

Tudor Room: 8 Westgate Street

The prosaic 19th century façade of this building conceals a historical and architectural gem. At the rear of the house the first floor of a 16th century wing houses an elaborate timber-panelled room known as the Tudor Room.

The Early mansion

The building was originally one of a row known as the Coifery, or Hatmakers' Row, to the east of Grace Lane, the old name for St John's Lane.

In the early 13thC, during the reign of Henry III (Gloucester's Boy King), a Mr Peter Peytenny lived here. His daughter and heiress Christiana married into the Brown family and its ownership passed to them. Stephen Brown was Bailiff of Gloucester in 1295 and 1317, and Stephen Brown the younger in 1332.

With young Stephen's heiress's marriage to John Thoky, occupancy passed to that family, descendants of the famous Abbot Thoky who received the body of Edward II for burial in 1327.

Later the property was in the hands of the Bisley family. Thomas Bisley, the tenant in 1455 had been Gloucester's representative in Parliament in 1429-30. Thomas also owned the two shops next-door which were occupied by John Kirby. The two ends of the row were occupied by John Strensham, Bailiff of Gloucester in 1442 at the east end, and a booth next to Grace's Lane was owned by the Prior of St Oswald's.

The Tudor Mansion

The mansion was rebuilt in the reign of Henry VIII, and this was leased to Thomas Payne and his wife by the Abbot and Convent of St Peter's on 1 July 1530. Payne used linenfold oak panelling in his guest chamber, with a frieze of carved detail at ceiling level depicting heraldic beasts, the arms of various local guilds, and the initials TP, to tell his life story and affirm his loyalty. This is now the Tudor Room.

Payne was elected Sheriff in 1534 and during his year of office had the honour of meeting Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn at Churchdown and escorting them to their lodgings in the Abbey. In 1540 he was elected Mayor, and it was during his term of office that the King's Charter of 3 Sept 1541 was enacted, that "Our town of Gloucester shall henceforth for ever be a city and be called the City of Gloucester." Many generations of Paynes lived here, and now lie buried in the ancient cemetery of College Green.

In 1890 J. Ambrose Fisher, owner of Fisher's Tudor Restaurant, refurbished the room. He commissioned a skilled local carver and authority on medieval art, Mr G Howitt, to repair or replace several of the damaged or missing details and to construct a suitable overmantel for the fireplace. Mr. Howitt's work consists of finely carved details depicting the badges of Henry VIII and Katherine of Aragon together with three central linen-fold panels framed by barley-sugar style columns. It is recorded that he used "old woodwork found in this part of the house", and the source of the columns can be found close by, in the narrow staircase that leads from the room, which is seriously depleted of balusters.

In 1918 the mansion was acquired by the Cheltenham and Gloucester Building Society. The room is now used as an office and is not normally open to the public. Entry is by the door "Westgate Chambers No 8" to the left of Santander.

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