

# THE EARLIEST BATH GUILDHALL

Elizabeth Holland

As interest in pre-Georgian Bath increases, attention naturally turns to the Guildhall, the centre of civic life. Following the study by Stephen Bird of early plans of Bath in Volume I of *Bath History*, it is appropriate in this volume to highlight the early Bath Guildhall. In this article we shall follow the early Bath Guildhall to the date of its relocation to the High Street site, assembling whatever evidence may be available concerning this vanished structure, and the way of life it represented.

## Growth of Town Government

Until the Industrial Revolution, the majority of the inhabitants of England consisted of country dwellers. In the reign of Henry VIII, so it is believed, only one tenth of the population lived in the towns. However the townspeople were early recognised as a definite force within the nation. 13th century monarchs thought it financially expedient to consult the burgesses, the rebel Earl Simon de Montfort summoned them to the Parliament of 1265, while Edward I confirmed the precedent in 1275 and in the Model Parliament of 1295.

The 12th and 13th centuries saw the rise to pre-eminence in many areas of the guilds, with guildsmen such as leading merchants establishing a dominant position within the townships. In time, the term 'Guildhall' came to be symbolic of town government. It is against this background that we see the earliest references to the guildsmen of Bath, the mayor and commonalty, and the Guildhall.

The earliest municipal charter preserved in Bath Record Office

is one granted by Richard Coeur de Lion in 1189 to the merchant guildsmen of Bath. Modelled on a similar charter given to Winchester, it would have been part of his efforts to raise money for the Third Crusade. The charter grants the members of the merchant guild of Bath the right to trade unhindered and free from certain taxes, in the same manner as the guildsmen of Winchester. On the back a hand of latter date has written, according to P.R. James (the charter is framed at present), 'Rycharde cor de lyons . . . (illegible) for the gillde of marchants'. It was sealed at Dover on 7 December 1189, and the king sailed, so it is said, four days later.

In the 13th century the guild of Bath appears to have continued the upward movement typical of the social structure of many English towns at the time. A deed which has been ascribed to the



Early 14th Century Civic Seal showing a single storey building, probably the medieval Guildhall, within the city walls.

first half of the century (*Ancient Deeds* I:18)<sup>4</sup> mentions land which was bought by David son of Goldriana 'in full hundred', the traditional pre-Conquest court, and also before 'our guildsmen of Bath'. Toll has been paid to the provost. The deed is witnessed by Swan (Sweyn) of Weston, bailiff, and Serlo, seneschal. It is also witnessed by Reiner the goldsmith, scrivener of the guild, and 'other guildsmen of Bath'. The text reports that it was sealed with the seal of the guild (now missing).

The seal of the guild was used again on 13th century deeds. With the guild an established institution, having its own charter, confirmed by Henry III in 1246, its seal, its scrivener, and the power of witnessing deeds, we can well imagine that 13th century Bath also possessed a Guildhall. The first definite reference to the building to have emerged so far is, however, in a document of 1355, which refers, among other things, to 'the appointment of the mayor in the "Gyldehale". . .'.<sup>1</sup> The seal used on this document is a civic seal still in use in the 20th century. It appears to show the medieval Guildhall, set within the circle of the town walls, and if this is the true case, it is our first known picture of Bath Guildhall. The relatively straight north wall of Bath is shown in front, and the other walls form a hoop, making the design on the seal appear like a seal itself.<sup>2</sup>

All guilds had religious affiliations, while some were almost entirely religious in purpose. The religious foundation of medieval town life is echoed in Bath in 1444 in *Ancient Deeds* IV:104,<sup>4</sup> where the executors of the will of Alderman Philips ('phylpys') refer to his desire for the mayor of Bath to be present at his funeral service and mass, and for bread and beans to be distributed to the poor at the 'Guyhald' to mark the ceremonies.<sup>3</sup> It was inevitable that the guild principle would spread in Bath, though *Ancient Deeds* II:85,<sup>4</sup> ascribed to the late 13th century and once translated 'all the guilds of Bath', should probably read 'all the guildsmen of Bath' (*omnibus gildanis Bathon*). There are other towns far better supplied than Bath with documents illuminating the growth of the guild movement, for example Coventry. Here three earlier guilds were amalgamated in 1364 to make the great Trinity Guild or merchant guild, an eclectic organisation which included outsiders such as Dick Whittington, Lord Mayor of London. Under its wing a number of craft guilds flourished, embracing in 1449 a total of 603 persons in 23 different categories. We can imagine that



in Bath also, appropriate craft guilds emerged alongside the merchant guild, to be the precursors of the Three Companies (the Weavers, Tailors and Shoemakers) mentioned by John Wood and elsewhere as existing in Stuart and early Georgian times, and of the lesser companies.

Similarly Bath is not as well supplied as certain other towns with details concerning the election of the mayor, mentioned above, or the nature of the governing council. As we have already seen, something can be gathered from the ancient property deeds preserved in the Guildhall archives. Many early deeds are undated, so that the dating of them is deduction. The deed said to represent the earliest reference to the mayor, 'John de porta at that time mayor of Bath' (*Johne de porta tunc tempis maiore Bathon*) (*Ancient Deeds* IV:9),<sup>4</sup> dates to the early part of the 13th century.

### Site of the Early Guildhall

Where then did the Guildhall stand before its relocation to the High Street? It is accepted that by Tudor times and even earlier the site was east of the present High Street. Guildhall sites tend to be static, and there is no evidence of any other medieval venue. A deed of 1359 describes the site:

Grant by Robert le Deyghar, Mayor, and the Commonalty of Bath, to John Wolmere, and Isabella, his first wife, and John, their second son, for their lives, of a messuage in the lane going towards Lothiate, situate between their own tenement, on the west, and the Guildhall (*aulam Gilde*) of the city, on the east . . .

*Ancient Deeds* VI:41<sup>4</sup>

Although Lot Gate has been assigned to various sites, it was definitely the East Gate, being mentioned in the same breath in some deeds, 'the East Gate or Lott Gate'. The lane to Lot Gate or the lane to the East Gate was later called Boatstall Lane. As was customary in Bath, it had other names as well. There was also another Boatstall Lane, outside the North Gate.

There are other medieval references to the Guildhall and the way leading to it from North Street. From the 1580s on, the history of the properties around the old Guildhall can be traced



The area from a version of Speed's map published 1672, redrawn by Van Houe.

1. Site which became "The Horse Head or Corner House" (Lease of 1617).
2. Let to John Chapman 1585. Became Henry Chapman's Sun.
3. Once a garden with 2. Became William Russell's, Lease of 1631.
4. The Market House.
5. The way to the early Guildhall.
6. Cox's (mentioned in Russell's lease 1631).
7. The early Guildhall, redrawn by Van Houe.

on a more regular basis. In the 17th century, the old hall was turned into a butchers' shambles or meat market, shown on some 18th century plans. Using these sources of information, one can suggest the exact site for the old Guildhall, as being in the car park immediately behind the present Guildhall. The present route, often now called Boatstall Lane, which runs alongside the north side of the old Boatstall Lane and leads, not to the East Gate but to the Grand Parade, would cross its south eastern corner. What foundations lie beneath (bones there must be in plenty) it is for archaeology to determine.

## The Relocation of the Guildhall

It has long been an accepted view in Bath that the medieval Guildhall site was abandoned in 1569 and a new hall built in the

middle of the High Street, to remain there until the second half of the 18th century. Recent research has however questioned this view. At least by the 15th century, a 'High Cross' stood in North Street, the present High Street. This street had become the traditional market site. The cross is mentioned in connection with properties on both sides of the street, and may well have been a large edifice sheltering a covered space, as in typical market crosses such as that at Chichester. It stood opposite the present municipal buildings, somewhat south of the covered way known as the Corridor.

In the reign of Edward VI, it was replaced by a market house. The city chamberlain's accounts are missing before 1569, but the creation of the new building is mentioned in St Michael's churchwardens' accounts, roll No. 70, for the financial year 1551-1552; 'Of xls govyn by ye concente of ye paryshe towards ye byldynge of ye market house'.<sup>5</sup> The market house seems to have been part of a new start in the latter half of the 16th century, after an earlier period of depression. It can be seen in Speed's map of 1610, standing in the High Street, under a gabled roof. At least part of it was let out as a shop, under a 'pentis' roof, while charges were made for market stalls, as from 1583.

The reference to new houses in the chamberlain's accounts of 1569 is obviously not connected with the Guildhall but concerns actual houses. One of them was let, i.e. 'robert stevens for the fynne of one of newe howsten . . . xli' (chamberlain's accounts 1569). Unfortunately the accounts are missing again for several years and one cannot trace the fines (premiums) of the other 'new houses'. The Stevens family held various 'tenements in Bath, including items on the west side of High Street and south side of Cheap Street. This latter area seems a very feasible choice for the site of the new buildings.

The Guildhall, with its subdivisions such as the council chamber, continues to feature in the accounts as they pick up again, entered separately from the market house, with a number of references to the work of 'repayringe and amendinge'. The hall is still described in deeds as if east of the High Street, for example a reference to a lease of 1585 for the site which became the Sun Inn speaks of 'the way that leadeth (to) the Guildhall' on its north.

By the 1620s the aldermen and councillors had evidently had enough of repairing and amending, and decided to relocate their



hall in the upper storey of the market house. Work on the market house is recorded in the 1626 account and continues in force in the 1627 account. A loan of £200 was taken out. Old building materials were sold off: for example 10/- was received 'for three dosen of old hurdells for 8 short rafters halfe a hundred of lastes (laths) and twentie tile stones'. It appears that they dismantled the single gable depicted in Speed's drawing, probably also widening the base, and erected the double-gabled upper storey shown in Edward Eyre's watercolour of c. 1776. A large window was placed at the northern end of the new upper storey, a smaller window at the southern end, and the area beneath repaved. They rounded off the municipal decor by the purchase of two Town Hall chamber pots for 4/-.

For the first time the accounts now refer to an old hall and a new hall. In 1627 for example, John Bevill colours the wainscot in the new hall for 5/-, while Henry Bush works at the old hall for 10d. In 1629, Walter Symons received £20 'towards the buildinge of the Newe Shambles', and purchased the old wainscoting from the corporation for £1. A note on the first rent of the shambles occurs at the foot of the 1629 account. The amount collected in 1630 was £21/1/-, with 10/- laid out in the collecting. There still remained the northern end of the former municipal complex, with the rooms it housed. It was retiled and replastered by John Beacon, and let out to James Smith, who paid £1 towards his rent in 1633 (the annual rent was 4/-). In 1673 the rent of this tenement is still entered as 'the Old Councill house'.

## Reconstruction of the Early Guildhall

Because nothing remains above ground of the first Guildhall and because records of the medieval townspeople of Bath are comparatively scarce, any detailed reconstruction of the old Guildhall has to be made from the chamberlain's accounts, from 1569 on.

The heyday of the guilds was now past. The Reformation in particular had proved antagonistic to the old guilds, because of their religious structure. By the Tudor and Stuart ages power in the city lay not with guildsmen as such, but with members of the leading families, the Sherstons and Parkers on the one hand, the Chapmans and their allies on the other. The centre of town

administration still however remained known as the 'Guildhall' (otherwise known as the Town Hall), referred to in the Charter of Incorporation of 1590, which outlined the structure, duties and privileges of the municipal government.

## The Hall and Offices

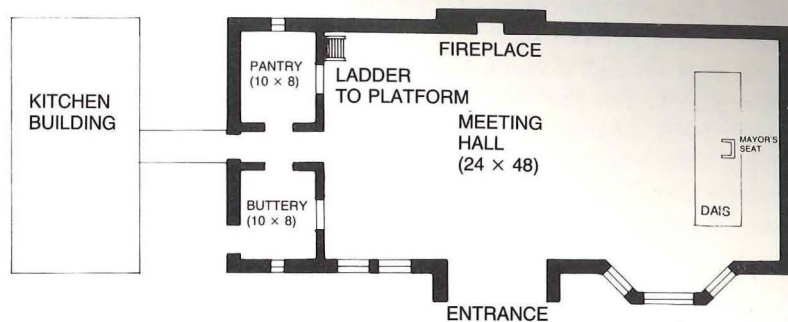
The old shambles, formed from the major portion or 'hall' of the old Guildhall, is described by John Wood as a court 56 feet in length by 24 feet in breadth.<sup>6</sup> It is not known whether this included the thicknesses of some of the outside walls, as well as the interior space of the old hall, or whether the old walls still partly stood around the shambles. However the dimensions he gives serve as a guide to its general size. John Wood writes that the court 'contains' two houses, his way of recording that two houses gave on to it, one the Shambles Alehouse at the north, on the site formerly known as the Old Council House, the other a property on the east side of the shambles, which became Walter Chapman's.

The kitchen stood at the northern end of the Guildhall, part of the tenement which became known as the Old Council House, let to Brouse in 1639, and to James Smith, his father-in-law, before him. The survey of 1641 gives a description of the property which remained essentially in use in 1705:

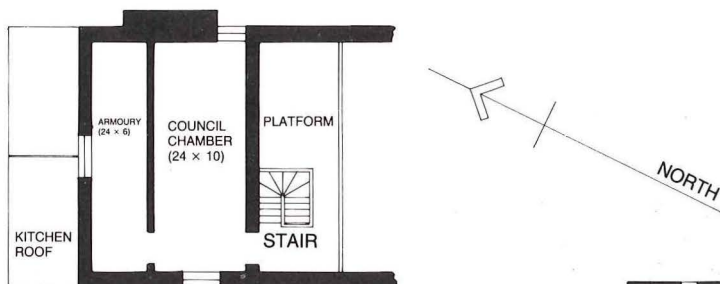
All that roomes called a kitchin and a loft over the kitchin sometymes called the Councell house of the said Cittie and a little Roome next adioyninge to the said loft called the Armor house of the said Cittie lyinge in the said Cittie at the North end of a place called the Butchers Shambells and a way at all times into the said kitchin in by and through and back agayne a house nowe called the butchers Shambells into the said kitchin and Roomes at his and their will and pleasure without doeing any hurt or nusants unto the said house called the Butchers Shambells . . .

No Guildhall stairs are mentioned in the accounts except those leading to the council chamber in this northern annexe. The hall, which became the shambles, appears to have been chiefly one single chamber stretching to the roof space, like the principal area

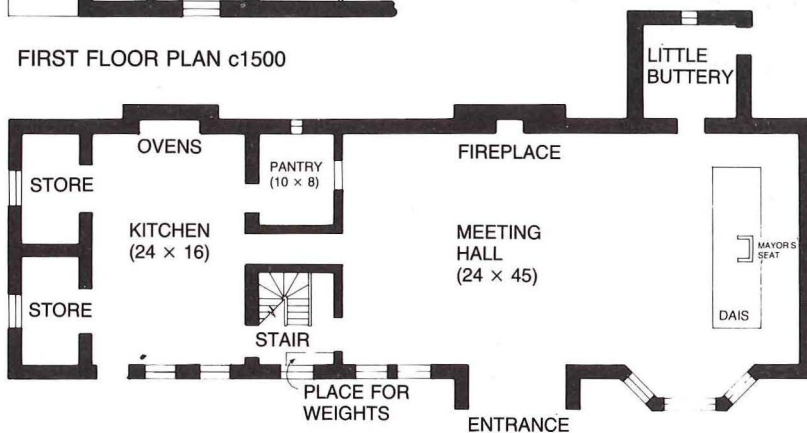




GROUND FLOOR PLAN c1400



FIRST FLOOR PLAN c1500



GROUND FLOOR PLAN c1500

of other known guild halls. It must have been of considerable age by the Tudor period, or it would not have required such incessant repair, nor would it have been abandoned for the market house by the 1620s. For the hall, one would suggest a framed building. In the 1445 drawing of Bath published in Volume I of *Bath History*,<sup>7</sup> the housing is shown as timber-framed, as Stephen Bird comments in his article. This may be the whim of the artist, yet it is surely significant that almost every house is shown to be framed, the houses, of course, probably being considerably older than the picture. The chamberlain's accounts do not appear to refer to the 'frame' of the Guildhall. However the disbursements are not incompatible with repairing a timbered hall, the lower part of its walls being composed of stone courses and the upper framed with an infilling of laths covered with plaster.

Masons are paid to repair the Guildhall walls, including the walls of the buttery. For example in 1575 we read, 'to Levett the roughe mason for making of walle in the guildhalle vijs', with 'for carradged of ij Lode of Stone from the Abbay to the guildehalle viijd' (i.e. the ruins of the medieval Abbey). In 1613 'a load and quarter of stone' is supplied 'for makinge up the wall in the Guildhall'. Meanwhile in 1580, while the wall between the kitchen and the hall is being repaired by a mason, the upper part of the same wall (presumably) is treated by Richard Beacon, who used 'Lyme heare (hair) lastes (laths) and nayles' to mend the wall and stop the door between the council chamber and the hall. In 1625 one entry alone notes 'eight and fortie hundred of lathes' (4800) for the Guildhall.

There is firm evidence of a tradition of frame building in Bath. Remains of timber-framed houses have been found, for instance at No. 3 Broad Street, which represents the northern part of the site once held by Sir Thomas Estcourt (mentioned in 1699 in the lease for the property to the north) and by William Sherston before him (1679).<sup>8</sup>

With regard to plasterwork, there is frequent mention of replastering the Guildhall. Richard Beacon, tiler, for example, worked at the Guildhall in 1597, 'plaisteringe and seeleinge' the council house 'and other places in the Guildhall', and required lime and hair. In 1595 over two dozen sacks of lime and more than a dozen bushels of hair had been used at the hall, the tasks again including plastering and 'seeling'. The variations of 'ceil' and

'seal' were used for facing the interiors of rooms, as Harrison used 'sielel with oke' in his Elizabethan survey. 'To ceil' is nowadays restricted to 'to overlay the inner roof of'.

Bath Guildhall was frequently limewashed. It was the fashion to paint wainscoting; and 'washing the wainscott Benches and flower' of the council house (1611) presumably means white-washing, as in 'for lime haire and to the plaisterer to mend the Guildhall and to wash it' (1613). Stephen Bird comments that in the illuminated MS. of 1445 building works 'appear in a greyish hue remarkably similar to that of Bath stone'.<sup>9</sup> Whatever this may signify for the medieval city, it seems safe to visualise the Tudor Guildhall as whitewashed externally.

By the era of the surviving chamberlain's accounts, the Guildhall roof was tiled, part of a general policy to prevent fires catching in thatch. The 1445 drawing depicts red roofs across the city, suggesting earthenware tiles. Traditional tiles can still be seen in England, weathered and lichen-covered, on old cottages and stables. Tiles were very often laid on laths of heart-of-oak. As iron nails tended to corrode, it became customary to use pegs of oak, especially favoured for suspending stone tiles, or pins of hazel, willow or elder, 'driven through the tiles and hooked over the laths'.<sup>10</sup> 19th century tilers are reported as spending part of the inclement winter months making their stock of pins. Thus in 1620, when John Beacon new-laid two perches of tiles over the council house, while he also plastered 'the hole against wheateakers stable', he was paid for 'eighte foote and a half of creast 2000 laught nayles 400 stone nayles 400 of laughts 3000 pinns fower sakes of lime'. The pins may well have been hand-made by himself, perhaps from the withy beds by the Avon (John Beacon lived over the North Gate).

The Guildhall roofs required much repair and constant mention is made of the replacement of 'crest' or ridge tiles. Lead gutters and a 'shute' carried away rainwater. Buckets were provided in case fire did break out. The accounts mention the repair of twenty-one civic buckets in 1595. In 1602 we hear of a weatherboard, in a context associated with the armoury. Boarding was used to clad walls as an alternative to wall-tiling, especially when walls were beginning to wear, and was also used for roofs.

The Queen's arms were displayed on a 'tablement', for which a



smith was paid for the ironwork (1595). The site is not specified, but it was fashionable to place arms over the entrance door, as may still be seen at Bellott's Almshouse in Beau Street. In the High Street Guildhall, the city arms were painted and gilded by Thomas Quilly, 'under the deske before the Maiors Seate' (1657).

The windows were glazed, and barred with iron (1581, 1587). In 1595 two new windows were built – in accordance with the new fashion for more light and air – probably with stone mullions and transoms in the Elizabethan style, since Moore the freemason worked ten feet of stone for them, and Gregory the freemason set them up. Timber was also used in their construction, probably to create the casements, while some (perhaps all) of the panes were leaded. A bay window is mentioned in 1581. Projecting windows, sometimes true bays and sometimes windows of the oriel type, were often built (sometimes as later additions) at the upper or dais end of halls, to throw more light on the high table. If the Guildhall faced west, as we believe, the bay window may have stood on the western wall.

The main entrance to the Guildhall does appear to have been on the west. The way from Northgate Street is called the way to the Guildhall, while the lane to the East Gate is never so named. As the Guildhall possessed an 'owter' door, with lock (1585), one surmises that it had an entrance porch, of which the 'wainscot door', with its bolt (1583) was perhaps the interior door. The way between the 'utter' and 'ender' door was paved (1587). 'The Guildhall dore' was painted (1575). As well as the wainscot door just referred to, wainscoting is mentioned in the hall, the council house, the armoury (implied), and the buttery. As Harrison states, wainscoting was now in high favour. Oak wainscoting erected in Exeter Guildhall in the reign of Elizabeth became a much-prized feature of the building.

In early halls, floors were made of rammed earth or tamped chalk, and the dais or raised platform, very often, of stone paving. In Bath in 1586 5/- is 'paid to the pavyor for levelling the fflowre at the hall', while in 1601 John Paviour receives 2/- 'for makeinge of the Guildhall flower', both entries suggesting some stone flooring. Again in 1615 John Bigg, a paviour, worked on the hall floor, with 'twelve sakes of gripes' and 'sand from the Church'. In the reign of Elizabeth rushes were still used to strew the hall, especially at Whitsuntide. But as the fashion grew for

carpets, Bath purchased three yards of green cloth for a carpet in 1597, replaced in 1614 by 'three yeardes of greane carsie for a Carpett to cover the Town hall borde'. It would be customary to cover the dais with the carpet, and if this was the 'Town hall borde', it would now seem to be wooden. On it would stand the seat mentioned in 1595, 'paid unto the joyner for makinge of mr mayors seate in the yeldhall xvjd'.

The dais in a great hall was normally placed at the end farthest from the service entries, known as the upper end. The main entrance to the hall was often near the lower or service end, and screens were sometimes used to block the draught from the entrance and the service doors. Judging by plans which show the site of the former way to the Guildhall, the main entrance in Bath Guildhall lay towards the centre of the hall. Distinguished visitors would dine at the high table with the mayor and aldermen, in their scarlet and other ceremonial gowns. Bath aldermen bequeathed their gowns in their wills. By the reign of Elizabeth, however, the great days of Guildhall banqueting seem to have been past. Food is mentioned in the form of gifts to visitors, such as sugar or capons, or of the cakes and bread and cheese, with beer and ale, at Whitsun or Corpus Christi. There is little to suggest actual cooking, and few dinners, especially when one considers that each roll represents a whole year's outgoings. The corporation increasingly resorted to inns run by the leading citizens, such as the Hart and the Bear, to lodge and entertain their visitors, even to hold their dinners.

In 1597, 'eight thrume cusheons for the hall'<sup>11</sup> were bought for 24/-; and in 1611, 'mattes' to cover the benches for 4/8. In the collection *Nugae Antiquae* there is preserved a reference by Sir John Harington of Kelston to the fashion for 'easye quilted and lyned forms and stools for the lords and ladyes to sit on, (which fashyon is now taken up in every marchawnts hall,) as opposed to 'great plank forms' and 'waynscot stooles so hard, that, since great breeches (padded breeches) were layd asyde, men can skant indewr to sitt on'.<sup>12</sup> Mention is made of the chest in the Guildhall, also of the 'pantre' (pantry) chest, the chest in the council house and one in the market house. Chests to store parchments came into use long before this period. For security, some of the chests possessed more than one lock. It was customary for different people to hold keys, so that no one person could open a chest or cupboard.



As the kitchen was evidently attached to the hall it would probably have been a fairly late erection. There is some evidence that it was at least partly stone built. If the kitchen was the later addition we believe it to have been, built perhaps at the beginning of the 16th century, we may visualise a typical early Tudor kitchen, with a large open fireplace with the fire burning at ground level and an oven built on either side, with pots on hooks and chains, and spits for roasting meat. It would have been furnished with trestle tables and with stools or benches.

Chimneys of attached kitchens were sometimes erected as a bay against an outside wall, which lessened risk of fire. We surmise that the chimney and fireplace stood at the eastern end of the kitchen. In 1611 both north and south 'poyning' or gable ends are mentioned for the Town Hall. In 1581 is mentioned the 'poyne end of the hale nex mr Leece his pavement', while in 1630 the 'poyninge end of the old hall' stood in Cox's backside. Cox's property lay both north and east of the Guildhall site. We presume it was also Leese or Leece's tenement. We believe the gabbling faced northward, with at least two windows on the northern end of the building – 'payed for the glasyng of two wyndows next mr Leeces' (1581) – while the chimney stood, as suggested, to one side.

Brouse's lease cited above makes no mention of the pantry, and it presumably therefore stood inside the hall, probably at the end near the kichen. Originally a pantry was a bread store, as in *pain*, bread. There would be little need for a long term bread store in the Tudor Guildhall of Bath; the pantry may have become a more general store, as in the modern usage, where a 'pantry' houses plate, cutlery, linen and crockery. In 1569 a lock and key were supplied for the 'chyste in the pantre'. Great cities like London had their gold and silver municipal ware; but, though Bath aldermen could bequeath precious dishes in their wills, the accounts mention pewter dishes only for the Guildhall. In general, Harrison wrote, pewter was replacing treen or wooden ware. In 1586 pewter was purchased to make 'a Dossen sawsers a Dossen pottengers and a Dossen platters and iiij chargers'.

The Tudor and Stuart buttery, described as 'lyttle' in 1602, must have stood at the southern end, since it gave on to the lane to the East Gate, with a locked door. It was an independent building, as it had its own roof, tiled and crested, and repaired in 1616 with



thirty-nine feet of timber. The buttery may always have stood on this site, though we would suggest it once stood inside the hall as a pair to the pantry, making, with the entrance of a passage to the kitchen, the fashionable triple pattern at the end opposite the high table. The buttery will have been the destination of the 'dossen and a half of ale' and the 'barell of beere' at Whitsuntide, and probably the site of the 'nayles to hange the tankardes on' (1581). The buttery seems to have been provided with 'formes' (1611), possibly to stand barrels on.

Bath had a piped water supply from the springs in the hills around, and water was probably piped to the Guildhall kitchen. The nearest conduit to the Guildhall stood in the High Street, while there was a cistern by the market house, with tamkin (inspection chamber). An enigmatical reference to lead to mend the 'axue' in the hall (1581) possibly refers to a branch in the pipes. There seems also to have been a municipal privy. It may not have been connected with the Guildhall at all, but if it was, it was not likely to stand adjacent to the hall. 'Houses of office' were now tending to be placed away from the main buildings. The building of the Tudor privy is described in 1575, with its roof tiled by Ireland, and frame made by William Harris. In 1613 a Stuart model is mentioned, with 'Ciiijer' (104) yards of paving (1615). Later another privy was built by the Ham Gate.

## Specialist Departments

In larger towns, the guilds would often support one central hall which had taken over the administration of the town, while still maintaining their own halls. Thus in London, we find the sites of traditional halls, such as that of the Goldsmiths, in the same general area as the Guildhall. In Exeter, we hear of the Tuckers' Hall, belonging to the Guild of Weavers, Fullers and Shearmen, as well as the administrative Guildhall. The situation in Bath was less complex than that of larger towns. The aldermen and the 'twenty-four', later twenty, would appoint themselves to committees . . . 'for our charges when wee sate in kommysshen for sale of leases ixv vjd' (1578). In 1581, 1/8 was 'payde to William Amye for takying downe the place where the waightes dy use to stand in the Guyldhald and for makynge a seate for the baylye',

with another 4d to 'bordnayles' for the same task. In 1583 6d was 'payd Jellye for slyttinge of ij peces of tymber that was lefte in the skoole which is to serve to make a place in the halle for the baylyfes court'. A Court of Record was provided for in the charter of 1590, to be held every Monday, while 'a view of frankpledge or leet' was to be held twice yearly in the Guildhall.<sup>13</sup>

The two most frequently mentioned specialist areas of the Guildhall are the council chamber, or council house, and the armoury, both of which lay, as we have seen, above the kitchen by the northern end of the hall. They did not cover the entire kitchen area, since the kitchen roof required 'crests' at the same time as the armoury roof (1616). In 1580–1581 work was done on altering the council house, the entries for 1581 being recorded under 'Charges layde owt in Repayrynge and amendinge the halle and Councell howse'. There are a number of items, and it seems possible that the roof space of the council house was enlarged in some way at that date. The stairs to the council chamber were also moved, and the evidence suggests they may have been relocated in the kitchen, to become part of the later tenement.

In 1583 the bailiff's court was created, and we surmise that it used space vacated by the stairs. The council chamber was wainscoted, and provided with benches. A 'joyne fforme' for it is recorded in 1599, and in 1622 a stool, for 1/8. The windows were glazed, and casemented, with leaded panes (1604, 1611). There seem to have been several cupboards and cupboard seats, mostly with locks. For example in 1597, 'paid to Pawle Poole for the presse of wainskott in the Councell howse xxixs', 'paid unto Bennet Gaye for makeinge of the Cubberd in the windowe xviijs'.<sup>14</sup>

The armoury lay next to the council chamber. No armoury stairs are mentioned, and we presume the armoury was reached through the chamber itself. It appears to have been wainscoted, with a glazed window, and plastered – 'paid for playsteringe of the Little Chaumber where the Armor lyeth vjd' (1598). In the earlier years payments are recorded to cutlers and lockiers for caring for the armour, also 'Richard Cutler' and 'Richard Graye' (1595). From 1598 a stipend of £2 a year is paid to 'William Dolton' for maintenance of the armour. Extra payments are also incurred. The Doltons, father and son, owned property outside the North

Gate. The armour belongs to its period, with the bows and arrows, pikes, bills and halberds of the earlier years, the cleaning of swords and daggers, and the increasing references to guns. Some items were bought in Bristol by John Sherston (1595 and 1596). Later we hear of old armour being sold, some of it to Roger Pooke the nailor, who presumably used it to make the nails he then sold to the corporation. The armour was hung on hooks or 'pinns', against mats (1581) fastened to the wainscoting. The wainscoting in the relevant item is described as being in the council house (1602), but must have been in the armour room and not the council chamber since armour was hung against it. Items like pikes were placed in racks (1621).

## Ground Plans

There are no surviving detailed ground plans of the early Guildhall. The diagrams of our imaginary reconstruction are offered as a basis for discussion and perhaps dissent rather than anything else. The task we have faced has been to arrange the component parts in such a way that they do not contradict the statements of the municipal records, nor the fashions of the times. Within these limits, the arrangements must be a matter of choice at this stage. In order to provide exact proof of the layout of the Guildhall it would be necessary to resort to archaeological evidence; and it is hoped that perhaps in time this may be realised.

## Acknowledgements

My thanks are due to my colleague Mrs Marta Oliver for her assistance with this article, and also to everyone else who has helped and advised, including Alan Day who produced the ground plans.



## Notes

- 1 Somerset Record Society, Vol. 73. *Medieval Deeds of Bath and District*, 1974, Part II, p. 106.
- 2 The outline has an interesting resemblance to the plan of the walls in Smith's map of Bath, see *Bath History*, Vol. I, p. 129.
- 3 A discussion of the role of religious town guilds is included in Colin Platt, *The Parish Churches of Medieval England*, 1981, pp. 111-120.
- 4 English summary by C.W. Shickle, *Ancient Deeds Belonging to the Corporation of Bath*, 1921, p. 134.
- 5 *Somersetshire Archaeological and Natural History Society's Proceedings*, Vol. XXVI, 1880, Part III, p. 121.
- 6 John Wood, *A Description of Bath 1765*, reissued 1969, p. 339.
- 7 *Bath History*, Vol. I, p. 143, from Henry Beauchamp's Book of Hours, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, MS. 893.
- 8 Bath Record Office, Furman's Repertory, Lease no. 587, 1679, Lease no. 952, 1699.
- 9 Letter to the author, 1987.
- 10 R.J. Brown, *The English Country Cottage*, 1979, p. 231.
- 11 'Thrum', an end of thread. 'To thrum', to fringe or cover with thrums.
- 12 *Nugae Antiquae*, 1804 edition, Vol. I. p. 202.
- 13 Translation from P.R. James, typescript in Bath Record Office, 'Charters of the City of Bath', 1942, Part I. James renders the original text as 'bis per Annum in le Guildhall Ciuitatis'.
- 14 An outline of the duties of the corporation is given in the Charter of Incorporation of 1590, while a valuable description of the corporation's activities in the early Stuart age appears in the opening chapter of John Wroughton, *The Civil War in Bath and North Somerset*.