

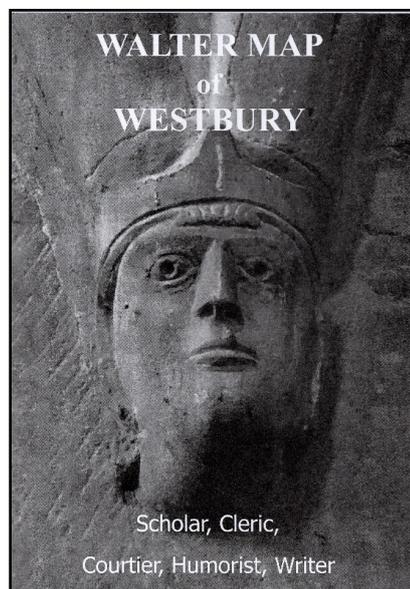
Book Reviews

Walter Map of Westbury: Scholar, cleric, courtier, humourist writer.

Nicholas Orme (Westbury-on-Severn, Church of SSS Mary, Peter & Paul 2019) 16pp., Card covers, £2.00. Reviewed 06.2019

I suspect that, like myself, few people have heard of Walter Map, but from this booklet it is clear that he was a very interesting person who lived through the mid 12th and early 13th centuries; a turbulent time in English history. The text is well laid out, starting with who Walter Map was, his career and his close links to Westbury of which he was Rector.

Much of this booklet is then given over to the book for which Walter is best known *De Nugis Curialium* translated as 'The Trifles of Courtiers', that was put together in the early 1180s when he was about 50. The court in question was that of Henry II Plantagenet, where Walter spent many years' service in a number of roles. It covers topics such as the court and the people who led it as well as the Welsh and monks – whom he apparently took a very dim view of, particularly the Cistercians. In addition to his satirical comments on his world there are stories, quoted here, that he must have heard in and around Westbury. But the point is made that the book includes much more – amusing and dramatic stories drawn from many sources including folklore. One such quoted is that of Wild Edric's fairy wife Godda. Edric Sylvaticus was an important Saxon landowner in south Shropshire/north Herefordshire who for some years following the Norman conquest continued the resistance. Charlotte Burne quoted from Map in her Shropshire Folk-Lore as one of a number of folk-tales about Edric – some of which still circulated in the area around the Stiperstones into the latter part of the 19th century.



The final section of this very interesting work sums up Walter's character as far as it may be understood from his writings – genial, humorous, sociable and well-read. A man who was hard-working but content with his lot. He died in 1209/10 probably at Westbury on All Fool's Day.

As one would expect of the author there is a concise, fully referenced, further reading list on the last page for those who wish to know more about Walter Map and his world – I do.

Alan Tyler

Shrewsbury

A–Z of Gloucester

Roger Smith, (Amberley Publishing, 2019), 96pp., many col. ill. Paperback, £14.99 [ISBN: 9781445691992]. Reviewed 06.2019

Little books on the old buildings of Gloucester crowd the bookshop shelves. Philip Moss's *Historic Gloucester* (1993, revised 2005) is hard to beat, but *A–Z of Gloucester* is the latest of many more on the same theme. It is beautifully illustrated, written in a lively style and packed with historical information, most of it soundly based on the *Victoria County History*.

Yet the text does not bear close scrutiny, nor does it incorporate recent research such as that in our *Record Series* edition of the *Terrier of Llanthony Priory*. At the cathedral, for instance, the canopy of Edward II's tomb is not alabaster (p. 16) but limestone, St Mary's Gate is not 14th century (p. 20) but late 12th–early 13th century, and the building shown on p. 43 is not the 18th-century organist's house but the 19th-century bishop's palace. Of the three great inns said on pp. 32 and 80 to have been built by the abbey for pilgrims to the king's tomb, the New Inn was built 100 years after the pilgrimage had peaked, the Fleece did not become a public inn until 350 years afterwards and the Ram in Southgate Street did not belong to the abbey. (The Old Ram in Northgate Street belonged to the abbey but was not a public inn either.) The 13th-century owner of the Fountain Inn, Peter the Poitevin, was not bishop of Winchester (p. 33) but collector of the prise of Gascon wine. The public house called Dick Whittington's was not owned or built by the lord mayor of London's nephew and namesake (p. 89); his house, called Studley's Hall, stood next door behind St Nicholas's church and was pulled down about 1820. The New Inn did not witness the accession or proclamation of

Lady Jane Grey (p. 63) but only entertained the messengers who brought news of it. The home of Bishop Hooper was not his so-called lodging in Westgate Street (p. 41) but his palace, nor did he spend the eve of his martyrdom there but at the Ingram family's Booth Hall Inn. The Bell was not an inn from the 18th century (p. 67) but from the 15th century or earlier, and the building now called the Old Bell was not part of it from the outset (*ibid.*) but only from 1912. Methodist worship at St John's Northgate has not been continuous since John Wesley's time, as at the top of p. 44, but only since 1972 as at the bottom of the same page.

Nevertheless, these little books represent a social revolution. Fifty years ago Gloucester's old buildings (other than the cathedral) were so little valued that destroying them was an economic imperative. Today, thanks to Roger Smith and his fellow authors, the interest in history and architecture promoted by BGAS has entered the popular mainstream. Of that both they and we can be proud.

John Rhodes

Gloucester