

A personal selection of Wessex, British Isles and world history.

Motto of the Knight Templar: “Non nobis, Domine, non nobis, sed nomini tuo da gloriam!” Translation: Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to Thy name give the glory!

This month J&T 185 has the honor to introduce you to a knight “sired by knights”, the regret to inform you of the tragedy of the Lady Eleanor and the pride to announce the achievements of the Nebulous Mr Luke Howard.

JERUSALEM IN LONDON¹

Recently I took advantage of a trip to London to visit the Temple Church. This is the church of the Inner and Middle Temple Inn’s of Court. The whole site belonged to the Knights Templar until their suppression in 1314. James I gave the site to the two inns in 1608 provided they educated and accommodated lawyers and maintained the church.

This lovely building was badly damaged during the Blitz but has been fully restored and you can see emblems of the winged horse, Pegasus and the Lamb and Flag which represent the Inner and Middle Temples. The church is a *Royal Peculiar* and so does not answer to a bishop. Robin Griffith-Jones is the Reverend and Valiant Master of the Temple and a Senior Lecturer in Theology at Kings College, London. The last Master of the Templars was burnt at the stake so I hope he is fully insured.

The earliest part of the Temple is round (right) in imitation of the Temple Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, aka the Al Aqsa Mosque. It has the traditional *ad orientem* alignment with the chancel at the east end and was in use by 1163. It’s pointed arches probably make it the earliest Gothic building in England.



The purpose of my visit was to see the tomb of one of my favourite historical characters, William the Marshall - called by the Archbishop of Canterbury at his burial *the greatest knight that ever lived*. The first part of this phrase was taken as the title of a book by Thomas Asbridge (Simon & Schuster 2015) and is the definitive work if you want to delve into William’s amazing life. Outside the south door is a court with a tall column in the centre to commemorate the Millennium. On top of the column is a bronze statue (inset) by Nicola Hicks of two knights on one horse. This was the motif on Templar seals in the Middle Ages.

EX LIBRIS²

The J&T Library now comprises some 450 books. The joy of looking up something is what you encounter on the way. In this way I came across Stephen Friar’s *The Sutton Companion to Local History* (Sutton Publishing 2001). It is arranged in dictionary format and I have selected the following which I hope will be of interest:

Armory - what most of us think of, probably inaccurately, as Heraldry. The hereditary principle dates from 1127 when Henry I invested his son-in-law, Geoffrey Plantagenet, with a blue shield charged with gold lions (right).



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You can see the same shield on William Longespée's tomb in Salisbury Cathedral. William was Henry I's illegitimate grandson. Geoffrey was married to Empress Matilda and William to Ela, Countess of Salisbury - both strong women. Geoffrey was Count of Anjou, the soubriquet *Plantagenet* was named after the sprig of Broom (*planta genista*) he wore in his hat. Well it probably never happened like that but its a good story.

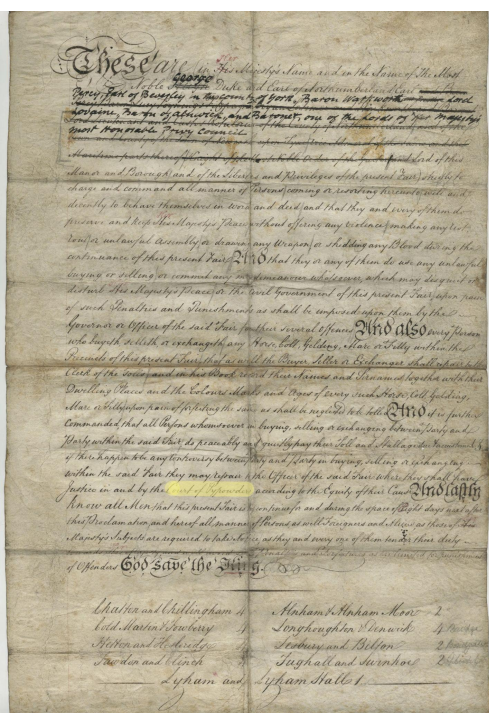
Chain - A ploughman with a team of horses was expected to plough an acre a day. To help him measure this, a chain 22 yards long was laid along the headland of the field to show the width to be ploughed. He would plough a furrow long (furlong) of 10 chains or 220 yards. On Sundays he would borrow the farmer's chain to mark out a cricket pitch of again 22 yards.

Club Men - These were associations of countrymen formed during the Civil War to protect their stock and crops from the soldiery. They were particularly strong in Dorset. Armed only with clubs, some 4,000 stood up to Cromwell who let those who refused to surrender go, calling them *poor silly creatures*. As you may know, most of the chalk figures cut into the hillsides were no older than the eighteenth century. One theory is that the Cerne Giant was fashioned by the Club Men. The famous part of his anatomy was probably a more recent addition.

Frankpledge - In Anglo-Saxon times, each *vill* was divided into *tithings* of ten households with corporate responsibility for its members' conduct. This included ensuring that anyone accused of an offence would appear at the Court Leet to answer charges. Knights and clerks were exempt.

Garth - The grassed area enclosed by the cloisters at Salisbury Cathedral is known as the Garth. The word comes from the Old Norse meaning enclosed ground. More correctly it should be the Cloister Garth as there were also *haygarths* and *applegarths* and even a *fishgarth*.

Marshalsea - Known to most of us as the notorious prison in which Dickens' father served time for debt. Marshal originally meant farrier and came to be the title of the person in charge of the Marshalsea and other royal studs and farms. The title gained more military significance under Thomas Mowbray, Earl of Nottingham, who became Marshal in 1385. A year later he was made Earl Marshal, a title held by the Dukes of Norfolk since 1672, organising great state occasions and overseeing the College of Arms.



Pie Powder - These were the courts that controlled markets and presided over by the bailiff or steward of the owner (in Salisbury's case, the Bishop). It is a corruption of *pieds poudreux*, referring to the dusty feet of travellers. The trade was often arranged so that local traders could start first leaving the outsiders, known as *stallingers*, *censers* or *chensers*, to wait their turn. The document (left) is from the Allendale papers mentions a Court of Piepowder in 1685.

Speenhamland System - A form of poor relief adopted by the Berkshire village of that name around 1795. Parishes supplemented low wages with an allowance related to the cost of bread. However, greedy employers reduced wages knowing that the parishes would pick up the difference, causing the number of people claiming poor relief to increase.

Strip Lynchett - These eroded terraced hillsides are a common feature in Wessex and are supposed to predate the Black Death. They were created by repeated ploughing in one direction, following the contour with the soil turned outwards to create a level surface. They were usually sited where there was insufficient plough-land on the level.



ANOTHER ELEANOR³

Eleanor, the Fair Maid of Brittany (c1184 - 1241) was the eldest daughter of Duke Geoffrey II, the fourth son of King Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine. Although female, she was seen as a possible threat by King John and spent her life in prison. This has been called *the most unjustifiable act of King John* but I can think of others - her brother, Arthur, disappeared in mysterious circumstances.

Eleanor lived in Corfe Castle's Gloriet Tower (see below), took her meals in the Long Hall and was allowed to walk abroad along the walls. She was allowed three maids and was provided fabric for clothes and bedding, and pocket money as much as 5 marks per quarter. She also received from John a saddle with gilded reins and scarlet ornaments, a gift which implies that she was not closely confined. John also sent her figs and almonds. A week's shopping list for Eleanor in captivity that has survived suggests the aristocratic diet at that time: Saturday: bread, ale, sole, almonds, butter, eggs. Sunday: mutton, pork, chicken and eggs. Monday: beef, pork, honey, vinegar. Tuesday: pork, eggs, egret. Wednesday: herring, conger, sole, eels, almonds and eggs. Thursday: pork, eggs, pepper, honey. Friday: conger, sole, eels, herring and almonds.



In 1208 John had Eleanor write a letter to Breton barons and churchmen such as the bishops of Nantes, Vannes, and Cornouaille, describing her life in captivity, expressing her hope of being liberated and asking them to arrive in England to negotiate her release:

...uos rogamus attencius quatinus uos supranominati ad dominum auunculum meum Regem Angliae in Angliam ueniatis scituri pro certo quod aduentus uester Deo uolente nobis et uobis ad magnum cedet commodum et honorem, et per Dei gratiam ad liberacionem nostram. (I ask you most solicitously that you, the above-named, would travel to England, to my lord uncle, the King of England, knowing for certain that your coming, God willing, will confer great honour and benefit to ourselves and yourselves, and, by the grace of God, our liberation.)



This letter is the only surviving document written by Eleanor. This negotiation was however in vain, and many of her supporters were banished. Eleanor was forced to entrust Brittany and Richmond to John, who referred to her as his "dearest niece" in communicating with Bretons. John did not give her the lands which belonged to the counts of Richmond. Instead he gave these lands to Eleanor's former stepfather, the Earl of Chester.

Things did not improve under Henry III. From June 1222, she was transferred between Gloucester, Marlborough and Bristol. She was finally settled at Bristol from June 1224 for a time and was visited by Henry III. Gloucester Castle temporarily moved all its prisoners elsewhere to accommodate Eleanor. A chamber in the tower of Gloucester Castle was thought to have been occupied by her. When Eleanor was relocated to Marlborough Castle, the council instructed that additional cavalry and crossbowmen should be added to the existing guards there.

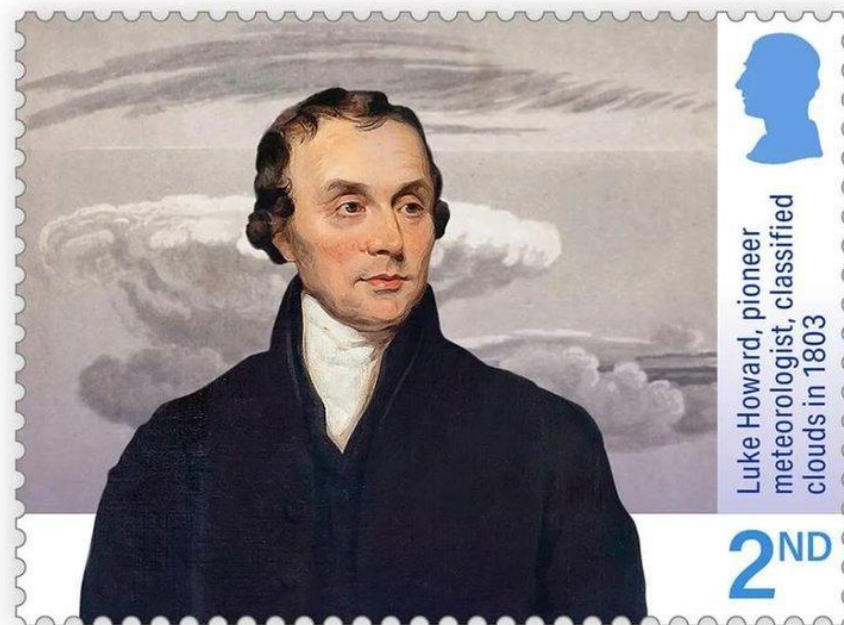


During her imprisonment for as long as 39 years, Eleanor was innocent of any crime, and she was never tried or sentenced. She was viewed as a “state prisoner”, forbidden to marry and guarded closely even after her child-bearing years. Scholar Gwen Seabourne believes that when Henry was in power, Eleanor had already passed the childbearing age and was at least apparently unlikely to pose any risk to his regime; however, he remained determined to imprison her, which made his devout, kind, and innocent persona no longer so credible; with his suspicion and calculation not inferior to John’s, he should also be condemned more.

Eleanor died as a nun in 1241 at the age of 57 or 59. She was initially buried at St James' Priory, Bristol, then reburied at Amesbury Abbey, according to her wishes, announced by Henry. She also donated her body there. Considering the association between Amesbury and the Plantagenets, Eleanor's final choice of burial place was probably a sign of submission and loyalty to her dynasty, but it may also have been her last protest about the fate of herself and her brother Arthur, as the abbey was dedicated to Virgin Mary and St Melor, a young Breton prince murdered by his wicked uncle who usurped his throne. However, neither burial place has a memorial for her remains.

HIS HEAD IN THE CLOUDS⁴

Luke Howard FRS (1772 to 1864) was a Quaker and later a member of the Plymouth Brethren. He was a pharmacist by profession, setting up his own pharmacy in Fleet Street. In 1798 he entered into partnership with fellow Quaker William Allen to form a pharmaceutical company which morphed into Howard & Sons,



well known for supplying quinine and aspirin. Like many ‘scientists’ of the period he was interested in many aspects of science but his passion was for Meteorology. In 1803 he published a classic *Essay on the Modification of Clouds* illustrated with his own watercolours. You may not have heard of Howard but we all use his classification of clouds: cumulus, stratus, cirrus and nimbus as well as their combinations such as cirrostratus.

He became well known and Goethe actually wrote a poem about him. Finally in 2018 Tottenham Hotspur FC, located near his house in Bruce Grove,

named two of their new stands *Stratus East* and *Stratus West* - and in 2024 there was even a stamp published honouring Howard.

1. Knights Templar column courtesy of Pinterest other by the Editor.
2. Geoffrey Plantagenet courtesy of Find a Grave.com. Piepowder document courtesy of Northumberland Archives.com.
3. Wikipedia, Corfe Castle courtesy of National Trust.
4. Wikipedia, Stamp courtesy of BBC.