

BATH AND 'THE GREAT REBUILDING'

Jean Manco

Every man almost is a builder and he that hath bought any small parcell of ground, be it never so little, will not be quiet till he have pulled down the old house (if anie were there standing) and set up a new after his owne devise.¹

There speaks an eye witness to the domestic building boom that swept away much of mediaeval England. It began roughly from the accession of Queen Elizabeth and ran on up to the eve of the Civil War, over most of the Midlands and the South.

It was the ever-fertile W.G. Hoskins who coined the phrase 'the Great Rebuilding' to describe this burst of activity. Devon-born and with a keen eye for his own countryside, he noticed the remarkable number of houses scattered about the South-West dated between 1560 and 1640. In a seminal article in 1953, Hoskins drew together his own observations and similar ones for other parts of the country. He found a pattern. There seemed to be a particularly large cluster over the half-century from 1575 and naturally he wanted to know why. His main conclusion was that rising food prices after 1550 funded a marked improvement in living standards for the producers. From contemporary writers and such humble household documents as accounts and inventories, a picture emerged of a nation taking giant strides out of mediaeval darkness and discomfort.² One of the most useful sources is William Harrison's description of England, first published in 1577. He tells us that within living memory few houses had the luxury of a chimney. People cooked and ate in the hall, with a fire on an open hearth. The old men of his village marvelled at 'the multitude of chimneys lately erected'. Windows of lattice or horn were no longer much seen, as cheap glass had become readily available.³ Houses were becoming lighter, cleaner and warmer.

Hoskins noted many instances in the South-West of the 'modernisation' of the fifteenth-century hall-house. With a chimney solving the smoke problem, the hall, formerly open to the rafters, could have a ceiling inserted to make an upper floor. Partitions further divided up the space, so that several smaller rooms were created out of

one large one. He saw the motive force as 'the filtering down to the mass of the population, after some two centuries, of a sense of privacy that had formerly been enjoyed only by the upper classes.'⁴

His article sparked off a number of studies which have investigated the Great Rebuilding and it is clear that the precise timing of it varied in different parts of the country. Hoskins himself had excepted the northern counties from his general thesis; he saw rebuilding there as delayed. Others noted that the same seemed true of Cornwall and Wales. It is not difficult to link such a pattern to variations in agrarian wealth. However, Robert Machin has gone much further in his reassessment of the Great Rebuilding. Where Hoskins beat a path into the unknown, Machin has followed on with measuring rods and given us charts and graphs. He made a systematic search for recorded houses in seventeen counties with date inscriptions between 1530 and 1799. From this it would appear that the greatest surge in building was around 1700 rather than 1600. But, as he points out, simply to shift our concept of the Great Rebuilding forward a century would be too simplistic. Undoubtedly the late Middle Ages saw the beginning of a change from comparatively makeshift structures, lasting only a generation or so, to the more solid houses that still survive today. Machin's building graph shows a peak in the 1570s and 1580s, supporting the eye-witness impression of William Harrison, and another peak in the 1620s and 1630s, though the outstanding decade for dated houses was the 1690s.⁵

Bath – the Cloth Town

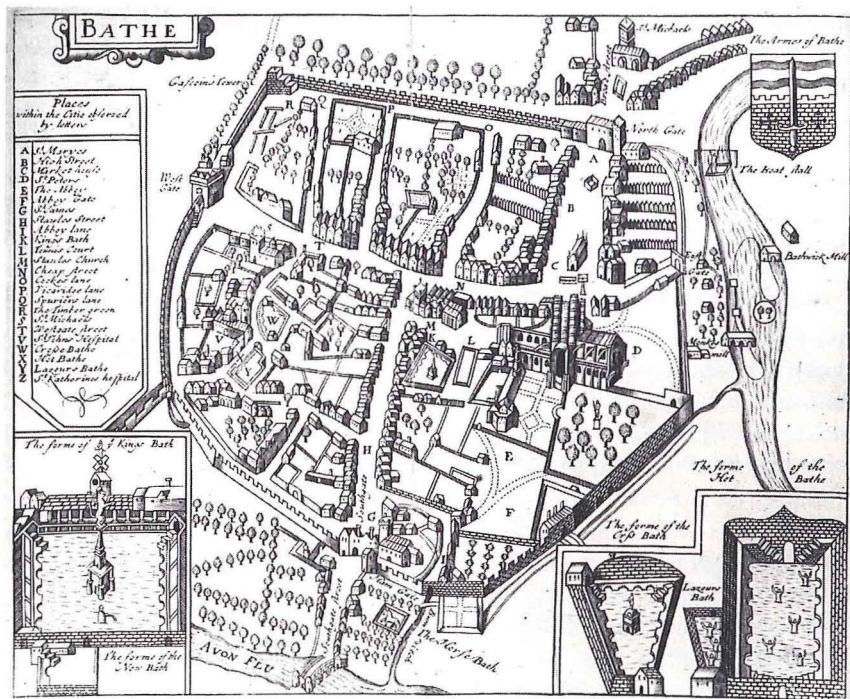
Machin found the urban pattern identical with that of rural areas. This came as no surprise, given the economic symbiosis of market towns and the surrounding countryside. But Bath was more than a market centre. It was of course a cloth town in the Middle Ages, when cloth was England's greatest industry and major export. Cloth exports rose steadily from 1500, as did the population.⁶ So it is not immediately obvious why 36 towns and cities, including Bath, were so badly decayed in 1540 as to prompt an Act of Parliament to enforce rebuilding. The Act paints an unsavoury picture. Houses had fallen down, leaving 'desolate and vacant grounds, many of them nigh adjoining to the high streets replenished with much uncleanliness and filth'. Open pits and cellars were a threat to life and limb, while

enfeebled buildings were liable to fall down on passers-by.⁷ This of course is a general indictment. But Bath specifically saw a staggering decline in the value of property between the lay subsidies of 1525 and 1540. The number of citizens paying the subsidy fell from 206 to 31.⁸ Locals laid the blame on individuals. The quarrelsome and violent William Crouch of Englishcombe was accused of having made life so insupportable for two leading Bath clothiers that they quit the city. One had employed some 300 people before Crouch's baleful influence fell on Bath around 1527.⁹ When Leland visited in 1542, he gained the impression that the recent deaths of three flourishing clothiers had led to decline.¹⁰ This of course cannot explain the national picture of urban decay. But Bath's economic dependence on cloth is grimly clear. The cloth boom hit its peak in 1549–50. Perhaps the building of the Market House in 1551–2 was an expression of misplaced commercial confidence.¹¹ Boom had turned to slump even as it was being built.

The Rise of the Spa

The lean years that followed may have been a spur to Bath's development as a spa. In the 1550s a series of bad harvests caused terrible hardship. Epidemics of influenza then cut a swathe through a population weakened by near starvation.¹² The nation had a sharp reminder that health is our most precious possession. At the same time Bathonians were in need of new sources of income. When Dr William Turner published the first treatise extolling the medical advantages of the hot baths in 1562, it should have fallen on fertile ground.

Turner urged the improvement of this neglected national asset. He sternly declared the baths a danger to body and soul in their existing form. The King's, Hot and Cross Baths had changed little from Norman times and he was appalled by the lack of drainage and indiscriminate mixed bathing.¹³ Smith's map of Bath, drawn probably in 1568, shows the baths as no more than open pools;¹⁴ it would seem that mediaeval bathers did without the luxury of changing rooms. Certainly they are not mentioned in Leland's description.¹⁵ A number of Turner's recommendations were followed, but only after some prompting from the Court. In June 1573 the Privy Council requested the city to maintain and manage the baths better for the reception of important patrons.¹⁶ Probably this was in preparation for Queen Elizabeth's visit to Bath the following year.



1 John Speed's plan of Bath, published in his *Theatre of the Empire of Great Britain* (1611–12). The plans for this atlas were compiled between 1596 and 1610. Speed drew the principal buildings individually, but the little houses which line the streets are conventional depictions only. They simply indicate the existence of buildings, not their exact number or appearance. (Photograph courtesy Bath Archaeological Trust)

The prospect of noble patronage seems to have galvanised the city fathers. The month after the royal visit, they announced plans to build a new bath for women next to the King's Bath by Whitsuntide 1576, and it was completed on schedule.¹⁷ Turner's plea for segregation of the sexes had been answered, though it was not to last. (The licentiousness of mixed bathing came under fire again in 1625.¹⁸) Turner also sensibly suggested the segregation of bathers with infectious skin diseases; presumably the Lazars Bath was added to the Hot Bath for that purpose. In 1575–6 John de Feckenham, former Abbot of Westminster, built a small house for the poor known as the Lepers Hospital

immediately adjacent, so it seems likely that the Lazars Bath was built by private charity around the same time.¹⁹ The King's Bath gained a sluice for proper drainage in 1577–8.²⁰ So by 1577 Harrison was able to assure his readers that the baths had been much improved recently.

They are not onelie verie much repared and garnished with sundrie curious peeces of workmanship ...; but also better ordered, clenlier kept, & more friendlie provision made for such povertie as dailie repaireth thither.²¹

The Cross Bath got a new look later. It was enlarged in the 1590s and supplied with drainage and heated changing rooms.²² Another of Turner's recommendations was that horses should also be allowed to benefit from the healing water. The drain from the King's Bath ran south to the river and there, outside the city walls, the Horse Bath was built. It can be seen on Speed's map of Bath, complete with a bathing horse.

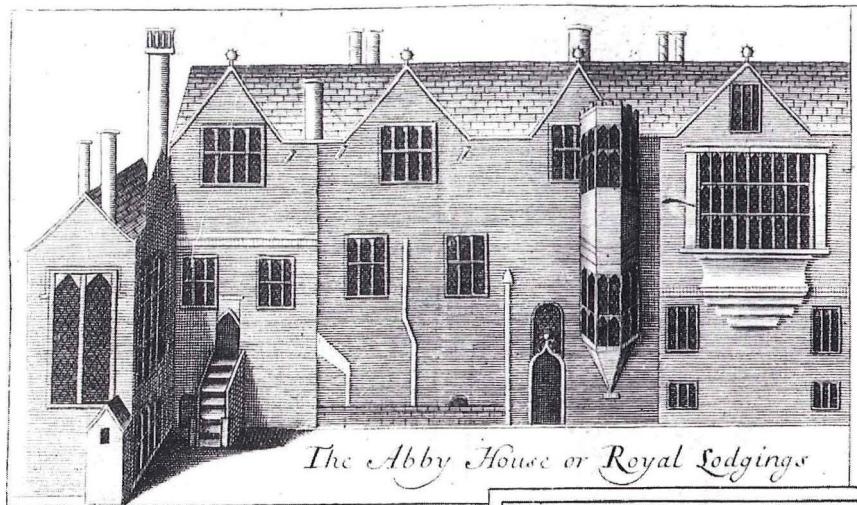
These improvements had not even begun when Elizabeth visited Bath in August 1574 and we do not hear of the Queen herself venturing to take the waters. Her visit, though, set the seal of royal approval on Bath as a spa. Thereafter 'the Bath' was much frequented by the nobility and gentry of the court. Sir Walter Raleigh could scarcely keep away and urged his friends to meet him there time and again.²³ Nobles brought their huge retinues, with a considerable impact on Bath's economy. Elizabeth's godson, Sir John Harington, observed in 1596:

The Citie of Bath ... being both poore enough and proud enough, hath since her highnesse being there, wonderfully beautified it selfe in fine houses for victualling and lodging, but decayes as fast in their ancient and honest trades of merchandise and clothing.²⁴

With the streets full of swaggering swordsmen, inevitably there was a certain amount of bloodletting not prescribed by a physician. A quarrel between the Lords Willoughby and Norris in 1615 ended with a fatal rapier thrust in the shadow of the Abbey.²⁵ But whatever the drawbacks of the aristocracy, they undeniably brought wealth to the city.

The Abbey House and its Satellites

Bath had few resident gentry. The city had been dominated by the Priory until the Dissolution, rather than by some local great family. In

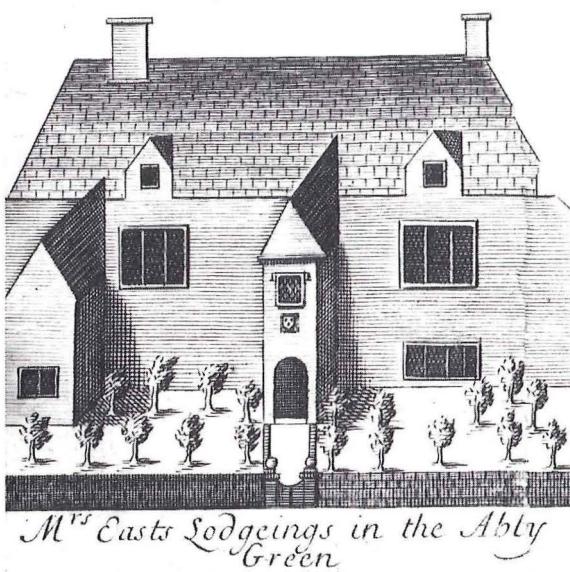


2 The Abbey House, from the border of Gilmore's plan of Bath 1694.
(Photograph courtesy Bath Archaeological Trust)

1543 the site of the Priory and some of its lands outside the city were purchased by Matthew Colthurst²⁶, the auditor to Edward Seymour, later Protector Somerset.²⁷ During the few years in which the Duke of Somerset in effect ruled the country, he built not only on a magnificent scale but in an innovative style. He was the dominant figure in a circle for whom Renaissance architecture was a passion. Several were members of Somerset's household, including his steward, Sir William Thynne, the builder of Longleat.²⁸

Colthurst and Thynne must have been acquainted, but there is no evidence whatever of an infusion of Renaissance architecture into Bath as a result. Perhaps this is not too surprising. Longleat was another of the spoils of the Dissolution, and in the late 1540s Thynne simply adapted the Priory buildings there to his own use. Matthew Colthurst seems to have done the same in Bath, converting the west range of the Priory into what became known as the Abbey House. John Gilmore's plan of Bath, issued in 1694, provides the only record of this building. It was easily the grandest house in the city but had no claim to novelty. The oriel windows with arched lights were typically Tudor but both doorways were of mediaeval type; the one with an ogee arch is most

3 Vignette from Gilmore's plan of Bath 1694, showing Mrs East's house against the city wall. The other side of the house appears in Speed's plan of Bath. (Photograph courtesy Bath Archaeological Trust)



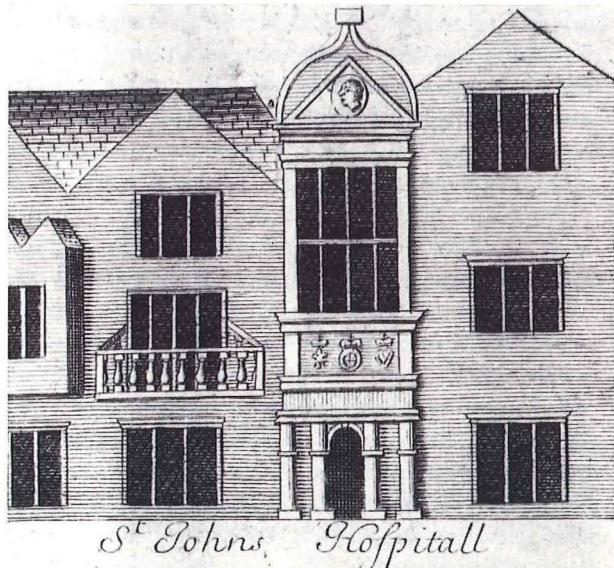
likely to be fourteenth-century. These were almost certainly remnants of the Prior's lodging. In the late Middle Ages many heads of monastic houses had created their own highly comfortable lodgings, often in the west cloistral range, easily adapted to domestic use by post-Dissolution owners. This of course was far more economical than complete rebuilding.²⁹ It was only after Longleat was burnt down in 1567 that Thynne began the great symmetrical structure that survives today. By then Matthew Colthurst had been succeeded by his son Edmund.

Financial problems seem to have dogged Edmund. He first mortgaged the property and then let it piecemeal. His major asset was the Abbey House, but two other houses within the precinct had been let by 1592. Both can be seen on Speed's map and in the vignettes bordering Gilmore's map. What Gilmore calls Mr Webb's Lodgings was on the west side of the Abbey Green, while Mrs East's Lodgings (once John Danver's house) was built against the city wall. They are clearly stylistically linked and quite different from anything else Gilmore depicts. It seems a reasonable assumption that they belong to the period of Matthew Colthurst's adaptation of the Priory buildings. The tennis court between the Abbey House and the King's Bath was presumably also built by Matthew. This was let to Sir John Harington by 1592.³⁰

St John's Hospital and the Abbey Church House

The Dissolution released other property. St John's Hospital was a twelfth-century foundation, placed under the authority of Bath Priory at an early stage. Grants to the hospital make clear that it was intended for the support of the poor and infirm. They also refer to the Master, the chaplain and the brethren and sisters serving God there.³¹ Since the needy inhabitants were later known as the brethren and sisters, some writers have not realised that there was a religious community earlier, serving the hospital. Numbers were small; in 1377 a list of religious in the Deanery of Bath includes the Master of St John's and four brothers.³² The standard hospital plan in the Middle Ages was a great hall, opening at one end into a chapel.³³ In 1260 the chapel and infirmary of St John's are mentioned,³⁴ but there is no clue how, or even if, the sexes were segregated. From the fourteenth century that was no longer a problem; St John's housed brothers only.

The Hospital was expensively rebuilt by Prior Holloway between 1527 and 1532, using at least three experienced masons. This seems to have attracted the avarice of the appalling William Crouch. New stone buildings must have made the Mastership a comfortable benefice. By



4 Detail from the border of Gilmore's plan of Bath 1694, showing St John's Hospital, as rebuilt in 1580. (Photograph courtesy Bath Archaeological Trust)

threats or bribes or both (accounts vary) he inveigled the Prior into appointing his clerical kinsman John Symons as Master.³⁵ The monks dispersed at the Dissolution but Symons remained.

It was not until November 1572 that patronage of the hospital was granted to the Corporation, along with that of the city churches. The Corporation wanted to complete the rebuilding of the Abbey Church, left unfinished at the Dissolution, since 'Heretofore for lacke of convenient roomes in the nowe churches wythin our sayd cytie, the sermons have bene made in the open markett place'. Permission for this was included in the royal grant and a start was made, but this ambitious project was really beyond the city purse. In recognition of this Elizabeth granted permission in April 1573 for collections to be made nationwide for seven years towards the rebuilding of the Abbey Church and the enlarging and improving of St John's Hospital.³⁶ The Hospital accounts show that it was rebuilt in 1580.³⁷

Hospitals elsewhere were adapted into almshouses by partitioning the great hall into cubicles,³⁸ and the development of St John's seems to follow this pattern, but with a variation unique to Bath. The hospital itself occupied the ground floor of a range facing the Cross Bath and contained a double row of rooms for the almsfolk, six on each side. So far there was nothing unusual. But above were two floors of lodgings, let out to swell the hospital revenues. Gilmore's view of the hospital shows Classical features – columns, entablature, pediment, cupola – applied to a basically vernacular building. This superficial pasting-on of Classical detail for decorative effect was typical of the carefree eclecticism of Elizabeth's reign. On the courtyard side was a colonnade, which seems to have supported a gallery acting as a corridor to the rooms above. A staircase led up to it at the northern end.³⁹ The hospital was almost completely rebuilt by John Wood in 1727, but the massive central wall between the rows of rooms is a survival from the Elizabethan building.⁴⁰ Internal chimneys in this period were generally housed in masonry of a reassuring solidity, as is the case here.

Adjoining the hospital range to the south was St John's Chapel. In 1580 the chancel was reroofed, the roodloft removed and seats fitted. This suggests that the chapel was originally divided between chancel and nave to suit the needs of a mixed religious and lay community. The division now being redundant, it would make sense to adapt the chancel into a smaller chapel. It was given a new timber bell-tower, which can be seen on Speed's map of Bath. The nave seems to have been converted to domestic use. The first tenant of the new chambers over

the hospital range also had a room over 'the bodye of the Chappell'.⁴¹

This fits the evidence of later deeds. The 'Capital Messuage of St John's' was split into three parts: the almshouse range and two gentry houses, one west (the 'Middle House') and one south of the Chapel. The Middle House was held by Robert Chambers from at least 1583, when he became Town Clerk. (In that year the Corporation mended the pipe leading from the Hot Bath into Chambers' bath.) There is a later lease to him of that part of the Capital Messuage of St John's west of the Chapel to the way by the city walls.⁴² If this was both the converted nave of the long chapel shown on Speed's map and the smaller building to the west, it must have been a sizable property, but rebuilding has left no idea of its original appearance.

By contrast, the third part of St John's is Bath's only surviving Elizabethan house. This fascinating building has a complex building history.⁴³ At its core was a mediaeval hall-house with cellar beneath. This was later enlarged, presumably by Prior Holloway around 1530, and used by the Master of St John's. After it came into Corporation hands it was rebuilt around 1590, leaving only the cellars as evidence of its earlier form. Robert Baker was granted a lease in March 1591, having erected the new buildings.⁴⁴ His house still stands as the western half of the Abbey Church House. After bombs sheared off the west façade in 1942, the opportunity was taken to restore it as closely as possible to its original appearance.

Dr Baker did not live to enjoy his new house for long and his widow married Dr Reuben Sherwood. The attraction of the house for physicians is explained by the fact that it also had its own private bath drawn from the Hot Bath, ideal for patients whose fastidiousness was matched by their wealth. But siphoning off the city's great natural asset did not meet with universal approval. Sir John Harington weighed in on the side of private medicine in 1596 with the assertion that the spring taken out of it did not prejudice the virtue of the Hot Bath, whatever Her Majesty might have been told. Others evidently disagreed. In February 1598

Certaine leude and disordered persons ... did in tumultious sorte assemble themselves togeather and shuttinge the dores of the Hott Bathe unto them did digg up the springe and heade of the said private bathe.

Protests rained upon the Corporation,⁴⁵ but we hear nothing of private baths out of the Hot Bath after this.

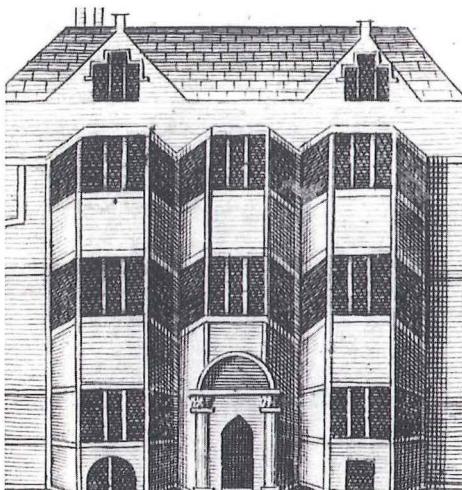


5 The restored Abbey Church House, Bath's only surviving Elizabethan mansion, built around 1590. (Photograph courtesy Bath Archaeological Trust)

Dr Reuben Sherwood did not long survive this dispute. He was buried in the Abbey Church on 24 July 1599. Since we are told in March 1598 that he was not yet settled in the city, he cannot have practised long at Bath. By contrast, his contemporary Dr John Sherwood was leasing the Abbey House from Edmund Colthurst by 1587 and remained there until his death in February 1621. Since Reuben died so much earlier than John, some writers have assumed their relationship to be that of father and son. In fact they were of the same generation, exact contemporaries at university.⁴⁶ Whatever their relationship (if any) the two eminent Doctors Sherwood illustrate how the spa economy had come to dominate the city. The houses they leased were then, and for a long time to come, the grandest in Bath.

'Fine Houses for Victualling and Lodging'

Dr John Sherwood was among the many of Bath's medical fraternity who lodged patients in their own houses. But plenty of other Bath



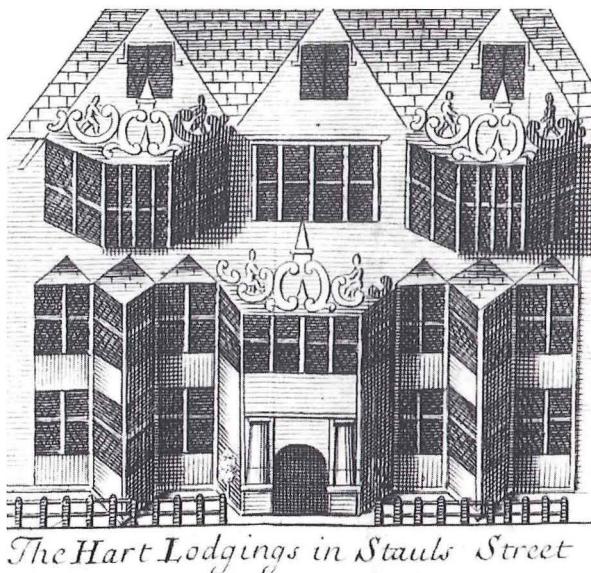
*Mr John Bushill Town Clarke
his Lodgings in Stalls Street*

6 Bushell's house against the King's Bath from the border of Gilmore's plan of Bath 1694. The east front of this house is visible in Thomas Johnson's view of the King's Bath (*Bath History III*, p. 25). The longer, lower, central windows on that side presumably lit a staircase. (Photograph courtesy Bath Archaeological Trust)

citizens were eager to compete for this lucrative custom. Before they got through the city gates visitors would find themselves importuned to patronise this lodging or that. Aristocratic visitors with fat purses could not be expected to stay in hovels, so it is entirely credible that Bath 'wonderfully beautified itself' in the last quarter of the sixteenth century. We are assured again in 1637 that Bath was 'beautified with very fair and goodly buildings for receipt of strangers'.⁴⁷ However, hard dating evidence is elusive. Tentative dates can be assigned to one or two lodging houses, but the clearest impression of beautified Bath comes from the vignettes around Gilmore's map of 1694. Here are all the buildings the city took a pride in. For that very reason of course caution is needed in its assessment. Bath is here displaying its best face. But on this evidence it was a city of overwhelmingly Elizabethan and Stuart building.

John Bushell's Lodging in Stall Street looks Elizabethan. There is some indirect evidence that it was built in 1573; the lane beside it leading to the King's Bath was blocked up then.⁴⁸ With the new availability of cheap glass the Elizabethans took a great delight in glittering expanses of glazing. Here, and in several other Gilmore views, the windows dominate the façade, stretching in unbroken sweeps across the building. Columns and a pediment have been applied to frame the doorway,

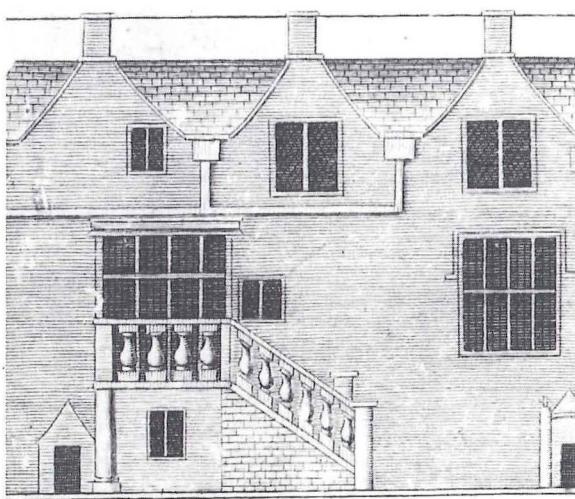
7 The ornate Hart Lodging near the King's Bath from Gilmore's plan of Bath 1694. (Photograph courtesy Bath Archaeological Trust)



but there is no other sign of Classical influence. This use of a Classical doorframe in isolation appears on ten other houses and is a common feature of Elizabethan houses of some pretension.

Four of the lodging houses fall into a stylistic group: the Hart Lodging, the Three Tuns Lodging, Mr Toop's and Mr Grandfield's Lodgings. All have projecting bays full of glass, surmounted by decorative stonework in flamboyant curves and scrolls. These were fronts built to impress, the Hart Lodging being particularly extravagant. It looks remarkably similar to the Hall at Bradford-on-Avon, built by wealthy clothier John Hall around 1600. It is quite possible that the same masons worked at Bath and Bradford. (John Hall became a significant property owner in Bath, as we shall see.) Henry Chapman's description of Bath in 1673 was a piece of unashamed city promotion. But his claim that Bath had 'such noble Buildings for Reception, that they appear ... rather petty Palaces, than common Lodgings' is perhaps not as inflated as it sounds. A widely travelled visitor of the same period declared the city 'without doubt the prettiest of this Kingdom'.⁴⁹

The house immediately north of the Cross Bath was purpose-built as lodgings, so John Wood tells us, in 1602. The evidence supports him. The house was described as new and considered the best lodging house



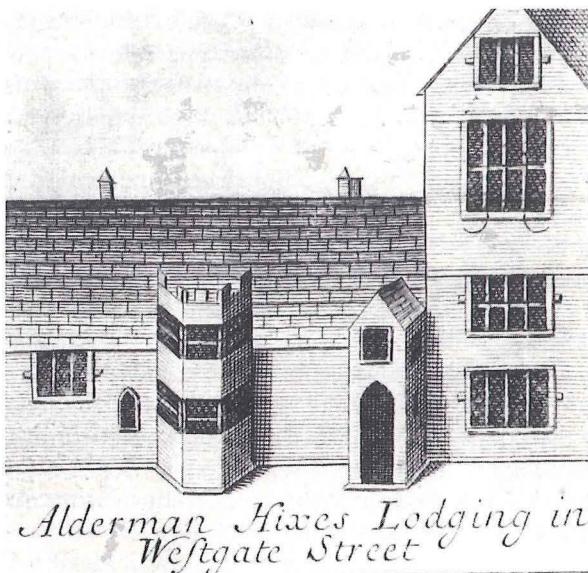
*M' Walter Gibbs's Lodgings
by the Cross Bath*

8 The lodging house north of the Cross Bath, built in 1602, from Gilmore's plan of Bath 1694. (Photograph courtesy Bath Archaeological Trust)

by the Cross Bath in 1604. It had its own private changing room on the north side of the bath. The proprietor was Jeremy Horton, who had married the widow of the Doctors Baker and Sherwood. The house was held for many years by his son, Sir John Horton of Combend in Elkstone, Gloucestershire,⁵⁰ but by Gilmore's time it was Walter Gibbs's Lodging. The balcony supported on a column and reached by a flight of stairs is an unusual feature, but perhaps less odd when we realise that this is the garden front. Cantilevered balconies appear on three of the lodging houses, as well as the first floor lodgings above St John's Hospital. This Italian import started to appear in London around 1615 and would probably have taken longer to reach Bath.⁵¹ A balcony could of course be added to an earlier building; in the case of St John's Hospital it presumably was.

However, there is scarcely anything in the way of domestic architecture depicted by Gilmore that we can confidently date, stylistically or through documentation, to before the reign of Elizabeth. The Abbey House is the most notable exception, along with its associated buildings. But outside the Abbey precinct, only 'Alderman Hixes Lodging' in Westgate Street suggests antiquity. It has what appears to be a small Gothic arched window and could well be a single-

9 Detail from the border of Gilmore's plan of Bath 1694.
(Photograph courtesy Bath Archaeological Trust)



storey mediaeval hall with later additions. The question remains how much was built before the general check in growth caused by the Civil War and how much can be attributed to a Restoration rejuvenation following the visit to Bath of Charles II in 1663?

Inns certainly proliferated in the later seventeenth century. Of the 22 inns specifically named on Gilmore's map of 1694, more than half do not appear in the 1641 survey of Bath. Only four inns seem to have closed between 1641 and 1694. But Bath already had at least 16 inns by the time of the Civil War, which is no inconsiderable number for a small city. The *White Hart* in Stall Street is the oldest documented, being in operation by 1503.⁵² It was also among the longest-lived, running on until demolished in the nineteenth century to make way for the Grand Pump Room Hotel. Another three were operating by 1585; the *Bear*, *Catherine Wheel* and *Raven*.⁵³ The *Bear* in Cheap Street was among the largest and most successful inns, continuing through into the eighteenth century. Like the *White Hart* it was long run by members of the influential Chapman family.⁵⁴

The *Three Tuns* was another prominent inn, placed conveniently close to the King's Bath in Stall Street. It began life as an ale-house, tucked against the Abbey precinct wall. The proprietor from around 1620,

Philip Sherwood, obtained a licence for an inn, and an inn-yard with stabling was created by expanding into the precinct. When his licence was revoked on a technicality, Sherwood 'refused contemptuously to take down his sign', so it was forcibly removed by the Corporation in 1622. He promptly set it up again, after laying a complaint before the Privy Council.⁵⁵ Given the dominant position of the Chapman clan within the Corporation, one suspects a certain rivalry among innholders at work here. But the Three Tuns survived and thrived. It was a leading inn in the eighteenth century.

Of the remaining Civil War inns, six survived to 1694 and beyond. The *Black Swan* and *White* (or *Lower*) *Swan* were operating by the early years of the seventeenth century and the *Bell*, *Christopher*, *George* and *Three Horse Shoes* by the 1630s.⁵⁶ However, it must be significant that no fewer than twelve of the inns named by Gilmore are post-Civil War. The traveller Celia Fiennes remarked in the 1680s that there were several good newly-built lodging houses. She always approved the most up-to-date architecture.⁵⁷

The City Gates Transformed

The first thing to meet the eye of the visitor was the city wall. Mediaeval town walls were serious defensive structures and Bath's were no exception. In 1370 Edward III ordered the city to repair its walls and towers, after a complaint that the wall had been robbed of stone in various places. Mutinous Bathonians reluctant to shoulder this burden were to be cast into prison until further orders. Richard II put additional pressure on Bath to repair its walls in 1377, stressing the imminent danger of attack by the French.⁵⁸ With such concerns paramount, mediaeval town walls naturally had few gates and no large windows in the walls.

But Speed's map of Bath around 1600 shows us no forbidding fortress. The Southgate has a positively welcoming aspect, with a cheerful row of windows, while John Danver's house within the Abbey precinct has a door through the city wall and a bridge across the ditch beyond. We can date the rebuilding of the Westgate to 1572–3 from the Chamberlain's Accounts. Quantities of stone were transported to the Westgate, while a smith provided ironwork and a lock for the door. This work seems to have been part of the flurry of activity in preparation for Elizabeth's visit. A man from Salisbury was engaged to paint the

Westgate, the Northgate and the King's Bath. The Southgate was repaired and a mason paid 'for making of the ringe of the Westgate againste the Queenes Majestes comyng'. It is possible that the new Westgate was intended as the royal lodgings. It was let shortly afterwards for the considerable rent of £2. Few properties except the city's inns had a comparable value even in 1641.⁵⁹

The Northgate had three portals originally, the outer two of which were blocked by shops in this period. The Council granted a lease of a property under the Northgate in 1581. The house over the Southgate was let in 1583–4.⁶⁰ What caused this domestication of Bath's defences? One might suggest two factors at work. The firm grip of the Tudor dynasty had produced a lengthy stretch of comparative internal stability. The menace of armed attack must have seemed remote until the alarms of the Armada. Maximization of city income may well have been a greater priority. Gatehouses were prime trading sites. Nonetheless, city security was not neglected. Gascoyne's Tower at the north-west corner of the city walls was kept in repair and the city gates and their locks mended regularly throughout the Elizabethan and early Stuart periods.⁶¹

Shops and the Market

Between the North and South gates ran the city's main shopping thoroughfare. Bath was a market town without a market place, like other towns not specially laid out with that function in mind. In the mediaeval period stalls lined the wide High Street and then curled around the Priory precinct and into Stall Street. Plots along the west side of the Priory wall were profitably leased by the Bishop of Bath and Wells in the thirteenth century.⁶² Markets were held on Wednesdays and Saturdays and the 'Cherry Fair' ran from 28 July to 6 August every year from 1318.⁶³ The cornmarket was on the corner of Westgate Street and Stall Street.⁶⁴

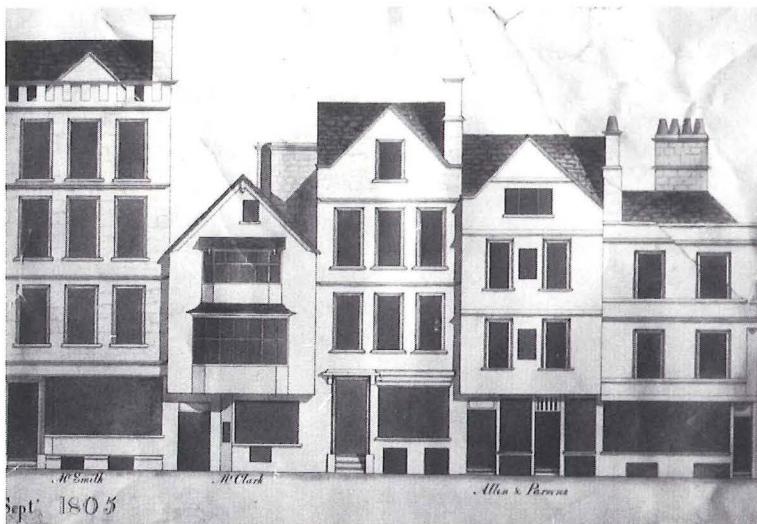
Over the centuries, flimsy stalls and booths developed into permanent shops in many market towns.⁶⁵ In Bath this process seems to start in the fourteenth century, with stalls in Northgate Street (High Street) becoming shops with solars over them. Tradesmen were beginning to live over the shop. One of Bath's more affluent citizens had a house in Stall Street with shops in front, a hall and solar behind and a cellar below. One can picture something akin to a manor house of the period, but with shops added onto the street front. However, the most

common arrangement seems to have been shop, solar above and/or cellar beneath.⁶⁶ Houses which developed out of stalls alongside the Church of St Mary of Stalls, the King's Bath and the Priory wall had little space for yards or gardens, unlike the typical burgage plots elsewhere with their narrow street frontages and long gardens behind. But in either case there was no room to expand width-ways.

Town houses on these restricted plots therefore grew upwards. Along the city's main trading arteries houses were piling storey on storey by Elizabethan times. A view of the east side of Stall Street in 1805, before it was rebuilt, shows some of these tall, narrow houses. Mr Clark's house is one of the smaller ones and looks Elizabethan or Jacobean. This had cellars, a shop with kitchen and buttery behind on the ground floor, the main living room or 'chamber' on the first floor with a smaller room behind, and garrets above.⁶⁷ With several floors available there was nothing to prevent shopkeepers from also letting out lodgings. Several of the lodging houses depicted by Gilmore provide good examples of the open shopfronts common in this period, with trestles outside on which wares were displayed.

Whether or not they also took in lodgers, shopkeepers would clearly be among those to benefit from throngs of wealthy visitors. But once again the documentary evidence to date rebuilding with precision is slight. The Corporation normally restricted itself to the repair and renewal of public buildings, leaving tenants to maintain their own properties. So it is interesting that in 1568–9 the city spent the considerable sum of £194 on 'new housen'. The bailiff to the Earl of Shrewsbury built himself a house in Sheffield in 1575–6 for less than £50,⁶⁸ so Bath could surely have got four decent houses for this sum. The available evidence suggests that this was the row of houses or shops north of St Mary of Stalls on Cheap Street.⁶⁹ Since the surviving Chamberlain's Accounts start only in 1569, we can make no comparisons with earlier years. It is possible that this represents the tail-end of Corporation efforts to replace decayed housing.

The focal point of the market was the market house. This developed in many towns out of the mediaeval market cross, which gave divine protection to the market and gradually physical protection as well. Often crosses became octagonal structures on legs, just big enough to keep the butter cool. A more ambitious development was the Market House, with a town hall built over the shelter for traders.⁷⁰ Bath's Market House can be seen in the middle of the High Street on Speed's map. It was built in 1551–2, shortly after Protector Somerset's purge of



10 Part of the east side of Stall Street in 1805. (Bath Central Library, Bath plan 115)

the guilds, but seems something of a Corporate extravagance. The old Guildhall was transferred to city hands and remained in use. However, in 1626–7 the Market House was enlarged into a handsome double-gabled building and became the new Guildhall.⁷¹

Just four years earlier the Council had explained their limited contribution to Parliamentary coffers with the plea that theirs was 'a verie little poore cittie' and the clothing industry was much decayed.⁷² Now they were willing to take out a loan of £200 to give themselves a new and impressive Guildhall. One suspects the poverty was much exaggerated. The poor certainly existed and those deemed to be fit but idle were housed and set to work in the Bridewell or house of correction, converted from a barn and stable at the northern end of Bridewell Lane in 1632.⁷³

New Development

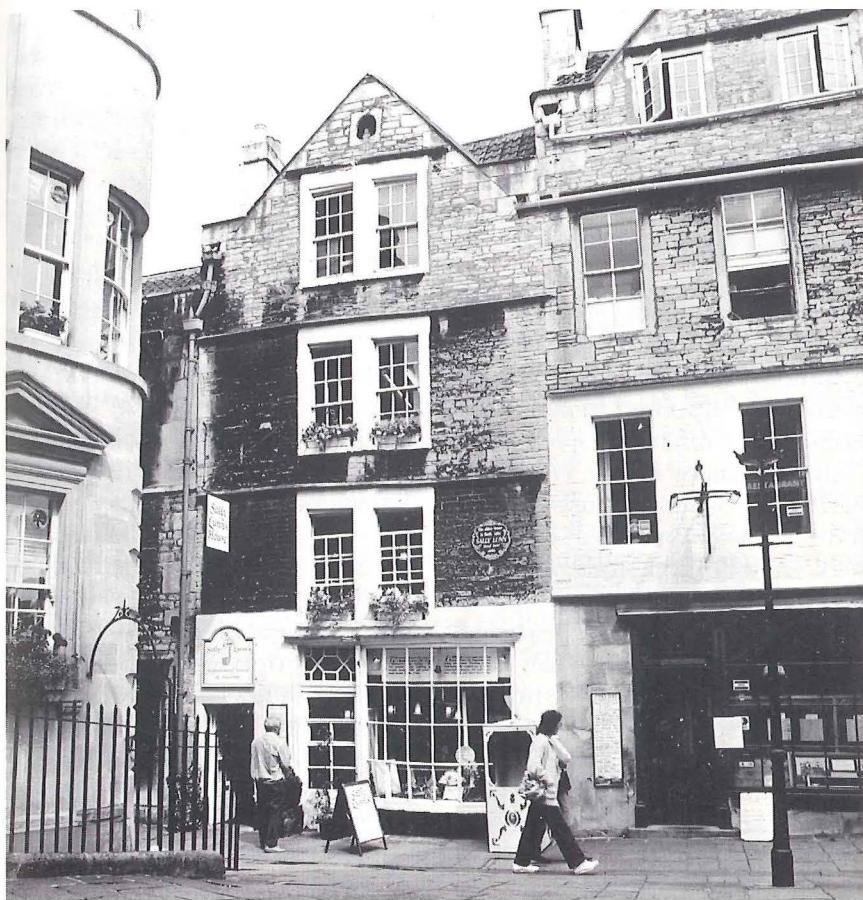
One of the most striking things about Speed's plan is the enormous amount of open space remaining within the walls. Rebuilding had certainly been going on through the Elizabethan period, but largely on

old sites. This fits Hoskins's view that the trigger of the 'Great Rebuilding' was the desire to modernise, not the house-hunger of a rising population. He suggested that the undeniable population increase was created by low mortality rates which were the result of improved living conditions in the Elizabethan age. In due course population pressure would lead to overcrowding and rising death rates.⁷⁴ Subsequent research has confirmed this population pattern exactly, with the period between 1571 and 1611 emerging as a golden age of low mortality, not equalled until the nineteenth century.⁷⁵

The largest open area in Bath was created by the Dissolution. The Abbey precinct remained a private enclave while the Colthurst family used it as their home, and Speed's map probably gives us a good idea of it. It seems unlikely that the heavily mortgaged Edmund Colthurst did much rebuilding after he let the property. But in 1612 the Abbey precinct was sold to John Hall of Bradford-on-Avon, who had held a mortgage on it.⁷⁶ Gradually he developed his acquisition. Speed shows a cluster of building in a prime position south of the King's Bath. The 'Star Chamber' was among them and it was rebuilt in 1612 either by Hall or his new tenant, William Hodnett.⁷⁷

In 1616 the other houses and the long garden running south were leased to the landlord of the *Three Tuns*.⁷⁸ This was the site that later became the inn-yard of Philip Sherwood, with the *Three Tuns* Lodging built close to the King's Bath. The similarity of detail between this lodging and John Hall's own house at Bradford-on-Avon is surely no coincidence. In the same year, a lease was granted to a joiner, Thomas Cotterell, to build on the plot next to Hodnett's.⁷⁹

So far, Hall had seized on the obvious potential of the property around the King's Bath. But in 1622 building leases were granted for the row of houses along what is now North Parade Passage. The lessees included two carpenters and a sawyer, which strongly suggests that these houses were timber-framed originally.⁸⁰ As artisan dwellings, in a quiet side lane, it is not surprising that they were architecturally quite unpretentious. Sally Lunn's House remains as a memento of a largely obliterated Stuart city. Any kind of survival from this lost era would have historical value, but this house is particularly interesting in that it represents the mass of vernacular houses that Gilmore does not show us. It was not left quite untouched by the Georgian building explosion. Sash windows and a bow window have been inserted. More dramatically, the street level was raised around 1750, so the present front door leads into what was the first floor. In 1740 John Wood built the Parades



11 Sally Lunn's House and Pope's Restaurant in North Parade Passage. A narrow alley ran between these houses until the mid-eighteenth century. (Photograph courtesy Bath City Council)

eighteen feet above the ground then sloping down to the river. (The Parade Gardens show the original level.) Within the city walls the ground level had risen over the centuries, but steps were still needed down from the Parades.⁸¹ Galloway's Buildings then went up around 1750 on a level with the Parades, which evidently required the raising of Lilliput Alley. A door in the basement of Sally Lunn's has the appearance of an external door. The same is true of a columned door at

the basement level of Elton House in Abbey Green, built in 1698, so it would seem that Abbey Green was also raised. This would have affected nos. 2 and 3 Abbey Green, built at the same time as Elton House.⁸² No.2 was evidently given a new front and attic storey in ashlar at this time, but its original mullion and transom windows survive in the south wall.

Building Materials

Harrison commented in 1577 that while in the past stone had been used for only the most important buildings 'now building with stone is so commonly taken up, that amongst noble men and gentlemen, the timber frames are supposed to be not much better than paper worke.' But the houses of ordinary people remained almost entirely of timber, except 'here and there in the West countrie towns.'⁸³ Bath evidently had a sprinkling of stone houses in the mediaeval period, but no more. Two fourteenth-century deeds of Bath houses refer specifically to the fact that they were built in stone, as though this was noteworthy. One of them had even taken its name from its fabric and was known as 'The Stone House'. In the early Tudor period we find many references to building or repairing in timber. When Edward VI let ex-Priory properties in Stall Street, he agreed to supply timber for repairs, while a benefactor of King Edward's School left all his timber for the maintenance of the school property in 1552.⁸⁴ However, the Corporation's 'new housen' of 1568–9 were stone-built and tiled, though with some timber partition walls. Large quantities of stone were salvaged from the ruined Bishop's Palace in the early stages of building and presumably used for the foundation. As the work progressed, stone was brought from the quarry. The timber came largely from the woods at Hinton and the tiles from Farleigh. These houses had every up-to-date amenity: chimneys, water pipes and cisterns. In short they sound like desirable residences and the cost of the one lease recorded was notably high.⁸⁵

Even with good stone almost on the doorstep, it was still probably beyond the reach of many. Abbot Feckenham built his little Lazars Hospital of timber in 1576. This had advantages on the tiny plot available. It was 8 feet 6 inches by 13 feet on the ground floor, but jettied out by 5 feet 6 inches above.⁸⁶ By contrast Bellott's Hospital was built in stone on a courtyard plan in 1609. But builders did not always make a straightforward choice of one material or the other. In Bristol, Totnes and other West Country towns, houses from the fifteenth to seventeenth

centuries had stone party walls, while front and back were in timber. This made the best of both materials. Stone was durable and fire-proof, but timber was ideal for cantilevering more floorspace, as we have seen. The Merchant's House in Plymouth has stone side walls and the ground floor front is also of stone, but the upper floors are jettied out in timber. Timber made for a lighter structure, permitting great stretches of glazing and the Merchant's House makes full use of this. A window runs the across the whole width of the first floor, cantilevered out to capture as much light as possible.⁸⁷

If Bath builders were equally flexible in their use of materials, this might help to explain the conflicting descriptions of the city. Evelyn the diarist states flatly in 1654 that Bath 'is entirely built of stone'. The antiquarian William Stukeley does not go quite that far. Bath, he says in 1724, is 'handsomely built mostly of new stone'. But a writer as late as 1790 comments on the overhanging upper storeys in the old centre of Bath.⁸⁸ We have some evidence for this in the drawing of the east side of Stall Street in 1805. Three of the houses have the first floor jettied out. Stone seems to predominate in the notable buildings displayed around Gilmore's map, but this cannot be a fully representative selection. As we have seen, Sally Lunn's House was built by a carpenter and the back wall is slate-hung, a cladding commonly added to timber and plaster walls no longer weatherproof. The north side wall of No.3 Broad Street is the most easily visible surviving example of timber framing.

Thatch, like timber, was a fire hazard of immense destructive potential in tightly-packed cities. In 1573 both a thatcher and a tiler were used on Corporation buildings. Around the same time Bristol Corporation was displaying concern about the dangers of fire: on 12 July 1575 they threatened to pull down any building in the city roofed in reed or thatch.⁸⁹ Bath finally caught up with Bristol in 1633, when the Corporation decided to stipulate in leases that thatched roofs should be replaced with tile or slate. This affected only their own properties. Within the old Abbey precinct 'The Thatched House' was still standing in 1726.⁹⁰ But like 'The Stone House' in the fourteenth century, its name is proof enough of its singularity.

Conclusion

The enthusiasm of Bath's Georgian redevelopers has swept away the physical evidence of the 'Great Rebuilding' and the documentary

evidence is not of a quantity that lends itself to statistics. However, certain impressions emerge strongly. Bath certainly did not lag behind in the wave of Elizabethan modernisation described by Harrison. The best evidence is supplied by the surge of Corporation works between 1568 and 1580. Records of private building have a poorer survival rate, but the testimony of Sir John Harington suggests that Corporation efforts were more than matched by private enterprise. For the seventeenth century we have a clear understanding of development within the Abbey precinct, thanks to the careful record-keeping of the Hall family. There was a burst of building in 1616–22 and another in 1698–9. This is very much in keeping with national trends detected by Machin. We should not be too surprised; Bath fed on the prosperity of the whole nation. But there was one way in which Bath was far from average. Then, as now, it was considered one of the loveliest of cities.

Notes

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- 3 *Harrison's Description*, Vol. 1, pp. 236, 239.
- 4 W.G. Hoskins, pp. 45, 54.
- 5 R. Machin, 'The Great Rebuilding: a reassessment', *Past and Present*, Vol. 77 (1977), pp. 33–56.
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- 7 *English Historical Documents*, Vol. 5, 1485–1558, C.H. Williams (ed.) (London, 1967), p. 954.
- 8 E. Green, 'Bath lay subsidies, Henry IV to Henry VIII', *Bath Field Club*, Vol. 6, (1889), p. 409.
- 9 *Proceedings in the Court of Star Chamber in the Reigns of Henry VII and Henry VIII*, G. Bradford (ed.), (Somerset Record Society Vol. 27, 1911), p. 145.
- 10 *The Itinerary of John Leland*, L. Toulmin Smith (ed.), Vol. 1 (London, 1907), p. 143.
- 11 E. Holland, 'The earliest Bath Guildhall', *Bath History* Vol. 2 (1988), p. 168.
- 12 A.G.R. Smith, pp. 52–55.
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- 15 *The Itinerary of John Leland*, Vol. 1, pp. 141–42.
- 16 *Acts of the Privy Council* 1571–5, p. 28.
- 17 P.R. James, *The Baths of Bath* (London 1938), p. 52; *The Accounts of the Chamberlains of the City of Bath 1568–1602*, F.D. Wardle (ed.) (Somerset Record

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- 18 *State Papers* 1625–26, p. 209.
- 19 P.R. James, pp. 68–70
- 20 *The Accounts of the Chamberlains*, op. cit., p. 41.
- 21 *Harrison's Description*, Vol. 1, p. 355.
- 22 J. Manco, 'The Cross Bath', *Bath History*, Vol. 2 (1988), pp. 53–4.
- 23 P. Hembry, *The English Spa, 1560–1815* (London, 1990), pp. 29–31.
- 24 Sir John Harrington's *A New Discourse of a Stale Subject, called the Metamorphosis of Ajax*, E.S. Donno (ed.), (London, 1962), p. 142.
- 25 *State Papers Domestic* 1611–18, pp. 306, 308.
- 26 *Letters and papers of ... the Reign of Henry VIII*, J.S. Brewer et al. (eds.) (London, 1862–1932), Vol. 18, pt. 1, 346 (40); 982, p. 551.
- 27 *The House of Commons 1509–1558*, S.T. Bindoff (ed.), Vol. 1 (1982), pp. 679–80.
- 28 M. Howard, *The Early Tudor Country House: Architecture and Politics 1490–1550* (London, 1987), Chap. 9.
- 29 *Ibid.* p. 144.
- 30 British Library MSS, Egerton Charters 5798, 5824, 5827, 5831, 5838; Egerton MSS 3565, 3654. The Elizabethan tenants were William Forest and John Danvers of Corsham.
- 31 *Medieval Deeds of Bath and District*, B.R. Kemp and D.M.M. Shorrocks, (eds) (Somerset Record Society, Vol. 73, 1974), pt. 1, particularly 51.
- 32 E. Green, 'A Bath Poll Tax, 2 Richard II', *Bath Field Club Vol. 6* (1889), pp. 297–8.
- 33 M. Girouard, *The English Town* (New Haven and London, 1990), p. 61.
- 34 *Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Dean and Chapter of Wells* (Historical Manuscripts Commission 12), Vol. 1 (1907), 144.
- 35 *Proceedings in the Court*, op. cit., pp. 156–8.
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- 37 Bath Record Office, Chamberlain's Accounts, Roll 12.
- 38 M. Girouard, p. 61
- 39 J. Wood, *Description of Bath* (3rd ed.) (1765, repr. Bath, 1969), p. 303; St John's Hospital Archive 7/108, lease 14 Oct 1727; Bath Record Office, 1641 Survey 174/2.
- 40 Bath Central Library, Microfilm 2, Huntington Library ST57 'Letters of the Duke of Chandos 1727'; W.J. Wedlake, 'St. John's Hospital Extensions, 1954' in *Excavations in Bath 1950–1975*, B. Cunliffe (ed.) (1979), pp. 84–5.
- 41 See n. 36.
- 42 *The Accounts of the Chamberlains*, op. cit., p. 71; BRO 1641 Survey 182/2. It was leased by Robert Chivers from c. 1622 and later Thomas Latham, gentleman. A lease of 1665 (St John's Hospital Archive 7/1a) describes it as the 'Middle House'.
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- 44 BRO, 1641 Survey 182/1.
- 45 P.R. James, pp. 66–67; Sir John Harrington's *Discourse*, op. cit., pp. 143–44.
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- 50 J. Wood, *Description*, p.207; BRO Chamberlain's Accounts 12 Oct 1604, 'Paving of Cross Bath porch next Mr Horton's new house'; Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Salisbury XVI*, p. 179; BRO, Bath Corporation Minute Books 4 October 1614; *The Visitation of Gloucestershire in 1623* (Harleian Society, Vol. 21, 1885), pp.84–5; BRO 1641 Survey 141/1.
- 51 J. Summerson, *Architecture in Britain 1530–1830*, 6th ed. (Harmondsworth, 1977), p.101.
- 52 Somerset Record Office, DD/X/HY H/182.
- 53 BRO, 1641 Survey of Bath.
- 54 BRO, E. Holland and M. Chapman, 'The Descent of the Chapman Mayors of Bath of the seventeenth century.'
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- 56 BRO, 1641 Survey; BRO, Bath Corporation Minute Books 31 March 1634.
- 57 *The Journeys of Celia Fiennes*, C. Morris (ed.), (London, 1949), p. 17.
- 58 A.J. King and B.H. Watts, *The Municipal Records of Bath*, App. A, 16, 17, 205.
- 59 *The Accounts of the Chamberlains*, op. cit., pp. 19–20, 26, 28, 30; 1641 Survey.
- 60 *The Accounts of the Chamberlains*, op. cit., pp. 51, 71, 78.
- 61 *Ibid.* pp. 56, 142, 143, 149–150, 182, 189; BRO, Chamberlain's Accounts 1632.
- 62 C.W. Shickle, *Ancient Deeds Belonging to the Corporation of Bath* (Bath, 1921), II/12,28; VI/1,10; VI/34, 38, 42, 48.
- 63 A.J. King and B.H. Watts, p. 18.
- 64 C.W. Shickle, II, 100.
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- 70 M. Girouard, pp. 18–19.
- 71 E. Holland, pp. 163–179.
- 72 *State Papers Domestic 1619–23*, p. 391.
- 73 BRO, Bath Corporation Minute Books 23 May 1632; Chamberlain's Accounts 1632 ('Almes house in Culverhouse lane'), 1633.
- 74 W.G. Hoskins, pp. 55–57.
- 75 A.G.R. Smith, p. 167.
- 76 BL MSS, Egerton Charter 5824.
- 77 *Ibid.* 5820.
- 78 *Ibid.* 5829. See M. Inskip, 'Two views of the King's Bath', *Bath History*, Vol.3 (1990), for exact positions of these buildings.
- 79 BL MSS, Egerton Charter 5827.
- 80 *Ibid.* 5842, 5843, 5844, 5845.
- 81 J. Wood, *Description*, p.345 & plate 14.
- 82 BL MSS, Egerton MS 3645; Elton House information from Peter Davenport.

Archaeological levels beneath Sally Lunn's also confirm the basement there as the original ground floor: see P. & S. Cauvain, 'Excavations at Sally Lunn's Tea-shop', *Archaeology in Bath 1976–85*, P. Davenport (ed.) (Oxford, 1991), pp. 128–136.

- 83 *Harrison's Description*, Vol. 1, p. 233; Vol. 2, p. 60.
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