



Abbey House, Malmesbury

## William Stumpe, Clothier of Malmesbury

William Stumpe, a King's commissioner, did very well out of the dissolution of the Abbey and its lands. He bought the Abbey and some but not all of its land, which was very closely defined, with some land in Malmesbury and much more in Brinkworth and Rodbourne for the sum of £1,517- 12s – 2½d. (Valuation was an exact science in those days!)

William Stumpe was born in North Nibley. His father was a weaver who improved himself to become a clothier. William was ambitious and successful. He 'got on'.

He had first married Joyce Berkeley, daughter of James Berkeley of Bradley. On her death he married Katherine Moody of the Moody family of Garsdon. The story goes that Richard Moody was from Malmesbury who went to court and became an esquire to Henry VIIIth. The king, hawking on Hounslow Heath fell into the mire and was like to drown had not young Richard pulled him out and as a reward the king gave him the manor of Garsdon.

William Stumpe was the M.P. for Malmesbury from 1529-1536. He was re-elected in 1547 and was in office in 1552 and had been nominated for sheriff when he died. Matthew King became M.P. for three years before Sir James Stumpe, William's son took over in 1555.

William Stumpe, the weaver's son entertained King Henry VIIIth unexpectedly after they had been hunting in Braydon Forest, which reached closer to the town than it does today. This banquet, which is thought to have taken place in the Great Hall of what is now Tower House, was furnished by Stumpe.

"Stumpe commands his little army of workmen, which he fed daily in his house, to fast one meal until night, which they might easily do without endangering their health, and with the same provision gave the King and his court train (though not so delicious and various) most wholesome and plentiful entertainment."

William Stumpe was a very wealthy man. His looms produced 3000 rolls of broadcloth a year using wool from Cotswold Lions, a special sheep famed for their wool. Tetbury and Cirencester were great dealing centres.

After he had purchased the Abbey he donated the Nave as a parish church, The remaining Abbey buildings were filled with looms – perhaps as many as 20. There were several mills round the town, Wynard, Cowbridge and Posterne were some. Cannops was built near St John's bridge for fulling cloth to make felt. The finished wool would have left the town by horse and cart and probably by river too. Sir James Stumpe, William's son, is buried in St Margaret's, Westminster. Much of the Stumpe estate survives: Lord Suffolk is a descendant of Stumpe.

### **Further Articles on William Stump**

William Stumpe was a wealthy cloathier at Malmesbury, tempore Henrici VIII. His father was the parish Clarke of North Nibley in Gloucestershire, and was a weaver, and at last grew up to be a cloathier. This cloathier at Malmesbury, at the dissolution of the abbeyes, bought a great deale of the abbey lands thereabout. When King Henry 8th hunted in Bradon Forest, he gave his majesty and the court a great entertainment at his house (the abbey). The King told him he was afraid he had undone himself ; he replied that his own servants should only want their supper for it.

Leland says that when he was there the dortures and other great roomes were filled with weavers' loonies.

### **From The Natural History of Wiltshire, by John Aubrey, c. 1668.**

The hole loggings of th'abbay (of Malmesbyri) be now longging to one Stumpe, an exceeding rich clothiar, that bouthe them of the king. This Stumpe's sonne hath married Sir Edward Baynton's daughter. This Stumpe was the chef causer and contributor to have th' abbay chirch made a paroch chirch. At this present tyme every corner of vast houses of office that belonged to th' abbay be fulle of lumbes to weve cloth yn, and this Stumpe entendith to make a strete or 2 for clothiers in the back vacant ground of the abbay that is withyn the town waulles. There be made now every yere in the town a 3,000 clothes.

### **Leland's Itinerary, Vol ii, p.27**

#### **Kings Visit**

King Henry the Eighth, hunting near Malmsbury in Bredon Forest, came with all his court train, unexpected, to dine with this clothier. But great housekeepers aree seldom as surprised with guests as vigilant captains with enemies. Stumps commands his little army of workmen, which he fed daily in his house, to fast one meal until night (which they may do without injuring their health), and with the same provision gave the King and his court train (though not so delicious and various) most wholesome and plentiful entertainment.

### **The visit from King Henry VIII, as described in Thomas Fuller's History of the Worthies of England, Vol 3. 1840.**