1835 Municipal Reform, Wells Corporation and its Estates

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The changes and financial pressures of the last fifteen years have had a major impact on both the reserves and land holdings of Local Authorities. As April 1974 approached there was considerable activity in the old County Boroughs as land was transferred from the Education Committee to others such as Housing or Parks where it would remain in the Authority's control and not pass to a new, upstart, County. Similarly many smaller Districts used portions of their reserves to realise long considered projects such as a swimming pool rather than see the money go to a new, larger and more remote Authority. More recently financial restrictions have led to a careful scrutiny of land holdings. Much land bought for council housing has been sold and there have been more dramatic events. Thus Bristol embarked on a major sale to redeem the massive debt incurred in building Royal Portbury Dock. This piece describes an earlier but parallel set of events in the town of Wells. It also foreshadowed other modern local authority problems notably the way in which a major project acquires a momentum of its own.

In 1835 while Parliament was considering the Municipal Corporations Bill and even after while elections were being held, Wells Corporation was very active. A major part of the authority's extensive land holding was sold off. If the 1834 and 1836 rent rolls are compared the annual income (corrected for arrears) fell from £111.6s.5½d to £41.8s.6½d. The number of freehold properties fell from 82 to 50 while others from which some rent charge or fee farm was due declined from 9 to 3.[1] The ostensible reason for the activity was the provision of a new market hall. But was this really an excuse by an outdated oligarchy bitterly opposed to municipal reform and determined to use any means to oppose it? This was certainly alleged in Court by counsel for an opponent.

The history of eighteenth-century Wells certainly provides incidents that illustrate the weaknesses of unreformed boroughs. Indeed a late eighteenth century Directory seems to epitomise the town as a typical pocket borough:

> The influence prevailing in this city is that of Clement Tudway, Esq., one of its present representatives. This gentleman has a sufficient interest always to procure a return for himself without expense and the Corporation, etc., compliment some particular friend or neighbour with the other seat.[2]

It is easy to project this picture on to municipal affairs and assume an inactive oligarchy. Such a view is, however, too simple.

To understand the full significance of the events of 1835 it is necessary to explain briefly the nature of the Wells property market. It was dominated by substantial estates largely in institutional ownership. This situation was a relic of medieval piety. Property had been left to secure prayers for souls. Both the various ecclesiastical bodies and officers and the Corporation in its role as trustee of the parish church benefited. In Wells the Reformation did little to spread ownership in contrast to the published accounts of Worcester and York.[3] Dissolutions were restricted to a hospital, a college of chantry priests and a free chapel and their estates did not fragment unlike holdings in those two published cases. All lasted until 1700 while the largest, the Manor of St John the Baptist (the estate of the medieval Hospital of that name) survived until mid-nineteenth century in slightly eroded form.[4]

Wells comprised 3 distinct elements. The Cathedral was surrounded by the Liberty of St Andrew. This was technically within the City but administratively independent. It contained the Bishop's Palace, the Deanery and the substantial houses of the other dignitaries with a fringe of smaller dwellings. The City proper lay to the west while there was a suburb, East Wells, on the opposite side of the Liberty. These last 2 were characterised by the long relatively narrow plots which are regarded as typical of medieval town development.

In 1638 in a dispute about ship money we are told that the City proper had 368 messuages, houses and cottages and 5 mills.[5] Some 55% were in institutional ownership with the Corporation predominant as owner of 27% of all urban properties. A further 19% belonged to the successor estates of the hospital, college and free chapel. In the Liberty of St Andrew the proportions were even more extreme with 96% still in institutional ownership and 3% belonging to the successor estates. In East Wells there was more scope for individual ownership with about 40% in institution hands and a further 10% with the successor estates.

The result was scarcely a property market as we understand it. The situation was characterised by extreme conservatism and an apparent lack of knowledge of what was happening elsewhere in the town.

Thus in 1550/51 the Corporation found it necessary to review its rents, reducing income from 55 (or 41%) of its urban properties. None of the other major estates changed and the Corporation's income had more than recovered by 1603. Again in the period 1575 to 1660 the Corporation, Bishop and Vicars Choral almost totally abandoned leases for years to concentrate on three-life leases. But at just that time the Dean and Chapter were switching three-life terms to 40 years leases. Individually rents show similar anomalies. There was a general tendency for rents to reflect proximity to the commercial hub (around the High Street – Sadler Street – Market Place intersection) plus plot area and frontage but many striking exceptions can be cited.[6] These contrasts presumably reflect the income which the property was to secure when bequeathed and perhaps its state of repair at some long since forgotten date.

In fact the major characteristic of the market was stability. Some 5% of the institutional rents still charged in 1800 (disregarding the canonical houses as a special case) can be shown to have been of medieval origins. Another 24% were as first recorded in the period 1500–1550. On the other hand only 6% date from after 1649 and these are generally attributable to a limited number of causes notably redevelopment of groups of houses and the declining attractions of the smaller medieval shops and houses for a later age. Similarly once established, the leasing mix of just over 70% held for three lives to 25% held for 40 years persisted to mid-nineteenth century.

With this background we can return to municipal affairs. Despite the temporary upset of 1550/51 the Corporation had done well out of the Reformation. It kept all the properties bequeathed to support obits and chantries in St Cuthberts but had the obligation to provide these services abolished. As a result it was able to live comfortably off its rentals until 1835. Furthermore, the bishops were impoverished[7] and in 1589 Bishop Godwin granted a new charter giving the town most of the rights which the townsfolk had disputed with his medieval predecessors.

The Corporation celebrated its new powers by building itself firstly a town hall over part of the shambles in the middle of High Street and then its own gaol (as distinct from those already maintained by the Bishop and the Dean and Chapter). However, other schemes were not carried through. In 1603 it acquired land for a pesthouse[8] and in 1621 for a workhouse.[9] But neither was built. Presumably the immediate crises passed. The Commonwealth period saw more activity with the Corporation competing with Dr Burges, the Presbyterian minister, to acquire the bishop's land and rights.[10] It must have been politically and financially embarassing when he was restored and resumed his lands leaving the Corporation with a substantial loss. The Corporation retired into a century of inaction. However, from the mid eighteenth century the Council showed considerable interest in town improvement. The first stage came in 1754 when they purchased the Queens Arms and an adjoining property on the north side of High Street.[11] They were rebuilt with an arched entrance between leading to a yard formed out of their rear gardens. This was used to re-site the stalls which had previously been set up in High Street. At that time the High Street was also obstructed by a central row of properties in its widest section. One of this Middle Row was then in poor repair. It was removed and its owners, the Vicars Choral, compensated by an equivalent rent from a nearby Corporation owned property.[12] This halved the Council's own income from that house. Then in 1768 the remainder of Middle Row was cleared. These properties were mainly Corporation owned.

In 1779 an even more ambitious scheme followed. The canonical house on the south side of the Market Place was acquired from the Bishop and the occupier, the Archdeacon of Wells. This cost £700 and involved the promotion of a Private Act of Parliament as that was considered the only way to sever a canonical house from its traditional tenure. The front garden was thrown into the Market Place and the house replaced by a new Town Hall. At the same time the Corporation acquired the office of Bailiff and Clerk of the Market which, in effect, transferred the Bishop's prerogatives in the town market to them.[13] This finally resolved problems which had surfaced periodically since the fourteenth century.

Finally in 1821/2 the Council undertook a widening of the eastern end of High Street. So in 1835 Wells had a tradition of over 80 years of Corporation improvement undertaken as resources and the chance of availability of property allowed. This record is important both as background to the events of 1835/6 and for its wider implications. Firstly, like much other recent research it demonstrates that the unreformed corporations have been maligned.[14] Whatever the problems of franchise they were not necessarily inactive or unaware of the potential for improvement. Secondly, it is notable that these projects seem to have occasioned no dispute either within the Council or between it and any wider body of citizenry. In fact purely domestic matters seem to have operated with a consensus of politically influential groups. Conflict appeared with national elections or local events which impinged on them, for example, the creation of new burgesses who then became voters.

The immediate trigger for the 1835/6 changes was further concern over the state of the town's markets. On 1 August 1834, it was resolved that a proper place be provided for 'exposing fish, butchers' meat, poultry and other provisions for sale'. Detailed consideration was delegated to a Committee of three. This was not an innovation. An identical procedure had been used in 1821/2 but from our point of view it does have the disadvantage that these Committees did not keep minutes so their detailed reasoning and motives can only be inferred. It is also worth mentioning that by this time two of the councillors were surveyors by profession. This group had consolidated their standing and expertise in this locality as a result of the enclosure of the Mendips mainly carried out in the period 1775–1800. One of the committee members was a surveyor.

The Committee reported in September and the whole Council began to look to ways and means. The eighteenth-century improvements had been financed largely from current income and accumulated surpluses with temporary bridging loans from leading citizens especially members of the Tudway family. This was a very traditional method for urban oligarchs to justify their status.[15] The 1821/2 widening had been financed by a loan from the Trustees of Llewellyn's Almhouses. Part was still outstanding. As a result interest switched to the Corporation estates. The Council's officers were instructed to produce a more detailed return than the usual rent rolls. All the property was leased for terms of three lives. So the key factor was the number of outstanding lives and their ages.

However, the scheme began to take a more definite form early in 1835 when the Bishop expressed willingness to sell two properties lying to the west of his palace and adjacent to the Market Place. This willingness to sell was novel and can be attributed to two factors. Firstly, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners had lately been established and would take over full responsibility at the next vacancy. The traditional estate was therefore doomed. Secondly, there was the nature of the properties. One, the Palace Mill, was in poor repair (as the Corporation were to discover) and probably no longer viable as a grist mill.[16] The other abutted the Market Place south of the gatehouse to the palace but it was traditionally let at only 9d p.a. This already ridiculous figure seems to reflect its origins as colonisation of a strip of waste in front of the outer wall around the palace.[17] Obviously, a lump sum was a great attraction in both cases.

The Corporation therefore had to consider the way forward. The normal problems were compounded by the limit to their own life. As a result the number of meetings increased in a quite unparalleled way and they were wholly absorbed by this one issue. On 15th June they authorised the sale of 20 freehold properties, plus any of their fee farm rents and their shares in the Wells Gas Co. On 24th June terms for the purchase were agreed and the sale of another 24 identified properties plus all their other properties on the east of Grove Lane. In fact the choice of properties to be sold was logical and clear. Those offered were likely to yield the best returns either having regard to location or size. Furthermore, the residual estate would be left in clear geographical blocks.

Originally, a first 20 properties were to have been auctioned on 10th August. However, a preliminary valuation was obtained from the County Surveyor, Richard Carver, and Mr Young Sturge, a surveyor of Bristol. They suggested that better results would be obtained if the properties were offered privately to the leaseholders. Only four remained for the auction and three of these were withdrawn. The sole property sold was the only one not to reach its full valuation. At £44 it was 15s. short. By the time all this was reported to the Council on 19th August a further two had been sold leaving only the Bulls Head Inn, at £229, the third most expensive of the whole list.

At this stage it was worth considering wider reactions. On 5th August, W. Ridlegh, M.P., had replied to an enquiry from the Town Clerk. He wrote 'it appears to me that the sale and purchase contemplated by the Corporation is so fair and beneficial that it need fear no scrutiny'. He continued that he had spoken to Lord John Russell who had received nothing on the subject. Ridlegh had also heard from several intended purchasers and reassured them that a punitive clause in the Municipal Corporations Bill referred to collusive transfers and would not threaten any title openly and honestly acquired. The negative inference seems to be that some objection was expected. But the Corporation received only one letter of protest written by William Henry Fowles, a habitual complainer and schoolmaster, who leased modern 67 High Street from the Corporation. His points were lack of public involvement, the sacrifice of public property, an action by an 'expiring Corporation' intent on benefiting themselves and that the sale would impoverish the borough so that the new Council would be checked in any project by the prospect of a heavy rate. This can be contrasted with a supporting petition with 113 signatures which seem to include a good cross section of trade interests.

The first set of sales had yielded £2,656.16s but the purchase alone had cost over £1,620. Some detail of this is worth noting:

To Secretary of State for license from Crown to purchase	£164.16s.0d.
To Bishop for his freehold interest	£488.18s.0d.

To Archdeacon Law for his lifehold interest	£750. 0s.0d.
All other costs and interest	£216.15s.4d.
	£1,620. 9s.4d

The relative value of the freehold and lifeleasehold interests are startling to those accustomed to the modern assumpt of the primacy of an absolute title. It also reflects on the price the Corporation was able to raise on its similarly leased estates. To establish the full hierarchy of property it may be mentioned that the actual occupiers were given respectively £25 and £10 to quit.

Obviously more money was needed. On 14th September the Chamberlain was instructed not to go to contract for a clock and water closet for the Town Hall as all available money was to be used for the improvement of the markets. But the key meeting was on 8th October. Sales of a further nine freeholds and four fee farm rents were reported yielding £751.16s.8d. A list and valuation of the remaining properties were ordered. It was also reported that the design of the market hall commissioned from the County Surveyor had been put out to tender. Six offers were received ranging from £1,594 to £1,800. The lowest, from Richard George, was accepted.

Now the Council was caught in a rush to raise the money and complete the works by the end of the year when it gave way to the reformed body. The problems were compounded by the extensions and over-runs that seem inevitable in a major project. The Council immediately added £25 to the tender for a red-deal roof. They also had a report on Palace Mill. The building was not affected by the works. But inspection had revealed that it was so dilapidated as to be unworthy of repair. Furthermore, if it stood for a further winter no re-usable timbers would remain. It was a detriment to the new hall and offered obvious potential. For £250 it could be re-developed as a cheese market and space for 100 carts to park. This would remove cheese sales from the then open ground floor of the Town Hall and cure congestion in the market. This proposal was approved.

On 23rd November the Council agreed to sell the Bulls Head for its original valuation and further property up to £100 for 'certain improvements in the market works'. These presumably included the increased cost of the cheese market to £300. Then in December opposition surfaced. An application was made in the Vice-Chancellor's court[18] in the name of the Attorney General acting on behalf of Cornelius Bartlett, a citizen of Wells, for injunctions restraining the Corporation from:

i) carrying into effect contracts for sale of their real estate
ii) proceeding any further with building the new market hall
iii) withdrawing any proceeds from Stuckey and Co's bank.

A further injunction was to prevent Stuckeys from making any payment. Bartlett's counsel began by reviewing the constitutional history of the town. He then stated that the Corporation held an estate worth £4,000 and until June had never alienated any of it. The Municipal Corporation Act was bitterly opposed by the defendants who took every means to impede it. They were determined to sell the property and this was only a pretext.

The Vice-Chancellor does not seem to have been impressed and asked three questions. How was the information obtained? Why the delay if their intentions were known since June? Why had notices of action not been served on the defendants? Answering this last counsel stressed the urgency. George the architect was forced to complete by Christmas and had, he alleged, expressed conviction 'that from the great haste with which it must be got up it was quite impossible it would ever stand'. The Vice-Chancellor was unconvinced stating that the affadavit was too slim for an injunction. He adjourned the hearing for a week to allow full representation.

So the next Council meetings were held with this threat hanging over them. But the Corporation pressed on. On 17th December they agreed to defer paying the outstanding £100 debt to the Llewellyn's Almshouse Trustees. They also instructed the Chamberlain to pass any available funds to the Treasurer of the Building Fund. The old Council ended its days by having to meet on each of Christmas Eve, Christmas and Boxing Days. This was partly to await possible hearings in London. But they also sold the gas shares for £212 and transferred a further £89.19s.4d to the Building Fund. In fact the action was never resumed but neither was the hall completed in time. However, the new elections had resolved matters. On 30th December 1835, Robert Davies, the Town Clerk, wrote to their London agents with a total lack of modern impartiality: 'our elections have ended beyond our expectations propitious. Eleven out of twelve of our list have been elected and the twelth is decidedly in favour of the new market'.

On 1st January 1836, the new Council passed a resolution in favour of the project and appointing a Committee to oversee the completion and outstanding payments. Then on 5th February costs were awarded against Bartlett as he had not proceeded. Actual paying of these costs and of the builder took a good deal longer and involved several legal opinions. Problems arose because of the change in the style and nature of the authority and the split of money between the old and new Treasurers.

Reviewing events one can begin by dismissing the majority of allegations of the opponents. It is charitable to assume that the legal action was hastily prepared. Its facts were often wrong. Thus the Town Hall Act is dated as 1789 and George is described as architect not builder. Again as the 1835 sales realised over £3,600 the estate must have previously been worth over £5,000. Nor had the estate remain fixed to 1835. The procedure for purchasing freehold provided in the Acts for the Redemption of the Land Tax had led to a slow but steady wastage of the estate from the middle of the previous century. Since 1750 some 25 properties had been sold by this method and five lost in the demolition of Middle Row. It was also tendentious: the market hall is the modern post office and has stood untroubled for nearly 150 years. Turning to more general issues the financial probity of the exercise is beyond doubt. The accounts are precise. Not a property more than was necessary was sold and the prices were established by independent out-of-town valuers. Nor did Councillors receive special benefits. None was involved in the works and only six freeholds and one fee farm were sold to members and all were well established lessees. In fact three properties went to one member, William Chester Berryman, but this seems to mainly reflect his weight of leasehold properties in and around High Street. He also appears in Vicars Choral and Dean and Chapter lease books.[19] Furthermore, fees and charges were reasonable. Messrs. Carver and Sturge each received only £10 for their part in the sales. In fact those who really did well were predictably the lawyers and the local bank, Stuckeys, who provided facilities for both the Corporation and many of the purchasers.

As to the real intentions of the members, it is obviously impossible to be sure. However, it seems likely that they were acting in an established tradition of improvement. Only the last minute decision to include a cheese market was rushed through otherwise advice and consultation accompanied their actions. Again they had little reason to act as wreckers. The reformed Council was smaller but all its members had sat on its predecessor. Moreover, the result seems to confirm the necessity and popularity of the scheme. To a modern cynic who might object that the old council had nothing to lose, the response must be that they had – their political influence. The gentry who had chosen Wells as a suitable centre and the townsfolk who aspired to their status would have regarded political influence as a family possession. It was to be bequeathed to heirs and was therefore not greatly dissimilar to landed property, the future of which was carefully controlled by marriage settlements and family trusts.

It would also be wrong to assume that the scheme was a doubtful financial proposition from the start. In 1835 the councillors could hardly anticipate what railways and the runaway growth of the major urban centres were going to do to traditional marketing. Initially the scheme seemed likely to pay its way. One house on the north of the site had been retained and that was let for 21 years at £12 p.a.[20] Obviously the Corporation felt untrammelled by traditional tenures and amounts here. Furthermore, in its early years the market hall was producing income of the order of £50 p.a.[21]

Turning to the challenges it is noticeable that Fowles and Bartlett both held Corporation properties in areas not sold off. Perhaps the legal action was an attempt to sway public opinion in favour of a faction which already felt itself to be losing. Certainly, as the hearing was one sided, maximum uncontested publicity was achieved. The precedents may have seemed good. In 1828 a series of legal actions resulted in the removal of 5 members and the ordering of new elections.[22] It followed a complex faction fight as meetings were fixed to be unsuitable for one group and factions stayed away to prevent a quorum or arrived suddenly to try to gain a majority. In fact it was mainly about advantage to create burgesses for Parliamentary elections and it marks the waning of the Tudway interest. If Bartlett hoped to repeat such a triumph, the Vice-Chancellor's comments and the election must have disillusioned him. He really had no choice but to stop and try to minimise his losses.

Turning to wider significance, it is apparent that Wells, whatever its shortcomings as a Parliamentary constituency, showed none of Trevelyan's 'municipal stagnation'[23] before 1836. In fact the events of 1835 transformed the Council from a general landlord to the owner of a public service orientated estate where the major elements were the town hall, market, market hall, parking space and shambles. If anything, the pace of municipal improvement was slower in the two decades after reform than in the 20 years before. However, this can be partly attributed to the upheavals of 1835 which left finances depleted, councillors and officers exhausted and had focussed government attention on Wells. As a result the next major improvement, the cutting of a new road from the Glastonbury turnpike into High Street in the late '30s, was undertaken by the local Turnpike Company. Again when the Corporation did wish to act to acquire a house protruding into the market and to re-purchase the Queens Arms to widen the arch to the shambles, the Treasury refused to sanction further property sales. Mortgages should be raised on the estate instead. As a result a mortgage was duly obtained. This was done in the traditional way in that the dominant local politician, Joseph Lovell, provided a loan of £1,700.[24] Both properties were acquired but only the market place improvement was actually implemented.[25] The Corporation only attempted a major project in 1858–1860 when the town was sewered. By that time the municipal estate was nearly gone as sales in 1858 disposed of 28 properties. Afterwards smaller sales progressively dispersed the residue. The reason given for the 1858 sales was to reduce the mortgage debt.

One final point is necessary on municipal affairs. The reformed Council soon had to levy a rate although it was far from heavy by our standards. However, this was largely owing to new duties, especially the employment of policemen rather than to any reduction in previous income. Commencing in 1839/40 the rates for the next 20 years varied between 6d and 1s yielding from about £295 to double that sum.

However, 1835 is at least as significant for the emergence of a modern property market in Wells. For 400 years this had been dominated by large estates operating in little changing ways. The acts for the Redemption of the Land Tax had allowed a gradual erosion of both Corporation and Ecclesiastical holdings. But the impact was marginal and the purchasers were almost exclusively the Tudways and other gentry resident in Wells. 1835 saw owner occupiers and more especially small landowners emerging as a significant group. It was a process that quickened from 1858. By the end of the 1860s the Corporation retained only 6 urban properties. By that time the Ecclesiastical Commissioners had also moved into the market and were systematically selling property.

It is interesting that the prospect of reform rather than the actuality persuaded the Bishop and especially the Corporation to dispose part of their traditional estates. Wells was amongst the first boroughs to begin to sell its property and its disposal was more complete than most. Neighbouring Axbridge began to sell its freeholds slightly earlier but it made substantial perpetual rent charges on them. These passed to the Town Trust when borough status was lost and were finally sold only in 1964. Ludlow sold its substantial estates in 1846. Ironically this was after bitter litigation occasioned by alleged misappropriation by the 'reformed' council.[26] Canterbury Corporation had gained the rent charges originally due to St Augustine's Abbey. They only began to liquidate them in 1942. When Urry wrote in 1967 some still survived although little real value remained.[27] Finally to illustrate the complete variety of responses Bath Council still owns much of its central area with enormous benefits to both rate levels and its powers to control development.

To conclude it is fair to say that if any of the members or officers of the old council had secret thoughts of obstructing reform they completely miscalculated. Their actions hurried the birth of modern Wells. The change in the size and nature of Council property must have been for many years the most dramatic difference to come from the events of 1835.[28]

Notes

[1] These rent rolls are in Wells Town Hall (WTH below). Generally the sources for this piece are these rolls and the following items in the Town Hall archives:-

a) Receivers Books Vols. 270 & 271 giving respectively the proceedings of the Council and the detailed accounts.

b) Bundle 57/1 relating to the sales of Corporation property in the 19th century.

c) An unnumbered bundle relating to the Town Hall and its environs.

Similarly references to earlier events in 1550/51, 1754, 1768, 1779 and 1821/2 when not otherwise attributed are drawn from the Receivers Books and rent rolls for the material years.

Supplementary information comes mainly from the Somerset Record Office (S.R.O. below) especially the Tudway papers and material deposited by the Church Commissioners. (Series TD and CC respectively).

[2] *University British Directory*, 1793–8, p. 714.

[3] See Dyer A.D. '*The City of Worcester in the Sixteenth Century*', Leicester U.P., 1973 and Palliser D.M. '*Tudor York*', Oxford. U.P., 1979.

[4] See for example S.R.O. DD/CB Bundles 1 & 2 and DD/FS Box 27 which gives various 19th century transactions.

[5] Serel T. '*Historical Notes on the Church of St Cuthbert in Wells*', J.M. Atkins, *Wells*, 1875, p. 108.

[6] The type of anomaly can be illustrated by the following table concerning three adjacent properties of the Dean & Chapter in Tor St. All were re-built at least once in the period of constant rents and all had a period as an inn. At the time of the Parliamentary Survey only the property now nos 20 & 21 was not an inn which may explain that differential.

Modern Street Nos	Frontage	Plot depth	Tenure	Rent p.a. 1587–1830	Suggested improved rent of 1649.
16 & 17	11m	49m	3 lives	13s.4d	£2
18	20m	49m	40 years	10s.0d.	£2
20 & 21	40m	48m	40 years	7s.0d.	£1

As an indication of how far adrift the traditional rents were by 1649 reference can be made to the Parliamentary surveys surviving for the Dean and Chapter's, Vicar's

Choral and Precentor's Estates. Only one property had no recommended improvement and only one improvement is of under 100%.

[7] See Hembry P.M. '*The Bishops of Bath and Wells 1540–1640*', Athlone Press, 1967.

[8] Serel op. cit. p. 113.

[9] WTH Convocation Book. Vol. III (1553–1623), pp. 449–450.

[10] Underdown D. 'A case concerning Bishop's lands: Cornelius Burges and the Corporation of Wells', *English History Review*, Vol. 78, No. 306, 1963, pp. 18–48.

[11] S.R.O. DD/TD Box 30 Label 28 (and WTH Receivers Book Vol. 251).

[12] S.R.O. DD/CC 115568 and WTH lease 1007/57.

[13] 19 George III Chapter 31, and see Bailey D.S. '*Canonical Houses of Wells*', Alan Sutton, 1982, pp. 164–5.

[14] See, for example, Grady K. 'The Provision of public buildings in the West Riding of Yorkshire', unpublished PhD thesis, Leeds, 1980.

[15] For late medieval parallels see Britnell R.H. '*Growth and Decline in Colchester 1300–1525*', Cambridge. U.P., 1986, pp. 228–9.

[16] An attempt had been made to use it as a silk mill, see Scrase A.J. 'Mills at Wells', in '*Somerset and Dorset Notes and Queries*', Vol. xxxi, Part 316, 1982, pp. 238–43.

[17] S.R.O. DD/CC 13202. In about 1816 the lifeleaseholder was subletting as small tenements for £20 p.a. which is another example of the inadequacy of traditional rents.

[18] Law Report in '*The Times*', 9th December 1835.

[19] For example, S.R.O. DD/CC 114080, Vol. II. p. 121 and Wells Cathedral Library, Vicar's Choral lease E297.

[20] WTH Bundle 182.

[21] WTH Council Minute Books for relevant years. However, the records of the 1840s show constant concern for falling market tolls and the difficulties of increasing charges without a loss of takers.

[22] WTH 72.

[23] Trevelyan, G.M. '*British History in the Nineteenth Century*', Longman, 1930, p. 13.

[24] For mortgage WTH 98/44 & 98/45, for alterations 98/46, 98/47 and 98/48, and for its redemption in 1859 WTH 98/49.

[25] See WTH 78/4 for the demolition. The other property was let for short terms at an economic rent of £66 p.a., see WTH 99/9 & 99/10, until it and the yard behind were sold in 1867, see WTH 57/12.

[26] Spreight M.E. and Lloyd D. 'Ludlow Houses and their Residents', Ludlow Research Paper No 1, Studio Press, Birmingham, 1978, p. 3.

[27] Urry W. '*Canterbury under the Angevin Kings*', Athlone Press, 1967, p. 67.

[28] General acknowledgements are due to Jean Imray, the Archivist, Wells Town Hall for help, advice and comments.