Chapter Two:  
Medieval Town to Tudor Corporation (1204 to 1576)

The Castle from Magna Carta, the Statute of Marlborough, and Decline

John was not a popular king with the barons, partly because of the excessive tax demands he made to pay for his wars. In 1215 the barons revolted after a new scutage1 was imposed. Defeat at the Battle of Bouvines in July 1214 underlined to many the futility of yet more taxation to pay for John’s unsuccessful wars in France. John gave orders that should Winchester be surrendered, the Constable of Marlborough castle, Hugh de Neville, was to convey the Queen and the nine year old Prince Henry to Marlborough. A month later he faced his barons at Runnymede. The moderate party, led by William Marshall son of John the Marshall former castellan of Marlborough Castle, brought the autocratic king and his supporters including Hugh de Neville, and the rebellious barons to the compromise of written law, to which, for the first time, the king himself was subject. Magna Carta was, however, a device to buy time for John: he had no intention of adhering to it. Here John had an unexpected ally: the Pope declared Magna Carta illegal denouncing it as a usurpation of baronial power in defiance of a sovereign monarch. In September 1215 a more serious baronial revolt broke out. London was taken by the rebels and by May 1216 Prince Louis of France had landed unopposed in England pursuing his claim to the throne.2

On John's death in October 1216, Hugh de Neville surrendered Marlborough Castle to Prince Louis; but within a year the moderate barons forced Louis and his supporters to seek terms. Louis withdrew the claim he was making to the throne of England and the 10 year old Henry III could reign in peace with 80 year old William Marshall as regent.

King Henry III, like his father, spent much time in Marlborough Castle. Mills and fishponds were used by the king. The largest fishpond, the King's Great Bay, filled the valley between the Swindon and Ramsbury roads at the eastern edge of town. It had been made on the demesne land of the castle estate in the Og valley north east of Marlborough by 1179.3 In that year 28s 1d was spent stocking it with fish. An earthen dam, sometimes called a bay, was raised across the Og to make a long narrow lake, which extended north to Bay Bridge. The dam can still be seen today. The pond was drained by the early 19th century. In use it supplied bream, pike, and eels to the castle and fish were exported to other places in England. The modern housing development of Baywater is named after it.

From 1222 to 1259 building seems to have been going on almost continuously within the castle on walls and turrets, roofs and windows, porches and kitchens, stables and fences, and on a new dovecot. Constant improvement was made on the King's and the Queen's chambers and on the two chapels that stood within the castle dedicated to St. Nicholas and St. Leonard. St. Leonard was the patron saint of prisoners and his was probably a small chapel in or before the Great Tower. There is some evidence that the stone-built tower on top of the mound was the work of Henry III.

Like his father, Henry III had problems with the barons. A group led by Simon de Montfort brought the country to civil war in the 1260s. Henry III was compelled to redress the accumulated grievances of the barons in the Statute of Marlborough of 1267 in the presence of his two sons and the Papal Legate, the greatest and almost the last episode in the history of the medieval castle of Marlborough. The preamble declared that it would end “the many tribulations and unprofitable dissensions” of the past and guarantee the “peace and tranquillity of the people”. It confirmed Magna Carta, regulated wardship4 and protected persons outside the lord's jurisdiction being forced to attend his court. When Henry died in 1272 the written, enacted law of England consisted of four documents, the Magna Carta, its sister charter which defined forest law, the Statute of Merton, and the Statute of Marlborough.

The castle declined in the 14th century. By 1390 a commission of enquiry reported,

. . . of all the goods of the king in the castle of Marlborough there remain only lead in old guttering to the value of £8, old iron in utensils, door hinges, bolts and window-bars to the value of 2s 1d and 2 bells in the chapel worth £10; various persons (and notably the late parson of St. Peter's, Nicholas Halle, and John atte Mill) have

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1 Literally “shield money”, a tax to pay for John’s wars in France. John increased it to three marks per knight’s fee thus provoking the rebellion
2 His argument was that he should be king because his wife was Henry II’s grand-daughter and that John had forfeited his right to the throne through his suspected role in Arthur of Brittany’s murder
3 The Great Roll of the Pipe for the 5th – 34th year Henry II 1158-88 (1884 - 1925) Pipe Roll Society (30 volumes), 26 Henry II, 25
4 In English feudal law, the guardianship that the feudal lord had of the land of his vassal while the latter was a minor
...despoiled it to the wasting and worsening of the said castle, as to the walls, gates, turrets and other things...it is impossible to assess the damage since only complete reconstruction would restore them...

By 1541, Leland, King Henry VIII's antiquary, described Marlborough castle as,

A ruine of a great castelle, hard at the west end of the town, whereof the dungeon tower partly yet standeth.

Camden's "Brittania" of 1610 stated,

Now being daunted by time there remained an heape of rammel and rubbish witnessing the ruines and some few reliques of the wall remain within the compasse of a dry ditch.

By the 19th century no trace remained. Local tradition asserts that the dressed stone coping on the churchyard wall of St. Peter's Church came from the castle. The great black font made of Belgian marble in Preshute Church probably came from St. Nicholas' Chapel where it could have held the baptismal water for royalty. The high-status font is clearly out of place in a parish church and it would make sense to derive its origin to the castle chapel.

Marlborough quickly became a market and trading centre for the surrounding area. Its history, therefore, needs to be considered along with its surrounding villages. The establishment of a castle and mint both encouraged and protected the new borough's commercial life and the main period of expansion coincided with the royal use of the castle as both fortress and residence.

Ludgershall Castle was contemporary with Marlborough Castle but very different in lay-out consisting of a ring-work with a double ditch and the remains of a keep of flint rubble. It was, however, of equal importance to King John as he used it extensively as a hunting lodge. In the Middle Ages Savernake and Chute Forests lay between Marlborough and Ludgershall. Like Marlborough, Ludgershall grew up beside its castle and both towns had two members of parliament until the 1832 reform act deprived Ludgershall of both its MPs.

Urban Expansion

By the late Middle Ages, the castle's decline lost Marlborough its importance in national history. The town, however, prospered and grew while other boroughs like Great Bedwyn and Ludgershall stagnated. One reason for this was its position on the King's Highway between London and Bristol.

Bristol had become a flourishing port as early as the Norman Conquest when it was used for shipping slaves to Ireland and importing wine from Bordeaux. Bristol Castle was a key Norman fortification and the town had been Earl Robert of Gloucester's base in supporting his half-sister Matilda in the 12th century civil war. By around 1240 the River Frome had been diverted to create a deep harbour. In 1373 Bristol was incorporated as a county and in 1377 Edward III's poll tax showed it had become the largest provincial town in England after York. The opening up of the New World following John Cabot's expedition to Newfoundland from Bristol in his ship the "Matthew" in 1497 led to the town's rapid growth.

After London and Bristol, England's most important medieval port was Southampton. Again Marlborough benefited as a major north-south road passed through to Southampton via Salisbury. Southampton had originated as the Saxon port of “Hamwic” which had given its name to the county “Hampshire” as early as the year 755. From the 11th century it became the sea-port for the continent and was visited frequently by Genoese and Venetian traders. Salisbury, too, was a major town planned on a grid formation by its bishop in the 13th century and becoming the fourth largest in England in the 15th century.

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5 Quoted in Stedman op cit pp47-8
6 John had five children by his second wife Isabelle of Angouleme and at least twelve illegitimate children. His eldest son, who became King Henry III, was born in Winchester and therefore unlikely to have been baptised in Marlborough
7 Early 12th century pottery and a King Stephen halfpenny have been found
8 Bristol became a cathedral city in 1542 and its traders were incorporated into the Society of Merchant Venturers in 1552. By the late 17th century it had become England’s second city after London; a status it retained until Liverpool, Manchester and Birmingham superseded it during the Industrial Revolution
9 Salisbury, renowned for its cathedral with its enormous spire, was the centre of a vast medieval diocese encompassing Wiltshire, Dorset, and Berkshire. It had changed its name from Sarum incorporating the Latin “sai” meaning “salt” reflecting its wealth in the same manner as “Salzburg” in Austria. The word “salary” and the phrase “worth his salt” have the same derivation
Salisbury’s wealth precluded it becoming a university town as students could not afford to live there. Oxford, because it was then cheap, became along with Cambridge the first English university towns.

Traffic passing through Marlborough to or from London, Bristol, Southampton, and Salisbury allowed a healthy flourishing of trade. The guild-merchant established during the 12th century clearly regulated the local economy. King John’s charter also encouraged and supported such institutions allowing trade to be fully exploited to the detriment of rival towns. In 1229 King Henry III confirmed his father’s charter. The first mayor is recorded in 1310. The authority for the creation of the office of mayor is unknown but it was an important step towards corporation status. A little known charter of King Henry IV is the first to mention the mayor. Dated 20th May 1408 it stated,

Henry, to all Archbishops etc... Know that of our especial grace, and for the amendment of the town of Marlborough, and for the increase of the inhabitants of the same, we have granted to our beloved subjects, the mayor and burgesses thereof, that they and their heirs and successors, burgesses of the said town, shall be for ever quit and discharged of murrage, quayage, coverage, and chiminage, to be paid and taken for their goods and merchandize, within our kingdom of England, and elsewhere within our realm. Therefore we will and command etc.

This is interesting because it equates burgesses with inhabitants and clearly bestows rights and privileges on Marlborough people whilst engaged in trade or commerce anywhere within the realm. It extended John’s charter from freedom from tolls within the town to freedom of trade elsewhere. It clearly advocated free trade and must have helped to advance the prosperity of the town in the period leading up to the Wars of the Roses in the second half of the 15th century. The complete rebuilding of St Peter’s Church in the mid-15th century in the Perpendicular Gothic style must reflect the wealth the town had then for such expensive projects.

At Marlborough, the castle estate did not surround the borough, which was able to expand eastwards in the early 13th century. This area east of the Green, now known as St Martin’s, but then as “Newlands” occasioned a long running ecclesiastical dispute over the paying of tithes as it originally encroached into the parish of Preshute, which originally surrounded the town. As parishioners of Preshute, the people of Newlands had to attend St George’s Church in Preshute and not the much closer church of St Mary. As a result, a chapel dedicated to St Martin was built where Coldharbour Lane now begins. The chapel survived until the 16th century when the area was absorbed into St Mary’s parish.

Fulling Mills

Textile production was very important in the town until it declined in the 17th and 18th centuries. The finishing of woollen cloth, or fulling, was originally performed by soaking and compressing it by treading it by foot. Later, water-mills beat and scourred the cloth by means of water-wheel driven heavy hammers or fulling stocks. One of the earliest fulling mills in the country was sited at the end of what is now Elcot Lane. At the western end of town Castle Mill, in existence by 1227, appears to have been used for grinding corn and fulling cloth as there is a reference to a newly built dye-house being built nearby in 1613. This mill had ceased to function by 1929 but its site is still obvious near Washpool cottage. The Port Mill, or Town Mill, was demolished in the 1980s to make way for riverside housing. Prince John granted it to Robert Barbleur between 1189 and 1193. All three mills were part of the castle estate. In 1319 the canons of St Margaret’s Priory acquired the Port Mill. On dissolution in 1538 the mill passed to the manor of St Margarets until 1799 when it was sold to George Plank. J and E Dell were the owners when it ceased grinding corn around 1922. Briefly in use as a youth hostel, it was subsequently allowed to fall into disrepair.

10 See footnote number 19 above
11 John Godhyne, listed in Chandler, J E A History of Marlborough The White Horse Bookshop 1977, p43
12 The meaning of this toll is unclear. It may derive from the French “mur” meaning “wall” or the Latin “murus” of the same meaning: “extra-mural” means outside the walls or outside the town so “murrage” could be a toll on entering a town
13 Payment for use of a quay
14 The meaning of this toll is unclear. It may be a tax on the storage of goods in the sense of being “covered”
15 A toll paid for passing through a forest. Chiminage Close is named after it. J E Chandler in Marlborough Place Names wrote, CHIMINAGE CLOSE
‘Chiminage’ was a toll formerly paid for liberty of passage through a forest. Close’ is the land given, the rent of which paid the toll of chiminage. In June 1518, Robert Somerfield gave the land called ‘Chymanadge Close’ to discharge the town of Marlborough henceforth from Chiminage, rent and charges levied on villages and carriers. He was Mayor in 1477.

16 Hence the surname “Walker” of “Fuller” which derives from this practice
17 “In 1215 King John conveyed a fulling mill to be identified as that of Elcot, to Reynold Basset and William of Rowden” Victoria County History Volume XII p176
The highly restrictive laws of the weavers and fullers of Marlborough were set out in a customs book of Edward I’s reign along with those of Winchester, Oxford, and Beverley. These laws effectively denied the status of burgess to cloth-workers and made it impossible for them to form their own guild. It was a classic case of keeping the workers in their place but it may well have contributed to the later decline of cloth-making in this area.

**The Church and Religious Houses**

In the Middle Ages the Church exerted an enormous influence on people’s lives and featured in almost every aspect of political, social, and economic life. Even the monarch had to tread carefully when dealing with the Church as King Henry II found over his quarrel with Thomas Becket and his son King John experienced by excommunication when he opposed the wishes of Pope Innocent III over the appointment of the Archbishop of Canterbury. The Church took taxation in the form of tithes from the people. It gave alms to the poor. Those few who learnt to read and write were taught largely by monks. In the days before printing, monks performed a vital task in writing and copying official records. The King’s administration would not have functioned without its scribes.

At the height of the Middle Ages Marlborough possessed more religious houses than any other Wiltshire town save Salisbury, which was one of the country’s major ecclesiastical centres.

The most important of Marlborough’s religious houses was the Priory of St Margaret of Antioch. This was a Gilbertine priory built outside the town south of the river. The Gilbertines were the only purely English religious Order. They were founded in 1131 by St Gilbert of Sempringham who was canonised in 1202. The Order was a mixed one of canons and nuns. The nuns adopted the Benedictine rule and the canons the Augustinian rule. The Marlborough house was not mixed and had only canons who wore a black habit with a white cloak. Of the 24 Gilbertine houses in England 10 were mixed with nuns and canons and the rest were for canons only. The mother house was in Sempringham in Lincolnshire. Sempringham is commemorated by an apartment block in Salisbury Road which recently replaced a large house of that name. The priory’s meadows are today commemorated by the St Margaret’s Mead housing estate. The earliest mention of it is a list of houses, which King John took under his protection in 1199-1200 but it is likely to date from the reign of King Henry II (1154-89). King Henry III (1216-72) did much to benefit the priory in addition to his granting of a fair in 1236. In 1224 he gave them permission to gather firewood from Savernake Forest. A tenth of the bread, meat, fish, and ale consumed by the King’s household during royal visits to the castle were granted to the priory in 1232. Various money gifts were made including fifty shillings a year for a canon to celebrate daily in the castle chapel of St Nicholas and seven shillings and four pence a year from the Constable of Marlborough castle.

In 1337 the priory was robbed and partly burned by 50 men. The priory suffered a further violent attack in 1486 when their tenant of Kennett Manor, John Wroughton, and his sons broke into the property in pursuit of John Seymour, the warden of Savernake Forest, and his brother. Evidently John Seymour and his brother Alexander, described as lieutenant of the forest, had been failing to stem a rise in deer poaching. The Wars of the Roses had been a turbulent period within which lawlessness seems to have gone unchecked. In 1485 the Battle of Bosworth brought these wars to an end as the victor became the first Tudor King, the Welshman King Henry VII. As the owner of the royal forest he sent a warning to John Seymour demanding that no-one hunt without his permission and asking for the names of infringers in order to “provide for his sharp punishment”

A further threat followed threatening John of “our high displeasure and the pain of forfeiture of your office”

In response John and Alexander replied with the names of those who had violated the King’s forest. They included John Wroughton and his sons Christopher, Richard and John the younger. The Wroughtons had gathered in Marlborough with forty of their followers. The reply described how they,

> Came in riotous and forceful nature against your laws and peace armed with bows and arrows, swords and bucklers (small shields used for parrying and protection), openly assembling themselves in disturbance of your peace, sovereign lord, there conspiring among them the deaths of your said beseechers.

The gang broke into the priory and ransacked the place looking for the Seymour brothers intending to murder them openly threatening to cut them into pieces “as small as flesh for the pot”. Fortunately for them John and Alexander were not there.

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18 The *Liber Custumarum*
19 Quoted in, *The Earl of Cardigan, The Wardens of Savernake Forest* 1949 p124. The extracts I have used I have translated into modern English
20 Ibid, p125
21 Ibid, p126
It seems clear that local squires had been openly taking deer from the forest and been getting away with it for some time. A retinue of forty men would have been impossible for John Seymour to stop. The Wroughtons and also the Darells of Littlecote were eventually tried at a Forest Eyre held in Amesbury in 1490 or 1491 but the verdict is unknown. Usually squires were fined rather than imprisoned or hanged and it is likely that this was their punishment. The episode illustrates, however, how lawless the area had become in the 15th century and reveals that even religious houses were not considered by everyone to be sacrosanct.

In 1514 the prior was fined two shillings for charging excessive tolls at his mill. The mill cited was probably Manton Mill as it had been purchased by the priory in 1249 although it could have been the Town Mill as the canons acquired it in 1319. In 1535 the annual revenue of the priory was assessed at £38 19s 2d.

St Margaret’s was dissolved in 1539 and the property given to King Henry VIII’s queen, Anne of Cleeves as part of her divorce settlement.

The Carmelite Friars or White Friars, as they were better known, were granted land by William de Rammeshulle and John Godhyne in 1316. In 1328 both gentlemen served as the town’s two Members of Parliament. John was the town’s first recorded mayor in 1310 and William served as MP seven times. Unlike the Gilbertines, who were a contemplative order, the Carmelites were a mendicant order relying on alms and gifts from the townspeople and benefactors. It was always a poor institution, the friars totally reliant on charity. The friar’s latrine was a noted landmark.

Unlike the monks of the time, who sited their monasteries away from towns, the Friars lived amongst the people, preaching and teaching and helping the poor. William Ashbrigge, one of the friars, voluntarily took on the job as Chaplain to the Chapel of St Martin’s on the eastern edge of town. He was reprimanded for this as it was seen as a kind of medieval moonlighting.

In 1447 Henry VI gave to the friars “in relief of their poverty as much fuel as boughwood and shrobbes from Savernake as a horse can carry thence weekly for three days going and returning”. In 1535 a visiting commissioner from the King was shocked by the poor conditions the friars were living in. The friary was dissolved in 1538.

Marlborough had two medieval hospitals: the Hospital of St John the Baptist on what is now the Parade on the site of the present Priory. The Priory, now divided into flats for old people, was built in a “Gothick” style with pointed windows in 1820 to replace an older building that had been destroyed by fire. That older building is believed to be the medieval Carmelite friary.

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Marlborough had two medieval hospitals: the Hospital of St John the Baptist on what is now the Parade on the site of the present St Peter’s junior school, and the Hospital of St Thomas the Martyr which seems to have been situated on the eastern outskirts of the town. It is important to understand that the word “hospital” literally means “house of spite” or house of malignancy. Illness was seen as bad, evil, or malignant so the word is not inappropriate. The word “spiteful” means nasty or vindictive. Hospitals in the Middle Ages were run by the Church and relied on benefactors in the same way that other religious houses did. Evidence for the existence for a medieval hospital can be found in the place-name “spitalfields” which means fields where a hospital once was.

Confirmation of land granted to the Hospital of St John the Baptist was made in 1215. As a hospital, dissolution came late. Its buildings were used, as a result of letters patent of King Edward of October 1550, for the new “grammatical schole for the inducement of youth”. St John’s school is named after this house.

The Hospital of St Thomas the Martyr was a house of lepers first mentioned in 1231 when King Henry III granted it letters of protection and gifts of wood from Savernake Forest. In 1393 the house was granted to St Margaret’s Priory.

On the Downs north-west of Marlborough near Rockley was the only Wiltshire preceptory of the Knights Templar. The Order of the Knights Templar was founded in 1118 by Hugh de Payens and nine Knights as a religious military order to protect pilgrims to Jerusalem and to defend Jerusalem from Muslim threats. The order based itself on the site of King Solomon’s temple from which it took its name. Hugh de Payens brought the Knights Templar to England in 1128. Their English headquarters were at the Temple in London. The Temple church remains today by far the most complete of the 40 or so preceptories which existed just before the order was suppressed in England in 1308. The

22 An eyre was a court of itinerant justices
23 From the Latin “mendicus” meaning “beggar”
24 A preceptory is a community of Knights Templar: it has military overtones in that a precept is a rule of action. Interestingly the Templars’ rivals, the Knights Hospitallers, used the word commandery for their houses, an overtly military word
naves of Templar churches were always circular in imitation of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. During the two centuries that the Templars were in existence they became very wealthy and arrogant making them unpopular and promoting jealousy. Their secretive practices also bred suspicion. It is not well known that King John relied heavily on the Templars in raising money. The freemasons were to later adopt some of the Templar shrines like the temple of Solomon as one of their key symbols.

It is perhaps appropriate that King John had links with the Templars, as his son Henry was to be guided in kingship by William the Marshal. Marshal had been the chief influence in persuading the barons to accept John as king, rather than his nephew Arthur, in 1199. Marshal's father, John the Marshal castellan of Marlborough Castle gave one hide of land to the Knights Templars in 1155. This was the basis for the preceptory of Temple Rockley. In 1185 his family added another two hides at Lockeridge. The preceptory at Temple Rockley was the centre of a vast sheep-farming enterprise which aimed to make as much money as possible to help finance the Crusades. It has been calculated that the Templar estates between Rockley and Lockeridge would have provided enough pasture for 1,200 sheep. The Templars bred sheep for wool not for dung for cereal crops. As they had a licence for exporting wool they were well placed to make fortunes out of the wool-trade in Flanders and the Low Countries. At Temple Guiting in Gloucestershire and Temple Combe in Somerset they made cloth so it is likely that they used it for their own use making white mantles for the knights and brown for the sergeants.

The estate at Rockley passed to the Knights Hospitallers but they did not establish a preceptory on it.

**Medieval Fairs**

In addition to the markets, John's charter of 1204 granted an 8-day fair on the eve of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary (14th August). After 1752 it was held on the 22nd August. Until its demise in the 1960s, Marlborough fair, sheep fair or great sheep fair was held on Marlborough Common.

In 1229 Henry III granted a four day fair to begin on the eve of St Martin (10th November) to be held on the "new land". In the late 18th century it was held on the Green. By the 20th century it was held on the Common on 23rd November. It lapsed in the 1960s.

In 1236 a fair was granted to the prior and canons of St Margaret’s Priory to be held annually on 19th and 20th July. The last recorded instance of it being held was in 1763.

In 1246 a four day fair dedicated to St Peter and St Paul and to begin on St Peter’s eve (28th June) was granted to be held on the meadows south of St Peter’s church. By the 18th century it had become primarily a horse-fair. It had lapsed by 1879.

St Mary’s, St Martin’s, St Margaret’s, and St Peter’s fairs lasted for 18 days in total every year and must have been an important supplement to the weekly two market days granted by King John. They would have brought in goods from around the region and stimulated trade and industry.

Hiring or Mop Fairs were held in the early 19th century when they were used by employers to recruit labour for the following year. Now solely for pleasure, Little Mop and Big Mop are held in the High Street on the Saturdays before and after old Michaelmas day (10th October).

**The Seymours**

The Seymour family had succeeded to the warden-ship of Savernake Forest. Their fortunes seemed secured when Jane Seymour married King Henry VIII. Sadly, Jane died after giving birth to Henry's only son, Edward, who became king at the age of 9 in 1547. In 1550, in addition to founding Marlborough Grammar School, he gave the castle site and Savernake Forest to his regent uncle, Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset and Lord Protector whose fall from power and execution in 1552 prevented a palatial mansion bring built in Savernake Forest. Its would-be architect John Thynne later designed Longleat House near Warminster. But for an accident of history, the Lions of Longleat could well have been the Lions of Savernake.

The sickly King Edward VI died in his youth in 1553. The Seymour family survived its misfortunes. Sir Francis Seymour, grandson of the Protector built a mansion on the site of the castle in 1620. This mansion was rebuilt at the beginning of the 18th century and still survives as “C” House of Marlborough College.

25 From, Lord, E The Knights Templar in Britain 2002, p118
26 Ibid, p118
Queen Elizabeth’s Charter of Incorporation

By the 16th century Marlborough could be considered to be second only to Salisbury in the county. In 1537, during Henry VIII’s reign, Thomas Morley was appointed suffragan bishop for the town.

Elizabeth, Henry VIII’s daughter by Anne Boleyn, became queen in 1558. In 1576 she granted a charter of incorporation to the town of Marlborough allowing it the right to pass its own bye laws and administer itself. This was the most important charter since King John’s of 1204. The years between 1576 and the outbreak of the Civil War in 1642 were to mark Marlborough as Wiltshire’s second town.

The byelaws, passed as a result of Queen Elizabeth’s charter, paint a picture of Marlborough as a lively market town. Innkeepers were not allowed to brew on their own premises but had to buy from public brewers. No tippling was allowed in inns during time of prayer. After fairs and markets, and on every Saturday night, every one had to sweep clean their own doorstep. Every inhabitant had to have at hand in his dwelling or business premises, “a club, bill or other necessary weapon, that he or his servants may be in readiness to assist in suppressing any outcry or breach of the peace.

Many byelaws related to the market, law and order, and the keeping of animals. The Common was used for grazing at day but at night animals had to be penned by their owners in the town. It was laid down that, “after the herdsman has brought home the beasts at night, the owners must pen them close, not suffering them to stray in the thoroughfares of the borough, until such time in the morning as the herdsman shall blow his horn, when he comes to drive them to field again”. The street name, “Blowhorn Street” commemorates this practice today.

The Green was used as an open area for the preparation of wood for the building of timber-framed houses. A sawpit on the Green attracted the stockpiling of timber, which was frequently cited as a nuisance. Townspeople worked together to provide security. An order read, “At 10 in the morning the alderman of every ward shall cause the figure of a bill or axe to be chalked upon the door of every householder whose turn it is to provide for the ensuing night a sufficient and able watchman, which watchman is to be ready at the High Cross by 9 o’clock in the morning.”