cathedral, castle, or other public building, reserved for keeping records, charters, seals, deeds, and such like.

MUNTIN

A muntin is a horizontal bar that divides up a panel or window pane.

ORIEL

An oriel is a type of bay window often found in Gothic

architecture. It projects from the main wall of the building but does not reach to the ground. Corbels or brackets are often used to support this kind of window.

PALLADIAN

A European style of architecture founded on the designs of the Venetian architect Andrea Palladio (1508–1580). The style is strongly symmetrical, and based on the classical architecture of the Ancient Greeks. From the seventeenth through to the eighteenth century this style of classical architecture was known as Palladianism.

PER DIEM

Payment made per day.

PILASTERS

A partly projecting flat column, built into or applied to the face of a wall. Often found dividing panelling.

PRINCESS HENRIETTA ANNE

The youngest child of Charles I, she was born in Bedford House, Exeter in 1644, while her mother Queen Henrietta Maria was fleeing to France during the English Civil War. She is still remembered with affection in the City. There is a portrait of her in the Guildhall.

QUICKSILVER

An old name for the metal, mercury. It is the only metal that remains liquid at sea level temperature and pressure.

QUIRE

Also known as the Choir, it is the part of a church or

cathedral, normally in the western part of the chancel (the area housing the altar) between the nave and the sanctuary.

QUOINS

The cornerstones of a building, normally of brick or stone. They can be decorative, but were probably first employed to give the corners stability.

RECEIVER OF THE CITY

The Receiver, was the accountant for the city. He ensured that rents and other revenues were collected, and that bills owed were paid. In addition, he was responsible for the maintenance of all of the City's buildings and structures and ensured that all those employed by the City were paid correctly and on time. The Receiver was also responsible for the City's ordinance, shot and gun powder. Other responsibilities included looking after the keys and presenting end of year accounts.

RECORDER

A person appointed to maintain public records and documents.

REFECTORY

A dining room, in a monastery, boarding school, or academic institution.

REFORMATION

The period from about 1535 when Henry VIII proclaimed himself to be the Head of the Church of England. It refers to the political and religious turmoil that followed. Many

Monasteries and Church institutions were destroyed during this time.

ROMAN TIMES

The Roman fortress was manned by the Second Augustan Legion of 5,000 legionaries and 500 cavalry. Housed in timber barracks they were surrounded by defences enclosing 41 acres. The hot baths would have been a welcome relaxation after a day's drilling for the officers.

SCREENS PASSAGE

A screens passage across the end of a hall, separating a formal dining area the hall from the cooking, food preparation and storage areas. The passage has doorways to service rooms on the other side.

SERGE

Serge is a kind of woollen twill fabric that has diagonal lines or ridges running on both sides, made with a two-up, twodown weave. Many military uniforms, suits, great coats and trench coats are made from a worsted variety, in which long fibered wool is used to produce the cloth. The word is also applied to a high quality woollen woven.

TUCKERS

A tucker is the Devonshire word for a fuller. Fulling is a process of pounding bolts of wool with a large, water driven, wooden hammer. Fulling shrinks and softens the cloth, removes the natural oils, and makes it more like a felt.

WATERBEER

The established meaning of Waterbeer Street is as 'waterbearers street' and was first recorded in 1253, when it appears on a deed as 'Waterberestrete' and later in 1327 as 'Waterber Strete'.

SECTION 9

SOURCES

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