

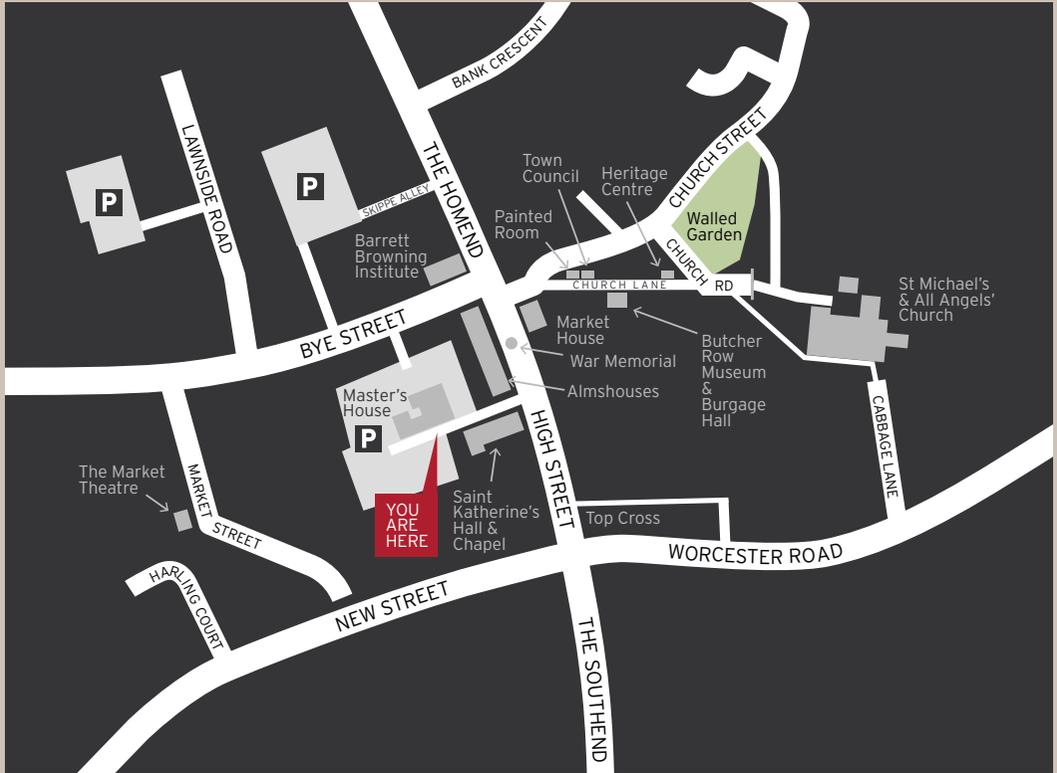
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RENOVATING  
St Katherine's  
and  
The Master's House  
in Tudor times

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by Celia G Kellett  
Friends of The Master's House





Map of today's Ledbury showing all the streets mentioned

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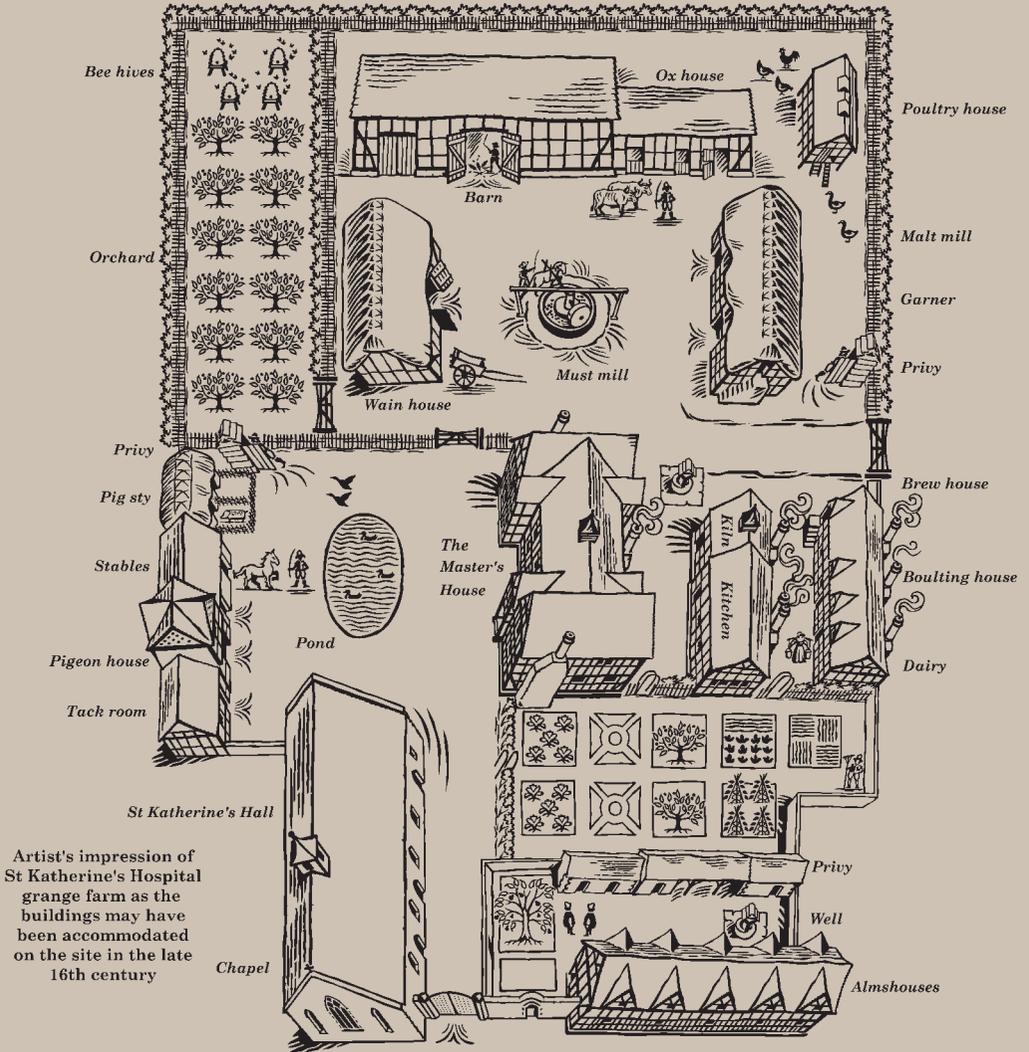
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Based on Edward Cooper's 'The Accounts of St Katherine's Hospital, Ledbury 1584-95', which were transcribed by F C Morgan and published in the Transactions of the Woolhope Naturalists Field Club, 34 (1953), 88-132.

# Introduction

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This booklet contains more detailed versions of a series of articles which were published between August 2013 and March 2015 in Ledbury Focus, our local community magazine, published by Nadelle Beddis, plus a few others published in Ledbury Civic Society's newsletter and the Victoria County History Herefordshire newsletter. During this time the Master's House in St Katherine's was undergoing its Heritage Lottery bid funded renovation, to become the wonderful building you can see today.

The original articles were based on the accounts drawn up by the Master of St Katherine's Hospital, Edward Cooper, who supervised the renovation and 'beautification' of the Master's House and the repair and renovation of the other buildings of St Katherine's Hospital grange farm on this site between 1584 and 1595. The original document, part of the Dean and Chapter Archive, may be seen in Hereford Cathedral Library.

Over sixty years ago this document was transcribed by the Cathedral Librarian of the time, Frederick C Morgan. As was the custom of the day, his transcription retained the original spelling and Roman numerals. This transcription with an introduction by Arthur Winnington-Ingram, the last resident Master of the Hospital before it was requisitioned by the War Office in 1941, was published in the Transactions of the Woolhope Naturalists Field Club for 1952-3-4, pp88-132.

I came upon this transcription in our old library in the Barrett Browning Institute some years ago and decided to rewrite the accounts with modernised spelling and arabic numerals, in order to understand exactly what Edward Cooper's workmen had done. This became the basis for my series of articles in Ledbury Focus, written in the hope that they would help to keep up interest in the ongoing work and to inspire others in the Ledbury area to take an interest in the now renovated and restored Master's House, a unique building, which has been so carefully and lovingly restored for everyone to enjoy.

Celia G Kellett  
Friends of the Master's House  
Spring 2015

# Alphabetical List of Edward Cooper's

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John & Roger Bailey, Carpenters	Thomas Cooke, Pargeter
John Ballard, Panel maker	William Cooke, Sawyer
John Banks, Panel maker	Mr John Cowles, Timber supplier
John Barnisley, Glue supplier	Robert Crowse, Carpenter/Builder
Richard Barrett, Lodgings	John Dodd, Mason
John Barston, Mason & Tiler	Edward Farmer, Tanner
John Baylis, Pargeter	Ford & his men, Carpenters
Thomas Beese, Lime	Richard Francis, Tiler
James Bishop, Drawing straw for thatching	David Gough, Stone Tile supplier
Thomas Bishop, Thatcher	John Grundy, Mason
Mr Roger Bodenham, Timber supplier	William Grundy, Mason & Tiler
John Bond, Drainage, Paving & Well digging	Simon Hall, Smith
John Bracie, Carpenter	Thomas Hall, Plumber
John Brooke, Carpenter	Thomas Hall, the elder & younger, Smiths
Thomas Brooke, Sawyer	Widow Hall, Lodgings
William Brooke, Sawyer	John Hardwick, Mason
Anthony Brown, Sawyer	Richard Homes, Carpenter
Thomas Buckenhill, Carrier	John Hopley, Sawyer
Simon Bullock, Smith	George Hunte, Ironmonger
Thomas Byston, Wattle panels	John Hyde, Sawyer
Robert Camden, Labourer	Simon Jeffreys of Hereford, Carpenter
William Chaliner, Joiner	Henry Jenkins, Sawyer
Thomas Collins & son James, Masons & Tilers	William Kenderdale, Bailiff

# workmen and their trades:

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Thomas Lawrence, Thatcher

Goodwife Little, Lodgings

David Lone, Carpenter

William Lucy, Timber Carrier

Richard Maddock, Lime with horsehair

Christopher Matthews, Stone carrier

Thomas Mayo & his son, Joiners

Thomas Meeke & John Meeke, Pavers

William Meeke, Tanner

James Merrick, Labourer

Thomas Minton, Tree-feller

Christopher Morgan, Ironmonger

David Morgan, Sawyer & Pargeter

John Morris, Labourer

Martin Morgan, Glazier

Edward Parker, Mason & Tiler

Thomas Parry, Pargeter, Mason & Tiler

Goodman Peacock, Joiner

John Perkins, Pargeter

Thomas Pewtress, Timber carrier

Manuel Podmer, Labourer

Henry Poole, Stone carrier

Mr Ravenhill, Timber supplier

Thomas Reese, Tanner

Thomas Roger, Carpenter

Mr Rudhall, Timber supplier

John Skynner, Tanner

Michael Skynner, Carpenter

James Stafford, Gardener

John Staple, Carpenter

Widow Taylor, Drawing straw for thatching

William Taylor, Smith

Henry ap Thomas, Tiler

Mordiford Turner, Joiner

Robert Turner, Carpenter

Hugh Vurden, Stone Tile supplier

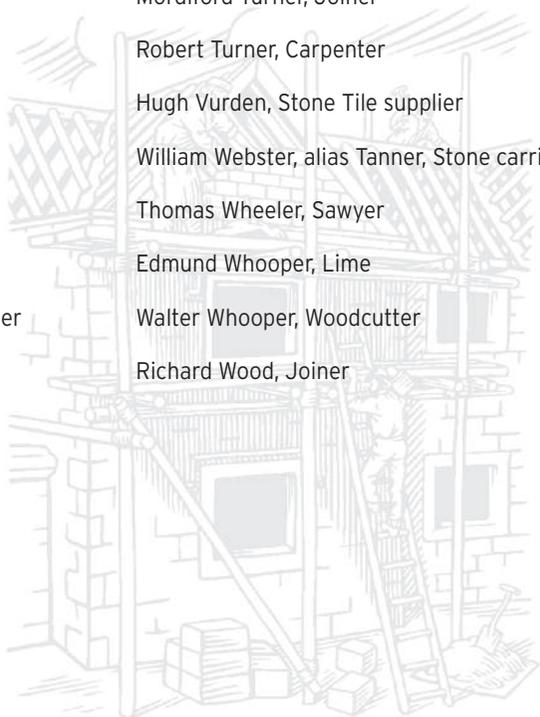
William Webster, alias Tanner, Stone carrier

Thomas Wheeler, Sawyer

Edmund Whooper, Lime

Walter Whooper, Woodcutter

Richard Wood, Joiner



# List of Edward Cooper's workmen

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## The Woodworkers

Gardener	James Stafford, for grafting fruit trees, planting fruit trees, quick set hedging
Labourers/woodcutters	Robert Camden, James Merrick, John Morris, Emmanuel Podmer and Walter Whooper
Timber suppliers	Mr Roger Bodenham, Thomas Buckenhill, Mr John Cowles, Mr Ravenhill and Mr Rudhall of Brampton Abbots near Ross
Timber carriers	William Lucy and Thomas Pewtress
Tree-feller	Thomas Minton
Sawyers	William Brooke, Anthony Brown, William Cooke, John Hopley, John Hyde, Henry Jenkins, David Morgan and Thomas Wheeler
Carpenter/Builder	Robert Crowse
Carpenters	John & Roger Bailey, John Bracie, John Brooke, Richard Homes, Simon Jeffreys from Hereford, David Lone, Thomas Rogers, Michael Skynner, John Staple, Robert Turner and his men,
Joiners	William Chalinor, Thomas Mayo & his son, Goodman Peacock, Mordiford Turner and Richard Wood
Panel makers	John Ballard and Thomas Byston

## The Metal Workers

Plumbers & Glaziers	Thomas Hall and Martin Morgan
Smiths	William Taylor, Simon Bullock Thomas Hall the elder & Younger, Simon Hall
Ironmongers	George Hunt and Christopher Morgan

# by trade:

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## The Stone Workers

Stone carriers	Thomas Buckenhill, William Webster, alias Tanner, Hugh Vurden, David Gough, Henry Poole & Christopher Matthews
Must Mill makers	Alfred of Woolhope and his man
Pavers	Thomas and John Meeke
Masons	John Grundy, John Hardwick
Masons & Tilers	John Barston, Thomas Collins & his son James Collins, John Dodd, John & William Grundy, John Hardwick and Edward Parker
Tilers	Richard Francis and Henry ap Thomas
Well Digger, Drainer & Paver	John Bond

## The Lime Suppliers and Pargeters

Pargeters	David Morgan, Thomas Cooke, John Perkins, John Baylis
Pargeter, Mason & tiler	Thomas Parry
Lime suppliers	Edward Farmer, William Meeke, Thomas Reese, Edmund Whooper
Lime with horsehair supplier	Richard Maddock
Carlime supplier	John Skynner

## Other services

Thatcher	Thomas Bishop
Straw drawing for thatching	James Bishop, Widow Taylor
Glue supplier	John Barnisley
Lodging providers	Richard Barrett, Widow Hall
	Goodwife Little
Bailiff	William Kenderdale

# Chapter One

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## The history of St Katherine's Hospital and the Master's House

Bishop Hugh Foliot's foundation of St Katherine's Hospital in Ledbury followed a tradition already begun more than a century earlier by Bishop Robert de Bethune. Two charters describe the purpose, government and endowments of this medieval hospital; it is dedicated to God and the blessed Katherine of Alexandria 'for the support of wayfarers or pilgrims and the poor and weak lying therein' and its government was conferred on the Dean and Chapter of Hereford Cathedral, and this remains so to this day. St Katherine's Hall was built for the Master and his brethren to live in, together with any visitors. The brothers were soon joined by sisters to assist with the running of this hospital, with its chapel being sited at the east end of the communal hall. Like other medieval hospitals it provided poor travellers and pilgrims with food, rest and warmth, that is hospitality, for St Katherine's was dedicated to the saving of souls not bodies - it was monastic infirmaries which specifically cared for the people's bodies.

Bishop Foliot's foundation was not just an act of charity, for the chapel was to be a chantry, where a chaplain would daily pray for the salvation of Foliot's soul and that of his successors. At this time it was believed that when you died you went to purgatory and thence to heaven or hell, depending on how you had spent your time on earth. Hugh Foliot wanted daily prayers said for his soul, and that of his successors, so that they might spend as short a time as possible in purgatory, before entering the gates of heaven. The chantry attracted endowments from the rich, such as the 480 acres of land at what are now the Hill House and Orham farms, and later some woodland at Little Marcle was added. With these and additional endowments the hospital prospered, as the income earned by these acres provided money to employ chaplains, who would say prayers and celebrate mass solemnly out loud in the hospital chapel, as very few people were literate at that time. The almspeople were also expected to pray regularly, not just for their own souls but also for the donors to the hospital and for the townspeople.

In 1349 the Black Death swept through the county and in Ledbury the master of the hospital, the parish priest and the chantry chaplain all died of this plague, along with many others, both in the town and the surrounding

area. New priests were quickly ordained but some were unsuitable for the life of prayer and care and had to be dismissed for inappropriate behaviour, - too much feasting and generally enjoying themselves. The bishop was appalled when he discovered this and wrote to the Pope. He also introduced new rules regarding the Master having to live in St Katherine's for at least part of the time and also for the running of the hospital. The Black Death resulted in a severe shortage of labour in the fields, which led to the collapse of the local economy and by 1397 the Hospital's Master had granted (rented out) all its lands to laymen, as had happened elsewhere, vastly reducing its income.

It was late in the 15th century that the Master removed himself to live in his own mansion house, as had already happened in many other hospitals, some many decades previously. This mansion house was built in 1487-8, a typical medieval hall house, with a central four bay hall, a two-storey solar wing at the west end and a two-storey service wing at the east end. The solar wing contained the Master's parlour and a staircase led up to his bedchamber above and a small prayer room which led off it. The service wing contained a buttery, in which butts of ale and beer were stored. The water was not fit to drink so even children drank weak ale or beer, which having been boiled during its preparation, was made fit to drink. There was also a larder where fish, game and meat were hung and a pantry where bread and other foodstuffs were stored. A doorway out of the east end of the service wing led to the old detached kitchen (no longer evident). An outer stair led up to the rooms above the service wing which would have been used for guests. A new detached kitchen (because of the danger of fire in timber-framed buildings) was built in about 1525.

It was about this time, the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century that the almsfolk began living separately from the brethren in the Hall. They moved into a half timbered building north of the gatehouse (as the gateway was then called), that ran parallel to the Butcher Row in the High Street, which had been there since medieval times. There was a narrow alley running between the almshouses and the Butcher Row, which was called the Cathol and later even referred to as St Catherine Street.

In the mid-16th Century, the chantry services were abolished during the Reformation, so a chaplain was now only needed to say prayers in the chapel on the days when there were no services in the parish church. Even today the chapel in St Katherine's has services on Wednesday and Friday



mornings, which anyone is welcome to attend. In 1568 Queen Elizabeth granted the hospital and its possessions to the master and his successors. Its primary role since its foundation had been for the care of souls, but henceforth the care of the body, rather than the soul, of the poor and needy would be its prime function. Queen Elizabeth I issued new statutes regarding St Katherine's Hospital in 1581, which made provision for the Master to oversee seven poor men and three poor women at four pence each per week. Master Edward Cooper (written then as Cowper) began renovations of the Master's House and other buildings of the Hospital, which continued until his death in 1596.

Ledbury's first public clock was installed at the east (chapel) end of St Katherine's Hall in 1642 and in 1769-71 the Master's House was updated by encasing it in brickwork, to make it look more 'modern' for those Georgian times. This work included cutting off the south side of the hall's timber frame so as to widen the hall by about 1.5m, as a result the rooftop gables needed to be hipped to accommodate this increased width, and some extra support columns provided, to prevent the building from falling down. A two-storey block of rooms was built at this time to join the north side of the Master's House hall to the previously detached kitchen and further additions followed later.

In the 19th Century, the dilapidated almshouses were rebuilt in two phases, completed in 1822 and 1866. A new entrance and staircase were built at the east end of the Master's House in the Regency period, early in the nineteenth century and later, in 1867, a Victorian west wing added.

In 1941 the Master's House was requisitioned by the War Office for the Ministry of Food and later ownership was transferred to the local authority. The Master's House was first recognised as a listed building in 1953. The Charity Commissioners introduced reforms in 1962, whereby the twenty four almshouse apartments were reduced in number to sixteen, to accommodate the residents, now enlarged and modernised, which at last had their own bathrooms. The central tower contains another for visitors.

The Master's House was used as offices and even as flats to provide homes for some people for a time, before serving as a doctor's surgery from 1977 to 2002. In 2004 the Master's House listing was upgraded to II\* and in 2008 Herefordshire Council began using it again for Customer Services and Tourist Information. In 2010 it was placed on the 'Buildings at Risk' Register and propped up with wooden buttresses before work started in 2011, on the 'Victorian' wing, which was renovated and reopened in April 2012.

Much work went into preparing the bid to be presented to the Heritage Lottery Fund, followed by a year's work stripping out the Master's House, whilst the Lottery bid was considered. Success came in March 2013 and work finally got underway to preserve this unique building, which was completed early in 2015, providing a new home for Ledbury's library and council services, as well as the John Masefield Archive, the Victoria County History and the Ledbury Poetry Festival.

# Chapter 2

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## Renovating The Master's House - progress so far - November 2013

Work was now well under way on the Master's House. The main contractor Speller Metcalfe appointed Ed Mandrell as the site manager and had sent him to the Weald and Downland Museum, Chichester, West Sussex, on a series of three courses all about medieval timber-framing. With this hands-on training and having worked for some time on stripping out the Master's House back to its original frame, he now feels he would prefer to spend the rest of his career working with timber-framed buildings. His in-depth understanding of this medieval building, and that of the Conservation Architect Gary Butler, have proved invaluable in interpreting the history of this important building.

At Gary's request several members of the 'Friends' Judy Conway, Robert Waddington, Pauline Fay and Pat Strauss kept a photographic record of the project. This involved taking a series of pictures from a number of precise viewpoints every 2 weeks, so that when the building work is completed there will be a series of views, rather like time-lapse photography, of the progress of the project. These photographs in sequence can now be viewed in the community resource area.

During the stripping out of the building there were a number of interesting findings, an old Hereford Times dated 1880 and a number of advertising leaflets from 1950's- 60's, there was even a letter from the Sunday Times about advertising official appointments. As the frame was stripped back numerous different types of nail, some almost a foot long, several large keys and other ironmongery were found, even some broken clay pipes. All these items have been kept for display in the finished building. A selection of them can be seen in the drawers of the mobile unit, upon which is the model of the Master's House.

The timber frame, now stripped of all the old plaster and most infill panels, was being cleaned, restored and repaired by many highly skilled craftsmen. The wattle and daub panels, which had been made with hazel in the earlier ones, and oak later, were saved and safely stored for later re-use and

display. Some 15 - 20 samples of wallpaper were found on the walls and have been conserved for further research at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.

The original timber-frame was built on stone foundations, of a better quality than those of the numerous later extensions, so some parts of the building are being underpinned, where necessary, with concrete foundations, including the north side of the kitchen. Car-jacks were used to raise the kitchen's timber-framing so that concrete foundations could be inserted beneath the sill beams. In the hall section of the Master's House, it was found that the west end had sunk about eight inches (20cm) because the sill beam had slowly rotted away long ago, which explains why the closed medieval doorways, which were only revealed when the plaster was removed, appeared to be so short in height. This had happened so long ago that later building and extensions had taken this into account, so it was decided that it was safer to leave the building as it is, rather than try to raise it.

Some months ago the roof tiles were removed. The hand-made ones were carefully stored for re-use, but the Victorian machine-made ones were sold on to a reclamation firm. New hand-made tiles, plus those stored for re-use, were eventually replaced on the roof, using copper nails. Old window frames complete with their original 'crown' glass having also been carefully restored.

The decorated beam, on which the biblical quotation was painted, was examined by paint conservation experts and suitably treated, during which time it has been wrapped in special paper, then felt and placed in a special box, prior to its final restoration. Where the ends of other beams had been cut into the biblical quote at some time in the past, the spaces have been filled, so that the complete quote can be repainted and the beam then displayed in its original position, at the west end of the finished hall. It is hoped that analysis of the pigments used and research into the particular version of the bible the quotation comes from will enable an approximate date to be made of when the quotation was applied.

The next chapter introduces Edward Cowper (pronounced Cooper) who organised a period of renovation, repair and beautification, about 100 years after the Master's House was first built.

# Chapter 3

## Renovating the Master's House in Tudor times

A hundred years after the Master's House was built a period of major renovation took place. The Master of St Katherine's Hospital at this time was Edward Cooper, in those days it was spelt Cowper. He kept meticulous accounts of the renovations here in Ledbury, which cover a twelve year period from 1584 to 1595. The accounts were inspected every year by the Dean and at least two members of the Chapter of Hereford Cathedral, who were the patrons of St Katherine's hospital. This annual visitation took place at Michaelmas, 29 September each year and sadly Edward Cooper died in July, two months short of another year of accounts.

These accounts, which today are held in the Hereford Cathedral Archive, are beautifully written, listing not only the work done and materials used, but also the names and trades of the local men who Master Cooper employed to undertake the work at St Katherine's. He also listed the costs incurred for materials, and where they came from, in addition to the wages paid, and the payments made for lodgings and food for specialist workers who came from further afield. An

examination of the parish registers, which listed baptisms, marriages and burials from 1556 onwards, has allowed the names of the tradesmen's wives and children to be found, in addition to those of some of Ledbury's more prosperous inhabitants. The vicar's Tithe Book, now in Hereford Record Office, provided a street by street list of townspeople, including the Master's workmen.



Apart from the tradesmen, who had served apprenticeships to learn their trade, there were a number of labourers who assisted them. James Merrick was a labourer, living in Horse Lane (now called Worcester Road), who later moved to New Street. He assisted John Morris, another young labourer from New Street, in carrying stones and mortar for the masons and later in October 1593 in applying clay to the wattle and daub infill of the millhouse walls. Emanuel Podmer was a labourer who lived at Dunbridge, on the Gloucester road with his family, wife Alice and daughter Joan, their other daughter Elizabeth had died soon after birth in 1580. Emanuel assisted Jim Stafford the gardener with fencing, cleaning out the hospital pool and other work around the site.

Edward Cooper's accounts tell us about all the work done for St Katherine's. What follows below relates specifically to the Master's House. For example, four oak trees from Teddeswood were bought from Mr Rudhall, at a cost of 43 shillings (£2 15p), and were used to make the wainscoting (oak-panelling), a table and some stools for the parlour, in May 1585. An additional tree costing another 12 shillings (60p), had to be bought only three weeks later to complete the job. Other furniture, including dressers, cupboards and shelves for the Master's House was made over the next few years. Cupboards set into the wall of the parlour and in the bedchamber above were made in September 1586.

Galleries had been under construction in 1584 and work continued over several years, including making new windows, which had metal casements (opening sections), inserted at each end of the hall. The galleries were created by extending the upper floors in both solar and service wings, over each end bay of the hall, so that anyone upstairs could step onto the gallery floor and look down on what was happening in the hall below, without the need to run down stairs every time. These galleries were later walled in to create an extra room at the solar end upstairs and a corridor to access the bedchambers above the pantry and buttery in the service wing. There was no trace left of the galleries except for this mention made in Edward Cooper's accounts.

Now the twenty-first century renovations are complete the only sign of those galleries is where the ends of the beams, which were inserted to support the gallery floor at the west end of the hall, were cut into the painted beam. At the other end of the hall, the glass floored corridor, leading to the John Masefield Archive and Victoria County History rooms

upstairs in the service wing gives some idea of how the galleries would have looked, although they seem to have been made with solid panels of wattle and daub, rather than a row of posts topped by a rail.

The 'panelled room' in Tudor times, seems to have been divided with the master's parlour, separated from a narrow service room on the north (colder) side. The old original chimneys in both parlour and the Master's bedchamber above were demolished and new ones built in stone, complete with new brick firebacks and a stonework surround in the parlour to protect the new wainscoting from the fire. This new fireplace was centrally positioned on the western wall of the Master's parlour, it now appears offset, because the narrow service room now forms part of what today is called the panelled room. Edward Cooper left his mark on this fireplace with his initials and the date carved into the panelling frieze, which at that time would have been placed about chest high, with a type of ornamental plastering, called pargeting above the wainscoting, which may have been coloured with ox-blood or whitewashed.

New staircases were also built at this time, together with all the associated carpentry and plastering involved. New doorways were created and old unused ones stopped up, by simply closing the doors and plastering over them. The new parlour door had studs applied to it as well as bolts, locks and keys, for security. Edward Cooper made sure that the old original windows with their wooden shutters were replaced with new window frames, which were glazed with leaded windows, some of which had casements, the opening sections of metal frames, supplied by the town's smiths. More details are given in later chapters, about the carpenters and joiners, as well as the plumber, who supplied the lead and the glass for the windows, such as plumber Martin Morgan, son of Davy Morgan the sawyer, who supplied glass for the chapel windows in 1585.

The smiths and ironmongers supplied iron bars for security and fitted them to the parlour windows. The security of the buttery and larder/pantry in the service wing was also dealt with. The smiths were kept busy supplying hinges for windows, doors and cupboards, locks and keys for both new and old doors, including for the cupboards. Some of this ironmongery has survived and can be found in the Master's House model unit drawers. Staples, latches and catches were also supplied, and a multitude of nails of many types, even stone nails, which were used when the Master's House roof was retiled with tile stones *á la Cotswolds*.

# Chapter 4

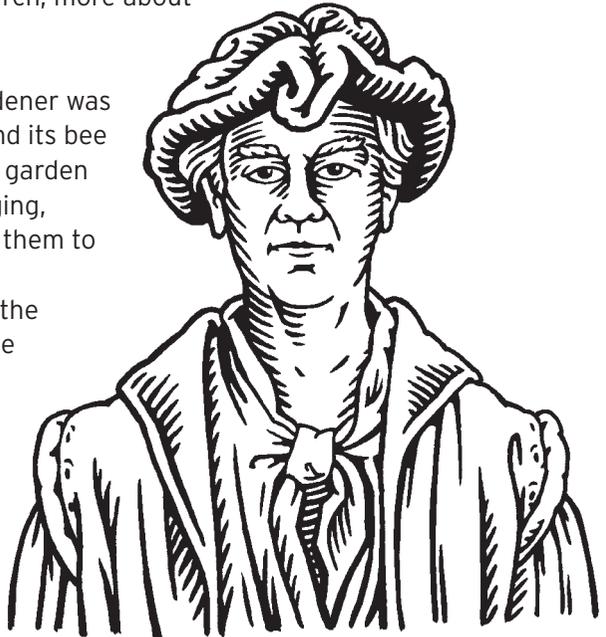
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## The Tudor Workmen and Ledbury's water supply

Edward Cooper, whilst Master of St Katherine's Hospital employed many workmen in the renovations he undertook on the complex of buildings within the grounds St Katherine's Hospital, including the Master's House. He named more than eighty of the workmen in the accounts he kept during this time, from 1584 to 1595. By examining the parish registers, tithe book and wills left by some of these people, their homes and families have been discovered.

Many of these craftsmen were woodworkers, others worked with metal or stone, and some were plasterers or roofers, including thatchers. The tanners in Ledbury, who used lime to remove the hair from animal skins during the tanning process, supplied the lime to the masons, for the mortar used in their building work, sometimes complete with added hair, to strengthen the bond in the finished plastering, daubed infill panels or stone work. Richard Maddock and Edward Farmer were two such tanners, who provided lime mixed with horsehair. Both men made wills leaving numerous bequests, including to the church; more about them in a later chapter.

James (Jim) Stafford the gardener was responsible for the orchard and its bee hives as well as the vegetable garden and planting up quickset hedging, supported by fencing, around them to keep the animals from eating everything, as well as around the Master's House and the grange farm boundary. He also grafted fruit trees and looked after the hospital pool too. Jim had married Margaret Baylie in 1569 and they had four children over the next ten years. There were two girls, Elizabeth and Alice,



Jim Stafford, gardener

followed by two boys, Richard and Thomas but sadly the youngest, Thomas died when he was only five years old. The family lived in Church Lane, only a hundred yards or so away from the hospital. Margaret died in 1612 and Jim 16 months later, when they would have both been in their late sixties.

Thomas Walcroft, alias Pewtress, was a timber carrier, who had married Joan Watts in 1578. They had three children, the first born just five weeks after the wedding. Thomas carried sawn boards on his cart from East Wood in September 1588. Joan died the next April, leaving Thomas with three small children, however on 27 November 1589 Thomas remarried, to 20 year old Anne Kenderdale, eldest daughter, of William Kenderdale the town bailiff. They had no less than ten children, the first born within a week of the wedding, although four, including a set of twins, died shortly after birth.

The sawyer David Morgan lived at Tyrell's Frith, Little Marcle. His children's christenings appear in the parish registers, his son Martin in 1572, then Elizabeth and Ciceley in 1574 and 1576. Martin Morgan grew up to be a glazier, providing four feet of glass for the chapel in May 1585. He moved, from his parent's home to live in Aylton, when he married Elizabeth. They had four children, Joan, Margaret, Edward and Margery, however there was an outbreak of plague in May 1610 and his wife Elizabeth and baby Margery both died. See the later chapter about a Tudor physician.

Robert Croose or Crowse, was a carpenter and builder, who appeared throughout the accounts. He married Margaret Mason in 1568 and they had three daughters, Margaret, Jane and Elizabeth and finally, at last, a son, Thomas, born in 1580. Robert put up post and rail fencing, laid joists and boarded over the little buttery, in the service room next to the parlour in the Master's House. A few months later he was making the galleries and laying boards to create a ceiling over the bedroom above the larder, and so the work went on. According to the tithe book, Robert and his family lived in the Southend. His son Thomas grew up to be a smith, perhaps serving his apprenticeship with one of his neighbours.

One such neighbour in the Southend was William Taylor. He had married Joan Moreton in 1576. At this time the cleric at Little Marcle was also named William Taylor, so entries in the parish registers were very careful to specify whether the William Taylor mentioned was the smith or the cleric. William the smith and his wife had five children. He made iron pieces for the

furnace, long nails for the wainscoting, plus numerous hinges, latches and catches, which were supplied over the years. William's wife Joan died at the end of November 1605 and only six weeks later he had remarried Joan Watkins. William wrote a will in 1609 detailing the bequests of his properties in the Southend and New Street. He left 20 shillings (£1) for the maintenance of the conduit water near his house on the Southend, so his house must have also been near Top Cross.

The water from springs up on the Conigree had been piped down into the town in 1592. Using lead piping it went to the High (Upper) Cross and then down to the gate of St Katherine's Hospital. This work was done by Thomas Hall, the plumber and glazier. There was also a smith and a shoemaker of that name in Ledbury at this time and the vicar was careful to distinguish between them in his parish register entries. The townspeople had collected the £40 required to pay for this work and Thomas was duly paid on their behalf, by William Davies alias Weaver the vicar and Edward Skynner the clothier, who also lived in the Southend. The vicar duly recorded this important improvement to the townspeople's welfare in the parish register.

Thomas Hall the plumber married a lady called Mary and they had five children during the 1580's including twin daughters Sybil and Margery in 1583. Thomas Hall the plumber supplied lead guttering for the Master's House, (*plumbum* is the Latin word for lead) and he was also the glazier too, as the glass was set in lead. Much work was done replacing old windows, which probably only had wooden shutters to keep out the cold. Many new windows and window frames were made and glazed, including the small opening sections called casements. Lead was used to hold the glass in place, because it is a soft metal that is easily worked at room temperature. Thomas supplied and used lead to glaze many of the new windows in the Master's House, using some pieces of glass called quarrels, small diamond shaped pieces of glass, in making leaded windows. He made a will, in which he left his house and garden in the Homend to his wife and children. Sadly he died in 1602, only six months after his daughter Sybil's wedding. Whether this was due to lead poisoning we will never know.

# Chapter 5

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## On the Job Training in Tudor Times

The building in Church Lane that we now call the Heritage Centre, dates from around 1500. It was taken over for educational purposes, following the founding of Ledbury's Grammar School in 1568. This school was the successor of the pre-Reformation chantry school. The parish maintained the building, in which the master both lived and taught. The Commissioners of Her Majesty's Woods and Forests paid him a small salary to educate four boys for free, whilst other boys were charged fees.

Richard Wheeler was schoolmaster of the Grammar School for some years, and was paid 71s 3d per year, a sum which continued to be paid until 1862, his income also included the fees paid by his paying pupils. He was followed by Henry Hunt, Master of Arts, whose will is to be found in the National Archives. His will listed a number of books, twelve on philosophy and the humanities and a number of other books left as bequests to various relatives.

Girls, it seems, didn't get a look in, in those days, not until Elizabeth Hall founded her school for girls in the Southend in 1706, where they were to be taught reading, writing and domestic crafts of all sorts- cookery, laundry and ironing, cleaning and mending,





needlework etc. Meantime the boys would continue their education as apprentices. Some boys would start their apprenticeship when aged only 8, but most would continue at school until they were 10 to 14 years old, before starting their apprenticeship.

Apprentices were unpaid workers who helped out in workshops in return for training from a master craftsman, and so would in time learn his trade.

In 1563 the Statute of Apprenticeships forbade anyone to enter a trade without first serving an apprenticeship, and remained on the statute book until 1814. Apprenticeships served the purpose of not only teaching a trade, but also ensured a steady supply of labour and kept young men under control.

The master would draw up a contract, called an indenture, which listed everything the apprentice was required to learn and be able to do, and also how he should behave during the seven years of his apprenticeship. He was not allowed to marry, to gamble or to get drunk and had to promise to behave as was expected of him. During those seven years he went to work and observed the craftsmen at work, slowly learning his trade, whilst living in his master's house, who ensured that he was fed and clothed. The master was normally paid a premium by the boy's parents, or by the overseer of the poor if a boy was a pauper.

Sadly some apprentices died before completing their training, several appear

in the burial register of Ledbury Parish Church. John, the son of John Brooke the carpenter, and apprentice to Thomas Smith of Pixley died and was buried on 27 June 1590. Thomas Careless, apprentice of Thomas Hall the shoemaker of the High Street, died and was buried on 5 June 1598 and Richard Lillie who was apprenticed to Edward Skinner, the clothier who lived on the Southend, died and was buried on 2 November 1600. How and why they died is unknown.

For those who completed their seven years apprenticeship, they were first promoted to journeyman and paid a small amount for every day worked. They were also allowed to look for work elsewhere to gain experience, and now allowed to marry. When a journeyman decided to set up his own business, he had to join the local guild and pay the membership fee beforehand. The guilds made sure that all members had a fair chance of pursuing their trade, checking that work or goods were of a suitable quality. The guilds also helped those members who fell ill or who were out of work. Each group of craftsmen were members of their particular trade guild, rather like modern trade unions. Any members living in a small town like Ledbury, were probably members of their guild in Hereford.

This chapter first appeared as an article in the Ledbury Letter, newsletter of Ledbury Civic Society.

## Chapter 6

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### The Carpenters & Joiners

Edward Cooper's accounts list a number of trades involving wood, from the timber suppliers who would provide a suitable tree for the job in hand, the tree-fellers who cut down the chosen tree, to the timber carrier who specialised in transporting tons of timber from the saw pit to the building site. Once on site the carpenters and joiners took over, as they were the experts in building and repairing wooden structures of every sort. The joiners, were carpenters who specialised in the finishing details of the woodwork. More than a dozen carpenters were employed and at least six joiners were also named in the accounts. Also required were panel makers of two types, wattle and daub type panels which required plastering and the

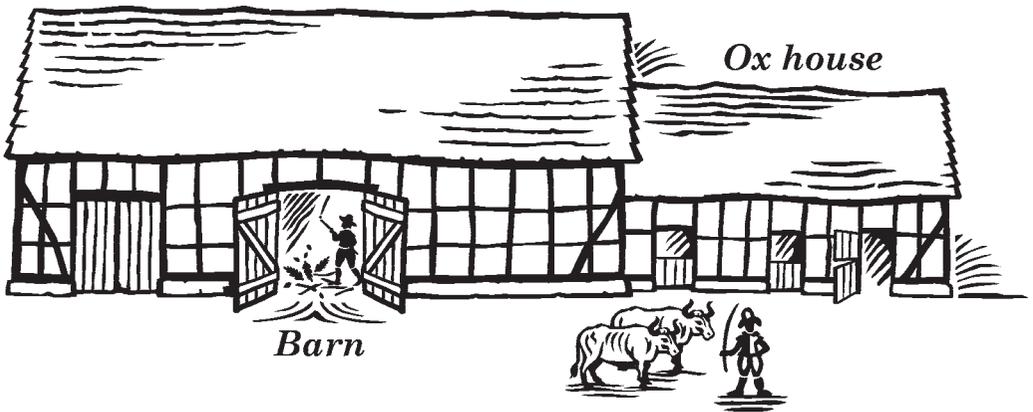
more skilful panel makers who created the wainscoting, using oak, which we would now call oak panelling.

The carpenter Robert Turner and his men were used repeatedly from the start of the accounts, and no doubt in earlier times too. Robert had married Elizabeth Bennett on 29th January 1559 and over the next 23 years they had no less than nine children, four girls and five boys, starting with Richard born in June 1562 and ending with Thomas born in April 1585. Much of the work Robert did was on the farm buildings within the grounds of St Katherine's Hospital, including the stable, ox house, barn and the millhouse.

In March 1586 he was in charge of the felling of two oak trees and the squaring of their trunks, some eleven tons of timber, in Teddeswood, near Ross on Wye and then he supervised the digging of two saw pits, one for each tree, for the sawyers whose job was to saw each trunk into boards (planks), using a frame saw or sometimes a long two-handled saw. Pit sawing had been introduced in Herefordshire much earlier in the century, replacing the swivel-sawing method that had been used previously. The previous May four oak trees in Teddeswood had been bought from Mr Rudhall. They were carefully chosen and marked, specifically for use in making the wainscoting (oak panelling), plus a table and stools for the Master's parlour.

The joiners William Chalinor, Mordiford Turner and Richard Wood were employed to make a new doorway from the Master's parlour in September 1585, as well as for making new door-posts and rails and to cover over the old doorway, which had previously opened directly from the hall into the parlour. In November John Banks provided the studding for the new doorway into the Master's parlour. John Banks and his wife Anne had three daughters, Anne born in 1588, Elizabeth in 1590 and Eleanor in 1593. Sadly John died in April 1603, when the youngest Eleanor was still only 10 years old. Eleanor grew up and rather late in the day, at that time, married John Windo on 20 April 1626, when she was 33 years old.

The accounts began in October 1584, just after the annual visitation, with Robert Turner mentioned no less than five times in that first month. He was involved in a number of tasks including the making of a new pig sty and the next month he was at work on the kitchen. In July 1585 he was employed together with his man in making rebates in the floorboards, to be inserted above the room where the flour was sieved before making bread, known back then as the boulding house. His next job was making a new staircase,



beside the stable, leading up to the servants bedroom above. He later made a new door for the stable too.

Robert Turner and his men were employed in repairing and rebuilding the millhouse and the rooms next to the garden and later that year, in September 1585, they were making a new ox-house on the north end of the barn and a sheere (shelter) on that end of the barn, where the oxen could be tied up. He had more work in November 1585 and then there was a gap of about 16 months when he did no work for the hospital. Was he ill or injured? We will never know, however at Easter 1587 Robert Turner was working with builder Robert Croose in the Master's House constructing the galleries, at each end of the hall, extending out the upstairs flooring from the Master's bedchamber over the end bay of the hall below, and similarly at the service wing end, extending out over the screens passage. Robert died in October 1587 and Elizabeth lived on in the Homend for more than a decade, and when she died in December 1598, the burial register records her as the 'widow of Robert Turner of the Homend'. He must have been well-respected to be so remembered for so long.

Joiners Richard Wood and Thomas Mayo spent February 1588 making the wainscoting in the Master's parlour. This panelling took a month to complete, for which they were each paid five pence per day. Three years later Thomas made two dressers and a new window, plus new stairs up to the bedrooms in the service wing, in July 1591, and then moved the door which led from the hall into the buttery.

In August 1590 the carpenter David Lone was employed to make some new windows for the Master's House. The first was a large one for the Master's

parlour, the second for his bedroom above and the third was for the south facing wall of the service wing bedroom, which was used for guests. He worked with an assistant and they also laid joists and boarded over the adjoining bedroom on the north side of the service wing, so providing that bedroom with a ceiling, which would make it much cosier than lying in bed looking up to the roof timbers. In July 1592 he worked with another carpenter, Thomas Rogers, in repairing the pigeon house and making a new staircase up to the roof space, which was then boarded over to create the floor of a servants bedroom. Thomas Rogers had previously worked on mending the roof of the stable, which was on the point of collapse.

Back in 1590 the brothers, John and Roger Bailey had been employed, John for three days in making and erecting a new saddle house (tack room) in November and Roger the following January to make a new cratch in the wain (wagon) house. This cratch could have been one of several items, a manger, a pannier, a kind of handbarrow, a flight of shelves or even a wooden grating or hurdle, any of which would have been useful in a large shed which housed wagons.

Carpenter Ford and his men were making three jointed windows for the hall the following summer, six days work for which he was paid twelve pence a day and his men ten pence each. John Brooke together with Robert Croose and John Staple, applied pales (stakes of wood normally used for fencing) to the north and south faces of the Master's House in April 1591, in preparation for the following month when they applied weatherboarding to the building. In April 1593 Thomas Mayo and his man were busy making yet more new windows for the Master's House. Many of these workmen must have lived some distance away as they were all paid for their work and received food and drink in addition during each period of work.

In the middle of May 1594 fifteen dozen (180) panels costing 15 shillings (75p) were listed in the accounts. These were ordered for wainscoting the chamber over the larder in the service wing, where new windows had been fitted and a month later one of the joiners was paid 46s 6d (£2 32<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>p) for using them to line the room with oak panelling. This bedroom and the adjoining one were perhaps used by guests, such as during the annual visitation by the Dean and Chapter from Hereford.

# Chapter 7

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## The Masons, Pavers and Pargeters

In Tudor times stone and timber were the main building materials, and those who worked with stone included quarrymen, masons, pavers and tilers. Cutting stone, brick or tile is a basic task in masonry. Quarrying needed picks, axes, wedges and crowbars, whilst building work needed a level and plumb-bob, plus a square, compass, and trowels to spread the mortar. Carving required mason's round-headed mallets, pickaxes and chisels, plus borers to drill holes when needed. Sometimes masons also used heavy axes and hammers to split stone. All these tools, used since medieval times, are still used by masons today.

Stone was used as pavement or flooring, also to strengthen corners of buildings, as well as under the sole or sill plate beams of buildings as foundations and even as a roofing material. In addition to using lime mortar as a bonding agent, when working with stone, the masons and pavers also worked as what today we would call plasterers. In Tudor times this was called daubing, where clay, cow hair and lime were mixed with a little water and applied to the infill panels of the timber-framed walls and when it had dried, was sealed with a limewash. Some were also skilled at a decorative type of plastering called pargeting. This was very popular at that time, and used to decorate both the interior walls and ceilings and even the exterior of buildings.

The brothers Thomas and John Meeke, were both masons and pavers, spending their lives working with stone. They lived not far out of town at Plaistow. Thomas Meeke had married Anne Hall, the daughter of yeoman Walter Hall and his wife Margaret, on 20th February 1573 and they had seven children over the next sixteen years. John Meeke and his wife Joan had five children baptised in Ledbury between 1574 and 1592. Most of the work involving Thomas and John Meeke seems to have been in bringing loads of paving stones for the renovations at St. Katherine's Hospital in the mid-1580's. This was a skilled job as the roads, in those days, were little more than muddy tracks, and loads of stone, very heavy and difficult to move using ox carts.

John Grundy seems to have been the main mason and paver employed during the renovations, he was also a skilled dauber and pargeter. John had married Joan Carpenter on 19th November 1570, they lived at Little Marcle

and had two daughters Elizabeth and Frideswyde. John first appeared in the accounts in July 1586 when he was quoining ( applying dressed stones) to the sill (or base) beams of the rooms next to the garden and making a sink (soakaway) to carry rainwater away. In December he was repairing a gutter in the kitchen and later making the chimney backs in the Master's parlour and the bedroom above, in the solar wing of the Master's House.

In October 1586 one hundred bricks were bought specially to make new fire-backs to the chimneys in the parlour and in Edward Cooper's bedchamber above. In February 1583 John Barnisley the mercer sold 50 bricks which were to be used to mend the oven and the furnace. Other quantities of bricks were bought in 1588 and 1593 although what they were to be used for was not specified, and some cost up to ten pence per hundred, which was rather expensive compared to using stone.

In May 1587 John Grundy was daubing and sealing the walls of the newly made galleries, followed by making a drain to run out of the kitchen and paving round the well. In July 1589 John Baylis was pargeting the master's parlour and making shelves for glasses and the following month found John Grundy doing yet more pargeting in the parlour and later another pargeter, John Perkins, worked on both the Master's House and later in the chapel in Autumn 1589. The following Summer John Baylis spent three days making and setting up desks in the study, the small room in the oriel over the front door, perhaps for the annual visitation expected in a week's time. John Grundy, assisted by his men, was busy paving the courtyard at the east end of the Master's House, facing the almshouses, and in July 1594 they were paving the floor of the newly renovated pigeon house. Four days before Christmas that same year he was busy repairing the kitchen chimney - hopefully it was repaired in time for the seasonal feasting.

In July, the following Summer, the Meekes were paving yet more of the courtyard, with stones supplied by James Band. He also lived out at Plaistow, in the same small community as the Meekes. He appears in the parish baptism register for the first time on 28th December 1580, at the baptism of Joan, daughter of Thomas and Margaret Weeste, where Margaret is noted as 'now wife of James Band'. Thomas must have died, but he was not buried in Ledbury as there is no entry in the burial register. James next appears at his daughter Anne's baptism on 19th January 1583 and another five children over the next decade, three girls followed by two boys.

John Bond was another mason and also a well-digger. He lived nearby in the Homend with his wife and son. He had married Margaret Godsoule on

25th October 1568 and their son John was baptised on 28th January 1570. In July 1586 he made a gutter to carry waste water from the town's conduit, from near the Hospital gateway into the hospital's pool. He dug and lined a new well for the brethren in St Katherine's and also paved its surrounds and also made a gutter to carry the rainwater from the almshouses. He spent November 1592 paving the area in front of the almshouses, known as the Katherine Row, that is, the narrow passageway between the almshouses and the Butcher Row, called the Cathol.

John Bond made his will in November 1595, and died the following Summer. He was buried on 6th July 1596 leaving everything to his wife Margaret, except for a little money towards the parish church repairs, plus 4d to Hereford Cathedral. These small sums left to the church were 'for tithes forgotten', a common practice at that time. He also left four shillings to his neighbours and the poor of Ledbury, to be spent on the day of his burial, no doubt for the wake, which followed his burial. His widow lived on in his house in the Homend.

## Chapter 8

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### Tiling the Rooftops and building the Chimneys

Many thousands of stone tiles were used in the renovations of St Katherine's Hall, its Chapel and other buildings, as well as the Master's House, when Edward Cooper was the Master. Much of the stone came from Teddeswood, near Ross, owned by the Rudhall's of Brampton Abbots. Several loads were carried in the Spring and Autumn of 1585 on the arduous journey over the terrible roads of Tudor times. Thomas and John Meeke from Plaistow, carried yet more stone tiles from the local quarries, as did David Gough, Hugh Vurden and Thomas Buckenhill.

Once unloaded on site, the stone tiles were sorted, scrubbed and trimmed, with any rough edges smoothed in preparation for the tilers. Thomas Collins and his son James did a lot of this work in 1584 and 1585. Thomas's servant Henry ap Thomas was also employed at sorting and scrubbing stone tiles, along with Richard Francis and Thomas Parry. It was a massive job, preparing the thousands of tiles needed for the roof of the Chapel and

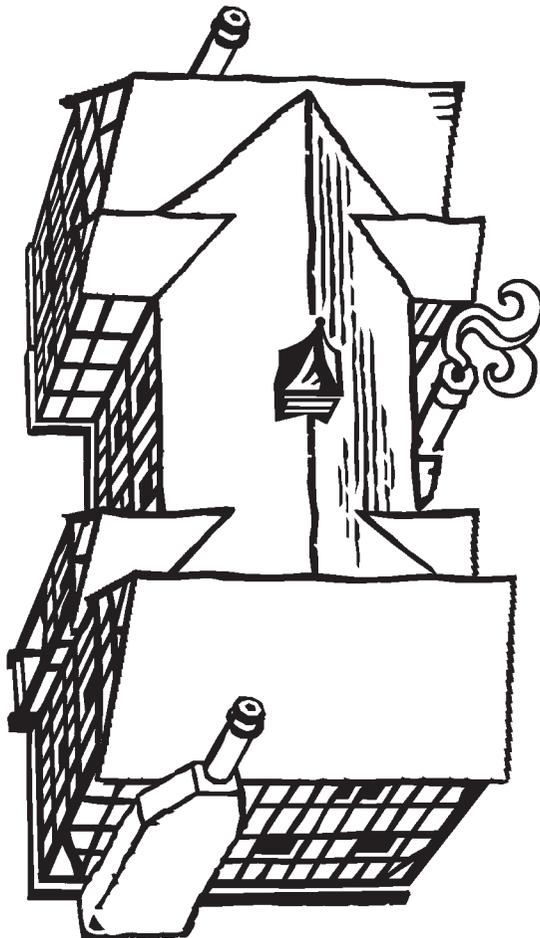
Hall, the new pigeon house and stable, the barn and its attached ox house, plus the Master's House itself. There was also constant work needed on the almshouses.

The tilers used wooden scaffolding, with winches and pulleys to haul the heavy baskets of stone tiles up to the roof they were working on. The tiles were arranged, as can still be seen in the Cotswolds today, with the largest tiles at the lower edge of the roof, diminishing in size and weight, upwards to the ridge, and fixed in place with nails through holes, which had previously been made in the tiles. Drilling these holes was a job reserved for the winter, when the wind and weather was not suitable for rooftop work. The tile nails were bought from the town's blacksmiths. Copper nails are used today, rather than iron ones which can quickly rust away. The rooftop was finished off with ridge tiles along the top, which in 'Edward Cooper's day and even in Victorian times, were called crests.

The accounts written by Master Edward Cooper began in the Autumn of 1584 with the masons John Hardwick, Richard Francis and Henry ap Thomas, working on rebuilding the kitchen chimney and oven using stones carried and placed for them by William Webster. William, his wife and five of their children, lived in Hall End, which we now call Church Street. John Grundy of Little Marcle, the mason who had done most of the stone work already, did a lot of the roofing too, along with William Grundy, who may have been his brother, but we will never know, as their baptisms occurred before the parish registers began in 1556. We do know that William had married Elizabeth Barston in Staunton, near Newent, in 1575.

Summer 1585 found John Grundy and his men retiling the hall roof. The following year, 1586, they were rebuilding the chimneys in the solar wing of the Master's House, in Edward Cooper's parlour and bedchamber above, but first they had to demolish the old ones. Once the chimneys were rebuilt, they had to repair the almshouse roof, for which they were paid four shillings. In 1587 the Chapel roof needed some repairs too, which took two and a half days at the end of September and the next month the bakehouse roof was tiled, along with the building by the masons, of a double chimney with stone. The chimneys were a continuing problem and needed frequent attention by the masons, particularly the kitchen chimney. Bricks were very expensive then, so only used for the fire back inside the fireplace, oven or furnace. Stone was used to build the chimney stack itself, this may have been the cause of the problems they seemed to have. That winter there was more tile hole drilling before the barn could be retiled in 1588, and yet more patching up of the almshouse roofs followed.

In May 1590 the new pigeon house was tiled and crests fixed in place with mortar, followed by retiling the stable roof. William Grundy worked with his brother-in-law John Barston and Edward Parker and this team tiled the Master's House working alongside John Grundy in the Summer of 1591. Yet more repairs were made to the almshouses that winter and again the following Spring by John Grundy. In April 1593, another ten days were spent tiling, on the Chapel and the servants chambers, by John Grundy and his men, including fixing crests on the ridges. They worked on the Master's House in May and for another day on the Chapel in August that year and again in 1594.



Thousands of tiles were needed to retiling the Master's House

In Summer 1595 as well as paving the courtyard, John Grundy and his men spent nine days tiling part of the Master's House at a cost of twelve shillings in July and in August. Hugh Vurden was paid thirty two shillings to buy and deliver another two thousand stone tiles from Teddeswood and to sort and smooth them in preparation for John Grundy and his men and their next task. At last, they were 'tiling anew half of all the almshouses' at a cost of thirty shillings! Hopefully they did the other half eventually, but we will never know, as this is where Edward Cooper's accounts came to an end.

Thomas Bishop's son James was baptised on the first day of December in 1558 and grew up to be a thatcher, like his father. They worked together thatching the new wain (wagon) house in October 1589. The following Spring they thatched the millhouse. Curiously this work was repeated in September 1593, but we don't know why. Thomas died and was buried on 17 April 1594. His widow ended her days as a sister living in the almshouses in St Katherine's Hospital. His son James was preparing more straw for thatching in March 1595, together with Widow Sybil Gromadge who lived in the Homend and Widow Alice Taylor, another of the sister's living in the almshouses.

## Chapter 9

### The Smiths & Ironmongers

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In Tudor times there were several smiths in Ledbury who made or repaired a wide variety of metal objects. There were also a number of ironmongers who sold ready-made items. Many thousands of nails were supplied during the period covered by Master Edward Cooper's accounts, and they came in a variety of types and sizes. Some, like board nails, lath nails and stone nails, have names suggesting their uses, but there were also spike nails, bushel nails and hatch nails, tack nails, middling nails, and even long nails provided for the joiners working on the wainscoting. And what were bastard nails used for?

William Taylor the smith was mentioned in an earlier article about Tudor workmen. He supplied nails, hinges, latches and catches, hooks and staples, even pieces of iron to mend the furnace, in fact all sorts of metal work that a smith could make. When he died in December 1609 he left his house in the Southend and properties in New Street to his youngest son Edward, whilst his smithy shop and tools were bequeathed to his son John.

Thomas Hall the Elder was married a few years before the parish registers started in 1556. Thomas and his wife Ellen had five children, the eldest was also named Thomas. Both Thomas's, father and son, worked for Edward Cooper on the renovations. In 1584 they supplied two pairs of hinges and mended two locks and in 1587 they made two iron grates or grids, one for the kitchen and one for the drain from the well. In August 1587 they had made two casements for the windows on the new galleries, upstairs in the Master's House. Over the years Thomas and his son made numerous casements and hinges, and for added security, iron bars for some windows.

Thomas' eldest son, Thomas Hall the Younger lived in New Street. He had married Alice Northen on 10th June 1583. Their daughter Elizabeth was born in October 1585, sadly her mother Alice died about five months later. But it seems that Thomas Hall the Younger remarried, as in his will written in 1621 he mentions another daughter, Margaret, who had married a clothier from Worcester. Thomas was buried on 21st January 1621 and the burial register listed him as one of the almsmen.

The accounts for 1586 itemized the chapel clock as needing attention and the Halls were listed as 'dressing the irons of the clock'. Was this dressing some sort of rust treatment? At this time clocks only had an hour hand - it would be the next century before the minute hand was invented. In 1587 Ellen died, and a few years later, about 1590, the widowed Thomas the Elder retired. In January 1591 he remarried, to Sybil Cam, and they spent their final decade together, ending their years living in St Katherine's Almshouses, before Thomas died in August 1601, followed by Sybil only 5 months later.

Simon Hall, the youngest son of Thomas Hall the Elder, was born in 1566 and married Joan Moreton in 1589. They had five children, three boys and two girls. Simon started working on the St Katherine's renovations from 1590, when his father retired. He made a new casement for one of the windows and later two new locks and keys for the buttery and pantry doors in the service wing of the Master's House. In 1593 he made a fastening for the privy at the service wing end of the Master's House and in June 1595 he was busy making long nails for the joiner working on the wainscoting, up in

the guest bedroom on the upper floor of the service wing. Simon died when he was 54 and was buried on 10th July 1620.

George Hunt was one of the ironmongers who supplied nails for the work on the Master's House. He married Maud Hall, who was also known as Smith, (so she may have been Thomas the Elder's younger sister) on 26th February 1578 and they had nine children, two sons and seven daughters. George was a cousin of Henry Hunt the schoolmaster and gentleman, who was a Master of Arts, according to Henry's will and made bequests of property and money to George and Maud, and to their children.

Christopher Morgan was a mercer (shopkeeper) who also supplied nails for the work on the Master's House but George and Christopher are only mentioned once in the accounts left by Edward Cooper, the Master of St Katherine's. The only record of Christopher appears in the parish burial register, he was buried on 20th August 1609. In his will he left everything to his wife Ellis, who died and was buried less than a year later. Christopher seems to have been a God-fearing man judging by the elaborately worded religious preamble in his will. He left a number of bequests to the townspeople: five shillings to the bell ringers at his burial, forty shillings to be distributed to forty poor people and £4 to be used to help poor honest tradesmen, by lending the money free of interest, for no more than a year to them, passing it from tradesman to tradesman to assist them in running their businesses. Very helpful as there were no banks in those far off days.

## Chapter 10

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### Suppliers of Lime, Lodgings and Other Essential Services

Lime was a vital ingredient in building work, as it still is today. Mixed with clay and sand to make mortar for use by the masons on stone or brick work and for daubing panels and walls, in the construction of timber framed buildings. This essential ingredient was provided to those working at St Katherine's by a number of tanners in the town. Lime is produced by roasting limestone, which drives off carbon dioxide, leaving behind the alkaline calcium oxide, which tanners still use today, to assist in removing hair and fatty deposits from animal skins, during the tanning process, in the making of leather. Some tanners provided lime mixed with horsehair (for

better bonding). It was sold by the bushel, a quantity equivalent to 8 gallons (36.36 litres), charging three and a half pence per bushel.

Edward Farmer, was one of the tanners who supplied lime to make mortar for the building work at the Master's House in St Katherine's Hospital. Edward made his last will and testament in August 1595 and died only two months before Edward Cooper. He was a rich man, leaving bequests to the church and to the poor of the town, as well as to his relatives. He had married four times and his only son, born in 1564, died before his first birthday. Edward left two almshouses in the Southend to house the two poorest widows of Ledbury. He left his own house, garden and meadow, which he had recently bought from a gentleman, one John Scudamore, to his fourth and final wife Ellis. He left his son-in-law John Salter another large piece of land in the Southend and land in Bishop (now Bye) Street to Richard, son of John Walcrofte. Edward's sister Jane was married to another man called Edward Cowper, not the Master of St Katherine's. Edward left her a small bequest and also to each of her sons, John, Thomas, Richard and Francis Cowper.

William Meeke the Elder, a tanner, was the son of William Meeke, yeoman and his wife Margaret. He married Alice, either outside the parish or in Ledbury before 1556 when the registers started. Their first child Margaret was born in 1561, their son William, the younger in 1564 and baby Alice only eight months later. William's wife Alice died in 1583 and so widower William the Elder continued in their home in the High Street. William Meeke, the Younger, was also a tanner, variously described as 'of the town' and 'of Ledbury', who provided lime mixed with horsehair for the building work at St Katherine's Hospital in November 1589 and July 1595. He must have married outside of Ledbury parish, perhaps in Welland, so there is no record of his first marriage to Elizabeth Bennett, a widow from Welland. They had three children before Elizabeth died; she was buried on 13 January 1596. The Tithe Book lists him as living in Bishop (Bye) Street in 1597.

Thomas Reese, also a tanner only appears in the baptism and burial registers, so we do not know who he married. Thomas had at least eleven children, all baptised and listed in the parish register. Thomas supplied lime in August 1589, to dress the chamber within the parlour of the Master's House, which had been constructed for Edward Cooper. He supplied another four bushels of lime in August of 1595, when repairs were underway on the almshouses. Edmund Whooper or Hooper, another tanner, together with William Meeke, supplied 11 bushels of lime in July 1595. He and his wife had eight children and lived in the Southend.

Lime with horsehair was supplied by Richard Maddock, son of John and Katherine. They had several children all born before the parish register began in 1556, including sons Edmund, John, Thomas and Richard and daughters Margery and Joan. Richard's father, John the Elder died on 16th January 1584, following his fall from an elm tree in the churchyard, and was buried the morning after. Quite what this gentleman was doing up an elm tree in the churchyard, we will never know.... Richard Maddock, like his father had married a woman called Katherine, this was Katherine Newton, on 5th February 1576 and their first child John was baptised on 4th January 1578. John would grow up to be a tanner like his father. Childbirth was dangerous in Tudor times and sadly Katherine died a month later and was buried on 3rd February 1578. Richard married again on 7th February 1580 to Joan Bishop, his servant, who had, no doubt, been looking after baby John since his mother's death two years previously. Joan gave birth to Thomas only seven weeks after their marriage and he was baptised on 27th March, but sadly he had died before the month end, being buried on 31st March 1581. Richard and Joan had two more children, Alice and Joan, born in 1582 and 1583, who survived to adulthood.

The lime mixed with horsehair, supplied by Richard Maddock was used because it provided a better bonding in the building work it was used for, than plain lime. The first two bushels in January 1588, one more in October 1589 and another 3 in November 1589 and the following year 4 more in July and another two in August 1590. Finally fifteen bushels in June 1591. The family was living in Church Lane in 1597. Richard made his last will and testament in May 1619, which can be seen in Hereford Record Office, leaving his wife and daughter, both called Joan, half each of everything, including various sums of money owing to him. John Skynner, tanner, supplied lime in September 1585 and in April 1589 to the workers repairing and renovating the Master's House and other buildings within St Katherine's Hospital compound. The Skynner family were many and numerous in Ledbury with a number of men called John - clothier, shoemaker, weaver as well as tanner. John the tanner and his wife, who lived at Wellington (Heath), had seven children, born over a seventeen year period, the last born was William in 1595. John Barnsley, mercer, lived in the High Street, he married Ann Vobe on 20 December 1591. He provided glue to the joiners no doubt prepared from bones supplied by Butcher Row, and 50 bricks which were to mend the oven and furnace. John and Ann had seven children, although two died when still very young. John's wife Anne died and was buried in July 1635 and John five years later in May 1640.

Richard Barrett provided lodgings to some of the workmen, for which he was paid 4d a time. His will, made in June 1591, described him as a

fishmonger and also mentioned his wife, Margery, four sons, and two daughters. He owned a house and an acre of land called 'Little Field' recently bought from William Cam. He left everything to his wife, and only after her death would his children inherit the various bequests he made in his will, the original document is held in Hereford Record Office. Richard Barrett had married Margery, the daughter of John and Katherine Maddock, described above, on Saturday, 11th September 1574 and they had eight children.

William Kenderdale the bailiff appeared in the Accounts on December 1588 and April 1589. He had married Joan Clent before the registers began in 1556. William and Joan had four sons and two daughters. In 1597 the tithe book showed them living in Church Lane. His daughter Anne became the second wife of Thomas Walcroft or Pewtres on 27th November 1589, already mentioned in Chapter 4 about the workmen involved in renovating the Master's House of St Katherine's Hospital.

## Chapter 11

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### The Brethren and Servants of St Katherine's and the Master's House

When St Katherine's Hospital was founded back in the thirteenth century the whole community lived together in St Katherine's Hall, worshipping in the chapel at its east end. Initially the brethren were all brothers, but by 1238 they had been joined by sisters. In the late fifteenth century, the Master moved out, to live in the mansion house which we now call the Master's House, it may have been about this time that the brethren also moved out of the communal hall, to live in separate, individual rooms. The Reformation in 1536-9 led to the end of the chantries and so too of the need to have more than one priest for churches and chapels.

In the later sixteenth century Edward Cooper was the Master of St Katherine's Hospital when in 1581 Queen Elizabeth I granted a new charter, whereby the Master would care for seven poor men and three poor women at 4 pence a week. By this time these elderly brethren were living in what were now the almshouses. This timber-framed row was eighty feet long and about nineteen feet deep, lying on the east boundary of the Hospital on the High Street, but separated from it by the Butcher Row.

Those members of the community living and working in St Katherine's who had died, were listed in the burial registers of the parish church, the vicar noting that they were a brother, or sister, of the hospital. From these entries, which began in 1556, it seems several priests ended their days living in St Katherine's. Given the honorary title of 'Sir' they were: Sir Thomas Kylinge, a priest of the Hospital who died in 1558, Sir Griffin Fowler, the chantry priest who later became priest of Ledbury town, who died in 1559 and Sir John Bucknell, a later priest of the Hospital who worked alongside the Master, and died in May 1596, only two months before Master Edward Cooper himself died at the age of sixty eight years.

Master Cooper was taken ill whilst on a visit to the Cathedral College of Worcester and died there on 16th July 1596. He may well have been on Hereford Cathedral business, as he was an Archdeacon of Hereford Cathedral as well as the Cathedral Treasurer. He was carried back to Ledbury and buried on the north side of the chancel in the parish church ten days later. His memorial, an alabaster slab bearing his image dressed in his clerical cap and gown together with a ruff is to be found in St Anne's chapel left of the altar. Several decades later when Elizabeth Thornton died, her entry in the burial register listed her as the wife of Mr Doctor Thomas Thornton Master of the hospital, and three years later when he died the register named him as Doctor of Divinity and Master of the Hospital. There is a memorial to him in the chancel of Ledbury parish church.

Several servants of St Katherine's were also buried. Margery Reese was mentioned as a servant of the Hospital at her burial in 1583. She may have been related to Thomas Reese a tanner who provided lime for the parlour during the renovations. Ann Henbage, was mentioned specifically as the servant of Master Edward Cooper at her burial in 1592. Two men of that name, Thomas and Roger Henbage were also buried as brothers of the Hospital, Thomas in 1583 and Roger in 1607, sadly we know nothing else about them. Perhaps Ann was the Master's housekeeper, making sure his home was clean and tidy, especially each Michaelmas when the Dean and two members of the Chapter came from Hereford on the annual visitation to inspect the Hospital and the accounts.

George Hodnet, who was buried a few months later, was listed in the burial register as the cooking servant of Master Edward Cooper and even mentions him in his will as 'his very good master' and made him overseer of his will. George's will listed a number of debts owing to him from people living in (Stretton) Sugwas, Madley and Breinton, so he must have lived over on that side of Hereford before moving to Ledbury. He was a yeoman and a widower with two sons, Richard and Thomas, and left his mother-in-law as



Sister Sybil



Ann Henbage



George Hodnet

executrix of his will. He was owed a legacy from his late mistress Mrs Ann Willison of Sugwas, so perhaps it was her death that was the cause of his move to a new job in Ledbury.

It would seem that the almspeople assisted where they could on the Master's House renovations. Panel makers John Ballard and Thomas Byston both appeared in the Accounts supplying wood, John to make laths and Thomas to make staves, studs and windings, these were all used in making infill panels to be daubed in the building process. They were both listed as brethren, John was buried in 1594 but Thomas not until 1608, although his wife Elizabeth, listed as a sister, had been buried back in 1583. Widow Alice Taylor was employed drawing straw for the thatcher in 1589 but was buried the following Summer. Robert Camden and his wife Elizabeth both lived in the almshouses, Robert had acted as a labourer for the masons in October 1594. Elizabeth died in 1601 and Robert only 9 months later. The carpenter John Bailey who had erected a new saddle house (tack room) in 1590 had ended his days in the almshouses, dying in 1607. The smith Thomas Hall the elder, having been widowed when his wife Ellen died in 1587, seems to have

retired in about 1590, when his son Simon took over the work. Thomas remarried the following year to Sybil Cam and they both lived in the almshouses for a decade before Thomas died in 1601 and Sybil just 5 months later.

Master Cooper was well regarded by the brethren as he really tried to improve their living conditions, with renovations of both the almshouses and other rooms occupied by the brethren.

## Chapter 12

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### The House of Office - a polite name for the Privy

And now it is time to look at the problem of 'spending a penny' (or two) in Tudor times. Edward Cooper, the Master of St. Katherine's, made more than a dozen references to 'houses of office' which was the term he used to describe the privies, that he had built or had cleaned out, in his accounts. As an educated and cultured man, he preferred to use the euphemism 'house of office' for this most necessary facility. There was no mains drainage and running water on tap in those days and it would be another few hundred years before such facilities were made available to everyone.

Privy by name, but many were not private at all. They were usually a piece of wood for a seat, with a hole in it, and a bowl, or hole in the ground beneath. Some were communal, with two or more holes, side by side. There are many names used to refer to this most vital of places, including bog, jakes, john, karzy, loo, midden, throne room or water closet. And many more too, that are unprintable.

Toilet paper was unknown in Tudor times. Paper was so expensive that it was simply not an alternative in those days. Most people used leaves and mosses instead, whilst richer folk might use sponges on sticks with salt water or even the softest lambs' wool or cloths. 'To spend a penny' is a common phrase today, but the Tudor equivalent was to 'pluck a rose', and it could take place anywhere, in chimneys, the corner of rooms or in the street. Even royal palaces had different 'pissing areas' allotted to members of the court, according to their status.

Castles and larger houses had garderobes built into the walls. The waste would drop into a moat or river, or otherwise just onto a dung heap below,

to be carted away, along with the animal waste and used to manure the land. The site of one such garderobe has been identified in the north-east corner of the service wing of the Master's House, in one of the two upper rooms or bedchambers, where the Dean and Chapter probably slept, during their annual visitation, at Michaelmas each year.

Wealthier people frequently had a close stool, which was a boxed seat containing a fitted chamber pot. Close stools were sometimes even covered in velvet, decorated with braid, fringes and fancy headed nails. Edward Cooper had a servant to deal with household tasks, like emptying his close stool, and this was Ann Henbage, who served him for some years as his personal servant, until her death in 1592, shown in the parish burial register. We know that Edward Cooper had a close stool in the Master's House at Ledbury, as it was listed in the inventory of his possessions, made after his death. This inventory, part of the Dean and Chapter's Archive is in the care of the Hereford Cathedral, and may be seen in the library there.

In October 1587 Edward Cooper paid John Grundy, the mason, for various agreed works including a new privy. Two weeks later John Taylor, the carpenter, was paid for work on the kitchen and a wall for the new privy. In June 1589 four pence was paid to someone to clean out one 'house of office', and three months later two pence was paid for making a trench to drain 'water' from the same. Obviously there was a privy plumbing problem of some sort.

In the middle of June 1592 the gardener James Stafford and labourer Emanuel Podmer were clearing mud and silt from the hospital pool and also digging and cleaning out the poor people's privy, for this was of the 'hole in the ground' type. The following April 1593 the Churchwardens of Ledbury were paid £1 for 2000 tiles and some stone to be used for making two new houses of office. Mason John Grundy was paid 3s 4d for digging the required pits, some task in the clay of this area. Three months later two masons from Hereford came to make these new privies, with the stone and tiles already bought and paid for earlier that year.

Towards the end of July Robert Crowse and three of his men were employed, for 13 days work erecting another two houses of office and a new poultry house, using wood sawn for him by David Morgan, especially for this job. They also used studding (timber uprights) and windings (hazel rods) used in wattle and daub wall infilling. John Grundy and his man spent five days tiling the roofs, once the timber frame had been constructed and a few weeks later Thomas Parry, a skilled pargeter, mason and tiler and David Morgan, a sawyer as well as a skilled pargeter, spent four days claying and plastering the two new houses of office and the poultry house.



**Robert Crowse, carpenter and builder**

Simon Hall, the smith, then supplied a key and staple for the privy at the eastern service wing end of the Master's House. In November 1593 Thomas Parry, using his masonry skills, spent a day quoining the poor peoples' privy. Quoins are dressed stones used at the corners of buildings and doorways, to protect them from damage of passing traffic, like carts pulled by horses or oxen. In May 1595 nails, hooks and hinges were provided for the 'office' door at the solar end, within the parlour, this was the Master's en suite. The following month two locks and keys were provided for the house of office belonging to the almsfolk. Perhaps some of the townfolk were taking advantage of the almsfolk's privy, instead of using the poor people' privy provided for them. They were lucky indeed to have public toilets so long ago.

As there were a number of tanneries in the town, where urine was used as part of the tanning process, it is interesting to ponder on the thought that perhaps urine was collected to provide the tanners with one of their raw ingredients, and whether they paid for this vital commodity. The tanners are to be found in Chapter 10.

# Chapter 13

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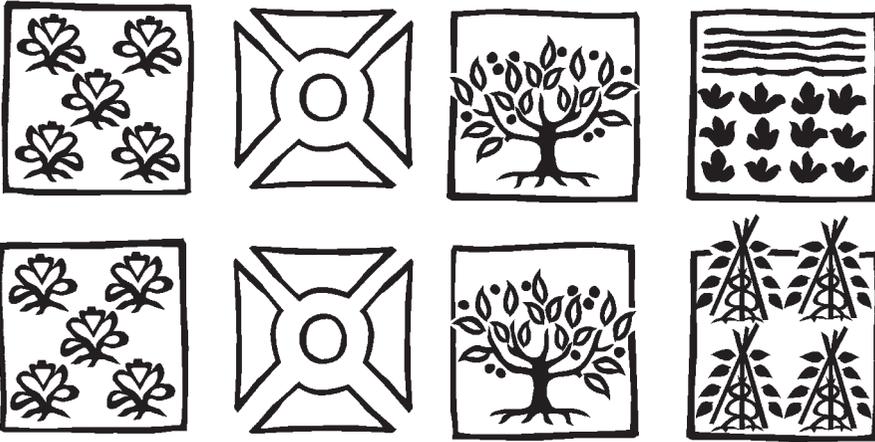
## Disease and Medicine in Tudor Ledbury

In Edward Cooper's day it was believed that disease was a disturbance of the patient's constitution. This was caused by an imbalance of the four humours that were supposed to govern the human body and which could provoke a feeling of illness. In those days, according to a theory dating back to Hippocrates in ancient Greece, there are four principle humours in the human body, phlegm, blood, yellow bile and black bile. Blood was the humour of the heart, phlegm the humour of the brain, yellow bile the humour of the liver and black bile the humour of the spleen.

Remedies prescribed by physicians in those days were supposed to restore the disturbed humoral balance and depended on the symptoms of the patient. So a choleric patient would have the supposed excess of yellow bile removed by purging or vomiting, a sanguine patient had too much blood and so would be treated by bleeding or blistering, a lethargic patient, who was distraught or melancholic would need attention to their diet and the phlegmatic patient would be treated with something warm and dry. The humoral balance was even said to be responsible for body shape and physique, so phlegmatic people were fat and choleric ones thin.

If you had a fever, you needed a cool remedy such as camphor. If you had a cold, you had too much phlegm and so needed something warm and dry such as ginger, as a treatment. Doctors would examine a sample of your urine, for its clarity or cloudiness, its colour, smell and even taste, all of which could provide further clues to the balance of the humours and so help in the diagnosis. In those far off days there were no test strips to dip into the sample and provide a near instant result.

Only the rich could afford to be treated by a doctor in those days, who would prescribe a different medicine for each and every symptom, in very small quantities, to encourage extra visits, which meant extra fees, very expensive treatment by any standard. Most people would have used the herbal remedies passed down the generations or if they could afford it would go to the local apothecary, who might be able to suggest a suitable remedy instead. It is likely that the sisters living in the almshouses would have prepared a variety of commonly used herbal remedies for use not only by the brethren, but also by any townspeople requesting them too.



### Herb gardens provided many medicines in the past

Hugh Scrivener, Doctor of Physicke first appears in the parish register in 1597 at the baptism of his first child Mary. He had married Margery Elton in about 1595, but this wedding did not take place in Ledbury, as there is no record in the parish register. Margery was the daughter of Anthony Elton of the Hazle. Hugh, but not Margery, appears in the baptism register no less than seven times following the births of their children, Mary, Anthony, Francis, Ambrose, Margaret, Edward and Jane from 1597 to 1607.

The baptism register entries for Mary, Anthony and Jane give no information other than his name as the father of the children. It was only in the baptism register entry recording the christening of his son Francis in 1601 that Hugh's profession was revealed, it mentioned that he was a 'Doctor of Physicke', that is a medical man. The entry for Ambrose states 'Doctor of Physicke', for Margaret it states 'Mr Dr' and for Edward just 'Mr'. There were no 'Scrivener' entries in the burial register in this period, a time when childbirth was hazardous and frequently resulted in both baptism and burial registered on the same day.

Where Hugh Scrivener studied is unknown, as neither the Oxford nor Cambridge Alumni records list him, and they were the only Universities in England at that time. He could have studied medicine in Scotland at Edinburgh, or perhaps at one of the great universities on the continent. Margery's older brothers Ambrose and Thomas Elton were both studying at Brasenose College, Oxford in the 1590's, where presumably Hugh Scrivener first met the Eltons.

Ambrose, having matriculated in 1588, aged only 15, gained his BA in 1591 and was Elton fellow 1588-94. He became High Sheriff of the County of Hereford in 1618, and lived well into his 80's, dying in 1659. His brother Thomas also matriculated at 15, in 1589, gaining his BA in February 1593/4 and his MA in February 1596/7. He was Elton fellow 1594-1614. He moved to Bath, Somerset, as a doctor of physic, but not for long it seems, as his will was dated 1618.

Meanwhile the Scrivener family moved to Sherborne, Dorset, which is not far from Bath in Somerset, within a year or so after Jane's birth, in October 1607. Another son, William, was born after the move to Dorset, and another daughter, Phillipa, was born, but also buried in October 1610. Tragedy struck the following Summer, 1611, when an outbreak of plague killed all the children, except the eldest, Mary. The first to die was Margaret on 11th June, followed by Ambrose on the last day of the month. Two weeks later, on 15th July, Jane died, then Francis on 3rd August, Anthony on 11th and little William on 21st. Two Elton children were also buried in this period, Alice at the end of July and Edward less than a week later on 4th August. Could these have been Thomas Elton's children, perhaps sent from Bath to try to escape the plague there too? The following entries appear in the Baptism Register of Ledbury from 1556 to 1633:-

Margery	daughter of	Anthony Elton		29 January	1575/6
Mary	daughter of	Hugh Scrivener		9 September	1597
Anthony	son of	Hugh scrivener		8 November	1598
Francis	son of	Hugh Scrivener	Dr of Phisicke	10 May	1601
Ambrose	son of	Hugh Scrivener	Dr of Physicke	28 November	1602
Margaret	daughter of	Hugh Scrivener	Mr Dr	19 January	1603/4
Edward	son of	Hugh Scrivener	Mr	27 March	1605
Jane	daughter of	Hugh Scrivener		14 October	1607

There were some 230 people buried in Sherborne during June, July and August 1611, when during the same period in 1610 there were only 24 burials. There had been a similar outbreak of plague in Ledbury during May and June, the previous year, 1610.

Such outbreaks had been occurring quite regularly since the Black Death in 1348-9, which had killed about one third of the population and up to 40 or

more of the clergy. Every decade or so since that time there was a further epidemic, and this continued until the mid-seventeenth century, when the Great Plague struck London in 1665. Once this epidemic was over the plague faded away again, but this time never to return. Despite many theories, no explanation as to why the plague died out has ever been found.

A shorter version of this chapter first appeared in *Herefordshire Past*, newsletter of the Trust for the Victoria County History of Herefordshire.

## Chapter 14

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### Paying the Vicar - Tithing in Tudor times

The word tithe means 'tenth', and is derived from Anglo-Saxon, but has a much longer history than that. A tithe was a form of payment dating back to biblical times, made by parishioners for the maintenance of the church and the support of the clergy. Tithes were levied by the early Hebrews and were common across Europe from the 6th century and they had become a legal obligation in England by the 8th century.

Tithes seem to have been collected for just about everything, from the produce of the soil, the profits of labour and industry and a combination of produce, animals and labour. Sometimes tithes were converted from one-tenth of the produce into a fixed sum of money instead, as no doubt it made collection so much easier. In Scotland tithes had been abolished at the Reformation and in Ireland by 1869. And somewhat belatedly, they were finally abolished in England, in 1936.

William Davies (also known as Weaver) was appointed vicar in January 1576, following the death of his predecessor Hammet Malbone the previous October, who had served the parish for over 20 years. William Davies would serve Ledbury parish for more than 35 years. He made his will, dated 14th October 1612, on his death-bed, and was buried just two days later.

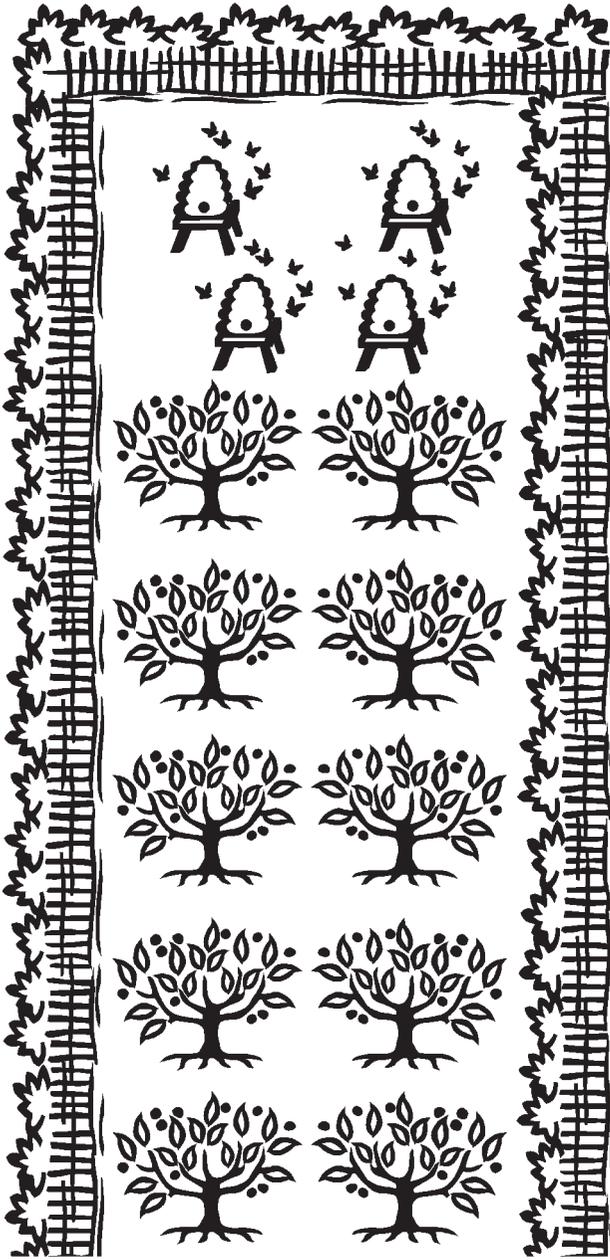
In Hereford Record Office can be found a large leather-bound volume, 'The Tithe Book' of Ledbury which lists the tithes collected by William Davies. He carefully kept a detailed record of all the tithes and other payments due to him from 1595 to 1607. This book also tells us who lived where, street by street in the town, and hamlet by hamlet, in the parish each year. It even listed the youth of the parish, whether servants, apprentices, journeymen or maidens, divided into those who received wages and those who did not.

He referred to the Tithe Book as the Easter Book, as he collected most of the tithes in the week before Easter, from every inhabitant of the town or parish of Ledbury. This he wrote 'was according to ancient custom, time out of mind'. The entries included those living in Wellington Heath, Wallhills, Fairtree, Mitchell, Frith, Plaistow and Court-y-Park, Haffield, Dunbridge, Massington and Netherthon.

Everyone had to pay for their oblation, which was a pious 'donation' for the clergy's offering of bread and wine at the Eucharist; the youth (young people) also had to pay for their first communion. Seemingly everything had its price in the tithe book. In Ledbury the great tithes of cereal crops went to the clergy who were appointed as the two portionists or rectors of the parish; one lived at Upper Hall, then called Overhall, and the other at Lower Hall, then called Netherhall.

After the Reformation many things changed, and long before the time of Elizabeth I, it was no longer the clergy but the local gentry who had taken up residence, the Skippe's in Upper Hall and the Elton's at Lower Hall. They were now just sinecure rectors whose only job was to appoint the vicar. The numerous small tithes of livestock, wool and non-cereal crops all went to the vicar. The 'great tithes' of the cereal crops, corn, wheat, barley and oats, or a mixed grain called muncorn, were stored in the barns at Overhall and Netherhall, and from each of them a yearly pension was paid to the vicar at Michaelmas, of 16 bushels of good clean wheat and 16 of oats. Other tithes of corn were also owed to the vicar by Donnington, Court-y-Park, Pixley and Aylton.

William Davies collected tithes of hay, of which the Master of St Katherine's Hospital had two thirds and he, the vicar, kept the other third, mown from all the meadows, leasowes, freelowes and greens in the parish. There were also tithes for herbage, that is the plants used as animal fodder, tithes for vegetables, including onions, garlic, beans and peas, millet and cucumbers.



Tithes of fruit, honey and beeswax were collected from the orchard

The tithe for leeks was always collected in the first week of Lent. There were tithes for honey and wax, for hemp and flax, for hops, for fruit, not just apples and pears, but also peaches, quinces, walnuts and wardenes (baking pears), cider fruit and stored fruit. There was even a tithe for wood, according to 'an old and ancient custom payable to the vicar for felling or cutting down any manner of wood within the parish'.

Parishioners had to pay a penny for every garden - no matter what its size, a penny for every milch cow and a penny for every hand they employed. The vicar collected either a monetary payment or one in ten of the calves and/or kids born that year, carrying over to the next year if less than ten had been born. Payment for pigs varied depending on the time of year, and no doubt also on the size of the animal. With lambs the owner would choose the first two and the vicar every third lamb the week after Holy Rood Day, 14th September. The chosen lambs were marked, to show that they belonged to the vicar.

Even the vicar, William Davies, farmed his own glebe, in 1603 he recorded that his little acre in Mabley (now Mabel's) Furlong produced 12 bushels of barley and his great acre there some 37 bushels of wheat. A few years later he had to draw up a glebe terrier of the land that went with his living, from which it was clear that this land was still cultivated in open-field strips. His little acre being described as '1 parcel of land being 4 rudges (ridges) and a little green at the Southend lying in the same field' and his great acre he described as '1 parcel of land being 7 rudges (ridges) and 2 headlands containing 1 acre or more'.

Mr Edward Elton and Mr John Skippe paid 13s 4d tithe for New Mills whilst Mr Ambrose Elton refused to pay the tithe for Hazle Mill. Wool or payment in lieu was collected immediately after Shrovetide. There was also a tithe for geese and in the week before Easter came the collection of the tithe for hens, pullets and ducks, which was two eggs apiece and for every cock and drake, three eggs apiece. So now we know where the tradition for giving Easter eggs came from. Master Edward Cooper received his share of the tithes collected from each of the various offices he held, including those of Stoke Edith where he was the rector.

A shorter version of this chapter first appeared in the Ledbury Letter, newsletter of the Ledbury Civic Society.

# Chapter 15

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## Christmas Time at the Master's House

Christmas in Elizabethan times was a time of celebration and feasting, the highlight of the year, a time to 'eat, drink and be merry'. Everyone, servants, brethren in the almshouses and the Master of St Katherine's Hospital would have celebrated although perhaps it might well have been somewhat restrained, when compared to those living out in the town of Ledbury itself. The Christmas season lasted from December 24th to January 6th this being the period between the birth of Jesus Christ and the arrival of the Three Wise Men in Bethlehem, called Epiphany, 12 days later. It was a time when everyone was supposed to open their doors to the poor and welcome them in to share the food. No doubt St Katherine's was very busy at this time, and the Master's House would have been busy receiving invited guests from the town and surrounding area, as well. Christmas was a festival to cheer everyone up in the middle of the bleak dark winter and the time to celebrate the birth of Jesus.

Not until Christmas Eve were any decorations put up, with holly and ivy and other evergreen branches, such as box, yew and laurel plus mistletoe from the oak and apple trees all used to brighten people's homes as well as the Master's House. A Yule Log would be brought in on Christmas Eve, large enough to burn throughout the twelve days of Christmas. It was considered lucky if this fire could be started with the remains of last year's Yule Log. Saving a piece from the previous year was said to protect your house from fire through the next year, a useful insurance in a timber-framed house. Today Christmas is a time for giving of gifts, but not so in Elizabethan England, New Year's Day was the time to exchange or give small gifts like fruit, nuts or even wine by the wealthier townsfolk.

The town of Ledbury, like every town or village throughout the land would appoint a 'Lord of Misrule,' who was in charge of all their entertainments. He organised games, plays, music and dancing throughout the 12 days of Christmas, as well as the eating and drinking. The Christmas season was celebrated with songs, but these were not the carols we sing today. Many Elizabethan Christmas songs, whether secular or religious, mentioned England's thriving wool industry by way of the shepherd's involvement in the Christmas story. There was also much wassailing, with morris dancing,

singing and drinking spiced ale, whilst they progressed around the parish blessing both the orchards and the land.

Feasting was an important part of an Elizabethan Christmas and some people even wrote poems about the food that was served. Several kinds of meat, beef and pork, as well as goose, which was by far the most popular bird served during the Christmas season. Meat was baked whole or made into pies, served with apples and nuts, with pudding made of meat spices and oatmeal, all served together with cheese. Roasted pork went by the name of brawn in those days and 'souse' the name given to pickled cuts of pork.

There were no potatoes, roasted or otherwise yet, they were only just arriving as a strange new plant from the 'New World', which some thought might be an aphrodisiac, wishful thinking indeed. Very few vegetables were served at feasts at this time, because they were the food of the poorest people at this time.

Sweets of all sorts were served as dessert, including tarts and custards, with quince marmalade. Marzipan, then called marchpain, made with almond paste and sugar, was moulded into shapes decorated with icing; gingerbread was also especially popular. Drinks included mulled wine, made from warmed wine infused with sugar and spices, and syllabub was popular too, made from a hot milk drink flavoured with wine or spirit and spices. Lambswool was another potent mix of hot cider, sherry or ale, apples and spices, which was heated until it exploded and formed a white 'woolly' head, which would have been served in the town, although perhaps not in the Master's House.

Some of the twelve days had names of their own, Christmas Day on December 25th, St Stephen's Day on the 26th, the day of St John the Evangelist on the 27th, the Feast of the Holy Innocents' on the 28th was also known as Childermas, and commemorated King Herod's massacre of all the male infants under the age of two, in and around Bethlehem, in his attempt to kill the young Jesus Christ. Mary and Joseph, who were warned by an angel, had managed to escape to Egypt with the Christ child, and stayed there until Herod's death. They also celebrated New Year's Eve on the December 31st and New Year's Day on January 1st. In those days March 25, Lady Day, was regarded as the first day of the year for official purposes until the mid-18th Century, it being the first of the Quarter Days.



Christmas was a time for singing and dancing

Epiphany was January 6th commemorating the manifestation of the young Christ to the Magi, the three wise men who had travelled from the East, bearing their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. This was the twelfth day of Christmas, celebrated with a church service followed on this Twelfth Night by a final party complete with a special cake to end the Christmas celebrations. However those evergreen decorations were left up until the eve of Candlemas on February 2nd. This was a holy day also known as the Purification of the Blessed Virgin and the Presentation of the Lord, forty days after the birth of Christ, a cleansing ritual in accordance with the laws of the Jews. And so finally, on the eve of Candlemas every trace of the evergreen branches had to be removed. Christmas was finally over for another year.

# Glossary

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Boulting	sieving flour prior to baking
Casement	a small metal frame, which can be opened, inset into a windowframe
Clothier	one involved in the cloth trade, or a seller of clothes
Crest	ridge tile, can be used as a gutter or drain if used inverted
Garner	a small barn for storing corn
House of Office	privy or toilet
Mercer	shopkeeper
Pargeting	decorative plastering
Plumber	metalworker specialising in the metal lead - <i>plumbum</i> = Latin for lead
Privy	toilet
Quoin	stone or masonry at the corner of buildings or doorways for strength
Sheere	shelter
Wain	wagon
Wainscoting	oak or other wood panelling

(note pargeting and wainscoting may be spelt with one or two tt's)

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## **In Hereford Record Office (HRO) :**

All the wills mentioned and many other sixteenth and seventeenth wills of Ledbury people are in the care of Hereford Record Office. They have been transcribed and can be found, together with an alphabetical listing on the Victoria County History website

[www.victoriacountyhistory.ac.uk/explore/herefordshire](http://www.victoriacountyhistory.ac.uk/explore/herefordshire)

Ledbury Parish Registers, Baptisms, Marriages and Burials from 1556 on microfilm

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