

John and Joan Cooke and the Crypt School, Gloucester: Its foundation and early development  
c.1500-1600

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## Abstract

The Crypt School in Gloucester is now 482 years old. The school began its life in a tiny building adjacent to St Mary de Crypt church in Gloucester. Today the modern thriving school although on a different site is still sited on land provided through the bequests of John and Joan Cooke.

John Cooke, four times mayor, sheriff and alderman of the town, a wealthy brewer and mercer died in 1528. He became the wealthiest man in Gloucester in his lifetime and experienced the domination and gradual decline of the monasteries. As a civic leader he witnessed and dealt with disputes between the civic and ecclesiastical authorities over land, trading, taxes, and education. The Church and the laity in Gloucester were powerful entities, whose influence and wealth had developed over centuries and who had held fast onto rights conveyed by royal charters. Education was one component of Gloucester life that was in the grip of the Church. St Peter's Abbey ran an almonry and song school, Llanthony Secunda Priory defended its rights in the court as the sole provider of grammar education in the town.

John Cooke died before realising his ambition to open the school, in his will he left instructions for his wife Joan who was to continue his plans, surrounded by influential men of the town. With full control over John Cooke's fortune, Joan forged ahead and with help from those around her the school was opened in 1539.

Though an examination of the documentation ranging from wills and rental documents to conveyances this thesis contributes to the understanding of the reasons for the foundation of the Crypt School of Gloucester and the school's survival through the Tudor age; as well as the influences that may shaped the decisions of John and Joan Cooke.

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Finally, I would like to dedicate this thesis with thanks to Peter Hobbs whose enthusiasm about the project was inspiring, I hope I have uncovered further insights which will prove interesting.

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## Notes and Abbreviations

Although the establishment of the Cathedral in 1541 changed the status of Gloucester to that of city it has been referred to throughout as town, as this was how it was known to John Cooke in his lifetime.

### Abbreviations

CLSC	Cheltenham Local Studies Centre
TNA	The National Archives
GA	Gloucestershire Archives
VCH	Victoria County History
ODNB	Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

## **Introduction**

An indenture tripartite of January 11<sup>th</sup> 1540 states that the Crypt School was now ‘fully and perfectly edified and buyldid’ in accordance with John Cooke’s final will and testament. Joan had spent much of her widowhood overseeing the building, staffing and endowment of the school, which was to provide a ‘contynuall freeschole of grammar for the contynyall erudicon and teaching of children and scholars’ within Gloucester.<sup>1</sup> The foundation of the school by John and Joan Cooke was possible because of the convergence of a number of factors both political and economic. The late fifteenth century witnessed the increasing power of the guilds and civic government in Gloucester through a series of letters patent from the Crown. During the same period the power of the laity began to surpass the strength and influence of the monastic houses in the town and in the early sixteenth century the reputation of the monastic houses began to decline. Furthermore, the period from the mid fifteenth century to the mid sixteenth century saw the development of Gloucester as a centre for trade with tighter governance of markets by the corporation of the town. John Cooke was one of those who benefited from as well as contributing to this enhancement, becoming an increasingly senior and important member of the civic government as well as a wealthy and influential businessman. It was these factors which allowed him to leave his wife both his instructions and the capital required to establish a school in the heart of Gloucester.

This thesis will examine the foundation of the Crypt School in Gloucester by John and Joan Cooke. John Cooke’s plans for his school were possibly seen by his contemporaries as a direct challenge to the monastic houses, who for centuries had been the only provider of grammar education in Gloucester, firstly by St Oswald’s Priory and then by Llanthony Priory. However, John Cooke only lived long enough to discuss his ideas for this school with his wife and document his wishes in his will alongside ringfencing the capital to establish the school. Although the school refers to this day to its founders (both John and Joan) the two histories of the school deal primarily with John Cooke, Joan taking a lesser role as his widow carrying out his wishes. Consequently, this thesis intends to re-examine Joan’s role in the foundation. Surviving her husband by 17 years, Joan enabled the school’s foundation and its longevity through astute investments. She obtained land from the surrender of Llanthony

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<sup>1</sup> MS GA D3270 The Crypt School. Gloucester United Schools Charity, 1478-1926.

Priory through Hugh Latimer, bishop of Worcester refused to be intimidated by the corporation when they demand she hand over the deed relating to the school's endowments and placed the bailiffs and citizens of Worcester to oversee the corporation of Gloucester to ensure her plans were carried out to the letter. It is worthwhile to assess Joan's willingness to move from her orthodox Christian beliefs to the new world of Protestantism. The foundation of the Crypt School moved Gloucester grammar education from the monastery to the parish. Unlike chantry schools, which were located within the church the Crypt School had its own building on land obtained from Llanthony Priory which lay adjacent to the parish church of St Mary de Crypt. The school's first master was the incumbent of the parish church. Joan however did include in the deeds the provision that, if necessary, a secular master could be appointed in place of a suitable cleric at a reduced salary, although the lodgings above the house were strictly for the master only, not his wife or family. Perhaps some orthodox beliefs were too well ingrained to erase.

A further area of the examination will also focus on the context of Gloucester as a secular authority with increasing strength drawn from the guilds and corporation and how John Cooke utilised these circumstances to become a figure of both influence and great wealth.<sup>2</sup> The growing power of the civic government created rivalry with the established monastic houses of Gloucester. Disputes with the monastic houses were frequent and at times violent and general standards of morality in the town were poor.<sup>3</sup> The monastic houses themselves were concurrently harbouring resentment for each other as well as the civic authorities. This had been demonstrated by disputes over the provision of grammar education in the town.

Although Joan didn't live to see the full extent of the Reformation, she lived long enough to see the weakening of the monastic houses in the town, the strengthening of the corporation and the creation of the diocese of Gloucester in 1541. These events would have

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<sup>2</sup> The exploration of social networks and oligarchy is a current area of interest, in particular, this thesis draws upon work of Joe Chick and Maryanne Kowaleski on oligarchies in Reading and Exeter respectively, J. Chick, 'Urban Oligarchy and Dissolutioned Voters: The End of Monastic Rule in Reading, 1350–1600', *Cultural and Social History*, 16:4 (2019), 387–411; M. Kowaleski, 'The commercial dominance of a medieval provincial oligarchy: Exeter in the late fourteenth century', in *The Medieval Town in England 1200–1540*, ed. R. Holt and G. Rosser (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 184–225.

<sup>3</sup> Concerns regarding morality in Gloucester were aired in common council on various occasions in the early to mid-16<sup>th</sup> century, particular reference was paid to people behaving in a disreputable manner as well as infringements to local laws regarding nuisances and rubbish on the streets by businesses; MS GA "16-18 Acts of Common Council, 1500" Customals, Corporation Proceedings and Administration, Official Memoranda Book 1486–1648.

influenced her ideas and wishes for the school it is against these events that Joan's establishment of a free grammar school will be examined.

John Cooke, a Gloucester mercer had extensively discussed his plans to build and endow a grammar school in the town with his wife and closest friends, his final instructions recorded into his will of 1528. John Cooke had accumulated substantial wealth which he intended should be used to endow the project and he was also able to draw upon the services of his peers from among the leading civic officers to assist his widow in realising the building of the school. Consequently, the Cooke's school was established away from the influence of the dominant monastic houses and placed physically within the confines of their parish church, St Mary de Crypt, the school and education provided to be overseen by the corporation of Gloucester and the burgesses of Worcester.

John Cooke's career was no doubt helped by his role within the corporation of Gloucester, serving as both sheriff and mayor on multiple occasions and further embellished by becoming one of the first in the town to be appointed as a lifelong alderman. John Cooke was one of the first to benefit from this elevated civic structure which allowed him to build his civic career alongside his mercantile career in the town. This could account for the considerable wealth and influence he held by the time of his death in 1528. The corporation charter also increased the friction that had already been apparent between the two major religious houses of Gloucester and the new civic authorities, which on occasion ended in violence and certainly influenced corporation legislation that followed the Tudor desire for good social order. This thesis will also examine how the changing nature and growth of the town of Gloucester and its secular rule influenced the decision of John and Joan Cooke to provide a free grammar school for the town.

One of the first tasks for the corporation of Gloucester to address was to foster the equilibrium of the commonwealth within its walls. Good order and social calm were in short supply and developing and maintaining a good reputation was essential if Gloucester was to enhance its standing in relation to other towns in the region such as Tewkesbury and Bristol. In 1504 John Cooke and others endeavoured to remedy the disorder because Gloucester was seen to have a 'shameful reputation throughout the country' this meant it was necessary 'for



reformation of 'vicious living' of persons both spiritual and temporal which has given the town a reputation, and which it is feared the Almighty will otherwise soon punish'.<sup>4</sup>

By establishing good order, the civic authorities sought to attract trade and thus enhance Gloucester's economic growth. A priority for the corporation was the rebuilding of the Boothall or Guildhall in 1529. This development in the centre of the town near the focal point of the high cross provided the corporation with the means to regulate the various trades and to impose taxation. Furthermore, it was also the location of the hundred court and town assizes and by 1558 the quarter sessions.<sup>5</sup> Thus the Boothall became the corporation's jurisdictional and administrative centre. As the castle fell into disuse and ruin during the sixteenth century, one part was maintained by the town, which was the gaol, its prominent situation acting as a message to those who were tempted to break the law. Regarding moral infringements, the common council employed ideas of public shaming those who brought the town's reputation into question, such as 'Common 'queens' and clients, lay and clerical' who would be placed 'in a 'hutch' in the market-place'<sup>6</sup>

The future of a strong and developing trade in Gloucester was dependant on literate and educated young men who would fill the future roles of lawyers, merchants, clerks as well as priests. This would be reason enough for John Cooke to develop his idea of a grammar school for the town that was underpinned by Christianity, but independent of the main religious houses and their domination of education.

By the time of John Cooke's death in 1528 his plans for a new 'free schole of grammar' had been meticulously described in his will and his considerable wealth provided for its longevity.<sup>7</sup> However, the majority of the work to establish the school itself was left to Joan Cooke as John Cooke's widow and executor. Joan Cooke was a devout woman, and complied with her husband's wishes, one of which was for her to 'kepe hirself sole without any other husbände'. The penalty for not complying was in line with gavelkind, wherein Joan would forfeit 'one half parte of suche goodes that I leave to hir dispociscion.'<sup>8</sup> Many of the usual issues surrounding her widowhood were not relevant to Joan as the couple were childless at this point, the only other heirs being their siblings and other family members.<sup>9</sup> Joan may well have taken her agreement with John to a further level by becoming a vowess

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<sup>4</sup> This was between Cooke's first (1501) and second tenure (1507) as mayor of the corporation of Gloucester MS GA '16-18 Acts of Common Council', (1500), Gloucester. Red Book, Gloucester Corporation.

<sup>5</sup> *VCH Gloucester* 4, pp. 248–51.

<sup>6</sup> MS GA F19-20 GBR/B2/1 (1504), Court Leet Ordinances.

<sup>7</sup> MS GA D3270 The Crypt School. Gloucester United Schools Charity, 1478–1926.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> P. Fleming, *Family and Household in Medieval England* (New York: St Martin's Press, 2001), pp. 85–7.

on his death because she is depicted in a manner strongly suggestive of this status and her decision may well have anticipated the legal and power struggles which she dealt with during her widowhood.<sup>10</sup> Although John Cooke had directed members of the corporation and family members to assist Joan, it seems she had considerable reservations about his instructions, arranging that the burgesses of Worcester should offer safeguards and ensuring that the land endowment would solely benefit the school through a series of conveyances and agreements. Even though attempts were made to persuade Joan to hand over the documents in her final years, particularly by Thomas Bell, a man of similar wealth and standing to John Cooke, Joan faithfully devoted her widowhood to her husband's wishes and successfully oversaw the founding of the school, its finances and the provision of schoolmasters until her death. The properties and finances for the maintenance of the school had been so well constructed that even when the case for ownership of the lands and money was taken to chancery the resulting judgment, dated 17 May 1551, stated that Joan's feoffment 'should be maintained and continued forever.'<sup>11</sup>

The first chapter examines the development of both the Church and laity in late medieval Gloucester, a period of significant progress in the establishing of a high degree of civic autonomy. The town of Gloucester, having played a crucial role in the successful outcome of the battle of Tewkesbury in 1471 and the victory of Edward IV, later petitioned Richard III following his succession to the throne for an extension to the Crown's charter. This was granted in 1483 increasing the rights of lay governance of the town. The letters patent permitted the election of a mayor, sheriffs and common council for Gloucester alongside a body of aldermen which meant that the town's civic authorities resembled those of London. The newly formed corporation was dominated by members of the merchant guild, a body which had previously controlled certain aspects of town governance following rights issued in the charter of 1200. These guildsmen had dominated the town's administration, power residing in the hands of a small group of families. In addition, the formation of the corporation did not improve relations with the monastic houses, rather disputes continued to break out from the end of the fifteenth and into the sixteenth century between the Church and the town. A specific contentious issue was the townspeople's use of the common land around

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<sup>10</sup> L. M. Wood, 'Vowess in the Province of Canterbury, c.1450–1540' (unpublished PhD thesis, Royal Holloway, University of London, 2017), p. 30.

<sup>11</sup> *Calendar of the Records of the Corporation of Gloucester*, compiled by W. H. Stevenson (Gloucester: John Bellows, 1893), p. 64 (item 67).

Gloucester which was finally resolved in the early sixteenth century when a written agreement was reached between the corporation and St Peter's Abbey.

The balance of economic power in the form of property holdings was also a key issue that affected relations between the religious houses and the townspeople. A rental from 1455 shows that the monastic houses and a few wealthy citizens held the majority of the land and buildings in the town, the abbey, in particular, holding large numbers of dwellings and buildings in prominent areas of the town. Rival markets were another contentious matter, one was held just inside the abbey precincts and another in the grounds of the priory. In both cases the monastic houses declared that their ancient rights and charters allowed them to have this privilege despite the corporation's right to control the sale of important local products such as wool, grain and metals within Gloucester. These issues proved problematic for the fledgling civic authorities and were not truly resolved until the surrender of both monasteries in 1540.

It was in the context of these events and their consequences that John Cooke began his successful career as a brewer and mercer in Gloucester. In addition, he became one of the first aldermen and served as both sheriff and mayor on multiple occasions. Thus, he was able to benefit from these late medieval developments and his wealth and influence allowed him to provide for the foundation of the Crypt School.

The existing education available in Gloucester and the increasing demand for the education of children within the town is examined in chapter two. Prior to Cooke's intervention, education in Gloucester resembled the provision in the neighbouring cities of Worcester and Hereford. In Gloucester there was a song school and an almonry school within St Peter's Abbey, as well as a grammar school that had been established by Llanthony Priory. Further provision was available at the many chantry chapels in the twelve parish churches offering a basic education to children of the town. Llanthony Priory stands out because of the lengths they went to in order to protect their school as the sole grammar provision in the town. Their monopoly on grammar education was so fiercely challenged that a test case 'the grammar school case' based on their determination to maintain the monopoly is still used as a test case example.

Education in this period was changing and the Church's previous dominance was waning because the need for a good education was no longer seen as only for those who would enter the Church. The development of business in Gloucester as elsewhere in the country demanded a higher level of literacy for a wider range of society, books in both Latin and vernacular languages had become more accessible to the population and literacy had

become an essential skill in many professions, as demonstrated by Caroline Barron in her study of London.<sup>12</sup>

John Cooke's determination to establish a school is consistent with such ideas nationally. It is likely that he considered that the level of accessible and affordable scholarship within Gloucester was insufficient for later ordination or to provide the clerks, lawyers and merchants which the town needed to succeed. Rather than enhancing Llanthony Priory's position as the sole provider of grammar school provision in Gloucester, he created a new school attached to his parish church, although it was physically and legally detached enough not to be a chantry school. It is possible, John Cooke may have believed that the priory's grammar school was unlikely to survive because both the school and priory had been mired in scandal. Consequently, the Crypt School offered a new start for education under lay authority within the town, and within a few years of Joan's endeavours, the town also acquired the King's School under Henry VIII's re-foundation that replaced the almonry school at St Peter's Abbey.

The third chapter assesses the foundation of the Crypt School. In his final year John Cooke had drawn up a series of indentures concerning his land holdings to ensure their use by his widow to carry out his wishes. The importance of education per se, as well as the maintenance and education of the clergy are very apparent in John Cooke's will, and he also fulfilled his familial and spiritual obligations as an orthodox member of Tudor society. He intended that Joan Cooke should administer the foundation of their school, which she was able to do as a widow and vowess. Nevertheless, she experienced considerable problems and among the sources examined here are a number of documents that highlight her struggle to maintain control of the school endowments, including a series of indictments that claimed Joan Cooke was too elderly and ill to personally hold these endowments.

The final chapter investigates the early years of the foundation, these were the years in which Joan was responsible for ensuring that the plans of her late husband were carried out. Further examples of widows in a similar position to Joan are investigated and their motivations compared to what we understand of Joan. The trials of maintaining control of the school and its deeds are a key element of this chapter, this includes Joan's battles with the corporation and her decisions which led to the Tripartite indenture between her, the town of Gloucester and the Bailiffs and citizens of Worcester which established the foundation and

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<sup>12</sup> C. Barron, M. Carlin and J. T. Rosenthal, 'Medieval London: Collected Papers of Caroline M. Barron: Chapter 16 The Expansion of Education in Fifteenth-Century London in Medieval London', *Research in Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, 9 (2017) [https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/mip\\_rmcmc/9](https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/mip_rmcmc/9).

the rules of the school and the funding. Finally, the Tudor masters and some fragmented documentation of one student's school life at the Crypt School in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century are investigated.

This thesis explores a number of historiographic themes relevant to Tudor society. Education and its progress in the late medieval to early modern period is the most obvious. However, the expansion of Gloucester as a town and the governance of its people and trade both lay and clerical is also a major theme in this research, the two bodies having a difficult and at times violent relationship. Additionally, the shift in the balance of power between the Church and the civic authorities transformed Gloucester from being a town dominated by the Church to a town of secular leaders using the parish churches to enhance their own authority. The monastic houses of Gloucester were frequently involved in disputes with the leading citizens which grew in severity once the town gained greater autonomy through its grant of incorporation from the Crown. Gloucester as a trading centre would have experienced regular visitors on business both locally and nationally as well as merchants travelling from the continent. This itinerant population would not only bring goods but also news and ideas, shaping ideas and new thinking.

Other events which changed this balance of power were new humanist ideas from London and the continent and the Reformation. As a consequence, Llanthony Priory was dissolved and its lands subsequently bought up by wealthy local people, including Joan Cooke who purchased great tracts of surrendered priory land to both house and financially support the Crypt School. St Peter's Abbey similarly surrendered to the Crown but was refounded as Gloucester Cathedral complete with a King's School in 1541. Furthermore, even before the dissolution the influence of the monastic houses had been reduced. In the early decades of the sixteenth century Llanthony had been involved in several scandals and St Peter's had been embroiled in arguments with the corporation which meant the civic authorities had become more powerful, their influence backed by the parish churches and guilds of Gloucester.

A further element was that of new ideas and news arriving from London and across Europe. As a merchant John Cooke would have had dealings with those outside of Gloucester, certainly London and in all likelihood as far away as Flanders and France. One movement which may well have caught his attention there was that of humanism and its influence in schools and universities especially that of St Paul's School in London, especially with its founder's links to civic government, the mercery trade and Erasmus.

## Education: The Provision of Schools

This research into the Crypt School poses two questions, firstly, where does the foundation of the Crypt School lie in the educational provision of the early Tudor period. Secondly, why did John and Joan Cooke establish a grammar school and what would this specifically provide for the boys of Gloucester and the town itself? These questions need to be placed in the context of key events and state policies, the dissolution of the monasteries, the Reformation and the Renaissance. Even if many of Henry VIII and Edward VI's policies were not intentionally directed at education and schools, the effects of the dissolution and Reformation did have an impact on these institutions. Gloucester would have been aware of some of the new ideas brought into the town via its trade routes with the continent and trade network to Oxford, Bristol, Southampton and London which would carry concepts of the Renaissance and humanism. Colet's foundation of St Paul's School with the assistance of the great humanist Erasmus was the source of these new ideas Phil Withington points out that this type of 'new learning' was subsequently appropriated not merely by the nobility and gentry but also the 'middle sort'<sup>13</sup>

The common view of education in the early modern period is that the dissolution of the monasteries was ruinous, the situation only saved by Edward VI and the protestants.<sup>14</sup> This view was challenged by A. F. Leach who concluded that most education took place within elementary and grammar schools attached to cathedrals and churches and therefore the biggest blow to education came with the dissolution of the chantries under Edward VI in 1548, the king far from being the saviour of education was in fact the cause of the demise of these schools. In the case of Gloucester, it is likely that the majority of the twelve parish churches, which all contained chantries, were providing some form of education. Gillian Draper in her work on Kent cites numerous examples of chantry priests providing education in places such as Rye and Sevenoaks, and it is likely that this pattern was followed in Gloucester, too, because many of the chantries documented were well endowed and many employed several priests.<sup>15</sup> When the question of employing a master is mentioned in John Cooke's will, he was not only expected to teach in the new school but to attend to the chantry chapel of St John inside the church of St Mary de Crypt. The foundation of Crypt School

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<sup>13</sup> P. Withington, *Society in Early Modern England. The Vernacular Origins of Some Powerful Ideas* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010), p. 10–11.

<sup>14</sup> C. Barron, 'Expansion of Education', p. 449.

<sup>15</sup> G. Draper, 'The Education of Children in Kent and Sussex: Interpreting the Medieval and Tudor Ways', *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, 52 (2008), 238–9.

nuances these views: the school was founded in 1539 but the dissolution of the monasteries was used to its advantage, gaining land to finance its future and provide it with a site as well as removing any competition.

W. Jordan when researching philanthropy in England between 1480 and 1660, scrutinised wills for signs of educational provision. His research concluded that there was not much provision within these wills regarding bequests for the foundation of new schools.<sup>16</sup> Similarly in Gloucester the surviving wills from the 1460s to 1560s predominantly provide bequests to help kin with their education or set them up as apprentices, rather than specific bequests for schooling. John Cooke seems to be the exception with his detailed bequest in 1528. However, there are examples in Gloucester of wills in the early Tudor period providing sums for various chantries in the parish churches, especially the churches of St Mary, St Nicholas and St Michael. It is likely that the upkeep of these chantries would have allowed for the provision of at least some elementary education for the children of the parishes. Jordan further claimed that Leach had exaggerated the number of grammar schools functioning in the early Tudor period. As far as Gloucester is concerned, Leach did list St Oswald's and Llanthony as offering grammar education, and later referred to St Peter's Abbey, as a post-Reformation foundation only, which is contradicted by the school's history.<sup>17</sup> However, according to Nicholas Orme, Leach had 'poor regard for education provided by the monasteries.'<sup>18</sup>

Joan Simon followed up this debate, she felt that Leach was too optimistic, but that Jordan was too dismissive of Leach's claims, her argument falling somewhere in the middle. Simon's criticism of Jordan was based on his proposition that many of the schools of medieval foundation in which lay children could be educated were by 1480 either 'gravely weakened or closed'.<sup>19</sup> Instead, she believed that there were 'a variety of schools and opportunities to be found in England in the fifteenth century, both in ecclesiastical and lay environments.'<sup>20</sup> . Regarding Leach, Simon agreed that there was considerable provision, yet, the parameters of these schools were often blurred. Education could be found in a number of settings and to a greater or lesser extent. In chantry schools a small amount of Latin may have been taught in order for boys to follow or assist in services however, they may also have

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<sup>16</sup>C. Barron, 'Expansion of Education', p. 449.

<sup>17</sup> St Oswald's right to providing a grammar education was given to Llanthony Priory in 1199.

A.F. Leach, *Educational Charters and Documents 598 to 1909* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911), pp. 77–97.

<sup>18</sup> N. Orme, *Medieval Schools* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), p. 335.

<sup>19</sup> J. Simon, *Education and Society in Tudor England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1979), p. 3.

<sup>20</sup> C. Barron, 'Expansion of Education', p. 449.

gained instruction in the vernacular.<sup>21</sup> Simon's conclusions regarding pre-Reformation education probably fit Gloucester's situation more accurately than that proposed by Leach because both monastic houses and chantries were continuing to provide education.

Nicholas Orme is highly critical of Leach's treatment of monastic education. Orme's work *Medieval Schools* discusses Leach's findings and concludes that there was a lack of understanding of the contribution to education of the monastic houses and monks.<sup>22</sup> Orme states that Leach 'misunderstood the teaching they provided for the lay children' overestimating its musical content and underestimating its 'grammatical basis'. Additionally, he accuses Leach of relying too much on the information contained in visitations about the training of novices because this is a fraction of the evidence, and visitation reports may well dwell on shortcomings rather than well-run establishments.<sup>23</sup> Draper agrees with this view and argues that 'this all depends on the long-entertained view that schooling was a sixteenth-century protestant achievement. This view tended to damn medieval education as carried out in failing, fading or corrupt monastic houses, or by monks, priests and chantry chaplains more interested in performing masses for the dead than in teaching'.<sup>24</sup>

Orme is critical too of Jordan in his study of English charities. He cites Jordan's work among others from the 1960s that largely ignored the years preceding 1480, were including the existence of twelve grammar schools in three counties prior to this date, and therefore showed an erroneous increase of grammar schools in the Tudor period.<sup>25</sup> A view that Draper endorses, pointing out that the, 'historiography presents the growth of education as part of the changes of the Reformation and dissolution'<sup>26</sup> This thesis demonstrates that education in Gloucester from the late medieval to the mid Tudor period, when the Crypt School was opened, is more subtle, influenced by a combination of local as well as national and state considerations and events.

Orme when discussing the development of the Tudor schools believed that 'Most Tudor schools flourished or died, not because of what the Crown did to them but through the efforts or failings of wealthy benefactors, private venture school masters and fee paying parents'.<sup>27</sup> This is very much the pattern in Gloucester, there is evidence that the fee paying priory grammar was losing pupils towards the close of the fifteenth century, thus far having

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<sup>21</sup> J. Simon, *Education and Society*, p. 3–4.

<sup>22</sup> N. Orme, *Medieval Schools*, p.7.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>24</sup> G. Draper, 'Children in Kent and Sussex', p. 217.

<sup>25</sup> N. Orme, *Medieval Schools*, p. 9.

<sup>26</sup> G. Draper, 'Children in Kent and Sussex', p. 213.

<sup>27</sup> N. Orme, *Medieval Schools*, p. 344.



fought off competition through the courts and through the bishop of Worcester's declarations which forbade others to provide grammar style education. Consequently, of the monastic schools only the abbey's almonry school survived, albeit it was refounded as the King's School a few hundred yards from the almonry as part of the new foundation of Gloucester Cathedral. When it opened, the Crypt School was secured through legal agreements over its finance and running that had been established fully before Joan Cooke's death. Such schools, Orme concluded, were founded 'to fill the gaps left by the dissolution of monastic cathedrals.'<sup>28</sup> A further observation from Orme which encapsulates the Crypt School in this period was that 'Elizabethan schools were still medieval and many predate the reformation and commemorated founders who were catholic.'<sup>29</sup> The wills of John and Joan demonstrate their orthodox Christianity, and, even though the school grew and developed in the latter half of the sixteenth century, at its heart it a the medieval foundation, not dissimilar to the earlier chantry school in St Mary's church which it adjoined.

### The Growth of Education and Literacy

Also central to this thesis is the increased requirement for education in England in the late medieval and early modern period. As trade expanded, there were more opportunities and the need for literacy and numeracy skills increased. As Draper has shown in her study on literacy and its transmission in the Romney Marsh area, the evidence for the growth in lay literacy can now be 'demonstrated rather than assumed', she asserts that scribes carried out literate administrative tasks in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, however by the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries 'reading, writing and numeracy were used as a tool by local people as part of their other activities, particularly in the form of accounting.'<sup>30</sup> Barron also discusses the expanding requirement for education that involved an 'increasing demand for the teaching of the English vernacular and grammar school teaching of Latin'. Barron identifies the reasons for this. Literacy was no longer just for the 'clerk and courtier' because books were more commonly available, and less expensive now they could be made from paper, while commonplace books increased in popularity and accounting was a required skill

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 344.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>30</sup> G. Draper, 'Children in Kent and Sussex', p. 213.

for many businesses.<sup>31</sup> As a businessman in Gloucester, John Cooke would have been very aware of these changes in his lifetime, and a good grammar school would ensure that businesses within the town would have of the necessary educated men to take up these roles.

Added to this burgeoning of business and the skills required by working people, demographic trends during the late Middle Ages as a consequence of plague outbreaks meant that there was a ‘notable rise in per capita wealth’.<sup>32</sup> Consequently, in addition to consumables beyond basic necessities, some saw education as an area that they were willing to fund this continued, for example, as Simon highlighted, during the Tudor period many new school foundations were created by merchants. Such establishments included a free school in Stepney (1540), opened by the Grocers’ Company, and in 1543 the Mercers who became responsible for West Lavington School.<sup>33</sup> For a merchant like Cooke, these factors were presumably important for his own initiative and the subsequent foundation of the Crypt School in 1539. Moreover, the foundation of schools was not a totally new phenomenon, and such ideas had grown in popularity since the 1440s, although by a mixture of patrons and founders. Thus, as Orme argues, a system had developed regarding the way to found a school that had become well known and almost formulaic, thereby easing the process. Furthermore, Orme notes that the schools of the late medieval period were teaching the skills which the protestant reformers prized, especially the ability to read and understand rather than be informed, which means it can be argued that medieval education created the path for post-Reformation schools and education. These issues are important, nevertheless, as Orme comments, ‘Much remains to be done in the complex field of study of grammar, in the identification of school sites and buildings and reconstructing the careers of schoolmasters and their pupils.’<sup>34</sup> Consequently, it is hoped that this thesis on the Crypt School will add to this understanding.

### Urban Society: Gloucester

As the focus of this study is the foundation of the Crypt School and the reasons behind John and Joan Cooke’s bequest to Gloucester. There are two histories written about the school itself, the first published in 1939 for the school’s four hundredth anniversary and

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<sup>31</sup> C. Barron, ‘Expansion of Education’, p. 450.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 451.

<sup>33</sup> Like Cooke, Nicholas Gibson died leaving the maintenance of the school to his wife.

<sup>34</sup> N. Orme, *Medieval Schools*, p. 11.

the second in 1989 for the four hundred and fiftieth anniversary. Roland Austin's volume (1939) is focused on the initial foundation documents and does little to integrate the history of the school with the development of Gloucester. In the later book Charles Lepper (1989) spends little time on the foundation and early years, the majority of his research focusing on the year 1639 and later. However, it is difficult to see how researching the foundation of the school can be completed without contextualising its place within the history of the town itself.<sup>35</sup>

John and Joan Cooke lived and prospered at a time of religious and local political change and some instability, however at the same time Gloucester was becoming a flourishing centre of trade and industry. The new corporation of mayor, sheriffs and aldermen, dating from Richard III's charter of 1483, involved John Cooke himself as one of the first group of Gloucester men to become an alderman. Therefore, John Cooke's reasoning for bestowing such a large bequest on the town was rooted in his experiences, so research into the reasoning for the foundation of a school must be rooted in the development of Gloucester. In their wills, John and Joan Cooke demonstrate their orthodoxic piety, but John Cooke, as a senior civic officer, was involved in the increasingly violent disputes between the monastic houses and the civic authorities, and thus it is important to consider the relationship between the Church and laity. The monastic foundations in Gloucester were wealthy and in terms of local involvement owned the bulk of the property within the walls of Gloucester, this provided much friction between the Church and the civic authorities, as the tide turned against the monasteries the corporation and the wealthy families of the town took advantage of this and bought land and tenements that had been surrendered. Joan Cooke secured lands to endow the school and merchants such as Thomas Bell, secured buildings in the town, which had once been a friary in order to expand his growing cap-making business. This is not a situation unique to Gloucester, David Grummitt has discussed a series of incidents that took place around 1500 in Canterbury as part of a dispute involving the city's mayor and his supporters against Christ Church Priory.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> R. Austin, *The Crypt School Gloucester* (Gloucester: John Bellows, 1939).

C. Lepper, *The Crypt School 1539-1989: The story of the Crypt School, Gloucester* (Gloucester: Sutton, 1989).

<sup>36</sup> D. Grummitt, '“Stond Horeson and Yelde thy Knyff”: Urban Politics, Language and Litigation in Late Medieval Canterbury', in *The Fifteenth Century XVII: Finding Individuality*, ed. L. Clark (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2020), pp. 115–28.

John Cooke however, deliberately sited his school within the physical confines and the teaching authority of the parish, rather than maintaining or resurrecting (in the case of Llanthony Priory) a school within the domain or authority of one of the monastic houses. This could have been seen as a sign of a general mistrust of the monastic houses in Gloucester, therefore does this study fit in with others examining Gloucester on the eve of the Reformation?

The development of Gloucester has been explored through a number of lenses: religious change, the development of the civic government and its trade and industry. Ben Lowe (2010) describes his publication on Gloucester on the eve of the reformation as one covering political, religious and economic areas ‘in an attempt to place the reader into the conditions of the day’, asserting that in order to understand Gloucester in this period through the lens of the Reformation, it is necessary to examine it more widely looking at the impact too of political and economic life.<sup>37</sup> Lowe additionally examines the character of reform and the drive behind it, focusing on those who would initiate the repurposing of the monastic property within the town, such as Joan Cooke purchasing surrendered lands from Llanthony to benefit her grammar school and Thomas Bell transforming Blackfriars into a capping workshop. Lowe chose to concentrate on the ‘administrative forces’ and how these interconnected with royal policy, especially religious and the ‘effect of plague and war on the economic religious and political geography.’<sup>38</sup> Education too has a role to play in these ideas about Gloucester prior to the Reformation, because it was part of the means whereby the urban community gained socially and economically, and therefore has implications for this study.

Caroline Litzenberger’s 1997 work dealt with Gloucestershire and the Reformation, but primarily focusing on the laity. Using Gloucester and Tewkesbury as case studies she employs religious change as a lens for looking at the experience of the laity in Tudor England. She argues that too often the spotlight has focused on protestantism, ignoring other facets of Tudor religion. Furthermore, Litzenberger warns that it is necessary to accommodate ‘myriad shades of grey’ when exploring such topics, a point that is applicable to this study because it is not possible to focus on one particular aspect of pre- Reformation Gloucester when considering the foundation of the Crypt School. For example, Joan Cooke,

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<sup>37</sup> B. Lowe, *Commonwealth and the English Reformation* (Abingdon: Routledge 2010), Chapter 4.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, Chapter 4.

on the eve of the Reformation, still demonstrates what might be viewed as orthodox late medieval piety, however she had already ensured that the school would benefit from the dissolution, purchasing lands once held by Llanthony Priory. Consequently, this study also underlines the significance of this mixture of orthodox views and new attitudes which allowed for the success of the school. On the other hand Joan was willing to add to the regulations of the school to ensure that a lay person could become a master of the school, however a priest was seen as preferable. She offered a salary of £10 for a priest, but only £9 if a layman was engaged.<sup>39</sup> She also stipulated that the accommodation provided in the upper floor of the schoolroom was for the master and ‘hym and his scolers only and not for his wiff or his famylie’<sup>40</sup> this determines a grudging acceptance that perhaps a priest of the catholic orthodoxy would not be found, but whether the master would be lay or otherwise, orthodoxy would not allow a family to interfere with the running of the school. Whether it was because of her affiliation with the mother church of the diocese of Worcester or whether is a consequence of her friendship with Latimer who became Bishop of Worcester in 1535, she used him as a conduit to persuade Thomas Cromwell to allow her to acquire a portion of the surrendered lands of Llanthony Priory.<sup>41</sup> Additionally the citizens and bailiffs of Worcester were added to her tripartite deed, to monitor those in Gloucester to ensure they continued to carry out the duties and ceremony she had attached to the Crypt School exactly as she wished, failure to do so providing the city of Worcester with a fine of £10.<sup>42</sup>

Moreover, even though comparable tension and social conflict which afflicted late medieval Gloucester has been seen by historians studying other English towns, how this manifested itself seems to have varied being heavily dependent on the local circumstances. For example, Fleming has explored the issues leading to conflict between St Augustine’s Abbey and town in 1490s Bristol, while Joe Chick discusses the slow inroads made into monastic authority by Reading’s leading townsmen and the ensuing if limited conflict, and Maryanne Kowaleski notes the lack of conflict within Exeter and concludes that its moderate size and wealth were significant factors.<sup>43</sup> Thus, Gloucester was not alone in dealing with

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<sup>39</sup> MS GA D3270 C/27 Tripartite deed, ff.110v–114 1539/40 Dame Joan Cook, Gloucester Corporation, bailiffs and citizens of Worcester.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> B. Lowe, *Commonwealth*, Chapter 4.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> P. Fleming, ‘Town versus Abbey in the 1490s’, in *Historic Churches and Church Life in Bristol: Essays in Memory of Elizabeth Ralph, 1910–2000*, ed. J. H. Bethey (Bristol and Gloucester Archaeological Society: Bristol, 2001), pp. 73–85. J. Chick, ‘Urban Oligarchy’, pp. 387–411. R. Holt and G. Rosser, eds, *The Medieval Town in England 1200–1540* (London: Routledge, 1990), R. H. Hilton, Chapter 5. R. Holt, Chapter 8, Maryanne Kowaleski, Chapter 10.

such tensions and the records for Gloucester indicate conflict over procedure, markets and common land on the boundary between the town walls and abbey precincts. For Gloucester, Litzenberger discusses the latter disputes within the town and St Peter's Abbey, but she also shows that at nearby Tewkesbury relations between the laity and abbey did not necessarily lead to conflict, because of the abbey's dominance.<sup>44</sup> Whereas at Gloucester, conflict between the laity and the monastic communities was due to the gradual increase in power of the ruling elite, firstly through the Merchant Guild from 1200 and then the newly formed corporation from 1483.

The development of the ruling lay elite or oligarchy features in discussion regarding the development of many towns from the medieval period onwards. In Gloucester's case conflict within the ruling elite mainly concerns Joan Cooke and the issues she had with the mayor, sheriffs, recorder and common council of the town in the 1540s, although such disputes may have occurred earlier. Nevertheless, as Kowaleski's examination of the oligarchy in fourteenth and fifteenth Exeter shows, even where these small ruling elites existed, they did not necessarily exclude all others and therefore cannot be seen as the main reason for social conflict.<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, Robert Tittler discusses the increasing gap between the ruling elite and inhabitants as a possible cause of dispute and unrest within early modern towns. As an elderly widow, Joan Cooke may have felt estranged from the peers of her late husband which may explain the problems she encountered and her desire to ensure her school's survival through the third party of the bailiffs and people of Worcester.<sup>46</sup>

## The Crypt School

There are two published accounts of the Crypt School. First Roland Austin's 1939 history of the school published to commemorate the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation. Austin's work is reliant on documentary sources, and he references many of the documents essential to understanding the school's foundation. He laments the loss of the council records in the early period of the corporation but examines in detail the wills of both John and Joan

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<sup>44</sup> C. Litzenberger, *The English Reformation and the Laity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1998), p. 14.

<sup>45</sup> M. Kowaleski, 'Provincial Oligarchy', pp. 184–225.

<sup>46</sup> R. Tittler, *The Reformation and the Towns in England: Politics and Political Culture, c. 1540–1640* (New York: Clarendon, 1998).

Cooke, the deeds pertaining to land endowed to the school, the tripartite agreement and finally the depositions collected regarding the state of health of Joan and her fitness to hold the deeds relating to the school.<sup>47</sup> Some of the records Austin had searched for have since come to light, various elements of the early corporation records are now available at the Gloucester Archives. Digitisation of catalogues and records make the task far easier than it was for Austin. Although he did focus on Joan in his accounts, she is very much in the role of the widow carrying out her late husband's wishes and living a godly life. Much of the book is dedicated to later periods in the school's history which were better documented. The second published account of the history of the school is by Charles Lepper in 1989 for the 450<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation. Little of the volume is focused on the foundation and the remainder of the Tudor period, however, the intention of the book is to fill in the gap from 1939 when Austin's book was published to 1989. Again, the main focus is on Joan, with Joan carrying out her husband's wishes. Although he does raise the description of Joan being called 'unwieldy' and ascribes it to her putting on weight.<sup>48</sup> Having discussed this point with Dr Laura Wood it appears that this term could essentially be describing her as fragile and unable to ride to places because of her health.

## Methods and Sources

Although several books compiled in the nineteenth century comprise material from the corporation archives, these volumes raise a number of issues because they are rarely verbatim copies. For example, *The Calendar of the Records of the Corporation* includes facsimile copies of the charters of Gloucester, in addition to transcriptions but among the small number of wills within the transcribed documents, some are transcribed in full whereas others only summarised. Another omission in this book are the court records which can leave large gaps in the record coverage, occasionally a court case is added, but only a summary and outcome. It has been noted in various other publications that only a small fraction of the corporation records had survived into the twentieth century.<sup>49</sup>

Dudley Fosbrooke's publication in 1819 of a history of the town of Gloucester contains useful documents that can be cross referenced to other sources. These include lists (for example the mayors and sheriffs of Gloucester) that had been amended from earlier

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<sup>47</sup> R. Austin, *Crypt School*.

<sup>48</sup> C. Lepper, *Story of the Crypt School*, p. 7.

<sup>49</sup> W. H. Stevenson, *Calendar*.

antiquarian compilations and confirm earlier evidence from original extant corporation documents. Manuscript sources in the form of chantry documents are sparse in the Gloucestershire Archives, except for the chantry certificates of St Bartholomew's (1545).<sup>50</sup> However, the chantry certificates were transcribed in 1906 by J. T. Evans but they are described as extracts and they follow a systematic description of the number of chantries, endowments and priests and no mention is made of other possible roles of the chantry priests such as teaching.<sup>51</sup>

Roland Austin goes to great pains to describe the lack of records regarding the corporation and early years of the Crypt School.<sup>52</sup> There are slightly more records than Austin mentioned, but they are scattered across various archives which in these times of electronic catalogues and data bases have been easier to locate. The Gloucester record office did hold a number of corporation papers, deemed to have been lost, but these are fragmented and concern a small selection of the actions of the corporation during the sixteenth century.<sup>53</sup> Additionally the same archive holds a selection of papers regarding the Crypt School. These files contain the main deeds regarding the foundation of the school, copies of the wills of both John and Joan Cooke, the receipts of the acquisition of land by Joan Cooke for the endowment of the school and the tripartite agreement relating to the functioning and funding of the school. There is then a gap of nearly a hundred years before the records of the school start again.<sup>54</sup> Some mention of the school provisions at Llanthony are covered in Leach's collection of educational charters and documents.<sup>55</sup>

A further document which is now catalogued by the Gloucestershire Archives covers depositions made by various Gloucester men regarding the fitness of Joan Cooke to hold the documents for the school endowment, and an attempt to get her to hand these over to the corporation before her death, rather than leaving them in the hands of her and her nephew William Messenger.<sup>56</sup> These documents can now be linked with transcriptions in *The Calendar of Records of the Corporation* regarding a chancery hearing and judgement on the endowment documents.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> MS GA Gloucester Borough Records GBR/K1/1 Copy chantry certificate relating to the Hospitals of St. Bartholomew, St. Margaret and St. Mary Magdalen, and the 'charnel service', St. Catherine's parish, 1545–1546.

<sup>51</sup> J. Evans, *The Church Plate of Gloucestershire* (Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society, 1906).

<sup>52</sup> R. Austin, *Crypt School*, p.16.

<sup>53</sup> MS GA GBR/J/3/18 ff.16–18. Corporation Proceedings and Administration Customals 'Red Book', 1518–1628.

<sup>54</sup> MS GA D3270. Gloucester United Schools Charity, 1478–1926.

<sup>55</sup> A.F. Leach, *Educational Charters*, pp. 94–97, 575–77.

<sup>56</sup> MS GA D3270/6A. Depositions in a cause relating to Lady Cooks Conveyance. 24 August 1550.

<sup>57</sup> W. H. Stevenson, *Calendar*, pp. 18–19, 56, 62.



Linking the early days of the school with the masters and researching the educational aims of the school was made easier by using the pamphlet written in 1639 by R. Willis, a former student of the crypt school.<sup>58</sup> Cross referencing his identification of masters led to the universities and in particular Jesus College Oxford and their foundation charter.<sup>59</sup>

The cartularies of Gloucester Cathedral have proved invaluable in cross referencing and obtaining details of the rights of the cathedral to markets and lands and of clashes with the civic government of the town. The 'cartularies' (registers) of Llanthony were transcribed in 1449, one comprising the 'Rentals' compiled by Robert Cole of Llanthony Priory in 1455. These documents provide a valuable account of the town, especially regarding the extent of property ownership by the monastic houses and the trades and occupations of the inhabitants. This was particularly useful as a baseline for the Gloucester of John Cooke's lifetime and because they were produced approximately twenty-five years before the charter of incorporation.<sup>60</sup>

This research has employed a relational database, supplemented by a card index of people, places and documents. As in other late medieval social history studies, personal names created considerable issues, for example the Parry/Pury/Purry/Parrie family, who were cousins of John Cooke. This situation was compounded by the repetition of forenames in this family. The database contained fields for each 'individual' covering name, sex, date of birth, mention in documents, mention of education, references to the corporation, religious houses, parishes or trades. This could then be cross referenced and provided some valuable comparisons. The database was useful for demonstrating that John Cooke was not the only resident of Gloucester to endow chantries in more than one parish within the town, but from the documents examined he was the only one between 1500 and 1540 who made a bequest to every parish church, monastic house and hospital within Gloucester. Nevertheless, due to the nature of the extant sources, this can only be a qualified assessment because of the lack of complete wills from the time of the proving of John Cooke's own will. Nevertheless, by using wills from the period of his lifetime, it was feasible to make some comparisons regarding the distribution of his wealth and his piety. It is important to remember the

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<sup>58</sup> *Mount Tabor. Or Private exercises of a penitent sinner Serving for a daily practice of the life of faith, reduced to special heads comprehending the chiefe comforts and refreshings of true Christians: also certain occasionall observations and meditations profitably applyed. Written in the time of a voluntary retrait from secular affaires.* By R.W. Esquire. Published in the yeare of his age 75. Anno Dom. 1639. *Early English Books Online Text Creation Partnership, 2011,* <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo2/A15484.0001.001/1:5.3?rgn=div2;view> (accessed 3 March 2020).

<sup>59</sup> MS Jesus College Oxford Archives. CC1. Jesus College Foundation Charter 1571.

<sup>60</sup> R. Cole, *Rental of All the Houses in Gloucester A.D 1455* (Gloucester: John Bellows, 1890).

challenges of using wills as indicators of the testator's religious beliefs, as well as the influence of clerical scribes and that they represent only an end-of-life snapshot of an individual's pious and charitable expectations and considerations. Even more problematic are women's wills because so few were made and most were produced by prosperous widows, therefore comprising only a very small proportion of society. For example, wills from Joan Cooke's time were only made by a few of women of her background and locality, and to supplement this study women's wills by those in similar situations have also been explored.

## Chapter One: Gloucester in Context

### Governing Gloucester

A series of portraits were commissioned by the common council of Gloucester in the closing years of the sixteenth century. The series culminated in 1618 with the final portrait of the mayor John Thorne, which had been commissioned just prior to his death. The eighteen portraits were hung in the council chamber of the old Tolsey, the sitters depicted looked down upon subsequent council sessions, a reminder to those common council members of the names and deeds of those who had established Gloucester's self-governance over their first century. The majority of the portraits were artistic representations, the subjects being long since deceased, symbols such as their furs, scarlet robes and fine gloves would have given clear indication to the members of the council the exact status of the sitter. These notable citizens ranged from local businessmen such as Gregory Willshire who gave the town authorities £100 annually for the purchase of wine in order to mark the election of a new mayor, to Richard Pate who was shown in his capacity as a Member of Parliament for Gloucester having served the town in 1559 and 1563-7. Although Pate was a native of Cheltenham his links with Gloucester spanned his lifetime. Sir Thomas White had founded St John's College Oxford, although he included Gloucester in his benefactions as one of the twenty-three towns to be awarded a £100 loan to a journeyman clothier, his links were related to his business interests not as a Gloucester citizen. Out of the eighteen portraits only four Gloucester mayors were included resplendent in their scarlet and fur lined robes of office, all four had been prominent and wealthy businessmen of the town. Also included were three portraits of women, all of whom had left substantial or long-lived legacies to the poor of Gloucester, providing funds for the hospitals or donations on an annual basis for the needy of their Gloucester parish.

One portrait stands out as unique, that of John and Joan Cooke who are depicted side by side in a double portrait. John Cooke is shown resplendent in his scarlet mayoral gown trimmed with fur, whilst Joan Cooke held a pair of fine gloves which signified her association with the Merchant Guild. The inclusion of both John and Joan Cooke demonstrate that even at the end of the sixteenth century both were still considered of huge significance to Gloucester, he as civic leader and businessman and Joan as the founder of the Crypt School. Most of the portraits bear the name of the individual and a short explanation as to their

importance. John and Joan Cooke's portrait holds an additional unique feature instead of a basic explanation the observer is presented with a poem concerning their legacy to Gloucester describing them as '*life mates*' whose work ensured the survival of '*Bartholomews*' and the '*Cawseway in ye West*' as well as the foundation of '*The School of Crist*'<sup>61</sup>

John Cooke who has been described as both brewer and mercer, as well as at one time the wealthiest citizen of Gloucester pursued his advancement in the town hierarchy through civic office. He was elected to roles which had been created by the royal charter of 1483, he was sheriff in 1494 and 1498, and mayor on four occasions from 1501 until 1519 as well as being appointed as one of the first aldermen of Gloucester. Cooke's path into local government would have been assured by his membership of the Merchant Guild. The movement of the Merchant Guild from a 'government in waiting' to a de facto civil government as a newly incorporated body in 1483 was the factor that allowed John Cooke to gain his power and influence within Gloucester.

Between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries, several royal charters had been granted to Gloucester, each one offering increasing autonomy to the town through the burgesses as the civic authority. In 1194 Richard I, granted the burgesses 'freedom from toll throughout the kingdom' and the burgesses could hold the borough in fee-farm.<sup>62</sup> This was later confirmed by King John in 1200 and provided for additional authority to the burgesses of Gloucester. These additional powers were specifically granted to those 'of the Merchant Guild shall be quit of toll and lastage and pontage and stallage... throughout the seaports of all our lands on this and the other side of the sea, saving the city of London.'<sup>63</sup> This had been the opportunity for the Merchant Guild of Gloucester to expand their trade and local influence to a degree independently of the Crown. These grants did however contain checks and balances which enabled the Crown to resume control. The 1227 charter stated that there would be no royal sheriff in the town, however, a year later a royal reeve was appointed and remained in place for 12 years, demonstrating that the Crown not only reserved the right to take back control, but had actually utilised this within Gloucester.<sup>64</sup>

The charter of 1200, moreover, allowed the burgesses an annual election from within their body to elect two reeves and four coroners. Each subsequent charter confirmed the

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<sup>61</sup> R. Tittler, 'The 'Gloucester Benefactors' After Four Centuries', *The Antiquaries Journal* 95 (2015), 305–24.

<sup>62</sup> W. H. Stevenson, *Calendar*, pp. 4–5 (Items 2–4).

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 6–8 (Item 5).

<sup>64</sup> R. Holt, 'An English Provençal Town during the Later Middle Ages' (PhD 'thesis', University of Birmingham, 1987), p. 181.

rights granted in 1200 and occasionally added new rights. In 1397 Richard II included that the burgesses were now granted the chattels of outlaws and felons, and that the bailiffs within the guildhall were now allowed to hold a court equivalent to a justice of the peace.<sup>65</sup>

Furthermore, the importance of the guild was demonstrated in the charter of 1200, with specific recourse to those who were members of the Merchant Guild. Becoming a burgess within the town was dependant on already being a member of a guild, previously this had been through tenancy, but that was now to change in Gloucester and, as Holt comments, that many of ‘the craftsmen and petty, merchants of town’ as well as the wealthier men would now have enjoyed this status.<sup>66</sup> This allowed the trades and craft manufacturers of the town the ability to rise in the social ranks to become burgesses. Membership of a guild was achieved through three different means, completing an apprenticeship, succession (although it is unclear if this was for all sons or the eldest) or payment of a fine.<sup>67</sup>

The other guilds linked to the various crafts within Gloucester, were less important but still enhanced the economic development of the town. Little is known about these craft associations because among the surviving records the earliest reference to a guild, other than the Merchant Guild, is from 1454 in which a piece of land was given to the butchers of Gloucester on the banks of the River Severn to dispose of waste from their butchering. The butchers were also granted the power to elect two wardens and not allow anyone from outside Gloucester to set up as a butcher before serving an apprenticeship, therefore creating a guild.<sup>68</sup> By 1517 the guild was referred to in an ‘Agreement that the Butchers' Guild will not keep pigs in any of their stys in St. Mary de Grace parish’ which demonstrates that the butchers’ guild was still in existence.<sup>69</sup>

Alongside the Merchant Guild, these smaller and more specialist guilds were also populated by influential and wealthy citizens of Gloucester. Some of this wealth was diverted into at least three of the chantry chapels supported by guilds in the parish churches. The wealthiest was the weavers guild within the parish church of St Michael’s, the benevolence of Margaret Vannecke, the wife of a mayor of Gloucester founded St Anne service for the ‘Fraternity of the craft of Weavers’.<sup>70</sup> Its wealth was enhanced over the course of the

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<sup>65</sup> W. H. Stevenson, *Calendar*, pp. 13–14.

<sup>66</sup> R. Holt, ‘English Provençal Town’, p. 181.

<sup>67</sup> Maryanne Kowaleski discusses this in her work on Exeter. As a larger number of men tried to join the guilds it became necessary for the ruling elite or oligarchy to restrict numbers by only admitting the first-born son by the route of succession into the guilds. M. Kowaleski. ‘Provincial Oligarchy’.

<sup>68</sup> R. Holt, ‘English Provençal Town’, p. 181.

<sup>69</sup> MS GA GBR/B/2/11 Disputes between Mayor and burgesses and Abbot of St. Peter and his Maisemore tenants over common rights, subject of litigation from c.1507–1519.

<sup>70</sup> Garret Vannecke was sheriff in 1493 and mayor in 1499. (See also Appendix B).

sixteenth century by other wealthy Gloucester citizens. John Fawkner, another former mayor, required that 'his wife Margaret shall deliver within a year after his decease £40 into the hands of the Master and Wardens of the weavers within the town of Gloucester, being proctors of the service of St Anne, founded in the church of St Michael.'<sup>71</sup>

A further group in Gloucester were the portmen who were allowed some privileges, such as protection of the market and the ability to carry out a craft or trade locally. Of the 123 portmen, or fine payers, identified by Holt in 1423 half were craftsmen. Like their counterparts in other late medieval towns, such as the intrantes of Canterbury, some of these craftsmen aspired to join guilds or become burgesses, because they were 'sufficiently prosperous to have craft tools and had enough financial and personal credit to allow them to set up in business.'<sup>72</sup> As an example of this, Holt found that seven men among the portmen in 1423 had that year managed to become burgesses on payment of the necessary fee..<sup>73</sup>

### The Charter of 1483

The burgesses of Gloucester at the coronation of Richard III petitioned the Crown for a charter to secure their self-governance and thus enhance the status of the town. The petition was successful and along with the presentation of his personal sword Gloucester received its charter and a status and hierarchy comparable to London. The town's role in the dynastic struggles of the War of the Roses had not been overlooked, but it was also a time when Richard III was endeavouring to gain political allegiance to secure his position. The charter bestowed various political privileges and liberties for the leading citizens of the town. Some items were confirmed from previous charters, such as remission of £45 out of the fee farm of £65. The burgesses were incorporated and styled as 'the mayor and burgesses of the town of Gloucester' allowing for the election of a mayor who would be responsible for the execution of the office of clerk of the market, steward and marshall of the king's household and escheator of the new county, which now included the parishes of Dudstone and the Hundred of Kings Barton thus making Gloucester a separate county and town with the freedom to tax the new area for their own benefit. The role of mayor now superseded the reeve, previously

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<sup>71</sup> W. H. Stevenson, *Calendar*, pp. 435–7 (item 1237).

<sup>72</sup> S. Sweetinburgh, 'Shepsters, Hucksters and other Businesswomen: Female Involvement in Canterbury's Fifteenth-Century Economy', *Archaeologia Cantiana* 138 (2017), 179–99.

<sup>73</sup> R. Holt, 'English Provençal Town', p. 187.

appointed by the Crown, allowing local and complete control of the town. The office of sheriff was formed and replaced the two existing bailiffs and a common council was created as the governing body of the town, which included the previously discussed posts as well as eleven aldermen who were to be elected for life, four stewards and twenty-two burgesses.<sup>74</sup>

From the date of incorporation, the mayor became the head of the civic government, and to highlight his elevated status, a sword was to be carried before him while he was expected to wear a fur-trimmed scarlet gown with a seal of office. As well as such civic rituals, it is conceivable that incorporation confirmed and amplified the oligarchical nature of Gloucester's civic governance because many of the roles were held for life, such as that of the aldermen, from whom the mayor was elected, as well as the common council. However social mobility was possible through the election of bailiffs, although they were now of a lesser status and could be drawn from the 'burgesses of the town' or from members of the Merchant Guild. Consequently, during the sixteenth century Gloucester was governed by the wealthiest citizens. Even though Maryanne Kowaleski's study of Exeter and its oligarchy suggests this occurred earlier than at Gloucester, there are some similarities. The emergent oligarchy protected its membership in the later medieval period, leading to the ascendancy of the merchant class into Exeter's urban government. As she discusses, the 'political privileges' of gaining the freedom of Exeter allowed its citizens to run for high office, but also to enjoy opportunities such as the 'right to trade at retail'. In Gloucester, membership of the Merchant Guild gave similar rights, for access to civic office was attainable as a burgess, as it was through membership to the Merchant Guild. Furthermore, the civic authorities controlled and codified certain market rights such as the selling of wool, metal and grain within the Boothall. Thus, it is to be expected that seven of the twelve surviving portraits that were hung in the Tolsey were merchants of substantial wealth and of these five were known to have held civic office in the county.<sup>75</sup>

Nevertheless, in Gloucester, as in Exeter and Canterbury, for example, it was possible through the guild system for a craftsman or tradesman to seek advancement through purchasing their status as a burgess (or freeman) as part of what Kowaleski terms an 'open oligarchy'<sup>76</sup>, thereby remaining open to newcomers rather than a completely closed system. Chick's examination of the guilds and political structure at Reading has some similarity to Gloucester because there was an open oligarchy linked closely with the guilds, even though

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<sup>74</sup> W. H. Stevenson, *Calendar*, pp. 13–14.

<sup>75</sup> M. Kowaleski, 'Provincial Oligarchy'.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 186–88.

at Reading he sees the guild as becoming the voice of the inhabitants. At Gloucester, the corporation was the supreme authority, albeit John Cooke and his peers in their civic roles also strengthened the guilds through linking them to the town's parish churches. This allowed the guilds to thrive, in conjunction with their chantries at all eleven parish churches.

Moreover, by the mid sixteenth century the parish church of St Nicholas was even referred to as the corporation church and housed numerous chantry chapels allied with the town guilds.

The 1483 charter also allowed for a coroner to be elected by the mayor and aldermen, which by the 1530s had become an annual post that was held by an alderman. Other administrative positions were added in the early years of the corporation, such as the town clerk, the recorder and four serjeants-at-mace, two under the jurisdiction of the mayor and two for the sheriffs. This proliferation of civic officers enhanced the opportunities for civic rituals, and it is conceivable that later Joan Cooke envisaged such an opportunity when she instituted the annual foundation ceremony for the school, linking it carefully to ideas about jurisdiction and authority. In addition, the Gloucester authorities introduced other civic ceremonies, such as dinners and feasting at Michaelmas, the Easter day procession and banquet, and drinking on the eve of the feast days of St Peter and St John the Baptist, thereby demonstrating the power and authority of the civic government.

The responsibilities of the common council and the newly appointed officers were far ranging, from ensuring the basic needs of the town's citizens such as the upkeep of the water supply for the town which was piped into the central cross, to regulating order and stability. Additionally the surviving records of the sessions of the new hundred court were mainly concerned with debt as well as a number of regulations concerning both trade regulation and morality<sup>77</sup>. The dates of these ordinances coincided with John Cooke's office as initially sheriff, then alderman and mayor and would have influenced his understanding and handling of civic issues.<sup>78</sup> In 1499 it was decreed that 'no burgess or inhabitant to buy woollen or linen cloth except within the Boothall' and in 1500 the council confirmed 'prices and quality of bread, ale, meat, fish, coal, candles'. As well as trade regulation the general state of the town was considered, Butchers were not allowed to 'scald swine in open street, cast bones into street, or wash offal at the 'washing place without the inner north gate'.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> C. Casson, 'Reputation and responsibility in medieval English towns: civic concerns with the regulation of trade', *Urban History*, 39.3 (2012), 387–408.

<sup>78</sup> The documents cover 1502–7, Cooke's time in specific roles other than alderman covered 1494–1519.

<sup>79</sup> MS GA F19-20 GBR/B2/1 (1504), Court Leet Ordinances.



Even though the leading citizens had managed to acquire greater autonomy over the centuries, their influence was partly curtailed by the power of the monastic houses that owned large tracts of the town and surrounding countryside, which meant that the Church as the largest landowner reaped the financial benefit through its rentals. Moreover, the considerable number of building plots locally in the fifteenth century presumably brought itinerant builders into the town who would need to be housed and fed. Such workers may have been accommodated at the abbey's vast hostelry, The New Inn. It consisted of a large courtyard inn with outside galleries that had been built in 1450, by John Twyning, one of the monks at St Peter's.<sup>80</sup> Although conjecture, it is unlikely that it was constructed to house and feed pilgrims visiting the shrine of King Edward, and instead it was probably for the benefit of visiting traders and those travelling on the main routes from Gloucester to Bristol, South Wales and London. Additionally, it may have served as accommodation for construction craftsmen and labourers from outside of the town hired by the abbey and others. The inn was part of five new holdings that the abbot had acquired in the centre of the town, to add to the already large portfolio of properties.<sup>81</sup> This building work ensured the abbey not only received a good income from its rents but was also very visible in the centre of the town and provided at a price, essential services, such as board and lodging to a wide range of people

The extent of the overall property ownership by the Church can be seen from the rental document of 1455, compiled by Robert Cole, a canon of Llanthony Priory, for the purposes of the land geld. According to the rental, of the total distribution of buildings in Gloucester, St Peter's Abbey, St Bartholomew's hospital and Llanthony Priory between them held 39% of all buildings within the town walls, of which St Peter's Abbey was the most extensive holder.<sup>82</sup> This was largely due to events in 1327, because even though its Norman building dominated the town and the tomb of Robert of Normandy, the eldest son of the Conqueror, connected the abbey to royalty, initially St Peter's was not well endowed.<sup>83</sup> In 1327 Edward II, having been deposed, died at Berkeley Castle and Abbot John Thoky received the king's body for burial at the abbey which encouraged pilgrims to visit his tomb. Their offerings provided sufficient income to enable completion of building work on the abbey, as well as allowing St Peter's to acquire significantly more land locally.

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<sup>80</sup> R. Cole, *Rental*, p. 84.

<sup>81</sup> J. Langton, 'Late Medieval Gloucester: Some Data from a Rental of 1455', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, vol. 2, no. 3 (1977), 259–77.

<sup>82</sup> Data derived from analysis of the material within the rental document, R. Cole, *Rental*.

<sup>83</sup> Robert was buried at the high altar in 1134.

With this level of ownership came an expectation by the abbey that it should be part of the town's legislative process, as well as being able to utilise its privileged status. The cartularies of St Peter's Abbey describe the privileges the abbey enjoyed in detail, including the right whereby only the monks were at 'liberty to fish in all the streams, as well as in the Severn and elsewhere', as well as receiving the tithes of 'venison from the Forest of Dean and a fair and a market at Northleech.'<sup>84</sup> Yet the privilege that caused the most friction between the abbey and the town was that granted first by Stephen and then confirmed by Henry III whereby the abbey's lands were to be 'free from all toll, carriage, summage, conduct and all other exactions.'<sup>85</sup> Furthermore, the abbey continued to claim exemption from tolls within the town of Gloucester for any cattle and goods, although this was challenged on at least one occasion. .<sup>86</sup> Even after 1483 the abbey continued to claim toll free markets at its gates, allowing incomers to circumnavigate the official markets and therefore the taxes charged by the corporation.

### The Townspeople of Gloucester

As well as showing that the third largest occupational group in 1455 were those who were part of the building industry: masons, carpenters and plumbers, the rentals confirm that Gloucester was a key production centre for the cloth, metal and leather trades. These trades were crucial for the town's success as the corporation developed. Of the fifty crafts or professions mentioned, 38% were involved with cloth production and the clothing trade, including six mercers, weavers, cappers, dyers and seven tailors. Leather workers comprised glovers, corvisers, tanners and skimmers who together made up 24% of the trades and 34 % were in trades allied to metal work, there being three goldsmiths and pewterers, six wire drawers and two cardmakers.

In addition, Gloucester was an important hub for agrarian and other raw materials, as well as trade in finished products, and the layout of the town in this period illustrates the distribution of the trades and commerce as John Cooke would have known it. The streets were divided into craft and service areas and, even though the docks were not built until the

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<sup>84</sup> *Historia et Cartularium Monasterii Sancti Petri Gloucestriae*, Volume III, ed. W. H. Hart (London: Longman, 1867), p. xxii.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xxii.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xxiii. A case bought by the Gloucester bailiffs William de Sumery and Thomas de Evesham against the abbot in 32 Henry III, but the verdict is not recorded.

end of Elizabeth's reign, there was a substantial quay serving this navigable stretch of the River Severn. The river provided trade opportunities not only between Gloucester and Bristol, but also into the trade routes of Europe, as well as more locally by giving access to markets in Painswick and Tewkesbury.

The High Cross was the focal point of late medieval Gloucester, the streets radiating out in compass points. The centre was dominated by retailers and victuallers, a hub of trades serving everyday needs from butcher's shops to apothecaries and inns. These retailers would have served both the lay population and the needs of the monastic houses in the town and produced a rental income for both. The Westgate Street was dominated by the buildings of St Peter's Abbey, which notably included a market under its own jurisdiction at King Edward's Gate. This market continued to be a problematic issue for the civic authorities because the abbey was protective about its trading rights including freedom from the town toll.<sup>87</sup> As well as a loss of revenue from Gloucester's traders, this and other markets on the abbey's and the priory's city estates were lucrative for incomers who could trade freely on this border of the town without the restrictions set by the corporation in the Boothall, thereby being in direct competition with the markets controlled by the civic authorities. Such disputes continued into the Tudor period because it had become a requirement that certain goods from wool to metals should only be sold within the market at the Boothall.

To sustain both local townspeople and travellers to Gloucester, 16% of the businesses recorded in the rental documents were concerned with the provisioning of food and drink. Such visitors included peasants from the many villages surrounding Gloucester who came to sell their surplus goods at the markets, as well as merchants bring manufactured and other goods, who might be travelling between Bristol and Wales and who would stay at the many inns within the town.

The town's mercantile trade allowed John Cooke and his peers to build their fortunes, For example, Philip Monger possessed at least four properties in the inner region of the town, including one rented to a Richard Cooke for the sum of 26s and 8d as well as various curtilage and tenements in the parish of St John , and his own house listed in the more prosperous area of Northgate Street.<sup>88</sup> Monger's business included trading via the overland routes between Gloucester and Southampton, and among the products he imported were

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<sup>87</sup> *Historia et Cartularium Monasterii Sancti Petri Gloucestiae*, Volume 1, ed. W. H. Hart (London: Longman, 1867), p. 26.

<sup>88</sup> R. Cole, *Rental*, pp. 74, 76, 98.

madder and woad for use as dye in the cloth industry, and wine from Europe.<sup>89</sup> As Monger's business prospered he and his wife were able to fund the rebuilding of the chapel of St Thomas in Northgate 'for the health of their souls' in 1454.<sup>90</sup> Again this bears some similarity to John Cooke, because part of his final bequest was to bestow lavish gifts upon the Gloucester parishes, ensuring that his name and influence were still present after his death.

Due to the 'lack of metalworkers and their dangerous fires and butchers with their stinking offal', a further group who lived on Northgate were several lawyers, clerks and Reeves, as well as apothecaries.<sup>91</sup> In addition, some of the wealthiest Gloucester merchants lived in this area, such as Thomas Bisley and Thomas Dewhurst who owned 29 and 28 properties respectively. There were also wealthy widows holding land, including Joan Reed who held ten properties and the Countess of Shrewsbury, who had a house here and four other properties within the walls.<sup>92</sup> Like the mercers, these professionals dominated high civic office in the town, and it is perhaps this group Cooke considered when he decided to establish a new grammar school because for the town to prosper it would need a literate workforce.

As a reminder that Gloucester was a distribution hub, Southgate Street provided a 'service area' for the arrivals and departures of people and goods. Among the local inhabitants was Walter who sold spices, Richard the baker and John Green the fletcher. In between were John Limerick, who was 'learned in law' and John Knight, a physician, who was next door to the 'Hostelry under the sign of St George' and Grove the cutler, who also maintained an inn.<sup>93</sup> The area remained a busy hub, so much so that a notice was sent out in 1504 reminding the inhabitants that 'Horses and mares to be tied at inn, not at street.'<sup>94</sup>

This distribution of property holders provides an insight into the income and wealth of the town. The skyline of late medieval Gloucester would have been dominated by the eleven parish churches, two priories and the abbey, and, as noted above the Church not only dominated the view but also ownership within the town, as well as maintaining certain markets and other trading privileges. which hindered the town's development. Furthermore, members of the monastic communities did not always behave in a manner which enhanced the reputation of the town. In response, the corporation, in 1504, introduced a regulation

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<sup>89</sup> *VCH Gloucester 4*, pp. 41–54.

<sup>90</sup> R. Cole, *Rental*, p. 99.

<sup>91</sup> Langton, John. 'Data from a Rental', p. 274.

<sup>92</sup> R. Cole, *Rental*, pp 30–2.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 4–25.

<sup>94</sup> MS GA F19-20 GBR/B2/1 (1504), Court Leet Ordinances.

whereby 'Priests and other religious found consorting with prostitutes to be put in a hutch reserved for them' and in these circumstances 'Priests in service of burgesses or inhabitants, if evil living, to be discharged'. The corporation was equally concerned about the morality of the townspeople, which also led to new ordinances that year in which 'Common 'queens' and clients, lay and clerical, to be placed in a 'hutch' in the market-place.'<sup>95</sup> Thus Tudor Gloucester witnessed an acrimonious relationship between the lay government and the monasteries, which at times led to violent disputes, especially in 1513 when a full scale riot erupted on disputed common ground between the abbey and the town walls. This was only resolved by the drawing up of a detailed agreement between Abbot William of St Peter's Abbey and the mayor and burgesses of Gloucester, which specified the use and ownership of the disputed land at certain points in the year.

Despite the apparent buoyancy of late medieval Gloucester's economy, the common council and later the corporation often claimed poverty when dealing with the Crown. Even though Clarke is of the opinion these complaints were 'part of the normal rhetoric with the crown'<sup>96</sup> and therefore Gloucester was not alone in attempting to reduce the sums owed to the Crown, it is worth noting that in 1447 the town bailiffs petitioned the king to reduce or relieve them of the fee-farm, stating that it cannot be raised 'without great detriment, in so much that at this time, on account of diverse petulances in the town and the ruin of hospices and houses in the said city.'<sup>97</sup> In 1473 the town petitioned the Crown once more, this time it was more specific stating that the bailiffs had reported that the town was 'febly paved and full perilous and iepardous for passengers in so much that many persons, both of high degree and low, have been seriously injured therby.'<sup>98</sup> To emphasise the point, the plea continued that the bailiffs and stewards have 'no lands, tenements or rents etc., in common wherewith to maintain the same.' and to overcome this lack they sought approval for the civic authorities to demand that the people in the main four streets of Gloucester to 'make sufficient pavement before their property at their own costs and charges.'<sup>99</sup> The bailiffs were pleading poverty due to depopulation but this plea may have been because any shortfall of the fee farm had to be covered from the bailiffs' own goods to the value of £30.<sup>100</sup> This was an issue that

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> P. Clark, 'The Ramoth-Gilead of the Good, Gloucester 1540-1640', in, J. Barry, ed., *The Tudor and Stuart Town* (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 244-73.

<sup>97</sup> W. H. Stevenson, *Calendar*, p. 15 (item 17).

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., p. 15 (item 19).

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> B. Lowe, *Commonwealth*, Chapter 4.

continued to hinder senior office holding within the corporation, because of the need for considerable personal wealth among those who became the mayor, sheriffs and aldermen.

One of those able to take on such office holding was John Cooke, who in 1524 would be Gloucester's wealthiest citizen, and from 1494 he became heavily involved in the civic governance of Gloucester.<sup>101</sup> He had first served as a sheriff in 1494, then again in 1498 and in 1501 Cooke served his first of four terms of office as mayor of Gloucester. As noted above, Cooke was one of a group of wealthy men, consisting of mainly clothiers, merchants and lawyers who owned property within the town and who became increasingly important following the grant of incorporation in 1483 because this gave the civic body of Gloucester greater authority. Furthermore, their area of jurisdiction increased to include the Hundreds of Kings Barton and Dudston, this made Gloucester both 'county and city'<sup>102</sup> and allowed the administration of justice for the common good.<sup>103</sup> In particular, the senior civic officers held their own assizes and monthly county courts, as well as execute royal writs and answer to the exchequer. The mayoral office came with its own powers, to receive all fines.<sup>104</sup>

For Cooke this was an opportunity to influence the progress and development of the town, perhaps bringing in new ideas to help improve Gloucester. Incorporation thus started a real shift in the balance of power between the ecclesiastical and civic authorities in Gloucester, the first officers being the mayor, John Trye, the sheriffs, William Francomb and John Poole, and the alderman (of which Cooke along with four others were named as the first to hold this office for life). Eleven years later Cooke would be appointed sheriff during the mayoral term of William Cole.<sup>105</sup> During his four terms of office as mayor, Cooke would have undertaken ceremonial duties, and this may have influenced Joan to incorporate such rituals later concerning their school. For example, at the annual visitation a procession of 'the Mayor, Recorder, two of the eldest aldermen, two Sheriffs, Town Clerk, four Stewards and Sword Bearer' were to assemble at the High Cross and process to the school to survey the schoolhouse.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> According to the 1524 lay subsidy, Cooke had the highest assessment at £300. MS TNA E 179/114/259/5. Exchequer: King's Remembrancer: Particulars of Account and other records relating to Lay and Clerical Taxation.

<sup>102</sup> *VCH Gloucester* 4, pp. 54–57.

<sup>103</sup> B. Lowe, *Commonwealth: The new charter of 1483*, Chapter One.

<sup>104</sup> T.D. Fosbroke, R. Bigland, *An Original History of the City of Gloucester* (London: J. Nichols and Son, 1819), p. 415.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 303–5. Cooke served as Sheriff in 1494 and 1498

<sup>106</sup> MS GA D3270 C/27 Tripartite deed ff. 110v-114 1539/40 Dame Joan Cook, Gloucester Corporation, bailiffs and citizens of Worcester.

In the decades following Richard III's grant up to 1547 the most common occupations among the aldermen of Gloucester were mercers, drapers, merchants, cappers and tanners. Wealth remained a perquisite for high office in Tudor Gloucester and by 1513, the eleven wealthiest men in the town were mercers, drapers and the bell founder William Henshaw. Of these Henshaw and the mercers, John Cooke and William Cole, were the wealthiest and between them they held the office of mayor or sheriff of Gloucester sixteen times between 1486 and 1520.<sup>107</sup> Nevertheless, Gloucester remained 'open' concerning civic advancement and the 1524 lay subsidy includes the names of new members of the civic authorities, such as Thomas Bell, John Falconer and Ralph Sankey. These men held office in the later years of Cooke's life, as well as playing a role in the foundation or early years of the school, an educational establishment John and Joan believed would overcome what they saw as the paucity of schooling opportunities in their town.

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<sup>107</sup> T.D. Fosbroke and R. Bigland, *History of Gloucester*, p. 303.

## **Chapter 2: Education in Late Medieval Gloucester**

It is likely that John Cooke's wish to establish a free school in Gloucester was in part a result of his experience of the monastic houses' monopolisation of education in Gloucester.<sup>108</sup> From the Angevin period education in the town was organised by the monastic houses, firstly by St Oswald's Priory which is recorded in the Patent Rolls of Henry I.<sup>109</sup> St Peter's Abbey also had a cloister school from the Norman period which became known for its scholarship and university ties. By 1283 the monks of St Peter's had established Gloucester College in Oxford (later part of Worcester College) as a place of study for thirteen of their monks. Such linked foundations became increasingly common in the later medieval and early modern centuries, including New College Oxford that only recruited fellows who had been educated at Winchester College, while in the seventeenth century Cooke's school established links with Pembroke College, Oxford.

St Peter's early cloister school later developed into a thriving almonry school, perhaps a product of the Council of Vienne (1311) that encouraged Benedictine monks to continue their own education and stated that every monastery with sufficient resources should have a master to instruct the brethren in grammar and logic. The master of the school in the early sixteenth century was John Tucke MA, who taught the thirteen boys there as well as those in the abbey's song school.<sup>110</sup> The latter comprised teaching up to six boys to sing both plainsong and descant that they sang in the Lady Chapel. For these duties he received £6 per annum, chambers and various other benefits. The students on leaving the choir school were expected to have completed some rudimentary studies in 'Latin, Greek, Writing, Arithmetick, and Musick', which would prepare them to attend university to complete their education.<sup>111</sup> Many of the boys returned to the cathedrals and abbeys at the end of their university education to continue their religious life.<sup>112</sup>

In the last decades of the fifteenth century the almonry school was similar to those at Ely and Norwich. The scholars would have been part of the community with duties including

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<sup>108</sup> MS GA GBR/J/3/18 f. 66v Appointment by Dame Joan Cook of Philip Draper, Gloucester, yeoman, bailiff or rent collector of all manors, lands, tenements, etc., in Badgeworth, Bentham, Brockworth, Hempsted, Podsmead and Elmore in county of city, and Stonehouse, Standish, Ebley, Oxlinch, Westbury [on Severn] and Chaxhill in county of Gloucester.1539/40.

<sup>109</sup> R. Austin, *Crypt School*, pp. 5–7.

<sup>110</sup> D. Robertson, *The King's School Gloucester* (London: Phillimore, 1974), pp. 20–3.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 20–3.

<sup>112</sup> T.D. Fosbrooke and R. Bigland, *History of Gloucester*, p. 232.



serving the monks at Mass and working within the Lady Chapel. A former pupil of Winchester College and scholar of New College, Oxford, Tucke in addition to his teaching duties was expected to attend Vespers and High Mass on feast days.<sup>113</sup> John Cooke would have known Tucke, and it is feasible that when he began discussions with his wife and friends regarding his new school he believed that the type of education and background offered by Tucke would be appropriate for his school. The masters in the opening decades of the school's history had very similar backgrounds and were required to teach 'the art of grammar', as discussed below.

The range of education available in Gloucester at Llanthony Priory and St Peter's Abbey was adequate to service the needs of the Church but was increasingly insufficient to educate the growing population of young men who were required by the town and corporation.<sup>114</sup> For even though Llanthony Priory had gained and maintained a hold as the only provider of a more general grammar education for the boys in the town, this provision was inadequate. The school had an ancient history having been established under a charter granted to Llanthony by the defunct St Owen's Church, which had received its grant from Henry II in 1137. This had allowed for a school to be run in the chapel of the castle.<sup>115</sup> As the castle became underused and somewhat derelict the school moved to the parish church before finally being given to Llanthony Priory. The priory moved the school close to its own premises in the south of the town and sought to establish that the charter of Milo, constable of Gloucester, dated 1143, granted the priory sole right to provide grammar education in the town.<sup>116</sup> This right was strongly defended, even though at times the ability and suitability of the teachers provided by Llanthony Priory was questioned.

Ecclesiastical institutions began sought to retain their eminence as the providers of education, but this became increasingly difficult by the late fourteenth and fifteenth century. This was partially due to the increase in literacy in the lay population. Literacy was no longer the sole preserve of the Church. Religious houses allowed educated clerks and secular clergy who had taken minor orders to offer themselves as teachers or private tutors of grammar. At Gloucester, Llanthony Priory unsurprisingly was keen to retain its monopoly, because fees provided valuable revenue. Llanthony had been charging the sum of 3s 4d per quarter to educate local boys, but a drop in revenue was experienced when a rival grammar school was

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>114</sup> A. Hinde, *England's Population: A History since the Domesday Survey* (London: Hodder Arnold, 2003).

<sup>115</sup> A.F. Leach, *Educational Charters*, pp. 95–6.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., p. 95.

created close by, forcing the priory to lower its fees to one shilling a quarter.<sup>117</sup> Llanthony decided to fight the arrival of its competitor and the subsequent court case which followed, known as the ‘Grammar Schools Case’, became the basis of an important ruling in the courts that became a step towards the removal the monopoly from the monasteries.

In earlier centuries, Llanthony had ensured that its rights to a monopoly were stated in public. For example, Bishop Giffard of Worcester (1235-1302) had given public notice on three consecutive Sundays in all the churches in Gloucestershire that reiterated the Priory’s claim, stating that ‘...against anyone calling himself a scholar keeping any school for the sake of teaching in the said borough, except that one the teaching of which had been granted to a fit master by the collation of the prior and convent of Llanthony, who have been and were notoriously in possession or quasi possession of the right of collation to such school from time whereof the memory of man runneth not to the contrary.’<sup>118</sup> Furthermore, this decree was reiterated in 1380 by Bishop Wakefield, who issued a mandate to the archdeacon of Gloucester to observe Giffard’s original decree.

In the early fifteenth century, Llanthony Priory was forced to return to the courts to try to protect its own interests. The case concerned a school master, Thomas Moon from Hereford who had attempted to establish a school close to the priory’s school. The court records also claim that a popular master from the priory’s school left following a disagreement and established his own school close by. As a consequence, his pupils followed him to the new school which angered those at the priory. The reason court records survive is that the case became a landmark ruling in the law of torts.<sup>119</sup> According to the records,

‘Two masters of the Grammar School [Llanthony] brought an action of trespass against another master. They stated they were appointed to have the government of the scholars of the school, and to teach children and others there. But the defendant set up another school in the midst of the town, and thereby the plaintiffs who had been used to obtain either forty pence or two shillings for the quarter’s schooling of a pupil could now obtain only twelve pence. Held, no action lay.’<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> J. Simon, *Education and Society*, p. 24.

<sup>118</sup> A. F. Leach, *The Schools of Medieval England* (London: Methuen, 1915), p. 126.

<sup>119</sup> The tort is an act or omission, other than a breach of contract, which gives rise to injury or harm to another, and amounts to a civil wrong for which courts impose liability. In other words, a wrong has been committed and the remedy is money damages to the person wronged. <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/suny-monroe-law101/chapter/general-law-of-torts/> (accessed January 2, 2020).

<sup>120</sup> <https://lawlegal.eu/gloucester-grammar-school39s-case/> (accessed January 2, 2020).

The judgment states that ‘If an act or omission cause injury to another, but no legal right is infringed, no action will lie, it being ‘*damnum sine injuria*’ or injury suffered without a loss.<sup>121</sup> This landmark case is still cited in law today because it established a point under common law whereby one schoolmaster could not sue another for starting a school, albeit they could claim against another school if the second school prevented children from attending the first.<sup>122</sup> Nonetheless, Llanthony pursued its monopoly for another century, Bishop Silvester issuing a statement in 1513 that no one could keep a school in Gloucester other than those who had been granted the right by the prior and convent of Llanthony.<sup>123</sup>

Even though Cooke was intending to establish his school close to the priory, by the time he was formulating his plans Llanthony’s school was in decline and no longer a threat. Llanthony Grammar School was recorded in Cole’s rental of 1455 as ‘a curtilage with a tenement, wherein a school is held’<sup>124</sup> this was located in Gor Steet which eventually became Bull Street off Longsmith Street, later described in the rentals document compiled by David Mathew in 1535 as a ‘schoolroom but by this time was vacant’.<sup>125</sup> There is nothing to link the demise of the Llanthony Grammar School with the foundation of the Crypt School, it appears that the Llanthony school by this time was still functioning as a song school, but perhaps with limited pupils this was taking place at the priory itself. A lack of a functioning grammar school would have led to an increasing necessity for grammar school places which would have ensured a ready supply of students for the opening of the Crypt School.

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid.; J. Simon, *Education and Society*, p. 24.

<sup>122</sup> <https://lawlegal.eu/gloucester-grammar-school39s-case/> (accessed 2 January 2020).

<sup>123</sup> R. Austin, *Crypt School*, p. 9.

<sup>124</sup> R. Cole, *Rental*, p. 23.

<sup>125</sup> R. Austin, *Crypt School*, p. 12.



Bull Lane Gloucester  
copyright Google Streetview Maps



Speed's Map of Gloucester.



Approximate location of Llanthony Grammar School. copyright Google Maps.

Furthermore, he was presumably cognisant of the judgement in this case and wealthy enough to consider defending his school against Llanthony in the courts should it be necessary.<sup>126</sup> In addition, unlike Llanthony that charged fees, John intended that his should be a ‘free schole’, the establishment funded through the endowments he provided.<sup>127</sup>

Cooke’s idea for a school which would enable local boys to not only be educated to serve the Church, but also to administer and run the businesses and lay government in Gloucester was not new. As early as 1310 the ecclesiastical dominance in education had been challenged when the abbot of St Alban’s had approved statutes which empowered the master of the schools controlled by the abbey to ‘supress, annul destroy and eradicate all adulterine schools within our territory.’<sup>128</sup> Eighty years later a similar situation developed in London where the population was growing rapidly and education provided by the Church could not keep pace with the numbers of students. Nonetheless, the ecclesiastical authorities sought to

<sup>126</sup> J. E. G. Montmorency, *State Intervention in English Education, A Short History from the Earliest Times Down to 1833* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1902), pp. 41–5.

<sup>127</sup> MS GA GBR/J/3/18, ff. 66v-69: Corporation Proceedings and Administration /Customals 'Red Book', 1518–1628.

<sup>128</sup> J. Simon, *Education and Society*, p. 24.

stop the growing number of unlicensed masters setting up schools to teach grammar, and these schoolmasters were summoned to appear before the ecclesiastical courts. However, they brought a counter claim through the mayor's court in an attempt to uphold their rights to teach. The ecclesiastical authorities asked the Crown to recognise only three schools, licenced by themselves: St Paul's, St Peter's Westminster and St Saviour Southwark, while the archbishop of Canterbury petitioned the Crown to request that 'the Mayor and Aldermen of London be commanded not to act in the matter to the prejudice of the Ecclesiastical Courts.'<sup>129</sup>

Although the situation in London in the fifteenth century was more complex than in Gloucester, it is worth noting that in 1446, the archbishop of Canterbury limited the number of grammar schools allowed in London to five. The reasons given for this were that 'Undesirable common grammar schools' had been set up by 'Many and diverse persons'.<sup>130</sup> The following year this was countered in a petition sent to Henry VI by four rectors in London who complained that there were 'a great number of learners and few teachers, and if all the learners were compelled to go to the same few teachers, the masters wax rich in money and the learners poor in knowledge.' As Montmorency concludes it seems accurate to believe education in London in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries was a remunerative business and such ideas may have become applicable in towns elsewhere in England, especially from the early Tudor period.<sup>131</sup>

At Gloucester by the early sixteenth century Llanthony's grammar school may have almost ceased to exist, and the abbey's schools were in a poor state on the eve of the dissolution. Consequently, there seems to have been little provision for grammar or more advanced schooling available in Gloucester, albeit the numerous chantry priests at the eleven parish churches probably offered some basic schooling. Nonetheless this dearth of grammar provision meant that in 1539 the Crypt School was the only school in Gloucester which could aid those seeking more than a rudimentary education.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> J. E. G. Montmorency, *State Intervention*, p. 41.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46

<sup>132</sup> D. Robertson, *King's School*, p. 26.

### **Chapter 3: The Life and Death of John Cooke**

Though Death has rested these life mates

Their memory survives

Esteemed myrrors may they be

For Majestrats and wives

Poem beneath John and Joan Cooke's Panel portrait.<sup>133</sup>

John Cooke was born less than four miles from Gloucester in the village of Minsterworth, a small parish on the banks of the River Severn, the parish church of St Peter's was held by St Oswald's Priory in Gloucester. John Cooke's parents were Thomas and Alice Cooke, and it can be assumed he was the only surviving son, although there is evidence of his having four sisters, all of whom married.<sup>134</sup> His mother Alice is likely to have been part of the Payne family, one of great importance in Gloucester where they dominated the local government. John's wife Joan or Johanna was a member of another prominent family, the Messengers,

Joan had three brothers Thomas held the office of sheriff in 1519 during John Cooke's term as mayor, Thomas himself becoming mayor in 1531. Thomas is also mentioned in many documents linked to Joan after John Cooke's death, most particularly as his executor who was charged with carrying out John's wishes for the building of a grammar school. It is likely that this kinship network helped John Cooke build his business and wealth, although it is possible that he may have inherited some of his wealth through his parents, but no records had been found to confirm or dispute this. There is no indication that the Cooke's had any children who reached adulthood, but in this period it was not uncommon due to high rates of infant and child mortality. It would be plausible considering their wealth and affiliation with St Mary de Crypt that had the marriage produced children who died some form of funerary memorial would be apparent or recorded. Nevertheless, both John and Joan made provision for a number of godchildren, nephews and nieces in their wills.

John Cooke is referred to as a brewer in 1501, which is the only reference to his involvement in the trade, and in 1525 he is listed as a mercer.<sup>135</sup> Cooke had a number of kinship connections to brewers, including the Chanterell family, also from Minsterworth,

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<sup>133</sup> The portrait now hangs with others in the Gloucester portraits series in the Gloucester Folk Museum.

<sup>134</sup> *MS GA D3270/6* Will and grant of probate of Dame Joan Cooke (1544 and 1545).

<sup>135</sup> R. Cole, *Rental*, p. 414.

through the marriage of his sister Margaret.<sup>136</sup> This family was very active in Gloucester, a Walter Chanterell, in 1445, is listed as a brewer holding ‘a tenement with appurtenances in the west side’ (of the mercery and butchery).<sup>137</sup> Walter was also a bailiff of the town in 1441 and 1445, and John Chanterell, Margaret’s father in law, became bailiff in 1464. Margaret’s husband, also John, was deceased at the time of John Cooke’s will. John Cooke had been holding his late brother in law’s lands on behalf of his sister and returned them to her for ‘hir lyfetye’<sup>138</sup> These family connections may have helped Cooke create an important commercial network and possibly even provided him with an apprenticeship as a young man. In his will John Cooke remembered his own mercery apprentice, his cousin Thomas Pyrry, bequeathing £20 to him which would have aided Thomas to become a mercer in his own right. During John Cooke’s first term as mayor in 1501, there may have been a conflict of interest between his civic and business life. According to the statute of bread and ale it was forbidden for a brewer or baker to hold civic office as the office would require their involvement in the assizes of bread and ale, and it was necessary to ensure that those who could benefit from the assize did not oversee it. This may explain Cooke’s change of occupation, but it is also possible that there are simply no further surviving documentary references to him as a brewer.<sup>139</sup> Brewing was changing from a domestic enterprise mainly carried out by women to a more commercial larger-scale operation and it is feasible that Cooke was a commercial brewer engaged in beer brewing because such an occupation was becoming an attractive proposition.<sup>140</sup> Nevertheless, it is also feasible that he engaged in different trades during his lifetime and he seems to have styled himself as a mercer during his later life. For example, in 1525 a conveyance between Walter Harres of Haresfeld, husbandman, and Johanna his wife, named John Cooke of Gloucester, mercer and alderman as the other party.<sup>141</sup> Furthermore, in his feoffment document of 1528, he described himself as a mercer, which may have meant that he primarily dealt in worsted cloth, but also potentially other material including linen and silk.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> MS GA D3270 The Crypt School. Gloucester United Schools Charity, 1478–1926.

<sup>137</sup> R. Cole, *Rental*, p. 31.

<sup>138</sup> MS GA D3270 The Crypt School. Gloucester United Schools Charity, 1478–1926.

<sup>139</sup> Many historians prior to 1950, assume that this first description of Cooke was incorrect, and he was only ever described as a mercer.

<sup>140</sup> J. Bennett, *Ale, Beer and Brewsters in England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp 161–2.

<sup>141</sup> MS GA D3270 / C /10 Feoffment of Lands. 1528.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*; John S. Lee, *The Medieval Clothier* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2018), pp. 86–7.

## Conveyances

Most of what we know of John Cooke comes from two key documents his will and a conveyance. On 12 May 1528, six days before he wrote his will and testament John Cooke completed a conveyancing deed ensuring that his lands were protected and could be used solely for the purposes set out in his will. The document conveyed all his lands and tenements in Ebley, Stonehouse, Oxlynch, Chaxhill, Rodley and Westbury, villages on the outskirts of Gloucester. He ensured that the lands were conveyed to the most powerful civic men in the town. Cooke had selected men whom he would have interacted with in terms of both business and civic matters. Out of the ten, five were to become mayor of the town after 1531 over a period of twenty-three years (see figure 1). This was sufficient to ensure his plans came to fruition and that these men were able to carry out his wishes. Five of the men were also relatives of John or Joan, so kinship as well as civic and business ties presumably reassured them that their wishes would be fulfilled.

Name	Sheriff	Mayor
Thomas Massinger *	1517, 1527	1531
Thomas Bell	1523, 1527, 1530	1536, 1553
John Hawkins (Brewer)		
Thomas Payne*	1529, 1534	1540
Richard Halyday*		
Richard Perkyns		
Thomas Bell the younger (Capper)	1535	1543, 1554
William Pyrry*		
Thomas Pyrry (Mercer)*	1541, 1548	1550
Lewis Leysant	1549	
*Denotes a relative of John or Joan Cooke.		

*Figure 1 The Social rank of the men witnessing Cooke's Conveyance Deed.*

Six of the men had or would serve as sheriff. Cooke looking to entrust his property to his peers and comparable men of the succeeding generation who support the work of his wife



and fulfil his wish to establish his school. It was an effective strategy and between them these men protected his property for the purpose he intended over the next twenty-six years. Indeed, when William Massinger attempted to seize all of John and Joan's lands in 1551, Thomas Bell the Younger, Thomas Bell and Thomas Pyrry were all still senior civic officers in the town and were party to a case in chancery to claim back the land from Massinger.<sup>143</sup> Albeit, Thomas Payne was responsible for harassing Joan Cooke to surrender the deeds of all the entrusted lands to the corporation, a development that will be discussed below.

Another measure employed by Cooke to strengthen his property transactions was to use a large number of often local men as witnesses. For example, the property at Badgeworth had seventeen witnesses, most of whom were from Badgeworth itself, while that involving land at Ebbely, had four witnesses, which is more common when compared to similar conveyances recorded in the same decade. In this context, it is worth noting that land at Badgeworth was the subject of several disputes involving women, including that of Alice Bentham and her sister Margery who complained that 'certain men unjustly ploughed their pasture and other men claim to have common on their pasture.'<sup>144</sup> Consequently, Cooke may have sought to strengthen Joan's position through the use of numerous and locally politically powerful witnesses to the agreements in case of dispute. After Joan's death this would become particularly important when Joan's nephew attempted to reclaim all the lands which had been set aside to pay for the school. Furthermore, the land at Badgeworth had been a relatively new acquisition for Cooke, signed over to him in an agreement made at Westminster in 1512, which may have similarly influenced his decision.<sup>145</sup>

### John Cooke's Death and Will

Mortality was never far from people's thoughts in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, rudimentary medical treatments and disease made death something to be faced on a regular basis. Recurrent outbreaks of plague and other endemic diseases were compounded by harvest failures and other crises, which meant for wealthier members of society the *danse macabre* and related images were envisaged as important in the preparation for death.<sup>146</sup> The

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<sup>143</sup> W. H. Stevenson, *Calendar*, p. 64 (item 67).

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 373 (item 1043).

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 420 (item 1194).

<sup>146</sup> E. Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars* (London: Yale University Press, 1992), pp. 338–76.

concept of Purgatory and care for the souls of the dead were key aspects of life, consequently in addition to religious rituals and feasts as part of the liturgical calendar, obits and other commemorative events were an important aspect of parish life. Wills provided a last opportunity to ensure care for the testator's soul and to try to ensure speedy progress through Purgatory, as well as make further pious and charitable bequests and provide for family members and other dependants. John Cooke's will and conveyance were intended to ensure that his wishes were known and enacted to protect him spiritually, financially and in fulfilment of his civic obligations.

By the time of his death on 14 September 1528, John Cooke had made considerable effort ensuring his affairs were in order and witnessed. It is possible that he had been ailing for the previous five months as he commented in his will, which was drawn up on the 18<sup>th</sup> May of that year, that he was 'sike in the body'. This was then followed by the writing of a very precise will covering his spiritual health, his charitable and civic acts and the remembrance and welfare of those close to him. In his will he firstly addresses his spiritual health, and then his civic acts and charitable deeds finally near the end and briefly compared to the rest, is his bequest to endow a new grammar school.

John Cooke's will begins with orthodox convention bequeathing his soul to God, the Blessed Lady and then St John the Baptist. He sought burial at St Mary de Crypt, in Gloucester, a church with affiliations to Llanthony Priory.<sup>147</sup> Like other leading citizens, he wanted to be buried near a particular altar or image, for Cooke this was 'the northende of the high altar before the image of St John the Baptist.'<sup>148</sup> This would afford him a place in the most sanctified area of the church and his chosen place reflected his desire to be near the church's Easter sepulchre. This was a recess in the wall to the north of the high altar that served as the 'tomb' within the Easter ritual into which the consecrated host was placed on Good Friday. Thus, Cooke's chosen burial spot was as close to Christ as possible during the most important time in the Christian year. Additionally, those who were less wealthy would often bequeath money for lights around the sepulchre on Easter Sunday, so the place of Cooke's burial would be bathed in light and at the focal point of worship within the church during the most holy festival of the year, but this also gave his grave visibility to the congregation all year round. Similarly, Richard Manchester also specified where he wanted to

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<sup>147</sup> Saint Mary de Crypt Church, also known as Saint Mary's in the South and Christ Church.

<sup>148</sup> E. Duffy, *Altars*, p. 84.

be buried in St Mary's, stating that it should be 'before his seat there' that, too, would perpetuate his memory post-mortem.

Despite the bulk of his money being left to Joan for the provision of a free grammar school there is little in his will directly concerning the school. Towards the end of his will he asks for a school to be 'made and edyfied' and that it should be a free grammar school with a 'prest daily to keep scole and teche gramer freely'. Thereafter he refers to his wife Joan Cooke explaining that as he has little time left the details of the school are passed to her 'I must and doo leave hooly and remitte to my said wife'. It can be assumed that the school had been planned and discussed at length between them and therefore other than ensuring that she had advisors whom he trusted supporting her there was little need to mention the school in anymore detail. In Joan's will of 1545 the school is not mentioned, presumably she feels the seventeen years of her widowhood have allowed her to leave the school in safe hands and financially secure.<sup>149</sup>

Cooke's religious bequests covered all the parish churches in the town of Gloucester and also the 'mother church' in Worcester. The gifts were substantial, and again very prominent in the daily life of the churches. 'One pare of vestments' was given to each parish church 'which makes xi pares', as well as a further pair of vestments to the church in his birthplace of Minsterworth and to St Bartholemew's Hospital. All of these were to be 'alike in the matter of colour' except those in the more generous bequests of vestments to the Lady Altars at both Llanthony Priory and St Peter's Abbey, which were each worth 33s 4d. This uniformity would mark out the vestments as those given by Cooke, a constant reminder of his presence in every church in the town.

Apart from St Mary de Crypt, one other church stood to gain more than the others from John Cooke's will, this was St Nicholas', also known at this time as the Corporation Church. The church was situated on Westgate Street, close to the West Bridge and St Bartholomew's Hospital. At St Nicholas', Cooke instructed that £20 was to be given to the church as a whole with further bequests of £20 to each altar. The purpose of this money was left to the clergy, Cooke stipulated that it was to 'refresh the said awtars in such things as they have most nede of.' Another sum of £5 pounds was specified to pay for a priest to provide a temporary chantry for two years to 'pray for my soule and and for all Christian soules.'

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<sup>149</sup> MS GA D3270 The Crypt School. Gloucester United Schools Charity, 1478–1926.  
MS GA D3270/6 Will and grant of probate of Dame Joan Cooke (1544 and 1545).

In his will John Cooke had listed his civic and social bequests and obligations in great detail. His wishes are close to the description in Langland's *Piers Ploughman* that 'a merchant would be saved must use his earnings to mend hospitals, broaden roads and bridges.'<sup>150</sup> In this vein Cooke had left money for the repair of highways, 'twenty poundes' to be 'bestowed in the king's high way towards the Vale of Euysham', and the same amount of money for repairs to the road at Byrdlyppe'.<sup>151</sup>

His next civic bequest was one which concerned both St Nicholas's church and St Bartholomew's Hospital, which had been given the church in 1229, and the great West Bridge.<sup>152</sup> He stipulated that the monies owed to him by Mistress Sankye and Margaret Baker, which totalled twenty-two pounds were to be given to the hospital to be used for the 'repairing and mending of the houses of the pore folkes there and to save and keep them from the dangers of the great waters in the winter tyme.' Such a charitable bequest of caring for the poor was seen by contemporaries as fulfilling the seven corporal works of mercy, but St Bartholomew's Hospital had also suffered long periods of poor management. Cooke would have been aware of its perilous state because during his mayoralty in 1519-20 he had given the income from three blocks of his land as a regular weekly sum of 3s 4d to the poor there. Thomas Bell, one of Cooke's contemporaries later provided an additional 2s 8d to be paid 'every good Friday'.<sup>153</sup> Moreover, Cooke's concern for the hospital may relate to personal connections because in 1528 St Bartholomew's had been under the stewardship of Andrew Whitmay, who is named several times in Cooke's will, either as 'the Lord Bishop' or as Andrew Whitmay. Whitmay's brother John was the parish priest at Minsterworth, which may be the link between John Cooke and Andrew Whitmay.

John took measures in his will to protect his wife Joan's interests and make her life as comfortable as he could. He bequeathed to her 'goodes money householde and plate' thereby allowing her to maintain the household as it was when John was alive. In addition, Margaret, one of John's sisters, who was also a widow by 1528 was expected to live with Joan: 'Margaret Chanterell, my suster to help in her age fourty poundes. And my will is that my wife shall cherishe hir as hir suster whylste they bothe lyve togider.' This is the first time in his will that John suggests that Joan should not remarry after his death, and that comfort and

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<sup>150</sup> A. Appleford, *Learning to die in London, 1380-1540* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), p. 63.

<sup>151</sup> MS GA D3270 The Crypt School. Gloucester United Schools Charity, 1478-1926.

<sup>152</sup> <https://www.visitchurches.org.uk/static/uploaded/ac2a0034-4389-4145-81f26b6d011bb0c3.pdf> (accessed December 31, 2021).

<sup>153</sup> B. Lowe, *Commonwealth*, Chapter 3.

companionship could be found with family members, while named friends of the couple, such as Andrew Whitmay, were to protect Joan's interests. At the time of Cooke's will Whitmay was the suffragan bishop of Worcester a man of importance and influence in the town.<sup>154</sup> Following the appointment of Bishop Hugh Latimer in 1535, Whitmay gained a patron which helped Joan Cooke when she bought some of Llathony's land after its surrender because she received Latimer's assistance. Whitmay was also charged by Cooke to be 'loving to my wife at her grete need.' It is tempting to think that Cooke was aware of the hurdles Joan might face in carrying out his wishes and therefore surrounded her with men of influence and power to aid her in fulfilling his bequests. For this task he gave Whitmay the sum of £10.

Margaret was left comfortably off by her brother's bequests with the sum of £40, additionally she had also received her husband's lands at Minsterworth for her lifetime. This latter bequest came with specific instructions for their disposal following Margaret's death. The lands of Minsterworth were to pass to Richard and Anne Holyday and their heirs. The couple were already substantial beneficiaries of Cooke's will 'Anne Holyday and too hir husband oon hundred poundes' It is likely that Anne Holyday was Anne Cooke, John's youngest sister who had married Richard Holyday. If they died without a living heir (at the time of the will, they had one son, John, who was also Cooke's godson, presumably named after Cooke or St John the Baptist) the lands would be 'applied and remain to the maintenance of my scole and obites.' Other family members were left smaller sums of money: John Holyday, the son of Richard and Anne, received ten pounds, but Garret, Richard and Elizabeth Colyns received twenty pounds to be split between them but with the instruction that they should pray for his soul.

The absence of children partly explains John's and Joan's bequests to their godchildren, but the role of godparents was important morally and spiritually being significant figures in a child's life.<sup>155</sup> Godparents were present at baptism and might have some involvement in the naming of the child. The role of godparent did not end once the child reached adulthood and many continued as 'avuncular benefactors' helping through the provision of a dowry or school fees. Cressy describes godparents as being involved in 'networks of obligation and honour' and John Cooke's godchildren, 'both mankynde and

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<sup>154</sup> Whitmay was appointed to this post on 6 September 1525.

womankynde' were to be presented with a silver spoon to the price of 3s 4d'.<sup>156</sup> Such spoons were common bequests in early Tudor wills because they provided a personal and affective bond between testator and recipient., Moreover, it was customary for godparents belonging to wealthier families to give silver baptismal spoons which could be decorated with the child's saint or Our Lady or an apostle.<sup>157</sup> For Cooke's such a final reminder of his role as godfather to his many godchildren was important and might be expected to provide more prayers for his soul. In addition some of Cooke's godchildren were named and given additional bequests, such as Richard and Elizabeth Colyns who were also his nephew and niece.

A further beneficiary of Cooke's 'networks of obligation and honour' was Thomas Perry who was named as Cooke's cousin and apprentice.<sup>158</sup> Thomas was given £20 under the terms of the will, which would have helped him to become an independent trader on completion of his apprenticeship. Thomas was successful, being described as a mercer in the corporation records and he held the office of sheriff of Gloucester twice, becoming mayor in 1550, an example of the value of kinship networks in Tudor Gloucester.

Education featured three times in John Cooke's will. Firstly, he asked his wife Joan to '...fynde Thomas Stewe to scole with my goodes til he be prest and thentent he shall have cause to pray for my soule'. It has not been possible to discover who Stewe was and why Cooke chose him, but he did train for the priesthood and is later mentioned as Sir Thomas Stewe in Joan's will. Furthermore, although his parish church was St Mary de Crypt where he was to be buried, John Cooke sought commemoration at all of Gloucester's parish churches and especially at St Nicholas', the corporation church, where he instituted a temporary chantry, as noted above. Thus, through his testamentary provisions he aided two men to become or remain as priests. as well as providing for a school, all acts that mark him as a pious individual.

John Cooke had a special devotion for St John the Baptist, perhaps because he was named for the saint because St John was seen as an important intercessional saint as well as being a member of the Holy Family. As well as seeking to be buried before the saint's image, he made bequests to the chantry at the altar of St John the Baptist. This is the same chantry which had been the subject of a bequest by Richard Manchester in 1453.<sup>159</sup> His will paid for the establishment of a chantry at the altar of St John the Baptist in St Mary de Crypt church,

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<sup>156</sup> D. Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death, Ritual Religion and the Life Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 106.

<sup>157</sup> <https://medievallondon.ace.fordham.edu/items/show/293>. (Accessed December 31, 2001).

<sup>158</sup> D. Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death*, p. 106.

<sup>159</sup> W. H. Stevenson, *Calendar*, pp. 399–402 (item 1137).

funded from the rental of his tenements in South Street. At this perpetual chantry, the priest was to 'say on every Thursday in his mass the prayer '*Deus cui proprium minor*'. Cooke also bequeathed an alabaster plaque of the life of St John the Baptist to the church of St Mary de Crypt and his and Joan's monumental brasses depict them with a pediment including a figure of John the Baptist with a book in one hand and pointing to the Lamb of God with his other.



Figure 2: Detail from the Canopy over John Cooke's monumental brass in St Mary de Crypt depicting St John the Baptist holding a book on which the Lamb of God is shown<sup>160</sup>

After his bequests to individuals and those relating to civic responsibilities came the largest of all his gifts and one which would affect a vast number of people for generations. He preceded this bequest by expressing regret that 'yf it had pleased almighty God to have gevyn me convenient tyme and space in this transitory worlde I wolde have particulerly notyd publissed and declared more opynly and at large within this my present testament and laste will which now for lack of serche tyme and space I must and doo leave hooly to my saide wife.' Consequently, even though he had discussed his greatest idea with his wife and friends, he understood that he would now have to leave its implementation to his wife. This final bequest concerned his idea to bestow a new grammar school on Gloucester to educate

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<sup>160</sup> C. Davis, *The Monumental Brasses of Gloucestershire* (Bath: Kingsmead, 1969).

future generations and it was to be in the parish of St Mary de Crypt, also known as ‘christe church’, and a priest would be needed to teach the scholars.

‘make and edifie or cause to be made and edified in the parish of Criste in suche place within the citey as I have to hir assigned and declared a Scolehouse and in the same as shall aswell stablishe and ordayne a contynuall free scole of gramer for the erudicion of Childern and scolers there as to ordayne and establishe a scole maister of the same scole and for the tyme being a prest daily to kepe scloe and teche gramer freely within the saide scole.’<sup>161</sup>

Although the school was to start with a priest as a master, the siting of the school within the parish of St Mary indicates that John Cooke wished to keep the schooling within the bounds of the parish and away from control of the monasteries. Cooke, as discussed earlier would have been very aware of the nature of the relationship between the secular governance of the town and the monasteries, as well as the increasing rumours of scandal ensuing from Llanthony Priory’s school, whether factual or not. The scandals surrounding Llanthony’s grammar school in this period now centred on complaints which were made about the general conduct within the priory and that of the school.<sup>162</sup> One of the teachers protested to the prior, Richard Hempsted, but the teacher was imprisoned by the prior and then expelled. No other evidence can be found regarding the nature of the complaints, but it is feasible this would have been sufficient to influence Cooke’s decision about his new school. Thus, once John Cooke’s will was proved on 19 October 1528, the money was now available for his widow to purchase lands and establish the school. Despite her husband’s efforts to smooth the path for the foundation Joan was subject to intimidation at various stages of the foundation, which will be discussed in the next chapter. However, their plan for the school was clear and eleven years later in 1539 Joan witnessed the opening of the Crypt School, John Cooke’s free grammar school for the boys of Gloucester.

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<sup>161</sup> MS GA D3270 The Crypt School. Gloucester United Schools Charity, 1478–1926.

<sup>162</sup> J. N. Langston ‘Priors of Llanthony by Gloucester’, *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*, 63 (1943) 137–8.



## **Chapter 4: Establishing the Crypt School: the foundation and Early History**

This vertous dame perform'd ye taske  
Her husbande did intend  
And after him in single life  
Lived famous to her end

Poem beneath Joan Cooke's Panel portrait<sup>163</sup>

Even though it was the money from John Cooke's fortune that enabled the foundation of the Crypt Grammar School, the practical creation of the school was due to his widow Joan. John Cooke's will was not written on his deathbed, the document signed by him on 18 May 1528 'per me John Cooke'<sup>164</sup> and he died five months later. Consequently, it seems he knew he was in his final months and wanted to ensure that his extensive wishes were recorded and that his property was in order, which was prudent for such a large estate. This would allow the time for John Cooke to discuss his ideas and plans with his wife, a proposition he alludes to in his will:

'The declaration of my hole mynde and purpose for suche thinges as I would have doon and executed by my saide wife and executrice after my death touching the purpose of my hole intent how and in what wise the said scholehouse masiter of the scole chantrie obites almes and other deeds of charity should be executed performed and established and doon'<sup>165</sup>

His intent was that Joan should continue to act as if they had still been together, pursuing their shared interests in education, religious and charitable causes. These acts would make Joan equally as well-known as her husband, whose multiple terms as a civic leader of Gloucester had made his name synonymous with the town. Although it is likely she was already as well-known as he was, the symbolism of her portrait is denoted through the fine gloves of the guild, rather than her portrayal solely as the wife of the mayor. Although her husband had instructed that a number of male relatives and colleagues should assist Joan in

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<sup>163</sup> The portrait now hangs with others in the Gloucester portraits series within the Gloucester Museum galleries.

<sup>164</sup> MS GA D3270 The Crypt School. Gloucester United Schools Charity, 1478–1926.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

her work, there were a number of obstacles for women in this period who were bidden to carry out such duties. As a wealthy and possibly young widow there would have been a possibility of a second marriage. However, if Joan was to remarry, she was to dispose of one half of their goods and these should be used for ‘the wealthe of my soule’. John Cooke’s wishes for his wife to remain a widow were summed up by him in the closing paragraph of his will where he reiterated that Joan was to be his sole executrix and was to be responsible for paying any claims and to dispose of his goods as she saw fit, followed by the caveat that ‘I put my feithfull credence and trust hoping that she will keep herself sole without any other husbände according to my desire so to hir by me made’.

Cooke’s wishes for Joan to remain as his widow were realised soon after his death when Joan styled herself ‘Dame’ Joan. In the brass portrait of her in the church of St Mary de Crypt she is depicted in ‘widows or vowess’ weeds’ a clear sign that she was going to remain faithful to the memory of her late husband. The title of ‘Dame’ was used by most vowesses and afforded them an elevated status in the community. From her work on vowesses, Laura Wood thinks that it is likely that Joan Cooke took a vow of chastity at the onset of widowhood and declared herself a vowess. This process would allow Joan to own and control the property left to her by her husband with less impediment than widowhood alone could afford. As a vowess she could find her own place between ‘enclosure and integration and contemplative and active piety’<sup>166</sup>. This would have allowed Joan to continue her charitable work and the founding of the school whilst living in her community and maintaining her piety. An alternative was to enter a religious order, and live an enclosed life, but this risked losing control over her possessions. Furthermore, her status as a vowess awarded her some protection from her nephew’s plotting in subsequent years.

Joan’s successes, like her husband’s, have been immortalised in portraiture and rhyme. As noted in chapter one, in the later years of the sixteenth century a series of panel portraits were commissioned by the corporation of Gloucester of the most important civic leaders of the town of Gloucester. Joan is uniquely portrayed in a double portrait alongside her husband John, a poem underneath immortalises the good works of both John and Joan Cooke. As lauded as she was, Joan did have troubles with the men who were supposed to aid her, specifically her brother William Massinger. In her later years when Joan was described as becoming ‘unwieldly’, her nephew attempted to take certain lands from her that were to

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<sup>166</sup> L. M. Wood, ‘Vowess’, pp. 15–16.

endow the school. He had also moved into her home and by 1540 several witnesses described him as dwelling in the house with her and having ‘the whole rule and order of the house.’<sup>167</sup>



Fig 3 John and Joan Cooke, oil on panel, 813 × 755mm. Photograph: © Gloucester City Museum and Art Gallery

Within the portrait John Cooke is depicted as an ageing figure but he is resplendent in his fur trimmed scarlet mayoral robes his eyes looking into the distance, the very symbol of a wise civic leader. Joan, on the other hand, is pictured clasping her husband’s hand, and in her right hand she holds a pair of leather gloves. Gloves were frequently shown in Tudor portraits, white gloves symbolising wealth, for example. Joan’s gloves may well be made of soft high quality Spanish leather, acquired through John’s mercantile network at great expense, similarly demonstrating their wealth. However, in this case it is likely that Joan is holding a symbol of civic association, indicating John’s membership of the Merchant Guild of Gloucester passed to her on her husband’s death.<sup>168</sup> This portrayal beside her husband with the gloves acknowledges Joan’s status as an important dignitary in Gloucester, or at least how she was considered half a century after her death. Her demeanour in the picture is in striking contrast to John who looks sullen faced and distant. Joan appears far younger and the colour on her side of the portrait is more vibrant, a style which has the effect of drawing the eye to Joan rather than John. Next to John is the description ‘Master John Cooke, Maior of the Citie of Gloucester 4 times’.<sup>169</sup> Yet a longer poem at the bottom of the portrait indicates their

<sup>167</sup> MS GA D3270/6A GA Depositions in a cause relating to Lady Cooks Conveyance. 24 August 1550.

<sup>168</sup> R. Tittler, *Portraits, Painters and Publics in Provincial England 1540–1640* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 130.

<sup>169</sup> Gloucester Museum. Gloucester Portraits Series, ‘*John and Joan Cooke*’.

charitable deeds, as well as highlighting Joan's dedication of spending her single life as a virtuous dame to fulfil her husband's wishes.

Joan's role as a benefactor was similarly undertaken by others in Tudor society, including Margaret Beaufort, the mother of Henry VII, albeit she could operate on a grander scale than Joan. Margaret endowed a free grammar school in Wimborne, was a patron of the arts and re-founded Christ's College Cambridge with her fortune. Nevertheless, far from being overshadowed by their husband's works or purely emerging from the noble ranks, female donors from the mercantile classes were gaining prominence in the late Tudor society, such women depicted in plays including Thomas Heywood's (1605) 'If you Know Not Me, You Know Nobody'<sup>170</sup> One of the main characters is Lady Mary Ramsey a benefactress and the wife of Sir Thomas Ramsey, Lord Mayor of London. She appears in one scene being shown around Alexander Noell's picture gallery.<sup>171</sup> Once in the gallery, Nowell comments that this is where he keeps his pictures of 'many charitable citizens',  
'Among these stories of these blessed men  
So many that enrich your gallery  
There are two womens pictures: what were they?'<sup>172</sup>

A description of the deeds of the two women depicted is then given: Alice Gibson, the founder of a free school and Agnes Foster who established a charity to help the prisoners of Ludgate. The character of Lady Mary exclaims, 'Why shoulde not I live so, that being dead, my name might have register with theirs'.<sup>173</sup> This denotes a shocked realisation that a woman could become one of the venerated charitable members of a community, moreover, Gibson's and Foster's images in Heywood's play demonstrate that benefactresses were now being acknowledged alongside their male counterparts.<sup>174</sup>

Thus, Joan was far from unique as a widow who spent her remaining years and wealth completing her husband's charitable works. Both Joan and Lady Mary were apparently childless and undertook the work of benefactresses when widowed, thereby carrying out the wishes of their late husbands, who had become wealthy and gained high civic office. Thomas, Mary Ramsey's husband had accumulated wealth in similar circumstances to John

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<sup>170</sup> R. Tittler, 'Thomas Heywood and the Portrayal of Female Benefactors in Post-Reformation England', *Early Theatre*, 11 (2008), 33–52. pp. 33–4.

<sup>171</sup> He was the Dean of Saint Paul's Cathedral, London.

<sup>172</sup> T. Heywood, *If You Know Not Me, You Know Nobody*, Parts I and II (London: Benediction Classics, 2009).

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>174</sup> R. Tittler, 'Thomas Heywood', pp. 33–52.

Cooke, Thomas assessed at £400 in 1582, compared to John Cooke's assessment of £300 in 1524. Thomas was a grocer, and like Cooke he also held multiple civic offices, being elected as an alderman in 1582, serving as sheriff in 1567 and eventually attaining the position of Lord Mayor of London in 1577.<sup>175</sup>

Joyce Frankland was another widow of the period who spent her remaining years enacting charitable deeds, being advised during her lifetime by the same Alexander Nowell of the picture gallery in Mary Ramsey's appearance in the play. Although she also acquired her wealth from her marriages, it was her mother Joan Trapes who had set aside money in her will to endow scholars at Gonville and Caius College, the endowment controlled by Roger Manwood and the 'Governers of the grammar scole of Roger Manwood in Sanndwyche'. Under the terms of the grant it was stipulated that these 'foure schollers for ever in the said Colledge, to be nominated by the Warden and fellowes at their libertye from places they think fit, and two from the grammar school of St Paules'.<sup>176</sup> Therefore, it was conceivably Joyce Frankland's late mother's influence that primarily directed her towards educational benefactions, rather than her husband. Yet, there was some personal motivation because she had been encouraged by Alexander Nowell, Dean of St Paul's, to invest in the university scholarships as a comfort following the loss of her son as a tribute to his memory, the boy having been killed in an accident.

'I will tell you how you shall have 20 good sons to comfort you in these your sorrows ... if you would found certain fellowships and scholarships to be bestowed upon studious young men, who should be called Mrs Frankland's scholars, they would be in love towards you as dear children ...'<sup>177</sup>

In contrast to Frankland, Joan Cooke and Mary Ramsey were deeply involved in their educational benefactions. Both had selected locations which had personal attachments and Joan took a very personal role in the foundation and management of the project in the remainder of her lifetime, the school for both her and her late husband a means to aid boys from their town because they had none of their own. Like Joan, Mary Ramsey's charitable interests were focused on her late husband's interests, in this case the London hospitals. When Thomas Ramsey died in 1590, he left very conventional bequests as befitting to someone of his social status, covering hospitals, prisons and the poor. He left £200 for young

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<sup>175</sup> <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/95611> ODNB Mary Ramsey (accessed 31 December 2021).

<sup>176</sup> Herbert Hurst's Calendar of Muniments 26 Oct 1911 ([ox.ac.uk](http://ox.ac.uk)) (accessed 4 January 2021).

<sup>177</sup> <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/10084> ODNB Joyce Frankland. (Accessed 31 December 2021).

retailers of the grocers' company as loan stock and for twenty sermons to be preached in his name within two years of his death. He also aided St Bartholomew's Hospital in London, and, like John Cooke, he had conveyed property to support an educational establishment for poor children, albeit Christ's Hospital was already well established. Furthermore, after Thomas death Lady Mary conveyed another manor, that of Colne Engaine in Essex (just like Joan who had acquired Podesmead near Gloucester for the Crypt School), to Christ's Hospital. This conveyance was intended specifically to support the writing school at the hospital.<sup>178</sup> She also supported twenty widows and endowed a grammar school at Halstead in 1594, providing £20 per annum. The building provided by Mary Ramsey for the school was to house forty-three scholars living in Halstead or Colne Engaine, or if that number could not be reached it was open to the sons of poor men living within eight miles of Halstead. It is unclear whether all the education was to be provided free, or just that to the sons of the poor men living within the eight miles of the town. The 'care and trust' of the school was given to the governors of Christ's Hospital, Lady Ramsey's other beneficiary.<sup>179</sup> Although her wealth was greater than Joan's estimated wealth, the two women experienced a very similar widowhood enjoying the benefits of their estates. Ramsey was left at least 50% of her husband's assets and Joan was left the remainder of her husband's estate (provided she did not remarry) once his bequests were fulfilled. Thus, even though all three of these widows were slightly different in their circumstances, their wishes to be seen as charitable in a very public manner was a common theme and all were venerated for their benevolence with portraits, their educational foundations still linked to their names as well as to those of their husbands or son.

### Establishing the Crypt School

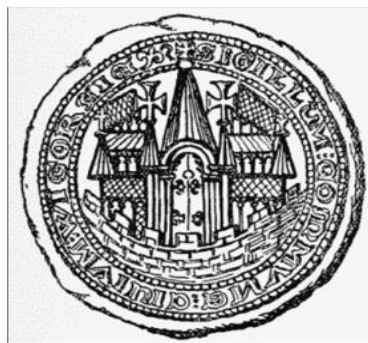
The most important document concerning Joan Cooke's foundation of the school in 1539 was the tripartite deed which was signed on 31 January 1540 just before the school become operational. The deed was an agreement between Dame Joan Cooke, the mayor and burgesses of Gloucester, and the bailiffs and citizens of Worcester. The deed echoed the instructions in John Cooke's will for there was to be a 'free schole of grammar within the

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<sup>178</sup> <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/95611> ODNB Mary Ramsey (accessed 4 January 2020).

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

seid towne of Gloucester’ the document then continues ‘which scholehouse if fully and perfectly edified and buyldid with certaine chaumbers above the seid scholehouse’.<sup>180</sup> The school building was already complete with the addition of accommodation for the schoolmaster because the deed states that ‘the seid ffree schole nowe alre dy buyldid’. The deed explains that Joan at her own cost had obtained letters patent dated 12 May 1538 whereby the mayor and the burgesses had been given the power to purchase further land and buildings to endow the school to the sum of £50 per annum. She had also given to the mayor and burgesses all her manors and tenements in perpetuity on the understanding that the returns from these properties were granted to her for life. She also instructed them that after her death the lands which were granted to John Partridge in the manor of Podesmead were to be ‘observed by a reckoning once a yeare befor the Mayor of Gloucester two senior aldermen and the Town Clerk’ and John Partridge was to be appointed bailiff and receiver of rents for the corporation.<sup>181</sup>



Seal of the city of Worcester.



Fragment of the City of Worcester seal – Tripartite agreement 1540

The deed then turned to what else would need to be done on Joan’s death. This was important because she had no direct heirs to continue her interests in the school or regarding any of her other charities. Before her death, Joan needed to be sure the school was secure and running smoothly under the corporation’s governance. Under the terms of the deed, the mayor and burgesses agreed that on Joan’s death the terms of John Cooke’s will concerning

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180 MS GA D3270 C/27 Tripartite deed f.110v-114 1539/40 Dame Joan Cook, Gloucester Corporation, bailiffs and citizens of Worcester.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

the school would be carried out. Firstly, the corporation would be responsible annually for the finding and providing of ‘an honest and wellnerved scolemaster being a priest if ony soch may conveyently be had to teche grammar’. Colet, too, when founding St Paul’s school in London had left the mastership open to priests and laymen, and at Gloucester Joan also fixed the master’s stipend at different rates, £10 for a member of the clergy but £9 if the master was a layman.<sup>182</sup> This payment would be made directly by Joan for the remainder of her lifetime, thereafter becoming the responsibility of the corporation of Gloucester, which meant initially it was Joan who was responsible for finding a suitable school master, and in this way she could keep a control on the school, perhaps running it in a manner that she and John envisaged until it became customary.

Additional details on the running of the school were discussed in the document. Chambers for the sole use of the master were provided above the school rooms with the stipulation that they were used only for the master and ‘not for his wyfe or his famylie and not for straungers’. This instruction meant, at least initially, that it was far easier for a priest to be employed in this position. The deed also allowed Joan to make other charitable directives. The hospital of St Bartholomew’s was to receive for the ‘pore people of the hospital’ the sum of 3s 4d each week for their ‘lyving and sustenance’, but if the hospital was ‘supressed’ the allowance was allowed to continue ‘at discretion’. The mayor and burgesses were given access to the sum of £5 for any repairs needed to the West Bridge and causeway. These items were almost identical to those bequests in her husband’s will, again denoting the value placed on civic and charitable acts.

At a time when ritual remained central to civic and religious life, Joan Cooke included certain ceremonies in the tripartite deed that were to take place after her death which involved the school and civic authorities. This annual visitation was to take place between Easter and Whitsuntide, thereby publicly reaffirming and commemorating Joan and John’s charitable acts. Starting at the High Cross, the procession comprising the mayor, recorder, two of the aldermen, two sheriffs, the town clerk, four stewards, a sword bearer, four serjeants at mace and the five porters of the town gates was to make its way down the busy Southgate Street and towards St Mary de Crypt Church and the schoolroom. The members of the corporation were expected to survey ‘the seid scholehouse as well within the schole’ and inspect the building for deffaultes of reparacons or decay as they shall ther fynd and see nedefull and

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<sup>182</sup> N. Orme, *Medieval Schools*, p. 238.



mete to be amended or repaired'.<sup>183</sup> Joan made provision for a payment to each in attendance according to their rank ranging from 4s for the mayor to 4d for each porter.

The Mayor	4s
The Recorder	3s 4d
Each Alderman	2s
Each Sheriff	1s 8d
The Town Clerk	1s 4d
Each Steward	1s
The Sword bearer	1s
Each Serjeant	8d
Each porter	4d

*Figure 4: Payment for Ceremonial attendance*

Joan did not allow the town of Gloucester to manage her school unchecked. The next part of the agreement was a stipulation that if the town of Gloucester did not observe all her wishes and perform all her requests it would receive a warning from the bailiffs of Worcester, and if it failed again £10 was to be paid to the city of Worcester for the repair of its walls.<sup>184</sup> This suggests that Joan Cooke did not fully trust the mayor and burgesses of Gloucester to fulfil their duties, and in 1540 she executed a further deed whereby she agreed to pay Worcester an annual rent of 6s 8d to oversee the terms of the tripartite agreement.<sup>185</sup> Thus, was Joan sending the old ‘mother church’ of Worcester to watch over the newly emerging town of Gloucester with its abbey becoming a cathedral? Later events which involved Joan and the corporation of Gloucester in dispute over the holding of deeds indicates that she might have been very shrewd in this judgement.

### Legacy and funding

In 1539, the year the school opened, Joan had appointed Philip Draper, yeoman of Gloucester to become her bailiff ‘of all manors, lands, tenements, etc., in Badgeworth,

<sup>183</sup> MS GA D3270 C/27 Tripartite deed ff.110v-114 1539/40 Dame Joan Cook, Gloucester Corporation, bailiffs and citizens of Worcester.

<sup>184</sup> This is the equivalent to £4,220 in today’s money.

<sup>185</sup> R. Austin, *Crypt School*, p. 158.

Bentham, Brockworth, Hempsted, Podsmead and Elmore in county of city, and Stonehouse, Standish, Ebley, Oxlinch, Westbury [on Severn] and Chaxhill in county of Gloucester'. These represent the lands which her late husband John Cooke had bought and she had added to in order to fund the school.<sup>186</sup> Draper appeared in a further document in the records of the corporation of Gloucester with his wife Joan renting two tenements from St Bartholomew's hospital for the term of seventy years from Andrew Whitmay. In this document Draper is styled 'mercier'. It is possible that Draper was an incomer to the town, appointed by Joan as someone who had not been involved in earlier transactions or disputes to act on her behalf. It may also demonstrate that Andrew Whitmay was taking his role seriously regarding his care for Joan in her widowhood and thus finding her new bailiff comfortable and favourable lodgings in Southgate Street (the same street in which the school was sited) which they were to keep in repair, 'other than all maner of grete tymbre, collare postes... which the prior and brethren are to find.'<sup>187</sup> On the same day that Philip Draper received the lease to the tenements on Southgate, Joan leased her fulling mill in Ebley for the term of ninety-nine years to a William Benet of Ebley, which may indicate that now the school was established she no longer wanted to manage her properties herself.

Throughout the sixteen years of Joan's widowhood, she had been continually harassed by various members of the Gloucester corporation to hand over the deeds to the lands which both she and John Cooke had acquired to fund the Crypt School and other charitable ventures. It was perhaps her status as a widow which gave her the courage to stand up to the corporation and refuse to hand over the documents that pertained to the land acquired for the school. As discussed by Peter Fleming in his study of women in Bristol, widows were allowed to operate more freely than married women, and it is in part because we have Joan's trail of paperwork regarding the school and its endowments, we not only know about the early period of the foundation but, also about Joan herself.<sup>188</sup> In the depositions from 1540 there is an interesting exchange recorded whereby the mayor, Thomas Payne 'exhorted her [Joan Cooke] to delyver the evidences conceryinge the premises to the town' and Joan responded 'that is that as was done she wold tell them an other tale'. It is feasible from this statement that some sort of underhand method had been used to remove the deeds from

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<sup>186</sup> MS GA GBR/B2/2 f.66v Red Book Appointment by Dame Joan Cook of Philip Draper, Gloucester, yeoman, bailiff or rent collector of all manors, lands, tenements, etc., in Badgeworth, Bentham, Brockworth, Hempsted, Podsmead and Elmore in county of city, and Stonehouse, Standish, Ebley, Oxlinch, Westbury [on Severn] and Chaxhill in county of Gloucester 1539/40.

<sup>187</sup> W. H. Stevenson, *Calendar*, p. 431 (item 1218).

<sup>188</sup> P. Fleming, 'Women in Bristol, 1373–1660', in *Women and the City: Bristol, 1373–2000*, ed. M. Dresser (Bristol: Redcliffe Press, 2016), p. 20.

Joan's possession. Also in the depositions, Philip Draper, her servant described arguments that he had heard between Joan, William Massinger and Thomas Payne, the then mayor (this confirm the date of the contents of the depositions to events in 1540) which were linked to this incident.

Joan had already signed letters of attorney, prepared by Richard Carycke, a law clerk and Thomas Lane, the recorder of Gloucester, whereby the deeds were to be handed over on the event of her death. It is unlikely that Lane was an ally of Joan's, despite the fact he was said to know her well, because he had spent most of Joan's widowhood trying to persuade her to hand the deeds over to the mayor and burgesses for safekeeping. Her reply to him, according to Lane, was that 'for her tyme she was mistress of the rentes and therefore wold have the keeping'.<sup>189</sup> In his deposition later, Lane explained that he had told Joan that she must take seisin of the land, but again her response was that she would 'never ride till she was borne upon foure mens shoulders'. This unwillingness of Joan to relinquish control of her lands through livery of seisin, essentially until she was dead, irritated members of the corporation. In other witness statements Joan Cooke's chaplain and the parish priest of St Mary's, Henry Hawke, explained how he was aware that the mayor (Thomas Payne) had tried to force Joan to deliver the deeds to the burgesses of Gloucester, but Joan had refused, wishing to have them in her own keeping. Another statement from Gyles Robertes of Wotton confirmed that although the school was 'kept' by the mayor and burgesses, Lane had attempted to persuade Joan to hand over the deeds, but again she 'woulde have kepinge of them for her lyff'.

Consequently, it seems that the mayor and burgesses of Gloucester attempted to remove the deeds from Joan in 1540. Even though a series of depositions in the Gloucester Archives had been attributed to an attempt by Joan Cooke's brother William Massinger to declare himself as her heir and keep the deeds and therefore control of the land for himself on her death, it appears they were produced to demonstrate Joan's inadequacies and thus provide a legitimate excuse to remove the deeds from her keeping.<sup>190</sup> However, there is nothing to indicate that she was in poor health and her will was not made until 1 May 1544, and she died the following year. The depositions were taken by William Bromley toward the end of August 1540 for the case of the mayor and burgesses of the town of Gloucester versus William Massinger, perhaps because Massinger had declared himself to be Joan's heir and

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<sup>189</sup> MS GA D3270/6A GA Depositions in a cause relating to Lady Cooks Conveyance. 24 August 1550.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

had already claimed the deeds, or that he was thought to be obstructing Joan's wishes about them. Whichever, the depositions were collected in a possible case against Massinger, rather than against Joan herself. The thirty surviving depositions tend to be formulaic all commenting on 'Dame Johanne Cooke which sometime was wife and executrix to John Cooke' and that she had become 'soche an unwieldy woman for her age and unweldyness that she could not ride or go herself to soche places oute of the towne of Gloucester'.<sup>191</sup> Other deponents explained how they understood a particular area was part of the land mentioned in the tripartite agreement drawn up for Joan in 1539 and that they had witnessed the 'lyverrey of seayn' carried out on her behalf. Presumably such evidence was intended to have been seen as enough to remove Joan Cooke's control regarding the deeds and to place them directly in the hands of the mayor and the burgesses. Yet, as discussed above, in the tripartite agreement Joan had employed the mayor and burgesses of Worcester as a check on the mayor and burgesses of Gloucester to try to ensure that they fulfilled her wishes properly.

As a postscript to this incident, a document in the corporation of Gloucester records shows that a judgement was delivered on 12 February 1550 by the Court of Chancery concerning the 'petition of William Massinger, gentleman, plaintiff against the Mayor and Burgesses of Gloucester'. The judgement was once again in relation to the lands covered in the tripartite agreement and that the 'Mayor and Burgesses have the said manors, lands etc. without molestation from William Massinger, and he is ordered to deliver them up to them all the charters and muniments in his possession concerning the said lands'.<sup>192</sup> This suggests that William did declare himself his sister's heir and attempt to gain possession of her lands.

## The School

The original 1540 foundation wishes of Joan Cooke had specified that the master should be an 'honest and wellerned scholemaster being a priest' which may have been a legacy of ideas associated with the employment of chantry priests, as well as the provision of spiritual guidance for the boys in his charge.<sup>193</sup> Thomas Younge, the first master, fulfilled this provision and in the depositions of 1540 he is described as 'then scholemasyster of the saide

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<sup>191</sup> MS GA D3270/6A GA Depositions in a cause relating to Lady Cooks Conveyance. 24 August 1550.

<sup>192</sup> W. H. Stevenson, *Calendar*, p. 64 (item 67).

<sup>193</sup> MS GA D3270 C/27 Tripartite deed ff.110v-114 1539/40 Dame Joan Cook, Gloucester Corporation, bailiffs and citizens of Worcester.

freeschool'.<sup>194</sup> It is likely that the school functioned like other Tudor grammar schools admitting boys from the age of about seven. A former student Richard Willis published a book called *Private Exercises of a Penitent Sinner, or Mount Tabor*, which was included in the Register of the Company of Stationers on 19 November 1693.<sup>195</sup> The author was seventy-five at the time of publication and a former pupil of the school, so he would have been a pupil at the school somewhere between 1571 and 1577.<sup>196</sup> This provides some limited insight into the curriculum and features of the Crypt School in the Elizabethan period. It is also useful as it gives an indication of the type of occupations accessible to the boys attending the school. Willis himself commented that once the schoolmaster Gregory Downhall had gained his Master of Arts, he moved from the school to become secretary to the Lord Chancellor, Lord Ellesmere. Even though Willis' own education was confined to his time at the Crypt School, he followed in Downhall's footsteps and became secretary to a series of men in high political and social office: Lord Brooke; Lionel Cranfield, the earl of Middlesex and Lord High Treasurer, and finally Lord Coventry, keeper of the Great Seal.

In 'Meditation number 5, 'Upon my breeding up at school' Willis described aspects of his experience as a student at the Crypt School. His first comment was that 'it was not my happiness to be bred up at university' but he does indicate how he became so proficient in writing and composition skills without attending university. He discussed the arrival at his time in school of a new master from 'Pembroke Hal in Cambridge' Master Gregory Downhall' and how he became very attached to this master who lived over the school in the masters room.<sup>197</sup> Willis, whose father lived next door, spent a considerable time with him. Willis describes Downhall as a good scholar, enthusiastic and with his Bachelor of Arts degree, he could write in both Italian and secretariat hand. However, after a few years he left the Crypt School having completed his MA, which he undertook as a founding scholar at Jesus College Oxford.<sup>198</sup> It is perhaps possible that the type of education Willis received under Downhall was a version of Downhall's experience at the Merchant Taylors' School at the time of Richard Mulcaster.<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> MS GA D3270/6A GA Depositions in a cause relating to Lady Cooks Conveyance. 24 August 1550.

<sup>195</sup> [Stationers' Register Online \(SRO\) Digital Humanities @ Oxford](#) (accessed March 4, 2021).

<sup>196</sup> Confirmed by Willis's recording of Hugh Walker, schoolmaster in 1577, and Gregory Downhall or Downhale, master from 1577–8.

<sup>197</sup> R.W., *Mount Tabor*.

<sup>198</sup> MS Jesus College Oxford Archives. CC1. Jesus College Foundation Charter 1571.

<sup>199</sup> Richard Mulcaster became headmaster in 1561.

Name of Master		Dates
Thomas Yonge		1539
John Disetley	M.A. (Oxon)	1547
Thomas Bowland	B.A. (Oxon)	1550
Nicholas Oldysworth		1551
Richard Hewis	M.A. (Oxon)	1553
Hugh Walker		1557
Gregory Downes/Downhall	B.A. (Cantab)	1577
Edmonde Cugley	B.A. (Oxon)	1579
Alexander Bellshire	M.A. (Oxon)	1581
Henry Aisgill	M.A. (Oxon)	1582
William Groves		1589

Figure 5. Masters of the Crypt School in the Tudor period.

Willis also commented on the teaching methods employed by Hugh Walker, who was master of the school in 1577. According to the account in *Mount Tabor* Walker was not a popular master and had trouble maintaining discipline. His methods were to hold evening lessons and the following morning tests followed by humiliation for those boys who could not pass. Willis described Walker as a local man, ‘an ancient citizen of no great learning’.<sup>200</sup> Other local men were Thomas Younge, who had been a chaplain at St Mary de Crypt church before taking up his appointment, and William Groves, who did not hold a university degree. The subject of qualifications for masters is discussed by Orme, who notes that following the Black Death and the reduction in university graduates to teach in schools, this did not remove the desire for a master to have had this level of education.<sup>201</sup> A university degree was seen as desirable, but it was more likely that the incumbent would hold a Bachelor of Arts, rather than the more complex and prestigious Master of Arts. The title of ‘master’ for teachers more commonly being bestowed as the status of a master of the school rather than denoting the degree. The Crypt School followed the trend of the later part of the sixteenth century when schools began to ask for degrees as a qualification to teach. As can be seen from figure 5, the Crypt School had four holders of an MA (five counting Downhall who acquired his towards the end of his post).

<sup>200</sup> R.W., *Mount Tabor*.

<sup>201</sup> N. Orme, *Medieval Schools*, p. 170.

Under Joan Cooke's arrangements most of the masters were paid £10 per annum. However, Downhall was the exception his salary being double at £20 per annum, although why is not clear, but perhaps it was as a means to encourage him to remain as the schoolmaster. Having been a founding scholar at the Merchant Taylors' School before attending Oxford, it is possible Downhall had been influenced by the pedagogical philosophy of Richard Mulcaster, the head of Merchant Taylors' school. Mulcaster believed that pupils should have a 'balanced educational course, the best that can be devised in light of experience'.<sup>202</sup> He extolled the virtues of a broad elementary grounding, reading in the vernacular, and writing, drawing and singing before embarking on more formal academic studies for all pupils. However, it was Mulcaster's philosophy for this next stage of education which could explain why Willis was so motivated by his education at the hands of Downhall during his time at the Crypt School. Mulcaster declared that the grammar education should allow gentlemen to mix with the 'common' rather than trying to emulate the nobility.<sup>203</sup> At the Crypt School, the mixing of the gentry with those who came from the lower social orders may have had a positive effect on boys like Willis who did not go to university because they were still able to advance socially as a consequence of their grammar school education. Therefore, without Downhall's teaching it is feasible that Willis would not have been able to emulate Downhall 'following his steps as nere I could'.<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> J. Simon, *Education and Society*, pp. 353–4

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>204</sup> R.W., *Mount Tabor*.

## Conclusions

John Cooke's religious orthodoxy, his understanding of the Tudor commonality and his desire to protect his soul and that of his wife Joan, all contributed to his desire to establish his own school. However, it was the development of the lay government of Gloucester, and his roles and acquired senior status within it alongside that of his expanding and prosperous business which enabled John Cooke to leave sufficient funds and ensure his friends' assistance for his widow to make the school a reality.

In his will John Cooke brought together all the instructions and financial bequests to establish a school at the heart of his community 'in the parishe of Criste', thus removing the source of grammar education from the ubiquitous hands of the monastic houses and placing it firmly within the boundaries of his parish church.<sup>205</sup> Regarding the master's appointment, John apparently favoured a priest instead of a lay master, and Joan's first appointment for the school was that of Thomas Young, clerke, then scolemayster of the freescole', binding their religious desires, the parish and the school tightly together.<sup>206</sup> John Cooke's burial place was feet away from the new school, which itself was attached to the church, but not as a chantry rather as an entity in its own right. By so doing, the grammar school was associated with the church and more specifically the parish, the school named for the parish: St Mary de Crypt. In this way John and Joan Cooke showed the desire that the school would be envisaged by contemporaries and future generations as part of the parish and the parish church. The church and school building opened out onto Southgate Street, a short walk to the cross, the Boothall and old Tolsey, and the business area of the High Cross and the mercery.

The location of the school next to the church would have provided a daily reminder of the founder John Cooke. Underneath the church itself in the crypt was one of the local breweries, although there do not appear to be any ties with John Cooke's role as a brewer. Within the church adjacent to the new school building, were further links to John Cooke that the boys presumably noted when they were taken into the church for their prayers. These include John Cooke's tomb located in the most sanctified area of the church topped with ornate brasses depicting the couple. Likewise, the chantry chapel of St John which was where the pupils' prayers were to be said under the watchful eye of master and priest. Similarly, the

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<sup>205</sup> MS GA D3270 The Crypt School. Gloucester United Schools Charity, 1478–1926.

<sup>206</sup> MS GA D3270/6A Depositions in a cause relating to Lady Cooks Conveyance. 24 August 1550.



vestments and other gifts to the parish would have left the pupils in no doubt of the reputation and importance of their founder in terms of business, the community and pious virtue.

Many of the more prominent townspeople of Tudor Gloucester had ensured their place and a reminder of their reputation in the county town by their endowments and gifts, those granted to St Mary de Crypt were generous and in the main donated from those involved in the corporation and local businesses. John Cooke was not alone in making multiple and generous bequests. Richard Manchester, a local businessman left two books to St Mary's church for the use of the parishioners and re-endowed the chantry chapels of St Mary and the chapel of St John the Baptist to the sum of £9 per annum and left money for the casting of five bells for the church. Garet van Eck, a former mayor, left plate and vestments for the chapel of St Catherine within the church and an endowment of 100 marks.<sup>207</sup> Alongside the tomb and the chapel, John Cooke also provided for vestments and altar gifts to be used for whatever was needed. Although the school was not a gift to the church the literal ties between the school building and the parish and the priest made it very clear that Cooke considered that the two should be united. His gifts sent a strong message to the parish and the school of his reputation and piety, something to be emulated by the pupils in the Crypt School.

John Cooke's businesses thrived in Gloucester, as his personal wealth demonstrated. He not only understood the need for a good grammar school but one in which he would see a twofold result for Gloucester, most importantly, the education of future priests, but also a chance for well-educated boys to be able to acquire the key skills needed for business in the developing Tudor town. As literacy rates increased and merchants sought those skilled in reading, writing and numeracy, a good education was becoming essential. Boys from the grammar school who did not wish to continue their education to take holy orders would have a set of skills and level of education which would allow them to take their place in commerce. As the businesses of Gloucester grew, the need for lawyers increased too, a grammar education could access training in the law. There was also the necessity for well-educated individuals for various positions within the corporation of Gloucester itself, if this was to continue to flourish. Educated men could become coroners, recorders and hold the key roles within the corporation, such as mayor and sheriff in a world which was becoming more literate.

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<sup>207</sup> *VCH Gloucester* 4, pp. 292–311.

Finally, it must be remembered that although it was the will of John Cooke which established his wishes, it was his widow Joan Cooke who saw them come to fruition. The Crypt School now entering its 483<sup>rd</sup> year has demonstrated its longevity. Much of this will be attributed to good leadership and management of the school across the centuries, but the financial security afforded to the school by Dame Joan Cooke had a large part to play in the school's continued existence. These lands provided financial security and eventually a home for the school as it outgrew its city centre buildings. Joan's forethought in securing the Podesmead manor estates gave financial security and land to the school a result of her astute purchase following the dissolution.<sup>208</sup> This was followed by her tripartite agreement in 1540, establishing a system of checks and balances to maintain the school and ensure that no single party from Gloucester could renege on their support or financial provision for the school, again denoting her careful management for which generations of Gloucester students remain truly thankful.

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<sup>208</sup> R. Austin, *Crypt School*, pp. 144–46.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A

Detail of the surviving portraits hung in the Old Tolsy.

Name of sitter	Dates of birth and death (where known)	Birth/Residency	Office held by sitter	Bequests/work	Symbolism	Posthumous
John Cooke	d.1528	b. Minsterworth Gloucestershire Lived Gloucester	Mayor x 4 sheriff x 2 alderman Gloucester 1501 1512 1512	The Crypt School, All 12 Parish churches of Gloucester, Gifts to the poor, St Bartholomew hospital, town infrastructure	Fur trimmed scarlet Mayoral robes	Yes
Joan Cooke	d.1545	Born and lived Gloucester	No	Crypt School, Parish churches, Gifts to the poor, gifts to hospitals	Double portrait The Couple are holding hands, John looking directly at Joan.  Merchant guild gloves	Yes
John Fawkner	d. 1545	Lived Gloucester	Mayor of Gloucester 1525 1534 1542	Owned a cap factory. Bequests: Roads and bridges, gifts to the poor and money for craftsmen in St Michael's parish.	Fur trimmed scarlet Mayoral robes	Yes
Sir Thomas Bell	1486-1566	Lived Gloucester	3 x Mayor 1536, 1544, 1553 3 x Sheriff 4 x MP 1538, 1545.1547 and 1553.	Capper – various legacies to Gloucester Knighted 1547. Purchased Blackfriars in 1539 to create his home, a workshop and alms houses.	Fur trimmed scarlet Mayoral robes, coat of arms.	Yes
Richard Pate	1516-1588	b. Minsterworth or Cheltenham	Gloucester MP 1558,1559,1563 and 1586 Recorder of Gloucester 1556-87	Many bequests in Cheltenham(school) and Gloucester Depicted holding a red book and documents. Chain of office?		Yes
Thomas White	1495-1567	b. Reading	Master of the Company of Merchant Taylors Lord Mayor of London	£100 loan for 4 journeymen in 24 towns including Gloucester		Yes
John Haydon	d.1582	b. Devon Lived London	No	Mercer Master of the company of Mercers. Sheriff of London – gifts for several towns		Yes

Name of sitter	Dates of birth and death (where known)	Birth/Residency	Office held by sitter	Bequests/work	Symbolism	Posthumous
Thomas Poulton	d.1608	b. Tewkesbury Lived Tewkesbury	No	£60 bequest to young craftsmen of Gloucester Money for the repair of Gloucester highways.		Yes
Joan Goldston	d.1579	St Michael's Parish Gloucester	No	Related to William Endowments for the poor and infrastructure of Gloucester		Yes
William Goldston	d.1569	St Michael's Parish Gloucester	No	Related to Joan Legacy to Saint Bartholomew's hospital Gloucester		Yes
Gregory Willshire	d. 1585	No	No	Legacy of £100 for wine for mayoral election		Yes
Isabelle Wetherstone	d.1555	Gloucester	No	Long lived legacy to the poor of Gloucester		Yes
John Thorne	d.1618	St Nicholas Parish Gloucester	Alderman Sheriff Mayor	Brewer, left various legacies.		No

## Appendix B

### Chantry Documents – Gloucester Parish Churches 1548 Commission.

Parish Church	Chantries	Details from certificates
<p>Saint Mary de Crypt</p> <p>Richard Manchester 1460 – will paid for five bells to be fitted.</p> <p>Brasses to the John and Joan Cooke were originally over their burial place in the chancel next to the Easter Sepulchre which had an ornate canopied arch and wall paintings.</p> <p>Houselynge people 280</p>	<p>4 chantry foundations</p> <p>Including: Fraternity of Saint John the Baptist Chanty of Saint Mary</p>	<p>‘William de Warwick £9 6s 6d Priest John Murraye priest took £5 6s 8d Plate and jewels none Ornaments 7s’</p> <p>‘Altar of our Lady £11 17s , founded by ‘divers persons’ Hugh Fishpole priest took £5 6s 8d Plate and jewels none Ornaments £2 2s 8d’</p> <p>‘Saint Katherine founded by Margarett Vanneck endowed with £5 6s 8d No incumbent, ornament plate or jewels.’</p> <p>‘Saint John £9 1 s 6d founded by ‘divers persons’ Stephen Pole priest took £5 6s 8d Ornaments 14s plate and jewels none.’</p>
<p>Parish church of Saint Ewen</p> <p>Houselynge 273</p>		<p>‘In the parish of Saint Mary de Crypt The lady service founded by ‘divers persons’ to minister to the parish in times of vycars sykness or absence’ Houselynge 273’</p> <p>‘Richard Stanley incumbent took £6 Ornament £1 1s 1d Plate and jewels £1 13s 6d’</p> <p>There is one document in GRO for Return of Church Goods xi July 6 Edw VI delivered to Bishop Hooper</p>
<p>Saint Mary de Lode</p> <p>Houselynge 500</p>	<p>Trinity gyld Our Lady</p>	<p>‘Trinity gyld £2 18d 1 Supports one priest Ornaments £4 6s – plate the same Mass priest is described as ‘verie well learnt’ William Taylor £2 11s 9d’</p> <p>‘Our Lady, £4 3s 4d Priest John Jamez took £3 15s and is described as ‘a man meate to be an assistant to the vycar beyng an impotent and lame man’ Ornament 16s plate the same.’</p>
<p>Saint Nicholas</p>	<p>Chantry of our lady</p> <p>The Roode Service</p>	<p>‘Our Lady £6 9s 8d’</p> <p>‘Roode Service £6 12s’</p>
<p>Saint Michael</p> <p>Houselynge 325</p>	<p>Fraternity of the craft of Weavers Chantry chapel and priest</p>	<p>‘Margarett Vannecke founded St Anne service for the Fraternity of the craft of Weavers Endowed with £9 16 Richard Burnell, priest took £5 7s 8d Ornament £1 1s plate and jewels none’</p>
<p>Saint Nicholas</p> <p>Houselynge 520</p>	<p>Our Layde Service The Roode service</p>	<p>‘Our Layde service £6 9s 8d Ornaments £1 Plate £29 The Rood service £6 9s 8d Ornaments 6s 8d’</p> <p>‘Endowment of William Francombe and Walter Beech to the value of 13s 4 d for 2 obits yearly.’</p>

Parish Church	Chantries	Details from certificates
All Saints Houselynge 45	Chantry for weekly masses and 2 yearly obits and yearly alms to the poor.	'Ornaments and jewels £4 17s 4d George Grey priest in receipt of £2 13s 4d'
Saint Catherine Houselynge 400	Charnell Service	'Charnell service £3 14s Founded by Edward Taverner, John Constable, William Taverner and Symon Baker. Ornaments 7s 10d Plate and jewels the same Robert Durseley mass-priest in receipt of £2 6s 8d'
Saint John Baptist Houselynge 309	The Roode Service Our Lady Saint Ayn	'The Roode Service founded by Walter Brockhampton. Endowed £7 4s 1d The charges are to find the usual 'singing priest to pray for the souls of him, his wife, and other forever, to keep one yearly obit and distribute certain to the poor and to give certyne money yearly to to the organ player in the same church toward the mending of his lyving' Richard Boydon, Priest took £5 6s 8d, the organ player 6s 8d. Ornaments valued at £1 0s 2d Our ladye service founded by diverse persons not named. Prayers to be offered for their souls £13 0s 8d Plate and ornaments £1 6s 4d Richard Lawrence, priest took £5 6s 8d.'  'St Ayn service founded by Agnes Brudge one yearly obit and yearly alms for the poor, it was worth £8 13s 4d yearly. Ornaments £1 1s 2d Mass priest William Strenseham took £5.'
St Aldate Houselynge 140		
Trynyte Houselynge 310	Jesus service/ Rood Service Our Layde Service	'Founded by Thomas Poope to sing at the altar and pray for the souls. Yearly value of £8 10s Matthew Walker priest took £5 6s 8d  Our Layde Service £8 19s 8d Diverse persons incumbent George Cowper who took £5 6s 8d Ornaments £1 4s 8d'

## Appendix C

Occupations in Gloucester according to Cole's Rentals 1455.

Occupation	Number	%		Occupation	Number	%
<b>Manufacturers</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>21.8</b>				
Smith	6			<b>Merchants</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>8</b>
Wiredrawer	5			Mercer	8	
Cardmaker	4			Draper	3	
Cutler	12			Merchant	3	
Bladesmith	2					
Farrier	2			<b>Transport</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2.8</b>
Plumber	2			Carrier	3	
Pewterer	1			Boatmen	2	
Goldsmith	2					
Fletcher	2			<b>Medical</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3.4</b>
				Physician	2	
<b>Cloth trades</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>14.9</b>		Apothecary	1	
Dyer	3			Barber	3	
Weaver	10					
Tailor	10			<b>Professional</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4.5</b>
Hosier	1			Law	6	
Capper	1			Notary	1	
Chaloner	1			Sergeant	1	
<b>Leather</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>22.9</b>		<b>Victualling</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>15.5</b>
Corviser	20			Cook	2	
Glover	6			Brewer	7	
Tanner	6			Baker	8	
Skinner	6			Butcher	8	
Sadler	2			Fishmonger	2	
<b>Building trades</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5.7</b>				
Masons	5					
Carpenter	3					
Painter	2					

## Appendix D

Details from John Cooke's Will. (MS GA D3270).

Soul/church	Education	Duties	Family
Worcester: xxd	Everything used for the school and school house.  Priest of the school to also say mass at the altar of Saint John and say daily prayers. Two obits annually, one at CC and one at ST N.	£20 to maintain the king's highway towards Evesham	Thomas Massinger Brother in law £10  Robert Holyday £10
-High altar CC xxd -Every altar CC xxd 'To refresh altars- 'Tabbil' of the life of John the Baptist in alabaster to be set at the altar of st John in the south side of the church.'		£20 to mend and maintain the road at Birdlip  'Joane Boucher to oversee the above.'  '40s to Joane for this'	Thomas Payne my cousin £10  John Chanterell at Minsterworth (Brother in law) 'I held the lands of my brother in law and give and bequesth these to my sister Margaret Chanterell in her lifetime. Afterwards the lands shall go to Richard Holyday and Anne his wife and his heirs. If they have no heirs the land will fund the school and obits.'
St Nicholas church – -high altar xxd -Every altar xxd To refresh altars -Fund a priest for lady altar for 2 years 'To give him his exhibition and wages of £5 a year. (pray for soul(s)'		Repairs to the great west bridge £5	Godchildren 'A solver spoon of value 3s 4d'  'Garret Colyns – my sister's son's son (sisters grandson, his great nephew) and Richard Colynes his brother and my godson Elizabeth Colynes their sister £20 to share equally between them.'

<p>'16 pairs of Vestments to be made for the sum of 26s 8d to CC for 12 months mind One pair to the lady service for each parish proctor in Gloucester (11 pairs) 3 pairs for the each of the freres 1 pair to saint bartholomews 1 pair to Minsterworth (where I was born)'</p>			<p>'Margaret Chanterell £40  Anne Holyday and her husband £100  John Holyday (godson) £10  Joan Browne (Brother's daughter) £10  Parnell Perry my sister's daughter £6 13s 4d  Thomas Perry my cousin and apprentice besides his covenants £20  Anne Perry – cousin and servant £10'</p>
<p>'1 pair for the lady chapel in Saint Peters monastery in Gloucester at the sum of 18s 4d'</p>			<p>All household and plate left to Joan as she 'doo know my full mynde in these purpose'</p>
<p>'One pair of vestments for the lady chapel in Llathony Priory in Gloucester at the sum of 18s 4d'</p>			<p>'I myseld did publishe and declare unto hir in my deth bedde. In the presence of my Lord Bisshop before named maister Robert Stynchcombe Thomas Messynger and other aforementioned who I specially require to here and bere witness to the declarations of my hole mynd and purpose of suche thynges as I would have doon and executed by my saide wife.  I put my faithfull credence and trust hoping that she will kepe herself sole without any other husbunde according to my desire so to hir by me.'</p>



All of the above must be 'made like ...and be after one maner of colour'			
Day of burial 'Distribute £20 to pore people on day of burial in 'pens' and at my months mind and 12 months mind.' After the first year Joan will distribute £10 to the poor on his years mind to pray for his soul.			
Other individuals	business	Other	
Lord Andrew, Bishop of Crisopolitanen 'to be loving to my wife in her grete nede £10'	All his lands purchased within Gloucester and Baggeworth and elsewhere 'enfeoffed Thomas Messynger, Thomas Bell and others (xxth yr of the reign of Henry VIII) to be used towards his performance of his will.'	Request to be buried at the north end of the high altar	
Sir Robert Stynchcombe Parson of CC £10  Maiden servants for their marriage 20s		'Saint Bartholomews Money owed to him by Mistress Sankye (£14) Margaret Baker (£9)' This is to be put towards the 'reparacion of the pour hospital...' 'mending of the houses of the pore folks there to save and kepe them from the danger of great waters in the wynter tyme.'	
Thomas Laurence (son of Anne) £10 Alice (sister of Thomas) £10 'Sir Richard Parkyns to pray for my soul £10'  'Alice Rowe his sister to pray for me £10'  'Thomas Stewe – 'to schole with my goods until he be prest to thentent he shall have cause to pray for my soul'  'Katheryn Stewe £6 13s 4d to pray for me.'			