

Bishop Burnell's Great Hall—what function did it serve and what was the interior like?

Bishop Robert Burnell's (1275-1292) Great Hall was built to impress not just locally but nationally. Its sheer size was only exceeded at the time by the Norman palace halls at Westminster and Canterbury. Adjacent to it was Bishop Jocelin's Palace completed just 50-60 years earlier in about 1230 and clearly seen by Burnell as insufficient for courtly visits.

Burnell was a highly influential, wealthy and ambitious servant to King Edward I before becoming Bishop of Bath and Wells. The demonstration of his wealth in the construction of the Hall and Chapel can be seen as his need to impress the King and keep alive his hopes of becoming Archbishop of Canterbury which ultimately failed at the hands of the Pope. Buildings on this scale also elevated the status of Wells as an ecclesiastical centre and made space for a growing bishop's household.

At about the same time as Burnell's works in Wells were being completed he was building his own 'castle' at his family seat at Acton Burnell in Shropshire. Built much like the Great Hall in Wells with stone walls and corner towers it was sufficiently grand to host Edward's parliament. Perhaps Burnell's hope was to create an even more magnificent venue for future parliaments in Wells.

Unfortunately, Edward I never visited Wells and it was not until 1331 that the Great Hall was the focus of a regal visit. In December Edward III and Queen Philippa arrived spending Christmas and New Year in Wells. Accommodation for up to 200 of his retinue would have to be found in addition to the bishop's own followers. Bishop Ralph in consequence had to move out to his 'palaces' in nearby Wookey and Banwell to make room while the King stayed in Wells.

The Great Hall, because of its sheer size, would have been the obvious place for the large scale entertainment and banqueting required for a royal visit. Dawson (1902) describes the epic scale of regal Christmases at this time and it can be imagined that no expense was spared at Wells. According to a chronicler there was "'a wondrous and sumptuous' outlay" during this visit. (Rait 1910: p291). On a smaller but significant scale the bishops were expected to reward manorial tenants with a Christmas feast and these could have been held in the Great Hall.

In 1337 the Great Hall was used to entertain two visiting lords sent by the King. Fortunately, we have a record of the banquet set out for them, their retinue and others. A feast for 268 people was organised costing a substantial sum over the period of their stay. A description of the stay and foods provided is in appendix 1

A note book from a famous cook of the time describes two other important feasts; the first of these being the funeral of Bishop Bubwith in 1424. Clergy, laymen and monks attended. Monks had on that day to abstain from meat but the rest had "heavy joint of meat and game". This was followed by puff pastry, cold fruit pie and pork prepared to look like hedgehogs, (Rait 1910: p298). See appendix 2.

The second banquet was held in 1425 to celebrate the installation of Bishop Stafford with one dinner for the honoured guests and one for the rest (Rait 1910: p298). See appendix 3. Each course concluded with 'sotelte' a confection of sugar and paste. In this case "a doctor in law, an eagle and St. Andrew figure" were made as reference to the bishop's former profession, the emblem of St John his namesake and Andrew the patron saint of the church.

"The various dishes of one course were probably not served up one after another, but various meats and birds were dished up together that every one might make his choice. One can picture the army of serving-men that would be needed to prepare these elaborate feasts. The head cook was a professional, who probably came down from London for both occasions; his services were in great request, his menu-book including the feast of the coronation of King Henry IV. " (Rait 1910 p299)

It is thought that the Palace and its Great Hall declined after Bishop Bekynton's death in 1465 probably because bishops now spent less time in Wells and more at the Royal Court in London. There is a record from 1497 of Bishop King coming from London with King Henry VII in pursuit of rebel Perkin Warbeck. Riding ahead of the king the bishop, on his first visit to the Palace, found it unfit for royal entertainment and accommodation and consequently the king stayed in the more comfortable Deanery (Rait 1910: p305)

We can see Burnell's Great Hall was used for banquets and courtly accommodation in times when hospitality to large numbers of people and their servants was deemed the norm. But this was not its sole purpose. The bishops were both lords of the manor (Burnell had 82 manors) but also heads of the diocese. The Great Hall may well have been used for regular episcopal and manorial courts for which the bishop was required to oversee and rule. The Hall may have been used as the place for important regional courts and we have reference to the hastily held 'mock' trial of Richard Whiting Abbot of Glastonbury in 1539. There is mention of large crowds attending this trial including wronged tenants appearing to accuse the Abbot (Rait 1910: p306, 309). Presumably such a gathering would have had to be held in the Great Hall.

In the mid 1550's the wealth of bishops was gradually being eroded as manors and other lands were given over to the king and his courtiers in the hope all the church's resources would not go the way of monasteries and abbeys. Perhaps because the Great Hall was now decayed, or no longer of great use and too expensive to maintain, King Edward VI gave Bishop Barlow permission to take it down and the job was granted to Sir John Gates. No doubt the king and Sir John prospered from the sale of the Hall's roof timber and lead. The Hall became derelict losing its porch in the 18th century and the south and east walls removed in 1820s. (Rait 1910: p311-312)

The Hall was in use for nearly 250 years and would have looked differently through that long period as fashions and furnishings changed. So, in considering how the interior might have looked, we need to look at the 14th century when it was new and used fully. However, as there are few written records of its appearance and what little physically remains, we must take our insight from other large stately halls and the evidence from the remaining fabric. Ultimately, we will have to use our imagination.

In thinking about the Great Hall's interior we have to recognize the sheer volume of the space, especially as it would appear to anyone at the end of the 15th century. The Hall is 115ft long, 60 ft

wide with a very high open roof structure. The present floor level has been raised over time shortening the height of extant doors and windows. There are five bays and a solar and service part at the west end. The solar is for the private and secure accommodation of special guests or the bishop and this overlays stone vaulted buttery and pantry rooms. This is a very expensive place to decorate and furnish, so any appropriate fittings required would be brought in from elsewhere when needed.

William Worcestre (c1415-1482) wrote that the Hall was aisled with nave and side aisles; a design necessary to achieve the exceptional width of the Hall. Harrison's drawing in *Keystone* (Cox 2006: p23) shows how the aisled Hall might have been constructed. However, no evidence of the bases of the required pillars has been found (Cherry and Draper 1981: p 52-53). Architecture Ltd, in their planning application statement for a public walkway on the Hall walls (2019 p4), suggest a hammer beam timber structure. Such a roof would span the distance in a series of steps from each wall. If so, it would be the earliest known example.

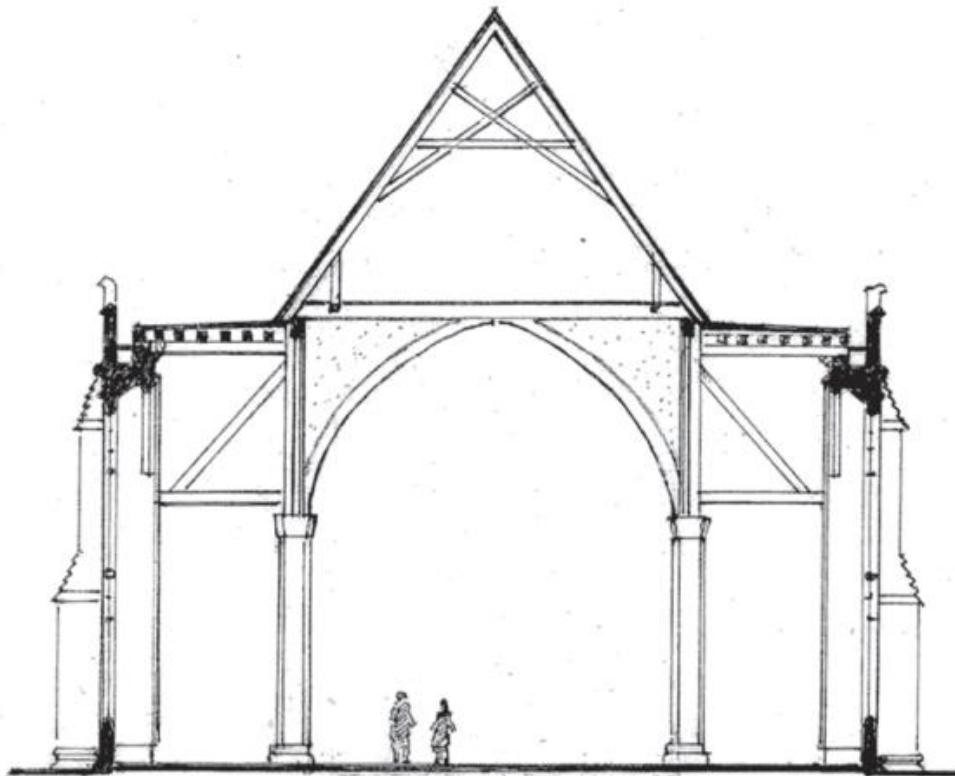


Fig.30. Section through Burnell's great hall, with a conjectural reconstruction by J Ray Harrison of the aisles and roofs to give an impression of the scale and grandeur of the interior. This shows one of several possible roof forms over the assumed aisles and 'nave' of the hall. Copyright J Ray Harrison.

Image 1.

(Cox J. (2006) *Building Conservation Plan, Keystone Historic Buildings Consultants, Cross-section of Hall, Fig 30.* [Illustration]. Document commissioned by Palace Trust)

Like in Jocelin's Palace, easily visible timbers (away from the smoke from hearths) could have been decorated with flowers and other motifs as could the pillars themselves (Wood 1985 p395).



Image 2: A reconstruction of the aisled west hall at the Bishop's Palace in Lincoln built in the 1230s – the public and ceremonial centre of the palace – showing Henry VIII's visit to the palace in 1541

(Peter Urmston, *Aisled West Hall, Bishop's Palace, Lincoln*, [illustration]. <https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/lincoln-medieval-bishops-palace/history/>. Accessed Nov 2024. © Historic England)

The external walls are built of contrasting red and yellow sandstone which may have been deliberate decoration (Emery 2006: p670). However, Burnell's contemporary Acton Burnell castle still has white washed render on external wall surfaces; a common practice at the time for visual effect and dealing with damp (Wood 1985: p304).

The interior walls would be most likely plastered and whitewashed (Wood 1985: p395). Restoration work in Jocelin's Palace revealed 13th century plastered walls with ochre lime wash and masonry patterns. Recently revealed chapel walls in Jocelin's Wookey palace show whitewash overlaid by ochre (S.M). Like in Jocelin's Palace and the front of the cathedral doorway, mouldings may have been painted alternating black, white blue and red.



Image 3: Evidence of lime render/whitewash on exterior of Acton Burnell Castle- 1280s

(Acton Burnell Castle [online image] (2016).

https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Acton_Burnell_Castle_2016.jpg. [Accessed 29/1/2025] Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International license.)

Tapestries were not common in the early 14th century (Wood 1985: p397), but coloured woven and painted hangings would be used to decorate the walls as might be painted shields (Wood 1985 400). Walls might also have been painted with lines (painted masonry) (Wood 1985: p395), or with scenes from myths, the bible and courtly scenes and activities (Wood 1985 p397). Such paintings are more likely to be found in the private chambers such as the solar or behind the bishop's dais table. Examples were found in Westminster's Painted chamber of 1292 and in the solar of Longthorpe Tower from c1330. See: <https://www.virtualststephens.org.uk/blog/painted-chamber-and-opening-parliament-1399-1484> for examples.



Image 4: Longthorpe Tower c1330. The west wall, showing a scene from the life of St Anthony (top) and two figures below, probably a pupil (standing) and his teacher.

(English Heritage, *Longthorpe Tower* [on-line image].<https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/longthorpe-tower/history/description/>. Accessed 29/01/25 ©English Heritage)

Other colour might be introduced with wainscoting; vertical pine wood, painted green and gold for example (Wood 1985: p395-6).

The Great Hall's windows are among the tallest in a medieval hall and would flood the interior with light enhancing the lime washed walls, paintings and hangings. The size and illumination of the hall would surely be an overwhelming experience for a first time visitor.

The windows would be glassed with shutters below the transom. In the early 14th century glass would most likely be translucent rather than transparent and could have been easily removed for safe keeping when not needed to impress. Glass windows were seen as fittings rather than fixtures. The jambs and arches of windows may have had painted decoration like that found in Jocelin's Palace.



Fig. 27. Original painted decoration round one of the gable end windows, now concealed in the attic space. Photograph by Jerry Sampson held in the Palace Archives.

Image 5. Painted Gable End, Bishop's Palace

(Cox J. (2006) Building Conservation Plan, Keystone Historic Buildings Consultants, *Painted Gable End*, [Photograph] Fig 27. Document commissioned by Palace Trust. Photograph by Jerry Sampson held in Palace Archives)

The floor of the Great Hall would need to be hard wearing, either rammed earth, stone or decorated tiles or a combination of all three. Broken floor tiles have been found in the Hall dating from 1272-1300 or a little later. They have the same designs of tiles found at Glastonbury and Cleeve Abbeys. These tiles have foliage, shields, birds within a circle, lion within a circle and double headed eagle designs. (Cherry and Draper 1981: p43-44, Eames 1981: p52-3). Covering the whole floor with tiles might have been impossibly expensive with the area nearest the high table more likely favoured.



Image 6. 13th and 14th century tiles in Glastonbury Abbey Museum

(Stuart Moore, Glastonbury Abbey Tile Examples, [photograph]. ©Stuart Moore))

The hall would need to be heated, not just for special events but as warmth for servant night-time accommodation. This would be most likely achieved with hearths or moveable braziers and given the size of the hall maybe more than one. Smoke would escape through blackened timbers to louvers on the roof ridge (Wood 1985: p257-8).

The following is Rait's (1910 p296-7) idea of the interior.

"The interior of the palace at the end of the fourteenth century was not bare and comfortless. The walls were covered with tapestry, the backs of the chairs of state were cushioned and covered with fine embroidery, each chamber had a different suit of hangings, and the seats were supplied with feather cushions. Two beds are particularly named in the will of Bishop Erghum, proved in 1400, which supplies these details as to furniture : " a green bed with white lilies, and a red bed with the curtains and sheets and all apparel. [...] Silver " charjours," bowls, salt-cellars, and spice-plates, finely chased, are enumerated in Bishop Erghum's will; and a certain piece of tapestry, with the image of St. John"

At the western end of the Great Hall was the solar above the pantry, buttery, corridor to the external kitchen and cross passage. (The buttery managed by the butler was the room where butts of wine, ale and cider would be stored and where meals were assembled; the pantry managed by the pantler was the store room for loaves). The solar, accessed from the porch, would be used as the private chambers for the bishop and high status guests. Here we could find scenes and designs painted on plastered walls and windows. Perhaps there would be a squint window to look into the hall below. The solar would be the most private space for meetings and meals. The guests would have the luxury of a bed with drapes to give privacy and keep out draughts. The most important personal servants would also be sleeping in the solar on truckle beds (Wood 1985: p67). Furniture within the solar and the Great Hall would be sparse; chairs for the most important people, benches for the rest together with trestle tables which could be dismantled and easily moved or stored. Furniture was often painted red and green. The solar may well have been a riot of colour as imagined at Dover Castle (see below). Happily, for the occupants of the solar, a small but beautiful wardrobe was provided in the southwest tower. A closet has also been found in the southeast tower. But what would be the sanitary arrangements when the hall was full of people eating and drinking through the many courses on offer? There doesn't seem to be an easy answer to this!



Image 7. Bedroom, Dover Castle showing ornate wall hangings, furniture and other furnishings. Created as part of a project to re-present the Great Tower at Dover Castle, creating interiors to evoke the character and atmosphere of the tower during the reign of Henry II

(*Bedroom Dover Castle* [online image]. <https://twotravelingtexans.com/top-things-to-see-on-your-dover-castle-visit/> Accessed Nov 2024. ©TwoTravellingTexans)

The solar had a fireplace, a feature only found in the most important properties. This fireplace with its enormous flue would be hooded with support from corbels or pillars. There may have been side brackets for lamps (Wood 1985: p261-2). Examples of how it might have looked are shown below.



Image 8. Original fireplace c1300, Aydon Castle

(Fireplace, Aydon Castle [online image] <https://medievalwanderings.com/2022/02/24/a-bad-move-north-to-aydon-castle/> Accessed Nov 2024. ©medievalwanderings)

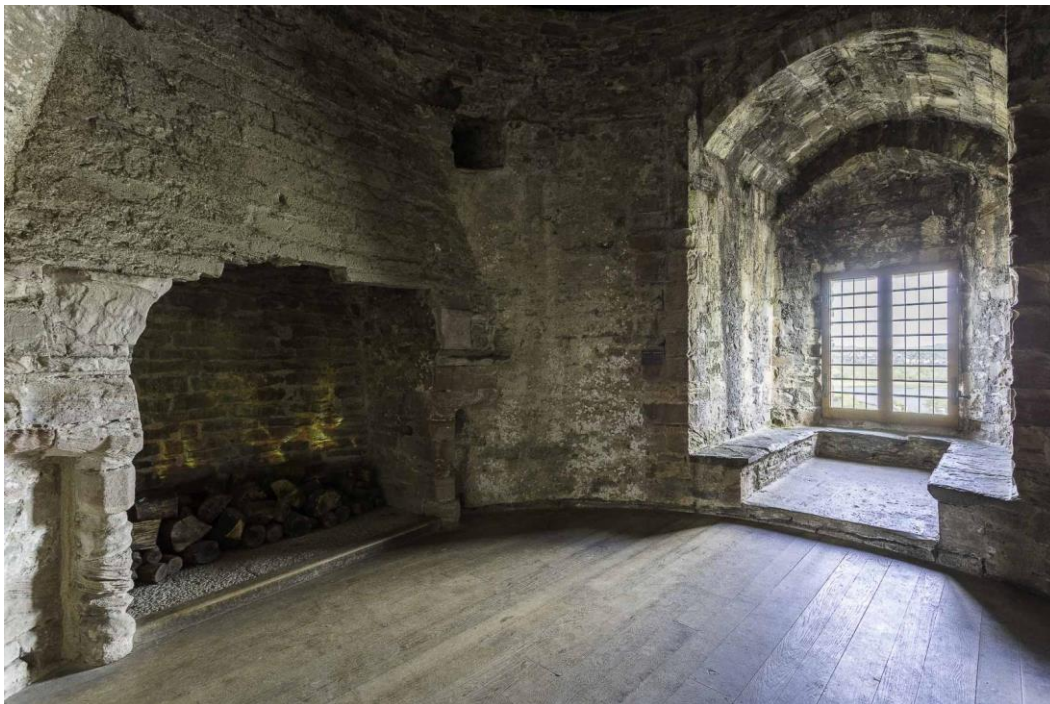


Image 9. Fireplace within a Chamber in the Chapel Tower, Conway Castle

(Fireplace, Conway Castle [online image] <https://cadw.gov.wales/visit/places-to-visit/castell-conwy>. Accessed Nov 2024. ©Castell Conwy)



Image 10. Fireplace, Aydon Castle

(Fireplace, Aydon Castle [online image] <https://www.britainexpress.com/photo.htm?photo=83>. Accessed Nov 2024. ©Britain Express)

In summary we can say the Great Hall was primarily a place for ceremonies, large scale court gatherings and banquets. The bishops may have used Jocelin's smaller hall for day to day activities and accommodation leaving the Hall's solar to lordly visitors. (Emery 2006: p 670, Wood 1985: p39). We can imagine the bishops and his most important guests dining on a long a table upon a decorated dais platform with coloured hangings, perhaps tapestries and paintings behind and round; the flooring covered in a pavement of decorated tiles and a hearth or brazier close by; lower status guests and the important servants seated on benches at tables arranged down the hall. Meals would come from the service rooms under the solar at the opposite end of the hall. Servants in the pantry and buttery would assemble the dishes arriving in the corridor from the kitchen. The high table diners may well have processed down the hall from the solar to their table (Buckle 1884: p72). The unusual location of the high table away from the service areas might have facilitated a window or windows in the gable wall behind the grandees to emphasis their elevated position (Wood 1985: p72). N.B The God's Eye video showing the development of the Bishop's Palace over 800 years assumes two full height windows in this east wall



Image 11. Dining room scene from the Luttrell Psalter, c.1325 – 1335. Behind the diners is a fine tapestry.

(Dining room scene [online image])

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dining_room_scene_from_the_Luttrell_Psalter.jpg. Accessed Nov 2024. ©British Library, Add MS 42130)



Image 12. A grand feast in the mid 1400s

(Lions and Lilies, *Banquet scene* [online image] Fol.298r How the Noble King Alexander was Poisoned, illustration from a book by Jean Wauquelin, from the 'Histoire du Grand Alexandre' 1460 (vellum).

<https://lionsandlilies.wordpress.com/2023/09/01/medieval-banquets-what-to-expect-10-fabulous-medieval-idioms-and-what-they-mean-and-powerful-medieval-women-who-ruled-from-behind-the-throne-a-spotlight-on-isabella-of-france-in-septembers-is/>. Accessed November 2024)

Other scenes at <https://picryl.com/topics/medieval+miniatures+of+dining>

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Appendices taken from Rosemary Cooke "Details of feasts in Great Hall"

Appendix 1

The 1337 feast of Bishop Shrewsbury

The following is from a report produced by an intern (Leonie Harbecke - Bishop Burnell's Great Hall 2019) and the source of details of the feast is a translation of the Household Roll of Bishop Ralph, 1337-38 (Lambeth Palace)¹. It gives an indication of what would have been served to important guests.

"While the Bishop Shrewsbury's household roll needs further investigation to bring to light more details on the feast in question, some information can be found out from Palmer's assessment alone. Accordingly, the Bishop seems to have given a feast in the Great Hall in 1337 in honour of Thomas Lord Berkeley and his brother Maurice (Household, p. 80). This falls most likely on Wednesday 19th November and it is said that 5 pound, 10 shillings and 7 ½ halfpennies were spent to cater to the needs of 268 guests.

Day: Tuesday 18th November, at Evercreech for breakfast and at Wells for dinner.

MARESCHAL (grooms):

Hay from the manor for 33 horses, [money] taken by a stout/pregnant freewoman; and 10 hackneys, [money] taken in hand by a half-freed (or released or delivered?), for the price of 21 d. (due). 2 quarters 2 bushels of oats/straw purchased for the same, 2 s. 1 d. Expenses to S. Clynton from Wells in advance, to be recovered 4 d. 7 irons with keys/screws from the 'stock' [store?].

N.b.bread/nourishment for the lord's horse and himself for labour 13 d. Expenses to A. of Newport for 3 days at Radcliffe (?) and Banwell and others in advance, 2 s.

Total for the mareschal/grooms: 7 s. 3 d.

KITCHEN. Half a carcass of cow meat from the pre-emptor at Taunton, for the price of 5 s. Half a pig from the Kingsbury stock, for the price of 9 d. 2 bacon (hog carcass?) from the larder at Banwell I reject (?) [or from the ancient larder at Banwell?] for the price of 5 s. 1 mutton from Evercreech for the price of 5 d., 6 muttons purchased for 3 s. 3d. 2 young calves purchased for 3 s. 5 d. 5 geese 16 d. 8 capons and 8 chickens purchased for 22 d. 4 mallards 8 d. 1 plover and 3 pigeons 2 d. 6 partridges from the stock (?) For the price of 6 d. 2 woodcocks donated by the parish of Evercreech. Garlic purchased for 10 d. N.b 18 chines from the stock (?), 1 bushel of 'curall' wheat from Evercreech for the price of 3 d.

Total for the kitchen 22 s. 10 d.

HALL/Palace. 18 51 tapers/tallows (candles) from the stock/store(?) for the price of 2 s. 3 d. whence 2 51 towards/to the chamber of the lord of Berkeley, 1 to the cook, and 1 to the Boteler, 1 to the lord Archdeacon and 1 51 to the chamber of lord J. Carleton, 1 51 for the perch (see n.)

¹Household Roll of Bishop Ralph of Shrewsbury (1337-38), in: Collectanea I. A Collection of Documents from various Sources. Arranged by T. F. Palmer (1924).

Total for the hall 2 s. 3 d.

BOTELER (servant chiefly in charge of wine or other drink). 3 flagons of wine in storage jars from Evercreech, for the price of 16 d. 20 flagons of good ale from the ale stock [brass stock]? for the price of 15 d. 12 flagons of wine in storage jars from Wells for the price of 4 s. 3 flagons of wine purchased for 18 d. 4xx flagons of ale purchased <from> Wells for 5 s. 20 flagons of 'second' ale from that same place for 10 d.

Total for the Boteler 13 s. 11 d.

PANTRY. 270 loaves of bread coming from? a quarter of a bushel and a half of corn/grain and the pounding/grinding of the aforesaid for the price of 4 s. 9 d., minus 3 loaves.

Item: 61 lots of feed? (can't be bread) for the horses and dogs, coming from 2 bushels of grain and the pounding/grinding of the aforesaid for the price of 12 d., and minus 5 loaves.

Total for the pantry: 5 s. 9 d.

Total for the day 53 s. Whence from the coffer 24 s. 9 d. and from the store 28 s. 3 d.

Day: Tuesday 19 November, in Wells.

MARESCHAL/Groom. Hay from the manor for 32 horses taken by a stout/pregnant freewoman and 7 hackneys taken by a half-freed (or released or delivered?), for the price of 19 d. A quarter of a bushel of oats/straw for them purchased for 19 d. Item, 5 irons with keys/screws from the store. Item, hay from the manor of Wookey for 11 of the Lord of Berkeley's horses, to pass the night with the same for the price of 5 d. 6 bushels of oats/straw for the same, 8 d. Bread for the horses of Lord T. and M. Berkeleye, W. Rodeneye, T. Gurneye, T. Marlebarewe, E. Cylvedon, S. Bristoll, and R. Mudelneye, R. Somerton and for them, after having dinner and oats (?), 2 s. 4 d.

Boteler. 60 flagons of wine in storage jars for the price of 20 s. Item, 20 flagons of wine in storage jars from Banwell, for the price of 3 s. 4 d. 6 flagons of wine purchased for 3 s. 14xx flagons and 10 of good ale, purchased for 18 s. 1 d. Item, 60 flagons of 'second' ale, 2 s. 6 d. Cups, 6 d. Pots and pans purchased for 10 d.

Total for the Boteler, 48 s. 2 d.

PANTRY. 6th (?) 72 loaves of bread, coming from 3 quarters (bushels?) of corn/grain and the pounding/grinding of the aforesaid for the price of 6 d., and minus 3 loaves.

Total for the pantry: 12 s. 6 d.

HALL/Palace. 10 51 tapers/tallows from the stocks/store, for the price of 15 d. Whence 1 for the lord's chamber, 1 for the cook, 1 for Wookey for the horse of Lord Berkeley, 1 for the chamber of the magistrate J. de Cartleton and 1 for the Boteler.

Total for the hall 15 d.

KITCHEN. 20 eels from Compton, for the price of 8 s. 4 d. 20 morucis (?) and Lings, previously purchased from Compton for the price of 5 s. 18 pollocks from Compton for the price of 3 s. 30 dried

hakes from Compton for the price of 2 s. 6 d. 4 hakes sea-salted? ['mersautz'] purchased for 6 d. 4 haddocks purchased for 20 d. 1 dorsel(?) of breams, gurnards and haddocks 7 s. 1 dossel and half of plaice, 8 s. 4 salmon purchased for 5 s. 6 d. 12 stockfish, 2 s. 6 d. 3 stockfish from the Bristol store, for the price of 5 d. qa.?. 18 stikkes of Anguilla [eels] purchased for 6 d. 3 large eels purchased for 2 s. 6 d. 2 large eels gifted by the Abbot of Glastonbury for the price of 12 d. 6 bream and 1 pike gifted by the aforesaid Abbot of Glastonbury for the price of 4 s. 2 d. Sheep (? Not eggs?), 6 d. Wastels, 1 d.; 1 capon, 1 and a quarter d.; 1 pickerel [young pike], 2 s. Mutton for the Lord Berkeley's boy, 6 and a half d. A quarter of a bull-calf for the said, 6 d.

Total for the day: 6 51 10 s. 7 d. and a half. From the coffers, 67 and $\frac{3}{4}$ shillings. And from the store, 63 s. 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ d.

There are details of two further feasts held in the Great Hall: the funeral of Bishop Bubwith and the celebration of the Installation of Stafford as Bishop of Bath & Wells

Appendix 2

Funeral of Bishop Bubwith (Bishop Bath & Wells 1407-1424, died October 27, 1424)

The following is from Rait R. S. (1910) English Episcopal Palace (Province of Canterbury), p297/8

A happy chance has preserved a verbatim account of two fifteenth-century banquets served in the hall of the bishop's palace, of which Dr. F. A. Gasquet has given in substance the following description :—

A famous cook of unknown name collected in his note-book a set of menus and a brief note of the occasion upon which the banquet described was served up. This note-book has survived till the present day, and is to be seen in the MSS. Room of the British Museum (Harl. MS. 279).

One banquet took place at the funeral of Bishop Bubwith, and the other at the installation of his successor, Bishop John Stafford.

The date of the first dinner was December 4, 1424. On the preceding October 27, Bishop Bubwith had died. Over a month, therefore, had elapsed before the funeral. The ceremony was celebrated with customary pomp. A great concourse of people, distinguished clergy, laymen and their followings, and monks in large numbers assembled at Wells for the occasion. Nicholas Bubwith had been a man of note, Bishop of London and Lord Treasurer of England, and he had taken part after the Council of Constance in the election of Pope Martin V. He was buried in his chantry, still to be seen with its screen of light and elaborate tracery, in the nave of the cathedral, and after the funeral the ecclesiastics repaired to the great hall of the palace, where the dinner described in the menu was served. The season of the Church on this occasion was Advent, and accordingly a

special dinner was provided for the monks, who had at this time to abstain from meat. Before the secular clergy and laymen a first course was set consisting almost wholly of heavy joints of meat and game; there is no mention of vegetables beyond the herbs used for flavouring. The second course consisted chiefly of game, ending with a "payn puffe" or pastry puff, "a colde bakemete" or cold fruit-pie, and "irchouns"—that is, pork prepared with spikes made of almonds to look like a hedgehog.

Appendix 3

Bishop John Stafford's Installation Feast, September 16, 1425

Following is from: The Book of Wells. Marion Meek, Barracuda Books Ltd, MCMLXXX, pp 42/43/44
(source: Wells Reference Library)

bishop's palace. Two menus were prepared, the grander three-course one for the top table, the two-course one for those seated in the lower part of the hall and elsewhere.

LE I COURS

| | | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------|---|
| FURMENTY WITH VENYSOUN | Venison with boiled wheat | SWAN | Swan |
| MAMMENYE | Mince | HEYROUN | Heron |
| BRAWNE | Brawn | CRANE | Crane |
| REDE ROSTE | Eggs treated with violet flowers | A LECHE | Sliced meat or bread with spices |
| CAPOUN DE HAUT GRECE | Stuffed capon | CRUSTADE RYAL | A pie with currants, dates, eggs, etc. |
| | | FRYTOURE, SAMATA | Fritter or pancake |

LE II COURS

| | | | |
|------------|------------------------------------|-------------|-------------------------------------|
| BLAMCHE | Forced meat of fowl or pork | GULLYS | Gulls |
| MORTREWYS | | CURLEW | Curlew |
| VYAND RYAL | Almond rice mould | COKYNTRYCHE | Capon and pig roasted together |
| PECOKE | Peacock | | Sliced meat or bread with spices |
| CONYNG | Young rabbit | A LECHE | |
| FESAUNTE | Pheasant | PYSTE LADE | |
| TELE | Teal | CHAUD | Hot pasty |
| CHYKONYS | Chicken glazed with almond milk | PYSTE LADE | |
| DORYD | Pigeon | FRYID | Cold pasty |
| PYJONS | | FRYTOURE | |
| VENYSONN | Roast Venison | DAMASKE | Fritter with Damascus dates |
| ROSTYD | | | |

LE III COURS

| | | | |
|--------------|---------------|----------------|---|
| GELY | Jelly | SMALL BYRDYS | Small birds |
| CREME MOUNDY | Cream mould | DOWCET RYAL | A kind of cheesecake |
| PETY CURLEWE | Small curlew | PETELADE FRYID | Cold pasty |
| EGRET | Young heron | HYRCHOUNS | Fish |
| PERTRYCHE | Partridge | EGGS RYAL | Eggs royal |
| VENYSON ROST | Roast venison | POMYS | A kind of forced-meat ball with spices |
| PLOVERE | Plover | | Cold brawn |
| OXYN KYN | Beef | BRAWN FRYID | |
| QUAYLYS | Quails | FRUTE | Fruit |
| SNYTYS | Snipe | WAFFRYS | Wafers |
| HERTE DE | Heart | VYN DOWCE | Sweet wine |
| ALOUSE | | | |

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The second banquet was given nine months later, on September 16, 1425, to celebrate Bishop John Stafford's installation. On this occasion no fast was being observed, and there was no provision for a "*dîner maigre*." Two dinners were, however, prepared—one for the more honoured guests, and the other for those who had seats in the lower part of the hall. Each course concluded with a "sotelte" (subtlety), a confection in sugar and paste, which generally pointed some allusion to the circumstances of the feast. A doctor-of-law, an eagle, and a Saint Andrew figured at this festivity. The lawyer apparently referred to the new bishop's early profession, the eagle was the emblem of St. John, his namesake, and St. Andrew was the patron saint of the church of his new see. The "sotelte of Sent Andrewe" was repeated at another installation feast of the same bishop when he was translated to Canterbury, and is then fully described as "Saint Andrew sitting on his high altar in state with beams of gold. Before him kneeling the bishop in priestly robes, his crosier-bearer kneeling behind him coped."

It is evident that the culinary art was not neglected in the episcopal establishment. The furnishing of the palace kitchen must have been ample to allow of so many as a dozen joints being roasted together. The various dishes of

one course were probably not served up one after another, but various meats and birds were dished up together that every one might make his choice. One can picture the army of serving-men that would be needed to prepare these elaborate feasts. The head cook was a professional, who probably came down from London for both occasions; his services were in great request, his menu-book including the feast of the coronation of King Henry IV. in 1399, royal dinners at Winchester and elsewhere, the installation feast of Bishop John Chandler of Salisbury in 1417, and many other notable banquets.