



A Salisbury-Cathedral-centric view of History.

Editor: Mark Brandon: markandsuebrandon@outlook.com

WEBPAGE: jot-and-tittle.com Please note that all editions will best be available by joining the subscribers mailing list, either via the web-page or by e-mail to the editor.

SERENDIPITY*

Not really anything to do with history, but whilst in London for a wedding, I had an hour to kill so sat down with a coffee and the local free paper. There was an interesting article about the ‘panthers’ that had been sited over the years in England and were regarded as something of an ‘urban myth’. Well it turns out that some fur caught on barbed-wire near a recently killed sheep enabled scientists to carry out a DNA analysis - which proved it was a real panther.



Having glanced through the paper I picked up my current reading *The Old Ways* by Professor Robert Macfarlane (Penguin 2013). It is about following ancient tracks and pathways but also a meditation on walking and is to be highly recommended. There is a chapter concerning my favourite artist, Eric Ravilious (Sussex Downs Chalk Path above), that ends with the author and a friend cross-country skiing the Ridgeway in the winter snow. Afterwards..... *We were only a few miles from the Ridgeway when David pulled out of a side lane onto a fast road. As he did so a large black-pelted animal sloped across the wide snowy verge to our south, moving with the high-shouldered prow of a big feline, before flowing into the darkness of the hedge. We glimpsed it only for a few seconds. It was far too big for a domestic cat, and had the wrong gait and size for a fox or deer. As David drove off up the road I swung round in my seat to see two great yellow eyes glaring like lamps from the hawthorn and the shadows. ‘That was a panther’ I said to David. ‘I know, I saw it too’, he said, as he drove on.*

*Horace Walpole formed the word in 1754 after reading the fairy-tale *The Three Princes of Serendip* who were always making lucky and unexpected finds by accident. Serendip is an old name for Ceylon Sri Lanka), taken from the Sanskrit.

DENDROLOGY

More notes from John Stokes' *Great British Trees* (The Tree Council 2002). The Martyrs' Tree at Tolpuddle is the largest sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) in Dorset. It was under this pollarded tree that a group of farm labourers gathered in 1834 to form one of the first trade unions. The landowners and government used a Naval law of 'administering an unlawful oath' to convict the men to seven years transportation to Australia. After petitions, protest meetings and newspaper campaigns the 'martyrs' were brought home after three years. In 1984 Len Murray (TUC) planted a replacement tree grown from the original seed ready for when the old tree dies.



The Heavitree Yew (*Taxus baccata*) in an Exeter churchyard (bottom left) was found to be 500 years old but had come from a side-shoot of a much older tree. It grew at the junction of ancient tracks and in Saxon times was a gathering place as well as the centre for the Celtic kings of Dumnonia (Devon and Cornwall). In Saxon the tree was a *Heafod Treow* and almost certainly gave its name to this part of Exeter.

John White, the curator at Westonbirt Arboretum, became intrigued with an area of coppiced small-leaved lime (*Tilia cordata*) and called in the well known Cambridge academic Oliver Rackham to do a DNA test. It turned out that this coppice 'stool', 52 feet wide (bottom right), was all one plant - and over 2,000 years old. Small-leaved lime is now fairly rare, except in ancient woodland.



EX LIBRIS

The latest edition to the J&T library is *The Sutton Companion to Local History* by Dorset author Stephen Friar (Sutton Publishing 2004). The entries are arranged alphabetically.

Sanctuary: From the Latin *Sanctus* meaning inviolable. Ecclesiastical Right of Sanctuary originally only applied to the area around the bishop's throne though it was later extended to the curtilage of a church from which a criminal could not be removed. Within 40 days he was permitted to take an oath before a coroner by which he confessed his crime, swore to 'abjure the realm' and submit to banishment.

Some churches possessed *hagodays*, large brass knockers in the form of a monstrous beast. The sanctuary knocker at Durham Cathedral, right, is a good example.



Alabaster: calcium sulphate is a form of gypsum used for rather up-market tomb sculptures. Originally, it was found that the gypsum quarried in Montmartre was ideal and was sold as Plaster of Paris. Later deposits were found in England's Trent and Nidd valleys. I was surprised at seeing the alabaster effigies in Salisbury Cathedral because it would have been difficult to transport over such a distance in medieval times. However, it transpires that a deposit was also found on the Isle of Purbeck!

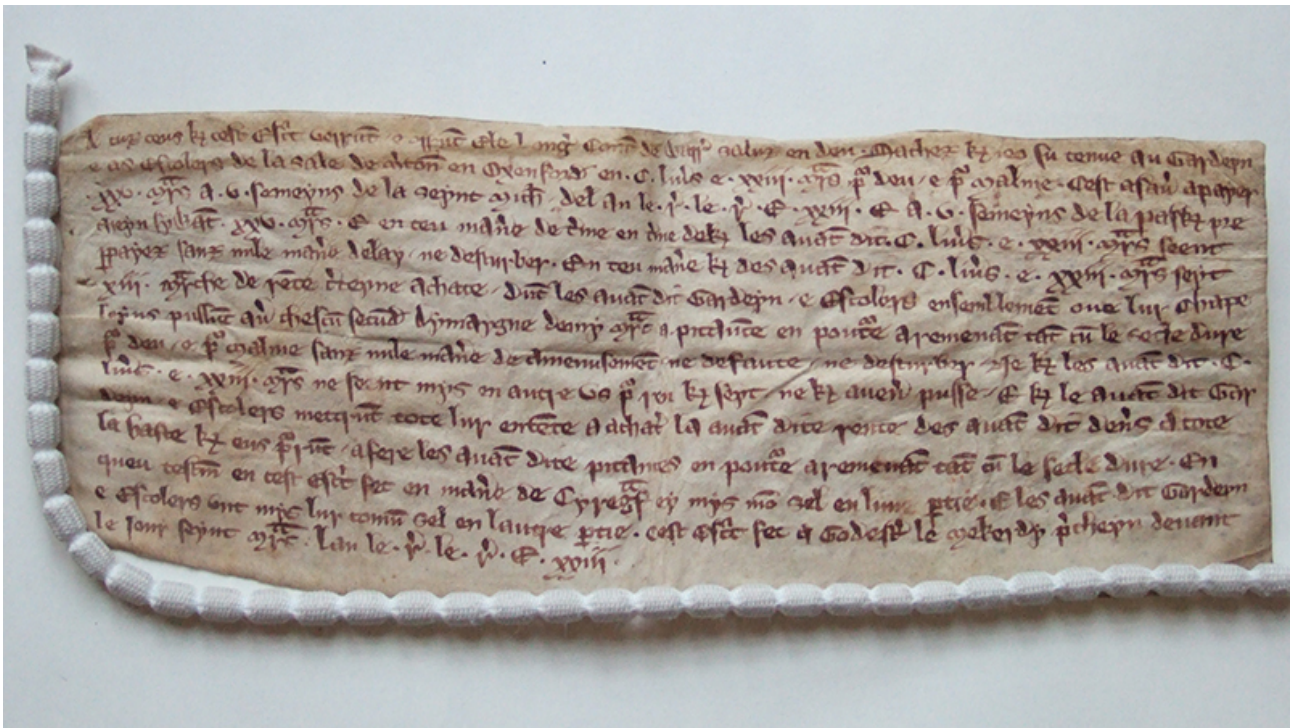
THE OTHER ELA

No, not Fitzgerald but the daughter of Ela Longespée (née Fitzpatrick), Countess of Salisbury. Ela married, first, Thomas de Beaumont, 6th Earl of Warwick, and, secondly, Philip Basset. She was a great religious benefactor, and contributed to the foundation of Merton College, Oxford.

Ela was probably born sometime around 1210, and married the 24-year-old Thomas de Newburgh, son of Earl Henry of Warwick, in the summer of 1229, before his father's death. Thomas succeeded his father soon afterwards, bringing to his depleted earldom Ela's substantial marriage portion, the manor of Chitterne in Wiltshire. The marriage depleted the earldom further: to attract it the Warwicks contributed a dower of five of their demesne manors, including the manor of Tamworth-in-Arden and the forest of Sutton in Warwickshire. Earl Thomas died childless on 27 June 1242, leaving Ela a wealthy widow.

Ela was involved in her mother's foundation of Lacock Abbey in 1249, donating her manor of Hatherop in Gloucestershire. She settled mainly in Oxfordshire where she had the large manor of Hook Norton as part of her dower. As early as 1248 she had entered into a relationship with Philip Basset, a leading justice and lord of the barony of High Wycombe who that year was involved in her business interests in Warwickshire. They married in or around 1254 when Philip obtained a papal dispensation because the pair were related in the third degree. It was seemingly a prosperous marriage, and Ela was involved with several of her husband's property transactions,

before his death in 1271. Together they patronised the friars, and gave money and support to Walter de Merton's new college. One gift was the manor of Thorncroft in Leatherhead which still belongs to the college. She had no issue by this second marriage.



After the death of Philip Basset in 1271, Ela was without a protector, and exposed to the aggression of William de Beauchamp, the new earl of Warwick. She possessed a substantial share of the assets of the earldom which would revert to him at her death. Between 1275 and 1278 Earl William waged an expensive fight through the courts to dislodge her from them. Eventually in 1289 she surrendered to him the manors of Claverdon and Tamworth-in-Arden, though it is not known whether it was for a financial inducement. Despite this and other lawsuits, she still had the resources to give money and lands to many religious houses, which are recorded in the remarkable roll listing her benefactions (to old-established Benedictine and Augustinian houses) and the spiritual rewards she expected from them.

Among them were gifts to Oseney Abbey, St Frideswide's, Bicester Priory, Thame Abbey, Rewley Abbey, Studley Priory (Oxfordshire), Lacock Abbey and Godstow Abbey. Her charters record other grants in return for masses: to Reading Abbey* and Selborne Priory. In 1293, she founded the University of Oxford's Warwick chest—substantial bursaries for poor scholars—and gave money towards the chapel of Balliol College. *This provided for a special distribution of spices to the monks and extra food on Thursdays and Sundays. The photo above is of Ela's grant to Merton College for drinks on St Matthias' day, made on 20 April 1295. The seal is Ela's attached to the grant of Thorncroft manor.



Ela retired in the 1290s to Godstow Abbey, Oxford, dying a year after her brother Nicholas (the bishop), in 1298. The

college gave a large gift to Salisbury Cathedral at her funeral. Her body was buried at Oseney and her entrails at Rewley. Her heart may have been buried elsewhere. She kept her Longespée name, and her seals all display her own coat of arms prominently, as well as carrying those of her husbands.

The above article is thanks largely to Wikipedia and Merton College's Steven Gunn, Fellow and Tutor in History.

PULPITUM

A massive transverse stone screen and platform separating the nave from the chancel and pierced by a central opening with doors. As well as privacy (from people and animals), it protected the choir from the worst draughts. The gallery was used by singers and possibly was the forerunner of the pulpit, as the name implies. The Gospel and Epistle were intoned there during mass. Salisbury's pulpitum which projected slightly to the west ran between the eastern pillars of the crossing. The west facing niches were filled with statues of fourteen royal figures. You may well ask how fourteen figures fitted into ten niches? The lower half of the pulpitum was moved by Wyatt in 1789 to the western wall of the north-east transept, the central archway being taken from the Beauchamp chantry chapel.

The picture below is of the choir-screen at York Minster, known as the Kings' Screen with fifteen near life-sizes statues of English kings from William I to Henry VI. The screen was by Master Mason William Hyndley c1420 and the figures carved between 1475 to 1506. The exception is Henry VI carved by Michael Taylor in 1810. Photo *courtesy of the Geograph Project, by Richard Croft 2008, under Creative Commons*. By the way, the stone stage in a Roman theatre was called the *Pulpitum*.



CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

The mighty Bishop Roger managed to offend both William Rufus and Stephen. The latter had him arrested at the Great Council of Oxford in 1139 and imprisoned him in a *cowshed*.

A pair of iron shackles was found at Old Sarum, still attached to a headless skeleton and buried to the north-east of the Cathedral choir. The most likely contender was William II, Count d'Eu of Lacock one of William I's original barons - he is believed to have held 77 manors in the west of England. In 1087 he joined a failed rebellion but was forgiven by the king. He took part in a second rebellion, this time against the egregious Rufus and led by Robert Mowbray in 1095. The idea was to kill the king and replace him with his cousin, Stephen of Aumale. The conspirators were arrested and tried at Old Sarum. Geoffrey Bayard, High sheriff of York, accused William and was ordered by the king to face him in trial by combat. William lost and faced blinding and castration of which he later died. Trial by combat remained legal until 1819. We still don't really know if the skeleton is William's.



Another insurgent was Sir Henry Stafford, 2nd Duke of Buckingham in 1483. Adopting threadbare clothes, attempting to pass as a servant, he was arrested at Wem in Shropshire after being betrayed by a 'friend'. He was brought to Salisbury where he attempted to see Richard III, concealing a knife up his sleeve. The king however refused to see him and ordered his execution without trial. On All Souls Day, 2nd November, he was executed by axe in the courtyard between the Blue Boar Inn (Debenhams) and the Saracen's Head (above right). Much later a headless skeleton with one arm missing was found beneath the inn's outhouse. Historian, Henry Hatcher declared that it was the Duke's skeleton but contemporary records showed that he was supposed to have been buried in the church of the Grey Friars (St Ann's Street). Another possible burying place is inside Britford Parish Church (right).



The above are taken from *Bloody British History - Salisbury* by David Vaughan (The History Press 2014).

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