



A Lecture on the Role of the Burgess and Bailiff of Chippenham

Mr Provis, in his lecture which he lately delivered at Chippenham, to the members of the Literary Institute, and which we noticed a few weeks ago, said that the Charter furnished the following account of the number of Arms belonging to the Borough in November, 1636: - "The arms delivered by the Bailiff and Burgesses to Henry Bull, gent, and Richard Harding, Constables of the said 'Boro", were 4 corslets and 4 gorgets, 4 pikes, 5 muskets, 5 rests, 5 bandileers, 7 swords, 9 head pieces, and 1 other sword bought by Henry Bull and John Harding. This was about the commencement of the Civil War, and shows the rude state of arms at that period. The muskets were so heavy as to require a rest to stay them on, and were fired by a match lock."

He also gratified his hearers by reading the following extracts from the ordinances and statutes made by the Bailiff and Burgesses under Mary's Charter:- "It is ordered, as often as it is needful, to repair the common Butts, either in the Ivy or St. Mary's Street. The Bailiff shall give notice to each householder to come and repair the same - for neglect to forfeit 4d. The Butts were places for the exercise of the Bow and other weapons, and a locality adjoining St. Mary Street is still designated by the name."

"All persons taking inmates, to discharge them if ordered by the Bailiff"; for every day they keep them after such order to forfeit 2d. per day.

"No artifice to take an apprentice but by allowance of the Bailiff." The indenture to be made by the Town Clerk, and sealed in the Bailiff's presence, otherwise to forfeit 13s 4d.

"If any person seek justice of any other person than the Bailiff to lose his freedom."

"All Butchers to bring the hide, the fell, and the tallow, with the carcass, to market, or forfeit 12d."

“The tipplers or publicans, to serve the town for an ale quart of 1d. The small ale, recently called panny ale, to be sold at a penny a gallon. The ale-tasters to examine it, and the measures to be sealed with the Standard Seal – forfeit for neglect, 2d.”

“No Burgess shall present law against, or sue any of his brother Burgesses, without licence of the Bailiff, or lose 11s.”

“Every person in the Boro’ to keep a tub or pail full of water at his door, from the 1st of May to the 12th of Sept, or forfeit 2d. A singular ordinance which we think was intended as a provision against fire, as the greater part of the houses are supposed to have been at the time thatched with straw.

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