

‘Pondre the universalle wele of the cuntre’: Richard III, Bridges and Floods

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PROTECTION FROM flooding depends on maintenance of drainage and appropriate defences by the inhabitants and authorities in those localities prone to incursions from the sea or which are so low lying that excessive rainfall could put them at risk. This is true now and was equally true in the reign of Richard III. In general terms, any owner of such lands where flooding was a constant danger had to make allowances in their accounts for the losses and costs consequent on floods, no lord being exempt, as notes in Richard III’s register of grants and orders testify.¹ The king regularly authorised commissions of walls and ditches, also known as commissions of sewers, appointing local notables to perambulate the waterways and marshes to oversee them and take order for repairs and the protection of the countryside: in Richard III’s reign only four, all dated July to September 1483, found their way on to his patent rolls, three of these being for the Thames.² Bridges were an important part of this defence against the waters of rivers, and fens. Bridges and causeways facilitated travel through low-lying land and their support, along with highways in general was recognised as one of the standard charities to be remembered during life or in a person’s will along with the feeding of prisoners or the provision of dowries for impoverished girls; a collecting box might stand on a bridge as it did, for example, on Barnstable Bridge.³ Flooding might also be used as a defence against enemies, and Richard III agreed to ‘suche convenient recompense’ for the inhabitants of the marches of Calais for the flooding of their lands done as a safeguard (‘suerte of the said Towne’). This had been ordered by Edward IV during the long drawn out invasion by Louis XI’s army of the young duchess of Burgundy’s territories which surrounded Calais; these lands had seceded to Louis XI on the death of

¹ Recorded under expenses concerning lands of the archbishop of York, allowance was made *circa reperaciones sepium et fossatum in diversis locis infra dictum dominium ...* and *in allocaciones & deduccione firme lx Acrarum prati in Stanecarre ibidem annuatim oneratis ad liijs iiij eo quod submersum est per fluctum excessum hoc anno ...*, *British Library Harleian Manuscript 433*, ed R. Horrox and P.W. Hammond, 4 vols, London and Upminster 1979–83, vol. 3, pp. 220–21. Also land at Cawood and Bishopsthorpe: *... residuum submersum per aquam ...*; also: *Et in deduccione firme cuiusdem prati vocati Newfenne eo quod submergitum per aquam hoc anno*, *ibid.*, p. 222; also *de parte firme de Everton Kerre submerso hoc anno*, in the lordship of Scrooby, Notts., *ibid.*, p. 223.

² *CPR 1476–85*, p. 466 (all 4); this care for the Thames undoubtedly ties in with the flooding at Henley at the end of 1482, see below. For a comprehensive record of such commissions, W. Dugdale, *The History of Imbanking and Draining in Divers Fens and Marshes*, 2nd rev. ed. London 1772, and see also H.C. Darby, *The Medieval Fenland*, Cambridge 1940, repr. Newton Abbot 1974, pp. 155–68. For some information on the weather of these years see n. 14.

³ For a brief overview of all aspects of medieval bridges, their hazards, construction, funding and costs, D. Harrison, *The Bridges of Medieval England, Transport and Society 400–1800*, Oxford 2004; he importantly rejects the view that major improvements in transport were all post medieval.

her father in 1477 because French law declared a woman could not inherit them. It was Lord Dynham, the Lieutenant of Calais, who made this plea for compensation to Richard in 1483 and Richard found 'that desire reasonable'.⁴

It was generally considered preferable that an endowment should support the maintenance of public structures such as bridges, more reliable than the alternative of collecting tolls and donations. Endowments of bridges were comparatively common, the most famous being that supporting London Bridge, a very wealthy trust endowed by London citizens who had bequeathed land to 'God and the Bridge'. Worcester's bridge and walls were in the care of its Holy Trinity Guild,⁵ the bridges of Rochester and York were safely endowed,⁶ as was Kingston upon Thames,⁷ but the endowed chantry supporting Salisbury's main bridge was far from satisfactory.⁸ Barnstaple, port and borough of Devon, enjoyed sound local management of its 700 foot 'long bridge': it paid out regularly for maintenance in the 1460s and had a box on the bridge for donations, with the occasional indulgence to boost takings, as in 1471.⁹ These are a few examples among many bridges, any of which might have claimed the king's attention. To these must be added causeways through low-lying land often with hermits or keepers attached to them, many of which were in the fens of the diocese of Ely, such as those at Earith, Huntingdonshire, Stuntney and Soham St Andrew, Cambridgeshire, from where there was a causeway to Ely through dangerous marshes built by an early bishop, or at Brandon on the Ouse north of Ely. Perhaps the longest of them all was at Swarkestone, said to be the most famous bridge in Derbyshire across the Trent and nearly a mile long with additional arches over the flood plain and a chantry chapel in the middle of the river to catch the prayers and donations of travellers.¹⁰

⁴ *The History of the King's Works*, gen. ed. H.M. Colvin, 6 vols, London 1963–82, vol. 1, pp. 434, 443–44. *Harl. 433*, vol. 3, p. 30. For background *The Book of Privileges of the Merchant Adventurers of England 1296–1484*, ed Anne F. Sutton and Livia Visser-Fuchs, London 2009, pp. 4–14.

⁵ VCH, *County of Worcester*, ed J.W. Willis-Bund, London 1971, vol. 3, pp. 382–83.

⁶ R.H. Britnell, 'Rochester Bridge, 1381–1530', in *Traffic and Politics. The Construction and Management of Rochester Bridge, AD 43–1993*, ed N. Yates and J.M. Gibson, Woodbridge and Rochester 1994, pp. 43–106; this is one of the most useful studies and illustrates all the problems of bridge building, repair and endowment that could occur in the late middle ages. The bridge over the Ouse in York was endowed and its chapel of St William was in the care of the corporation, VCH, *History of Yorkshire*, vol. 2, *City of York*, ed P.M. Tillott, London 1961, pp. 514–15; for Foss Bridge, p. 518.

⁷ Endowed by John Lovekyn, citizen of London (d. 1368), A. Anderson, *History and Antiquities of Kingston Upon Thames*, Kingston upon Thames 1818, pp. 62–64.

⁸ Salisbury, VCH, *County of Wiltshire*, vol. 6, ed E. Crittall, London 1962, p. 88.

⁹ J.R. Chanter and Thomas Wainwright, *Barnstaple Records*, 2 vols, Barnstaple 1900, vol. 2, pp. 86, 217–36. B.W. Oliver, 'The long bridge of Barnstaple', *Reports of the Devonshire Association* vol. 78 (1946), pp. 177–91, esp. p. 188 (1471 indulgence). Britnell, 'Rochester Bridge', p. 48 (length of bridges), and esp. pp. 60–75 for maintenance problems at Rochester much troubled by the tides of the Medway; particular problems in 1465 and 1489.

¹⁰ Darby, *The Medieval Fenland*, pp. 106–13 with map of causeways. C. Kerry, 'Hermits, fords and bridge-chapels', *Derbyshire Archaeological Journal*, vol. 14 (1892), pp. 54–71, esp. pp. 56, 57, 59, 63–66. See S. Lewis, *A Topographical Dictionary of England*, 4 vols, London 1848, for additional details on Brandon, Earith, Soham St Andrew and Swarkestone, and also Harrison, *Bridges of Medieval England*, p. 106 (structure of causeways, pp. 104–05).

Gloucester Bridge also had an extensive causeway.¹¹

Specific bridges might come in for a particular gift: Richard, on 8 December 1483, in consideration of Newcastle's expenses over the defence of the Scottish Marches, released £40 of their £100 fee farm, the money to be spent on the bridge over the Tyne and on the town walls under the supervision of Alexander Legh or George Bird.¹² Newcastle was a wealthy town but like any English town council, its leading men were always ready to emphasise its poverty, although with Richard they hardly had to do that as he had known the town well as duke and knew that the bridge regularly saw the passage of soldiers, arms and artillery for the defence of the marches.¹³

There were two incidents of flooding in 1483 involving bridges, and Richard made gifts to the first of these places (possibly), and to the other certainly: Henley-on-Thames and Bewdley on the Severn. Both the Fens of Lincolnshire and the area now called the Levels of Somerset seem to have suffered in 1484 and 1485 from flooding and drew Richard's attention.¹⁴

Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire

Henley was an important market town on the west bank of the Thames in the hundred of Binfield, Oxfordshire, almost equidistant from London and Oxford. It suffered from floods sometime before the feast of Epiphany 1483: on 7 January 1483 the town clerk recorded in Henley's Assembly Books that 'the whole commonalty' agreed that 'a certain way called the Clappers now by the inundation of the river disordered and the bridge destroyed, that the Bridgemen there shall make anew the stone walls and various arches with timber fixed and placed on the same'. John Elam and Godfrey Gyldone were elected to assist the Bridgemen. (*Ad quem diem concessum est per totam communitatem ville predictae eo quod quadam via vocata*

¹¹ Harrison, *Bridges of Medieval England*, pl. 1.

¹² He also confirmed all the town's previous charters, *CPR 1476–85*, p. 415 and *Harl. 433*, vol. 1, pp. 99; this sum seems to have been changed to an annuity from the customs for the same purpose, vol. 1, 189. John Brand, *History and Antiquities of the Town and County of Newcastle upon Tyne*, 2 vols, London 1889, vol. 2, p. 177. Legh was a cleric on Richard's council who undertook diplomatic missions to the Scots, and had similar defence responsibilities at Berwick, see A.B. Emden, *A Biographical Register of the University of Cambridge to 1500*, Cambridge 1963, p. 360 and D. Dunlop, 'Legh', *OxfDNB*. Bird was controller of the port's customs, a well-to-do merchant of the town who leased the earl of Northumberland's house there from 1482, C.H. Hunter Blair, 'Members of parliament for Newcastle upon Tyne 1377–1558', *Archaeologia Aeliana*, 4th ser. vol. 14 (1937), pp. 55–56.

¹³ E.g. R. Welford, *History of Newcastle and Gateshead*, 3 vols, London 1884–87, vol. 1, p. 382.

¹⁴ For the bad harvests and sheep murrains of the early 1480s, *The Book of Privileges*, p. 18. Sources on the weather are scarce: floods are noted for 1483 and 1485, but no sources are specified and may include those used here, J.A. Kington, *Climate and Weather*, London 2010, pp. 243, with no trends noted for this period and no reference to the murrains. More information is provided on prices, with a bad harvest in 1481, scarcity in 1482, floods in 1483, T.H. Baker, *Records of the Seasons, Prices of Agricultural Produce and Phenomena Observed in the British Isles*, London [1883], p. 105–06. I am most grateful to Dr Jim Galloway for these references.

le Clapers modo per nimum flumen confundatur et pons ibidem defractus, unanimi assensu et concensu, quod pontinarii ibidem de novo facient muros lapidosos et diversos arches cum maeremio super eosdem fixos et appositos. Et ad opus predictum, modo et forma predict' faciendum eligerunt Joh. Elam [et] Godfridum Gyldone, ut ipsi erunt quoadiutores pontinariis ville predictae). The Clappers was the causeway leading up to the main bridge on its eastern side, its name suggesting a ruder construction of stones and planks and therefore especially vulnerable when the river flooded its banks. The damage on this occasion seems to have been considerable, but cannot be precisely defined.¹⁵ Henley has no surviving accounts in which to follow the progress, extent and cost of these repairs. When Richard III and his household were planning his progress round the country after his coronation on 6 July, the possible crossings over the Thames included Henley. His clerk of the market, harbingers or other officials whose duty it was to make sure the cumbersome royal procession could move safely through the countryside and towns, with ample provision for people and horses, could have reported that the route via Reading was preferable to Henley if the bridge was still not completed and not fit for a king and a long cortege.¹⁶ Other persons acting as conduits of information between this town and the king will be mentioned below.

At some time during his reign Richard may have made Henley a gift, and it is interesting to speculate if this focused on its important bridge in the wake of flood damage. Evidence for his grant is ambiguously stated in a long and elaborate pardon, dated 24 November 1496, addressed to John Willes, warden of the town, and John Richmond and Thomas Goldyng, the bridgemen, pardoning them all forfeitures and potential punishments for their faults or negligence committed before 7 November 1485, and allowing them to retain all 'gifts, alienations and perquisites of lands and tenements' granted by any previous king of England, including Richard III, 'late in fact and not in right king of England' or any other donor. Grants to Henley from any king of England are unfortunately now unidentifiable, but the grants and specific mention of Richard III remain intriguing, whether the words merely expressed a lawyer's excessive care or not – the exhaustive catalogue of potential offences suggests considerable anxiety, but so do all pardons. It was a time of political unease in 1496, and someone on the town's

¹⁵ J. Southerden Burn, *A History of Henley-on-Thames*, London and Newbury 1861, p. 61, for English translation, and P.M. Briers, ed., *Henley Borough Records. Assembly Books i-iv, 1395-1543*, Oxfordshire Record Society, vol. 41 (1960-61), p. 90 for Latin original (the present author has modernised use of u and v). In 1479 the Clappers had been gravelled by John Joy with 68 cartfuls of gravel at 2d each in 1479 (Burn, p. 197 and Briers, p. 84), and in 1481 the common way at the 'Clapers' was repaired at a cost of 13s 4d (Briers, p. 88). I am most indebted to Dr Simon Townley, (who wrote much of VCH, *County of Oxford*, vol. 16, *Henley-on-Thames and Environs*, ed A. Thacker and E. Williamson, London 2011), for identifying the Clappers for me. I am also indebted to Dr Peberdy another author of this volume for his interest.

¹⁶ For the work of e.g. the clerk of the market, J. Davis, 'Market regulation in fifteenth-century England', *Commercial Activity, Market and Entrepreneurs in the Middle Ages. Essays in Honour of Richard Britnell*, ed B. Dodds and C. Liddy, Woodbridge 2011, pp. 81-105.

council clearly thought that any grant to the town was worth safeguarding, while securing protection from any potential prosecution over offences which might be said to have occurred in the reigns of Henry's predecessors including Richard's and before 7 November 1485. Henry also pardoned them all fines and arrears due since Michaelmas 1484, but did not include any improper retention of property belonging to Edward IV, Edward V or Richard III that might have occurred.¹⁷ It is therefore also worthwhile to speculate briefly on the state of Henley in 1483 and on who of its inhabitants and neighbours might have mentioned the town to Richard III.

The bridge had probably been founded about the same time as the town was planned in the late twelfth century. It acquired a chapel of St Anne at its south side, in the usual medieval manner. The bridge completed the important road between Dorchester and London, and greatly contributed to the town's prosperity, although river transport to the west and to London remained crucial. The grain of the Midlands came to Henley's quays to be shipped along the Thames, and the trade was so great the town appointed its own porters for grain and insisted all grain be sold in its open market. Although the grain trade was less prosperous in the fifteenth century than earlier, the town also enjoyed a healthy stake in the wool trade, with townsmen like John Elmes senior achieving considerable wealth, and his namesake and successor marrying a daughter of William Brown, a leading stapler of Lincolnshire.¹⁸

The town ruled itself by prescription, the result of a long line of indulgent absentee lords who received quitrents from the burgesses. The head man was the warden, once the ruler of the merchant guild which had become synonymous with the town government, and the burgesses were the members of the guild; they considered themselves a commonalty. The warden, two bailiffs, two constables and two bridgemen were elected each year on the Friday before or the Friday after the feast of the Holy Rood (14 September), and there was also a council for the warden, a council of the commonalty and a full assembly should they be required. A town clerk recorded their business. The officers regulated the town, collected moneys due, kept accounts, leased out and conveyed the communal property, and oversaw the cleaning of the brook, the town ditch and the repair of the streets. Above all they maintained their church and bridge, with the proceeds of the considerable endowment left to the guild for this purpose, worth £121 a year by 1440. This wealth paid for the rebuilding and embellishment of the church, including five new bells in 1472, and the rebuilding of the guildhall in 1487.¹⁹

¹⁷ Burn, *Henley*, p. 51, who dated the pardon in error to 1497; his source must be assumed to be the town's copy in Henley Borough Muniments now in the Oxfordshire History Centre, BOR/3/C/11/FM/110a, kindly located for me by Dr Simon Townley, who also confirmed that no grants from any king are known for Henley, and suggested that the specific inclusion of Richard III, king 'in fact and not of right', merely derives from a lawyer's care. I am grateful to Oxfordshire History Centre for a copy of the original. I am also indebted to Dr Sean Cunningham of the TNA for his advice on the background.

¹⁸ VCH, *County of Oxford*, vol. 16, *Henley-on-Thames and Environs*, ed A. Thacker and E. Williamson, London 2011, pp. 20, 24–25, 27–28, 80–84.

¹⁹ Briers, *Assembly Books*, pp. 3–7, 73 (bells). Burn, *Henley*, pp. 50–52. VCH, *Oxford*, vol. 16, pp. 32, 69

Although she was absent, the lady of the manor remained an important personage. In Richard's reign the manor of Henley belonged to the Hungerford and Moleyns heiress, Mary, who had been about eleven in 1478 at the death of her great-grandmother Margaret, Lady Botreaux. She was married about 1480 to Edward, son of William, Lord Hastings, and he was summoned to parliament from 1482 in her right. Although Henley ruled itself by prescription, the manor and its lady were omnipresent, for the sole court of the town was her court and her steward heard the suits before it (the manor and borough were coterminous). Apparently this worked without obvious friction and it seems the town appointed most manorial officials.²⁰

It is worth while considering the leading townsmen in 1483, who might have approached the king for a grant. John Russell was warden during the flood and the subsequent political changes, having been elected on Holy Rood day (14 September) 1482. He was re-elected for 1483, 1484 and 1485.²¹ The bridgemen in office at the time of the flood were Robert Arderne and John Wryghte, but unfortunately the town clerk is not known for this period.²² Another important personality of the town was the rector of the fine church of St Mary, almost certainly an absentee who employed a curate to carry out the daily duties: Peter Vador (28 May 1483–1510). The town was in the diocese of Lincoln but the advowson of its church was owned by the bishop of Rochester, and the bishop who preferred Vador to his post just before Richard was made king was Edmund Audley. The name of one parish priest is known, John Gamage (1478–92).²³ Although Richard III passed near Henley as he travelled west after his coronation: from Windsor (19–21st) he went to Reading (21–23 July), and then via Caversham to Oxford (24th–26th).²⁴ Towns, villages and parishes, however, frequently sent a deputation to greet the king and accompany him for some way if his journey was an important one, as Richard's post coronation progress certainly was. If the townsmen of

(guildhall), 106–09, 120–22, 178 (bells). The town was not incorporated formally until the reign of Elizabeth. It has excellent surviving records including a cartulary presented by John Elmes senior in 1457, Burn, *Henley*, p. 52.

²⁰ VCH, *Oxford*, vol. 16, p. 74. Burn, *Henley*, pp. 237–38. Hastings became Lord Hungerford and Moleyns in her right formally early in Henry VII's reign when the attainders on her Hungerford ancestors were lifted. *Complete Peerage*, vol. 6, pp. 622–23. For her use of the same motto as Richard III, A.F. Sutton and L. Visser-Fuchs, 'Loyaulte me lie: another user of this motto', *The Ricardian*, vol. 8 (1988–90), pp. 120–21. For the working of the courts, VCH, *Oxford*, vol. 16, pp. 104–105, 106, 121–22.

²¹ Russell had become a burgess in 1461 and in 1462 had made the indenture for the steeple (Briers, pp. 62, 63); bailiff 1466 (p. 67); warden 1478, 1479, 1480, and John Elmes for 1480 and 1481 (Briers, pp. 82–92); in September 1486 Nicholas Wagge was elected. The list of wardens compiled by Burn, p. 71, does not always tie in with Briers edition; his insertion of a William Wakeman for 1483–84 is not explained by reference to the Assembly Books. Burn, *Henley*, p. 75 (town clerks).

²² Briers, *Assembly Books*, p. 89.

²³ Burn, *Henley*, pp. 136, 139, 175–90, 207–09, and VCH, *Oxford*, vol. 16, pp. 160, 162–64 (rectors, priests and chantries), 176–78. Vador was a graduate of Oxford and he acquired the parish of St Edmund the King in Lombard St., London in 1488 (details supplied by Dr Townley); Gamage was not a graduate.

²⁴ R. Edwards, *The Itinerary of King Richard III, 1483–85*, London 1983, p. 5.

Henley intended to place a petition in the king's hands that would have been an additional incentive to attend on him.²⁵

Apart from any deputation from the town itself and the young lady of Henley manor, there was one other local nobleman who was ideally placed to put any request from Henley before the king at his council table or in more convivial surroundings. Two miles west of Henley lay the manor of Rotherfield Greys owned by Francis Lord Lovel since 1477. He had done some building there which implies he both liked the place and stayed there sometimes.²⁶ It was not at Rotherfield Greys that Lovel entertained the king some days later on this royal progress, however, but at Minster Lovel (29 July) after three days at Oxford and a couple at Woodstock.²⁷

Bewdley Bridge, Worcestershire

It is well known that there were floods and heavy rain in the Autumn of 1483 and that these contributed to the defeat and washing away of the so-called Buckingham's Rebellion. The flooding, or possibly the rebels, may have done damage to Bewdley Bridge, an important crossing of the River Severn. As lord of the manor of Bewdley, Richard ordered his receiver, Richard Croft, to pay Walter Rode, Warden of Bewdley Bridge, Worcestershire, twenty marks, on 4 February 1484 'toward the making of the Brigge of Beaudeley'.²⁸

The bridge seems to have been first built around 1447 when an indulgence was issued by John Carpenter, Bishop of Worcester, to promote the work on the bridge *noviter fundati*.²⁹ As the then lord of Bewdley manor, Richard Duke of York, had the previous year obtained a royal grant for the town of an annual fair and a weekly market, the townsmen were clearly eager to expand and the duke's support would undoubtedly have included the new bridge as well.³⁰ The city of Worcester at that time enjoyed control of the only crossing of the Severn between Gloucester and Bridgnorth and its citizens were not pleased at the competition from a comparatively new town, even when it was encouraged by their bishop. Bewdley was also busy taking over an important share of the river traffic. Worcester apparently took advantage of the change in York's fortunes and on 26 November 1459 the bailiffs and citizens were granted by Henry VI all the stone of Bewdley bridge as well as broken stones from Worcester castle to repair their walls, bridge and gates.³¹

²⁵ Compare the funeral of Edward IV for this practice, A.F. Sutton and L. Visser-Fuchs with R.A. Griffiths, *The Royal Funerals of the House of York at Windsor*, London 2005, pp. 22–24.

²⁶ Francis' grandmother, Alice, had also built there in the 1450s. VCH, *Oxford*, vol. 16, pp. 276–78.

²⁷ *Itinerary of King Richard III*, p. 5.

²⁸ *Harl. 433*, vol. 2, pp. 83–84. Croft was also treasurer of the royal household, A.R. Myers, *The Household of Edward IV*, Manchester 1959, p. 289.

²⁹ J.R. Burton, *A History of Bewdley with Concise Accounts of Some Neighbouring Parishes*, London 1883, p. 6. VCH, *County of Worcester*, vol. 4, ed W. Page and J.W. Willis-Bund, London 1924, p. 303.

³⁰ *Charter Rolls 1427–1516*, p. 72, 9 Dec. 1446 fair on feast of St Agatha and market on Wednesday.

³¹ *CPR 1452–60*, p. 528. This was at the time of a general division of the spoils from the attainder of York and Warwick, etc, with several grants involving the issues and offices of Bewdley, *ibid.*, pp. 532 (the steward of Bewdley liberty put in was John Hampton), 539, 578 and 587–88. There have been complex

Bewdley, however, immediately rebuilt its bridge, probably with a wooden superstructure on the surviving stone arches – the bridge and ferry were placed in the care of a warden. A wooden bridge was seen by William Worcestre in 1478.³² It has been concluded that a third bridge entirely of stone was under construction in 1483, possibly after damage to the wooden superstructure by the 1483 floods or by the rebels, and that Richard's grant may represent a contribution to this new bridge – the 'goodly fayr bridge ... of greate arches of stone', seen by John Leland in the early sixteenth century. Leland continued '... to this bridge resorte many flat and longe vessels to cary downe and up all maner of marchandise to Bewdlay and above ...'. The earliest image of the bridge shows a five-spanned bridge with a house on the largest pillar which served as the house of the toll-gatherer and gaol; there was also a timber-built bridge chapel on the north side of the bridge, dedicated to St Anne.³³

Bewdley manor had come to the house of York from their Mortimer ancestors and was in the hands of Richard, Duke of York, from 1433. He built at adjacent Tickenhill, and as mentioned favoured the town with the grant of a fair and weekly market. It was then granted incorporation by Edward IV on 20 October 1472 and could regard itself as a fully fledged self-governing body under bailiffs and burgesses with its own common seal and ability to go to law. Above all the citizens acquired the all-important privilege of freedom from all tolls throughout the king's realm by land, sea and fresh water.³⁴ Edward IV also had plans to use the adjacent house and park of Tickenhill, as a centre of the Council of Wales under the new prince of Wales 1472–73.³⁵

The town made much of this beneficent lordship: the town's arms included the fetterlock and the windows of its civic chapel of St Anne showed the arms of the duke of York, Edward IV and his queen and the prince of Wales.³⁶ The town was

theories about destruction inflicted on the bridge by the armies of Lancaster and York: Burton, the main historian of the town, understood the ownership of the manor, and suggested damage occurred shortly after the death of the duke of York when the Lancastrian army passed through the town and wondered if the stone of the bridge was purloined after York was attainted and the town in hands of Lancaster (Burton, *Bewdley*, pp. 27–28). Contrariwise a later historian of the county's bridges, despite Burton's work, assumed the town was pro-Lancaster and therefore all destruction was attributed to the Yorkists, J.W. Willis-Bund, 'Worcestershire Bridges', *Reports and Papers of Associated Societies*, vol. 31 (1911–12), pp. 273–302, somewhat at variance with his later conclusion in VCH, *Worcester*, vol. 4, pp. 301, 303, which seems fair and is followed here.

³² *William Worcestre Itineraries*, ed J.H. Harvey, Oxford 1969, p. 331.

³³ VCH, *Worcester*, vol. 4, pp 303–04, 315 (bridge chapel). Burton, *Bewdley*, pp. 27–28 and frontispiece of bridge. *Leland's Itinerary in England and Wales*, ed Lucy Toulmin Smith, 5 vols, Fontwell 1964, vol. 2, p. 87.

³⁴ Incorporation, *CPR 1467–77*, p. 361; full text of charter, Burton, *Bewdley*, App., pp. xlii–iii. Manorial descent, VCH, *Worcester*, vol. 4, pp. 308–09.

³⁵ VCH, *Worcester*, vol. 4, p. 310 (Tickenhill), p. 311–12 (park).

³⁶ Burton, *Bewdley*, pp. 3–6, 12, 18–19. Leland, *Itinerary*, vol. 2, p. 88, mentions the newness of the town and the favour of York and Edward. VCH, *Worcester*, vol. 4, pp. 301, 303. The glass is mentioned and the arms identified by Burton, *Bewdley*, pp. 18–19, the details of which he took from Habington's notes, cited in full in [Treadway R.] Nash, *Collections for the History of Worcestershire*, 2 vols, London 1781–82, vol. 2, pp. 284–85; only the glass of the chantry and guild seems to be mentioned by the VCH, *Worcester*, vol. 4, p. 306.

extra-parochial and focused on this comparatively modest wooden chapel where they established their chantries and guild altars. The townspeople were buried, however, in the parish church of St Leonard Ribbesford, of which David Gibbes was parson from 1467 to 1507, preferred by William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, to whom Edward had granted the privilege. Gibbes appears to have been a local boy who made good and enjoyed good relations with the town for he put up a window in the town chapel asking for prayers for the souls of his parents, John and Isabella.³⁷ The manor and advowson of Ribbesford had yet another royal connection, for from 1473 they were held by the heiress Elizabeth Talbot, wife of Edward Grey, created Viscount Lisle by Richard III in 1483. It is a matter of debate whether the plight of Bewdley Bridge was brought to Richard III's attention by Lord or Lady Lisle, Richard Croft, the king's receiver of the earldom of March and the treasurer of his household, or someone like the local parson, energetically contacting either of his manorial lords.³⁸

Bridgend, Lincolnshire

Richard's letter concerning Bridgend was dated 30 October 1484 and made at Nottingham. It was a general order to all lords both spiritual and temporal and all the king's subjects that they observe the king's licence to beg, granted to the prior and convent of St Saviour or Salvator, also called Bridgend, in Lincolnshire. The prior and his house were bound by the founder's ordinances to maintain and repair sixteen bridges and bridge ditches in its vicinity and these were now ruinous and the priory impoverished. The prior and his factors were licensed to go about the realm to gather alms to support the bridges for the next seven years. The royal injunction then expatiated on the merits of giving and the reward in heaven for the donors:

Site it is oure blisshed Creator of his infinite and inmensurable goodnesse hathe ordenned and blessedly provided for theme in this uncertain and miserable lif, list withe good hert and free will to departe in charitable and meritorie dedes of their wordly possessions and transitorie goodes incomparable and eternalle reward and for theme that more liberally sprede and distribute there almes and charite to be more singlierly in the participacione thereof.³⁹

Bridgend was a small Gilbertine priory in the large parish of Horbling, one and a half miles from the parish church; the priory was therefore an important supplier of the spiritual needs of a community at some distance from its church and in an area where travel was often difficult.⁴⁰ It was in the wapentake of Aveland in

³⁷ Nash, *Collections*, vol. 2, pp. 273, 284. VCH, *Worcester*, vol. 4, p. 315 (chapel of St Anne). Gibbes not otherwise identified.

³⁸ Manor of Ribbesford, VCH, *Worcester*, vol. 4, pp. 306–07; church of St Leonard, pp. 312–14; chapel of St Anne, p. 315. *Complete Peerage*, vol. 8, pp. 59–61.

³⁹ *Harl. 433*, vol. 2, pp. 172–73.

⁴⁰ *Ponte Aslaci* = Bridgend, D.M. Owen, *Church and Society in Medieval Lincolnshire*, History of Lincolnshire 5, Lincoln 1981, pp. 19, 144.

Kesteven and in the very centre of the Fens, which stretched from near Lincoln south to near Cambridge and inland from the coast to Huntingdon and Stamford.⁴¹ The dangers of the fens for travellers were considerable especially in the winter and wet weather. The priory of St Saviour had been founded before 1199 by Godwin the Rich of Lincoln, who was a benefactor and later a brother of the nearby Sempringham Priory, the mother house of the Gilbertine order founded c. 1131 by St Gilbert of Sempringham (c. 1089–c. 1189). Godwin gave his house a chapel endowed by lands and tenements, and bound the brothers to repair the long causeway called Holland Bridge which ran east from the priory through the fens of Kesteven into mid-Holland as far as the new dyke near Donington nearly four miles away and with thirty bridges along its length, ten feet wide and eight feet high.⁴² It was common practice in the middle ages, as mentioned above, to attach a chapel to a road, causeway, ferry or bridge, and the keeper or chaplain would have the duty to collect alms for his prayers and the upkeep of his charge.

As regards Bridgend, repairs represented a considerable burden on a small endowment, especially in an area subject to floods; catering for travellers was no doubt an additional burden on the house. Over the years the priory was allowed to collect alms, received indulgences and was permitted by the crown to take tolls. Ten bridges were recorded as in need of repair in 1325, and the 1484 order mentioned sixteen. In 1331 in reply to local petitions to parliament, the prior was able to show how inadequate were the means at his disposal and the representative of the house in 1484 would have had no trouble proving need once again. Edward III had granted the priory the right to hold a weekly market and a yearly fair; Richard II licensed the prior to beg throughout England and Henry IV made a grant of pontage while carefully allotting supervision of its expenditure. Bridgend was a small house, having only two enclosed brothers in 1376, for example, although as the enclosure of the Gilbertines was strict they had to have assistance from lay brothers. Its size and isolation added to its vulnerability and incapacity to fulfil its founding ordinance; in 1445 it was seriously damaged by fire and in 1446 it was as a consequence reduced to the status of a mere cell of nearby Sempringham. It seems unlikely it was any larger in Richard III's time.⁴³

The Gilbertine order was the only English monastic order and included thirteen houses at the time of its greatest influence. It was noted for its poverty and frugality,

⁴¹ Fens described, Rose Graham, *S. Gilbert of Sempringham and the Gilbertines. A History of the only English Order*, London 1901, p. 2, and Darby, *Medieval Fenland*, pp. 2–3.

⁴² Graham, *S. Gilbert*, pp. 41–42, 147–48. Darby, *Medieval Fenland*, p. 116. Lincolnshire is short of old and detailed topographical histories, the brief survey by William Marrat, *A History of Lincolnshire, Topographical, Historical and Descriptive*, 3 vols, Boston 1816, pp. 151–52, recorded that the remains of the priory had been destroyed 45 years before, and emphasised the 'deep fen' which by his day had been replaced by 'a safe turnpike road'. Harrison, *Bridges of Medieval England*, pp. 109, 202–03.

⁴³ The main sources for this house are: Graham, *S. Gilbert*, pp. 41–42, 121, 147–48. VCH, *County of Lincoln*, vol. 2, ed W. Page, London 1906, pp. 198–99; Owen, *Church and Society*, pp. 19, 51, 57–58, 144, 147, 151; G. Platts, *Land and People in Medieval Lincolnshire*, History of Lincolnshire IV, Lincoln 1985, pp. 2 (map), 117, 135.

so it is not surprising that Edward IV at the beginning of his reign had also taken notice of its houses in the Fens. He released Prior Richard Wakefield and his convent of Sixhills from a rent of eight marks as the house's annual income was under £40 and had to support twenty-eight persons and other burdens, and he pardoned Newstead-on-Ancholme a rent of £5 for land which was now only worth 10s.⁴⁴ The grant by Richard III is thus one of a long series of attempts to shore up the activities of St Saviour's and keep the all important causeway open. Horbling was a manor of the duchy of Lancaster so an official may have mentioned the decay of the causeway to the king, but as the advowson of the nearby parish church of St Andrew Horbling was in the patronage of the bishop of Lincoln, and he was John Russell, Richard's lord chancellor, it seems most likely he was the man who brought the priory's plight to the attention of king and council.

Highbridge and Brean in Brentmarsh, Somerset

The other two orders made by Richard concerned recent flooding of low lying land in Somerset in early 1485. The first is a complex order looking to the future safety of the area and was addressed to four important men of the locality or with experience and offices there: 'our beloved' Thomas Tremaylle, serjeant at law, came from Devon,⁴⁵ the king's attorney, Morgan Kidwelly, who was an obvious choice as he had been on a commission inquiring into lands in the south counties, such as Somerset, held by the earls of Ormond,⁴⁶ John Fitzjames of Redlinch, Somerset,⁴⁷ and last but by no means least, John Hayes, the king's 'receiver in the west parties'.⁴⁸ The high rank of the two lawyers and the local roles of Fitzjames and Hayes show the importance Richard attached to this order.

⁴⁴ *CPR 1461–66*, pp. 196 (1 July 1462), 269 (14 Mar, 1463). Graham, *S. Gilbert*, pp. 154, 157–8.

⁴⁵ Thomas Tremayle was of an important Devon family; of the Middle Temple; 1472–77 attorney general of duchy of Lancaster; from 1474 he was occasionally JP Somerset, on local commissions and MP; 1481 king's serjeant at law; 1488 justice of king's bench; died 1508. *The Coronation of Richard III*, ed A.F. Sutton and P.W. Hammond, Gloucester 1983, p. 406. R. Somerville, *History of the Duchy of Lancaster*, London 1953, p. 406.

⁴⁶ Morgan Kidwelly, of Dorset and Wilts., associated with Richard as duke of Gloucester from 1475; 1481 on commission to inquire into Ormond lands in Somerset, Dorset and Hants, *CPR 1476–85*, pp. 213, 215, 245; July 1483 made king's attorney for life, JP Dorset from 1475, etc., *Coronation of Richard III*, pp. 364–65.

⁴⁷ John Fitzjames senior 1436–1510, of Redlynch, Somerset; recorder of Bristol 1495; and brother of Richard, Bishop of London; from 1479 till death JP Somerset; died 1510; easily confused with his son Sir John. J. Wedgwood, *History of Parliament. Biographies of the Members of the Commons House 1439–1509*, London 1936, pp. 332–33 and see Somerville, *Duchy of Lancaster*, p. 407.

⁴⁸ John Hays was possibly the John Hay paid an annuity of £10 from lordship of Shepton under Whichwood during minority of Edward Earl of Warwick, *Harl. 433*, vol. 1, p. 77. There are innumerable references to orders for him to make payments and the general minutiae of his job, eg. *ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 100, 149, 168, 237, 241, 244, 276, vol. 2, p. 29, 70, 77, 119–20, 196–7, 203, 204, 204–05, 207; vol. 3, p. 146. He was undoubtedly the important 'receiver in the west parties' as he is called several times (vol. 1, p. 268, vol. 2, p. 130, vol. 3, p. 158) which included all the Salisbury and Spencer manors and lordships in Cornwall, Devon, Somerset, Dorset, Wiltshire and Hampshire which were in the king's hands (vol. 1, p. 131 and vol.

A bridge called High Bridge in Somerset 'which was a grete defense of the salt water and also a common highe way to alle oure liege people passing by the same is now by the grete rage and tempest of the water and also for noon repaying thereof in convenable season broken and fallen to grete decay'. To avoid great loss, they were to view the area, assess the costs of repair and see that all the people there contribute to any reasonable costs so assessed. The king's own lordship of Huntspille Marys was also to pay its share. If anyone should needlessly refuse to pay the share allotted him, his name was to be passed to the king so that a solution could be provided 'as ye entede to please us and as ye pondre the universalle wele of the cuntre aforesaid'. The date of the order was 19 February 1485.⁴⁹

Highbridge was in the coastal clay belt of the area now usually called the Somerset Levels or Moors, which consist of two wide valleys of low lying land, much of it pasture and subject to flood. The entire area is still crossed by a network of 'rhynes' or ditches between flood banks and in the middle ages there were extensive man-made sea walls along much of the coast especially in the gaps left by the natural sand dunes. The northern valley contains the River Brue over which the High Bridge provides a road and also great sluice gates against the sea tides. Drainage schemes of the later thirteenth to early fourteenth century had forced this river to flow west to join the River Parrett shortly before it reached the Bristol Channel. Drainage was a major concern for the local landowners, such as the great abbeys of Glastonbury at the western end of this area, and Muchelney and Athelney further south, which owned so much of the area, long with the dean and chapter of Wells. Glastonbury was especially anxious to gain and keep a water route to the sea, probably the main initial cause of work on the waterways. The particular work on the Brue, completed before 1324, has now been allotted to the organisation of the lord of Huish in Burnham among others. It formed a deeply cut stream in the clay at Highbridge, the high banks and sluice or clyse under the bridge becoming key defences against the sea. Scouring and maintenance of banks were essential local activities and schemes for drainage continued, so that it has been estimated that approximately a third of the floodable area was drained by 1500.⁵⁰ Richard's order shows that the lords of the district continued to be involved in maintenance and draining schemes; his order also provides crucial and unique evidence that the earlier construction of the banks and the clyse of Highbridge remained essential to the area's protection against the incursions of the sea in the late fifteenth century.⁵¹

3, p. 157), the temporalities of the bishopric of Exeter and 'other' livelihoods in the west country (vol. 1, p. 269), the lands of the marquess of Dorset (vol. 2, p. 34, vol. 3, p. 214), the lordship of Dartington and other lands in Devon and Somerset of Sir Thomas St Leger (vol. 2, pp. 46–47), the manor of Tiverton (vol. 3, p. 213), and the lands of Lord Fitzwarin's inheritance (dated April 1485, vol. 2, p. 213).

⁴⁹ *Harl. 433*, vol. 2, p. 206.

⁵⁰ The main study is Michael Williams, *The Draining of the Somerset Levels*, Cambridge 1970, pp. 43–86, esp. pp. 43–44, 68–70, and figs 6, 8, and photos 6a and 6b of Highbridge at high and low tides c. 1970.

⁵¹ VCH, *County of Somerset*, vol. 8, ed R.W. Dunning, London 2004, pp. 1–3; cites this order, p. 94 n. 9 as does Williams, *Draining*, p. 70 n. 5.

The Highbridge across the River Brue lay in the large and ancient parish of Huntspill.⁵² There were several manors in the area, the lords of which had of necessity to see that the ditches or rhynes were scoured and that all their tenants did their duty and maintained their fields and property; above all, the main rivers had to be kept clear of obstructions, such as fishing weirs, so that they might flow freely. The main manor was that of Huntspill, held by Fulk Bouchier, Lord Fitzwarin, from 1469 until his death on 1479, when his heir John was only nine years old. The dowager Lady Elizabeth was of Somerset herself and sister of John, Lord Dynham, an important man of Somerset but absent as lieutenant of Calais. By the end of 1480 she had remarried John Sapcote, another key Yorkist official, who was a justice of the peace in Devon from 1481 and steward of his brother-in-law from 1483. He performed a ceremonial role at Richard III's coronation and was useful to the king during the 1483 rebellion. During Richard III's reign, the manor of Huntspill was therefore in the care of the dowager Lady Fitzwarin and John Sapcote if it formed part of her dower, but John Hayes was apparently the receiver of the rents while the under age heir's property was in the king's hands. As Sapcote was such an active Yorkist official it is perhaps surprising he was not included among the addressees of the order.⁵³ The lordship actually mentioned as in the king's own hands at this time and which he was anxious should bear its part in the measures required to protect the area, was the manor of Huntspill Mareys, the lands of which lay on the seaward side of the parish; it is known to have employed ditch reeves and held a water court on a regular basis. Huntspill Mareys had been a manor of the Butler earls of Ormond from 1405 to 1461 when the fifth earl was executed. Edward IV granted it to George of Clarence in 1463, and it reverted to the crown in 1478 on the latter's death. At some point in 1484 Richard may have granted it to Sir Richard Radcliffe (that is before this order) along with the nearby manors of Crewkerne and Misterton, but the evidence for this grant is not convincing given Richard's own assertion of ownership.⁵⁴ Another adjacent manor that would have been called upon to contribute to expenses was Huntspill Delahayes manor, at this time the property of Cecily Bonville (d. 1529) wife of the Marquess of Dorset (d. 1501).⁵⁵

Other interested parties included the local clerics. The rich benefice of All Saints Huntspill was in the archdeaconry of Wells (Thomas Stowe May 1484–Nov. 85), and in the patronage of the lord of the manor, the lords Fitzwarin. It attracted some notable clerics usually also canons of Wells, for example John Arundel

⁵² VCH, *Somerset*, vol. 8, pp. 1–3, 91–112.

⁵³ VCH, *Somerset*, vol. 8, p. 97. *Complete Peerage*, vol. 5, pp. 508–510. Wedgwood, *Biographies*, pp. 740–41: he transferred easily to Henry VII and was knighted 1487; died 1500; and see *Harl. 433*, vol. 2, p. 143.

⁵⁴ *Harl. 433*, vol. 3, p. 146, lists holdings by county, including Ratcliffe's: *maneria de Hunspille Marys de crukerne et de Mystertone*, but with no date. On 6 Sept. 1484 Ratcliffe certainly received a grant of Crewkerne and Misterton, both Courtenay manors, and many others, but Huntspill Mareys was not mentioned, *CPR 1476–85*, p. 472. The inclusion of Huntspill Mareys is accepted, however, by VCH, *Somerset*, vol. 8, p. 98, and also in vol. 4 (ed R.W. Dunning, London 1978), p. 11, which covers Crewkerne manor. It remains odd that Ratcliffe is not in this grant and Richard calls Huntspill Mareys his own.

⁵⁵ VCH, *Somerset*, vol. 8, pp. 99. None of the other manors were in aristocratic hands, *ibid.*, pp. 100–01.

(1416–54), Nicholas Carent (1454–67), also dean of Wells, and John Bouchier, canon of Wells, son of William, Lord Fitzwarin, nephew of Thomas Bouchier Archbishop of Canterbury, and therefore relative of his patron, Lord Fitzwarin, from 1486 when the actual patronage could have been exercised by the dowager and John Sapcote or by the king during the heir's minority. Unfortunately the rector at the time of the order from King Richard is not known, although it is possible it was in fact John Bouchier who then needed a reinstatement by the new authorities which took over in the diocese of the disgraced Bishop Stillington after Bosworth.⁵⁶

The persons who could have brought this flood crisis to the attention of the king in 1485 were either Robert Stillington, Bishop of Bath and Wells, his dean, John Gunthorpe, who was also Richard's keeper of the privy seal,⁵⁷ the local prebendary, John Bouchier, or Elizabeth, Lady Fitzwarin, and her husband John Sapcote, esquire.

Shortly after Richard initiated this inquiry into Highbridge he issued two more specific orders. Brean in Brentmarsh, Somerset, had also been flooded. On 24 Feb 1485 he granted Thomas Barrett, parson of Brean, half the lordship of Brean in Brentmarsh, for as long as he was parson, and he was to use the proceeds to 'fortefie the See walles & bankes for the salvacion of the said lordship', because the villages and inhabitants had suffered much from recent damage by tempest and flooding by the sea.⁵⁸ Two months later, on 1 May 1485 Richard issued a commission to John Hervy,⁵⁹ John Payne⁶⁰ and John Middelham,⁶¹ squires, to inquire for all the coffers, tables and other goods 'cast by the Rage of the See from the parisshe of Brenne in Brentmarsh' into other lordships and see them restored to their proper owners.⁶² The advantage of furniture made from wood is incidentally made clear. Thomas Barrett, parson of Brean, was also suffragan bishop of Bath and Wells from 1482, and for most of 1484 and probably much of 1485 was away in Ireland on diplomatic business for Richard, so the care of Brean would have fallen on his vicar or curate.⁶³ Brean is one of six parishes in the hundred of

⁵⁶ VCH, *Somerset*, vol. 8, pp. 108, 109. F.W. Weaver, ed., *Somerset Incumbents*, Bristol 1889, p. 3 (archdeaconry of Wells), p. 108 (Huntspill). Emden, *Cambridge*, pp. 81–82: John Bouchier was prebendary of Compton Bishop 1470–96. Stillington's Register should provide the date of the missing preferment to Huntspill but does not for some reason, although it provides details of another Fitzwarin advowson, that of Norton, vacant in Jan. 1483 and Nov. 1485, when Sapcote and Lady Elizabeth presented, *The Registers of Robert Stillington, Bishop of Bath and Wells 1466–1491, and Richard Fox, Bishop of Bath and Wells 1492–1494*, ed Sir H.C. Maxwell-Lyte, Somerset Record Society 52 (1937), pp. 118, 134.

⁵⁷ Gunthorpe, Emden, *Cambridge*, pp. 275–77; he gave the manor of Alverton, Somerset, to his cathedral.

⁵⁸ *Harl. 433*, vol. 1, p. 264 and *CPR 1476–85*, p. 511.

⁵⁹ John Hervy: this is the sole reference to him in *Harl. 433*; not otherwise identified.

⁶⁰ John Payne is most likely to be the merchant of Bristol, who would have known the problems of this coast, see e.g. *Harl. 433*, vol. 1, 194, and *CPR 1476–85*, pp. 271, 330, 551.

⁶¹ John Middelham: this is the sole reference to him in *Harl. 433*; not otherwise identified.

⁶² *Harl. 433*, vol. 2, p. 222.

⁶³ Thomas Barrett, Bishop of Annaghdowd (1458–85), also suffragan of Exeter (1468–75), *Dictionary*

Bempstone and has the Bristol channel on its north and west boundaries, with vast sand banks on the coast, and the River Axe on its east boundary. It provides rich pasture except for the higher, rocky peninsular of Brean Down. It has suffered major floods in its history, of which one apparently took place in late 1484 or early 1485 on the evidence of the orders from Richard III.⁶⁴ It had been a property of the Butler earls of Ormond until 1461,⁶⁵ and must be assumed to have been still in the king's hands like Huntspill Mareys, again to judge from Richard's grant; its advowson was, however, with Elizabeth Talbot, Viscountess Lisle, already mentioned as the patron of Ribbesford. The extensive flooding in this area may have been brought to the knowledge of Richard's council by any of the people mentioned in the orders from Robert Stillington, Bishop of Bath and Wells, Thomas Barrett, Bishop of Annaghdown, Viscountess Lisle, down to John Hayes the local receiver.⁶⁶

All these orders displayed attention to detail by the king and his council and a concern for all parts of the realm which can be truthfully said to 'pondre the universalle wele of the cuntre'. Flooding was a common and frequent problem in many counties, and sometimes it was thought that the king could help. These orders also illustrate the complex network of informants that carried information from the localities to the centre of government.

of Irish Biography, vol. 1, p. 305. This biography assumes he died 1485 but he is recorded as dying 1498 when his successor at Brean was appointed by Viscountess Lisle, Weaver, *Somerset Incumbents*, p. 32; Barrett himself had been preferred by Elizabeth Lady Lisle in 1468.

⁶⁴ The hundred of Bempstone has not yet been covered by the VCH. For this see John Collinson, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Somerset*, 3 vols, London and Bristol 1791, vol. 1, pp. 175–94, esp. pp. 177–79 for Brean. Lewis, *Topographical Dictionary*, notices a notable sea flood in 1825 under 'Breane'.

⁶⁵ Collinson, *Somerset*, pp. 177–78 is not clear on the details of descent, but is aware of the grant to Barrett; he notes the small church with a tower, p. 179.

⁶⁶ The problems of the area did not go unremarked by others. Sir Richard Chokke, a justice of the common pleas, left £20 to mend feeble ways and bridges in his will of 3 July 1483, and as he was a man of Ashton, Somerset, this £20 might have included Highbridge. *Somerset Wills, 1383–1500*, ed F.W. Weaver, Somerset Record Society 16 (1901), p. 242; he was dead by 1 Sept 1483 when his widow made her will, *ibid.*, pp. 244–45.