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**Abel Wantner and his History of the City and County of
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The Author

Abel Wantner, ‘citizen of Gloucester’, worked for more than forty years on a ‘History of the City and County of Gloucester’. He never completed it, but the many documents that he accumulated contain much that is valuable, some of still unpublished, and offer a picture of an endearingly determined and resilient character of the turn of the 17th century.

Wantner was baptised in the church of St John the Baptist in Gloucester in 1639 and was buried there in 1714.¹ He came from a family of modest status well established in the city. His grandfather William Wantner was described as a ‘smith’ when his son Abel was bound apprentice in 1618. This Abel, the father of Abel the author, was described as ‘innkeeper’. In the registers of freemen and apprentices the younger Abel appears variously as ‘innholder’ and ‘clerk’. Two of his sons were apprenticed respectively to a barber surgeon and to a cordwainer.

Notwithstanding his modest antecedents Wantner aspired to the status of gentleman and in his history was ready to interrupt his discourse to assert his claims. He married Alice, ‘the eldest daughter of John Elton of Tetbury ... graduated doctor of physick, a branch of the ancient and honoured family of Hazle House in the county of Hereford’. His daughter Mary also married into a family of standing, to ‘Timothy Lowe Esq. of Ozleworth manor, the son of Sir Gabriel Lowe and a descendant of a lord mayor of London who acquired the manor in Queen Elizabeth’s day’ and Wantner as grandfather proudly announced that Timothy ‘hath two hopeful young gentlemen, his sons, viz. Timothy and Gabriel’. He seems to have acquired a nice sense of social distinction. The people of the Forest of Dean, he said, had been improved by example, ‘the gentry and the better sort’ having reduced them to ‘far greater civility, obedience and conformity’ than before.

For some years Wantner was innkeeper at the White Hart at Minchinhampton. He took pride in his calling. In his description of the city of Gloucester he transcribed a list of the city companies from Sir Robert Atkyns’s history² and added to it the company of innholders, now ceased: ‘the propagating of the last might be very advantageous to the city’. As a further patent of gentility Wantner, now described as ‘gent’, was among those summoned (albeit as an afterthought) to attend the officers of the College of Arms when in the course of their visitation of Gloucestershire of 1682 and 1683 they were accommodated at the White Hart.³ Subsequently he returned to

1. Biographical details are based on Brian Frith, ‘Abel Wantner, an unpublished Gloucestershire Historian’, *Trans. BGAS* 99 (1981), p. 170 and on two volumes of the Gloucestershire Record Series of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society: vol. 4, *Registers of Gloucester Freemen, 1641–1838*, ed. J. Juřica (1991) and vol. 14, *A Calendar of the Registers of Apprentices of the City of Gloucester 1595–1700*, ed. J. Barlow (2001).
2. *The Ancient and Present State of Glostershire* (1712).
3. P.L. Dickinson, ‘The Heralds’ Visitation of Gloucestershire, 1682–3’, *Trans. BGAS* 117 (1999), pp. 11–33, especially the facsimile reproduction at p. 19 of the list of those summoned from Longtree hundred.

Gloucester, where he became clerk to the parish of St John Baptist. Nothing survives to show when he went, but he was almost certainly in Gloucester in 1691 when in the roll of apprentices one of his sons was described as ‘Thomas, son of Abel, clerk, of Gloucester’.

There is little in his early life to suggest a future dedicated to history. No record of his education has survived. He wrote in a robust and literate style in a clear hand. His frequent errors in the transcription of Latin show that he was no scholar, but he was sufficiently recognised as an antiquarian in Gloucester to be the recipient of Roman coins excavated there. He was greatly interested in heraldry. The composition of a manuscript described as ‘Arms of the Gentry of Gloucester collected by Abel Wantner, 1683’⁴ may have been stimulated by his involvement in the heralds’ visitation.

The Inception and Progress of the Project, and its Aftermath

All that is known of Wantner’s project is found in two matching volumes in the Bodleian Library. That with the shelfmark MS Top. Glouc. c. 2 contains nearly 400 folios that are almost all relevant in some measure to his undertaking, but otherwise for the most part have little in common. Nearly all are manuscript, but they also include several copies of printed prospectuses and copies of the only printed pages from his proposed History that are known to exist. The manuscripts range from substantial booklets to unidentifiable fragments. Many are amplifications and reworkings of entries intended for his History which often contain valuable matter that he later discarded.⁵ Others, in several different hands, include material which he followed closely for important parts of his work. The companion volume MS. Top. Glouc. c. 3 devotes nearly 300 pages to a draft of Wantner’s entire History.

Wantner intended to fund the publication of his History by subscription. In 1685 he printed a prospectus (see Appendix 1) in which he announced that for the past twelve years it had been his ‘great design’ to prepare a ‘large and true history of the city and county of Gloucester, in folio’. In the prospectus he included what he described as ‘a brief abstract of the most remarkable heads therein contained’ with the purpose ‘to satisfy the curiosity of many who possibly thereafter may seem unwilling to subscribe before they know the subject matter on which it treateth’. The prospectus also sought to encourage subscribers by setting out the names of those who had previously undertaken to subscribe. Wantner’s practice appears to have been to ask newly recruited subscribers to append their names to a copy of the prospectus and then to consolidate them in a subsequent printing. Three printings of the prospectus of 1685 are known (one of them in two copies) with a total of 126 names.

This might suggest that Wantner’s quest for supporters had already proved quite successful, but he soon became concerned that actual payments were falling short of promises. In 1686 he printed a revised prospectus in an improved format. There is no doubt that its main purpose was to stimulate payments. In 1685 he had done no more than to announce that the subscription money ‘for, and towards the completion of, this design is ten shillings’ (and 10s. more on receipt). Now there was a note of urgency: ‘The author requesteth all gentlemen ... not to defer any longer their subscribing, which hath been the only reason for holding it back so long, which, if now encouraged, will be the means to have it appear by midsummer at the latest’. The plea was expressed still more

4. It was sold at the sale of the books and manuscripts of Peter le Neve, Norroy King of Arms, according to a manuscript note in a copy of a sale catalogue for 3s.: Bodleian Library Bibl. III 8° 10.
5. The most substantial item to be discarded was a history of Bristol, of which three separate complete versions, each of over 5,000 words, are in his working papers.

forcibly in another manifesto which survives in a much altered draft in which he referred to his 'labour, care, trouble and great expense' and to his unwillingness to expose himself to 'the hazard of uncertainties'.

Despite his preoccupations Wantner remained optimistic. Perhaps he had some justification for by 1686 he had attracted 172 intending subscribers, whose names make an impressive list. The nobility of the county was well represented by the duke of Beaufort, the earl of Worcester, the earl of Berkeley and Viscount Tracy. They had all promised a double subscription, as had the bishop of Gloucester, Robert Frampton, and, presumably to encourage a fellow historian, Sir Robert Atkyns. Many subscribers can be identified as clergy or gentry of the county, including several of those summoned to the heralds' visitation. Outside the county Wantner made his mark at Oxford, where subscriptions were promised by several members of the University, among them the influential Robert Plot, secretary of the Royal Society, with whom he corresponded. He might reasonably have expected men of such probity to fulfil their undertakings, and was confident enough to try to reach out farther. In the optimistic belief that a history of Gloucester would attract patronage in London he announced in his prospectus that he would be accessible 'any morning this week' at the Three Cups in Bread Street to talk to anyone interested, and that anyone then persuaded to subscribe should take their money to his agent Luke Singleton, in the Poultry, who would in due course hand over their copies of the History. Perhaps unsurprisingly, there is nothing to show that his optimism was justified.

In the prospectus of 1685 Wantner had done no more than announce that his 'large and true History' was in progress. In 1686 he committed himself more fully by referring to the History as 'now in the press, as may appear by the specimen of the first sheet ready to be presented to any gentleman that desires sight of it'. It was not true that the History was then in the press. His working papers show that by 1685 he had made progress on several of the subjects set out in his prospectuses, but with one exception nothing in print has survived, and almost certainly none existed; it is inconceivable that a work of the size contemplated, having been incomplete for want of funds, should in the next year, funds still wanting, have been printed in its entirety. Probably Wantner was guilty of no more than over-enthusiastic use of the prophetic present.

In fact more was printed than the promised single page. Six pages survive which have the appearance of two distinct extracts to be offered together as a sample from a longer work. The title *The Natural History of Gloucestershire by Abel Wantner, citizen of Gloucester*⁶ is followed by *Chap. I: Of the Ancient City of Gloucester, from the Original*. The following text ends in mid-sentence; then follows the heading *Chap. II. Of the Ancient Abbey and now Cathedral Church of Gloucester, from the Original*; the subsequent text similarly ends abruptly.

No record survives of any further attempt to attract support, and probably none was made. The sad words expressed in the manuscript of his History in his last years encapsulated the ultimate failure of his life's work: 'Hoping that these my poor endeavours will find acceptance and encouragement that so this manuscript may be made public by way of subscriptions to the printing of it to what order and method the judicious shall prescribe for the carrying on of the work'. In fact what he had by then achieved still fell well short of a publishable work. Wantner seems to have overstated his achievements to the end.

When Wantner died in 1714 his intentions for a history had long since been revealed by the detailed summaries of its proposed contents included in his prospectuses. In particular the

6. An unfamiliar hand has changed its title to begin *The Antiquities and Memoires of the City and County of Gloucester ...*, more closely akin to the titles later adopted by Wantner, with the following headnotes altered accordingly. Wantner may have arrived at his earlier, misleading, title from a misguided analogy to Robert Plot's *The Natural History of Oxfordshire* (1677).

scholarly world had been alerted through his association with Robert Plot. Wantner's papers were not to become generally accessible for another forty years after his death, but the mere knowledge of his endeavours led to a stream of lively comment. It seems that by 1695 it had become known that he had failed to get the money that he needed. Reactions were at first sympathetic. In his edition of 1695 of Camden's *Britannia* Edmund Gibson included 'a catalogue of some books and treatises relating to the antiquities of England' which mentioned Wantner: 'He had been twelve years in the collecting but not meeting (I suppose) with answerable encouragement the book still remains in manuscript'. William Nicolson in the 1696 edition of his *English Historical Library* felt strongly for him: '[Wantner,] who meeting with the discouragements that are common in that case [i.e. publication by subscription] (an untoward recompense for a gentleman's twelve years' pains and study), was content to enjoy the fruits of his labour himself'.

These views had not been universally shared. Several years previously, Wantner had been given a most unfriendly reception by Richard Parsons, chancellor of the diocese of Gloucester, who maintained that some of the local gentry had besought him to compose a history of the county in default of the composition of 'a blockheady innkeeper that could not write his own name and pretended to be an antiquarian of the county, but it was a ridiculous thing void of all sense'.⁷ It would seem from this that Parsons, a regular visitor to Oxford, knew nothing of the interest there in Wantner, for his remarks were addressed to Arthur Charlett, master of University College, who was one of those who had previously undertaken to support him. Charlett appears to have kept his own counsel, but it may well have been Parsons's baleful influence that persuaded Bishop Nicolson, whose acquaintance and correspondent he was, to take a very different view of Wantner's attainments in the revised version of his *English Historical Library* published in 1714. He now thought it appropriate that Wantner should 'meet with those discouragements that were suitable to the man's busy meddling in things beyond his station'. Soon after, this appraisal was echoed, with uncharacteristic moderation, by the redoubtable Richard Rawlinson in his *The English Topographer* of 1720: '[Wantner was] thought by some unequal to the task he had undertaken'.

By Rawlinson's time much attention had been given to Wantner, but still nobody had a clear idea of what he had actually done. What little had been printed was in the sample pages available with his prospectuses. Only one copy appears to have survived and we cannot tell how widely the samples were broadcast; they would have done little for his reputation as he was at his weakest in the naïve accounts of early history he selected for display. Rawlinson referred to 'the manuscript collections of Wantner or Parsons' and surmised that they were still in manuscript 'or more probably incorporated into one I shall speak of later' – i.e. Atkyns's history of Gloucestershire; a misconception which has not yet been entirely dispelled.

The mystery was not solved until 1755 when the two volumes of Wantner's papers were acquired by the Bodleian Library as part of a bequest of Richard Furney, archdeacon of Surrey. As well as the two volumes of Wantner the bequest contained three volumes in Furney's hand related to the history of Gloucester. Furney made some use of Wantner in them. We do not know when Wantner's papers reached him, but it is certainly possible his comment 'Wantner appeared to me to be a man very little qualified for his work' in a letter of 1719 was the first appraisal to be based on observation rather than speculation.

Wantner's manuscripts have been used intermittently up to the present day. The earliest recorded users are Thomas Warton, fellow of Trinity College, who in his *History of English Poetry* of

7. Parsons to Charlett, Bodleian Library, MS Wood 43 f. 194 (7 May 1690).

1778⁸ cited Wantner as authority for an event in 13th-century Bristol, and the Gloucestershire historian Samuel Rudder, who in his *A New History of Gloucestershire* (1779) used Wantner's accounts of Almondsbury and Painswick. The continuator of Bigland in his *Historical Collections* printed much of Wantner's notes on Northleach and Stow, and recently Suzanne Eward in her *No Fine but a Glass of Wine* included substantial entries related to James II's visit to in Gloucester. Recent volumes of the *Victoria County History of Gloucestershire* have used Wantner extensively, with over a hundred citations.

The first surviving criticism of Wantner after his work became accessible was made, with characteristic acerbity, by the local historian Thomas Dudley Fosbrooke in his *An Original History of the City of Gloucester* (1819): 'of his tasteless account [of the merits of the cathedral] nothing need be said; the ideas are those of a parish clerk'; and of Wantner's whole work '[it was] happy that they were not published'. In recent years several commentators have been favourable and sympathetic, their judgements not always influenced by an intimate knowledge of their subject.

The Contents of the History

The first indication of what Wantner intended for the contents of his History is in the 'brief abstract of the most remarkable heads' in the prospectus of 1685. In fact it was much more than a brief abstract, being a list of contents set out in some detail under 23 headings. The implication that it presaged a well-ordered work is misleading. It was evidently concocted from the miscellany of documents already acquired by Wantner in the course of twelve years' work, and put together in haste when he realised that the need for more funds was pressing. All but two of the headings in the prospectus have an exact counterpart in the working papers.

From the early days of his project Wantner continually augmented and revised his drafts and experimented, sometimes at length, on the way he should present his material. It was probably after he came to realise that his search for support had failed him that he repented of his headstrong assurance that a History existed and set to work on an entirely new presentation, which was ultimately to appear as MS Top. Glouc. c. 3. The items of the prospectus were still addressed, but Wantner now had in mind a History wider in scope than the prospectuses might have suggested. He included transcriptions, often extensive, of charters, grants of privileges and similar formal documents, which together account for more than a tenth of his entire text. In the 1685 prospectus he had repeatedly drawn attention to the inclusion of heraldic matters in his catalogues of persons. In 1686 he mysteriously removed them, but in his History he returned to them with enthusiasm, and an almost obsessive interest in heraldry permeated his entire work; he even described Minchinhampton church tower in heraldic terms. Descriptions of memorials and monuments were prominent throughout. Of especial interest are the many digressions and anecdotes which he introduced, under the subtitle 'Observations', into his accounts of market towns and of parishes. These, like his accounts of the contemporary city and cathedral of Gloucester, add a vivacity to his work not to be found in its many catalogues or in its ponderous expositions of earlier history. Often the 'observations' are only marginally relevant to their immediate context and appear sometimes to be included because Wantner could not resist telling a good story. Sometimes he seems gullible in unreservedly accepting them as true, though regardless of their truth they can be valuable as examples of the folk-lore alive in his day.

8. Warton, *The History of English Poetry from the close of the eleventh to the commencement of the eighteenth century* ii (1778), p. 140, citing 'History of Bristol, MS Archiv. Bodl. c iii by Abel Wantner'. Warton described Wantner's work as a document in the Furney papers, 'supposed to have been compiled by Abel Wantner of Minchinhampton'.

His History was now divided into five parts, or 'books' as he called them. Throughout they are set in double column and written in the same clear hand. They were clearly meant to make a single document, but the differences in the way they were presented show that Wantner never finally decided on the form his History was to take.

The titles of the first two books are very similar in style (suggesting that Wantner may once have considered issuing them as individual works): 'The History of Gloucester, or the Antiquities, Memoirs and Annals of the Present City and Royal Dukedom of Gloucester from its Original to the Present Time, by Abel Wantner, Citizen of Gloucester, 1714' and 'The Antiquities, Memoirs and Annals of the Ancient Abbey and now Cathedral Church of Gloucester, from their Originals to this Present Time' by Abel Wantner, 1713/4'. They are also similar in the way their contents are presented. Each starts with an account of early history with few local associations, entirely derivative and arid but of interest because they closely resemble the sample pages printed by Wantner. Thereafter events up to Wantner's day are set out chronologically, their presentation increasingly attractive and their content of increasing value.

In 'The Third Book', thus simply entitled, Wantner at first proposed 'an account of the county and diocese of Gloucester according to their civil and ecclesiastical jurisdiction'. This, however, did not survive, though a page in his working papers shows that he gave it a trial, and the contents of the third book are introduced by 'And first of its civil affairs'. It is nearly all accounts of market towns, which notwithstanding its introduction include descriptions of their parish churches. The introduction to the fourth book, 'The description of the county of Gloucester according to its ecclesiastical jurisdiction' shows it was meant to be complementary to the third. Nearly all of it is an itemised catalogue of parishes (with an unusually large number of omissions). As it was left in the History it is clearly a working document with several notes stitched on to its folios and annotations in a foreign hand not yet assimilated into its text.

The fifth part is entitled 'The Honorary Part, or the Fifth Book', continuing 'in which is contained the Names, Seats, Coats of Arms (and most of the Crests) belonging to the Nobility and Gentry of the County of Gloucester from 1 Hen. II A.D. 1154 to the present time'. In it Wantner unconvincingly tried to consolidate ten catalogues of holders of different 'degrees of honour', assembled independently in his working papers without any pretence of uniformity.

A plausible deduction from the presentation and content of the books as they survive is that by about 1706 Wantner arrived at drafts of all five. These he continued to update and to modify. The changes and additions to the third, fourth and fifth books did not disturb their format. By contrast, the conjectural versions of the first and second books were overtaken by completely rewritten books.

Wantner's Sources of Information

Much that Wantner recorded was based on his own observations. His accounts of recent events in the city reflect personal knowledge or hearsay, and his description of the interior of the cathedral has the air of a guided tour. Clearly he visited many parishes and their churches, especially notable with the churches of the city and Minchinhampton, places where he had lived. His notes on the government of market towns, which include matter since lost, were probably based on the inspection of records held locally. He certainly made much use of the borough records of Gloucester, transcribing charters and grants of privileges at length and using the records of the common council. His transcription of the regulations of St Bartholomew's hospital is made additionally interesting by an interpolated note: 'Next to this paragraph was a half sheet of paper torn out of an ancient copy, which I suppose contained'. Several tantalising references to ancient

documents are made throughout his work, usually with an introduction such as ‘I once had perusal of an ancient text’ and ‘I have seen in an ancient writing’.

He often sought information directly. He assured his readers that it was not for want of trying that he had fallen short: ‘As for the dedication of churches I have been very inquisitive but when ministers know nothing of it how can it be expected that I should give a true record thereof?’ he asked plaintively; and ‘As to charitable endowments and other benefactions, though I have been very anxious in my inquiries and exact in taking cognisance thereof, yet I suppose that there are more than came to my knowledge’.

In his working papers there are several substantial documents with information that he probably sought. He acknowledged the help of Nathaniel Freind of Westerleigh, a genealogist of some standing, who gave him a booklet which included ‘a catalogue of the gentry of Gloucester whose arms I have’ which he used in his ‘honorific part’. In another instance he noted: ‘As to the present value of every incumbency, these I received from the hands of Mr Charles Peirson, deputy registrar of the reverend chancellor of the diocese of Gloucester, exactly transcribed according to an inspection that was made over the county presently after the restoration of King Charles II’.

Wantner had access to many of the well-known authors of the day. For his accounts of early ecclesiastical and civil history, and of topography, he relied in particular on Camden’s *Britannia* and Leland’s *Itinerary*. Some topographical descriptions apart, these accounts lack perception, though Wantner did not always accept his authorities uncritically, and he noted apparent discrepancies between them, while candidly recognising that it was beyond him to resolve them. Throughout his work he continued to make use of Leland and Camden and other contemporary authorities, notably Fuller’s *Worthies of England* and *Church History*. Some of the anecdotes of events in parishes he found in comparatively obscure works, and two in the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*. For these, and also for Leland, not then yet in print, he probably depended on his connections at Oxford.

A work of a different kind that greatly influenced Wantner when it was published in 1712 was Sir Robert Atkyns’s history of Gloucestershire. Atkyns’s aims were very similar to his own, and almost certainly it was its appearance that led him radically to revise his first two books. Transcriptions of Atkyns, ranging from entries of several paragraphs to brief sentences, frequently occur in them. In one case Wantner introduced an extract from Atkyns by saying: ‘Now a late author [i.e. Atkyns] saith (but showeth no authority for what he saith)’ –making him probably the first of a long and continuing line with the same regret. In others his reliance on Atkyns was made explicit: ‘(a catalogue of gifts to Gloucester abbey) being too voluminous for this tract I shall therefore refer the reader that is desirous to read Sir Robert Atkyns his present state of Gloster where he may be fully satisfied’ and ‘(all the statutes of the Cathedral, Henry VIII’s charter etc.) I could here have included, but as Sir Robert Atkyns has already saved me that trouble I shall recommend ... the perusal of his present state of Gloster, where [the reader] may fully satisfy his curiosity’. Clearly the good-natured Wantner harboured no resentment on finding his life’s work anticipated. They may, indeed, have had friendly exchanges; Wantner’s transcription of a Latin catalogue of the sheriffs of Gloucestershire corresponds exactly to the list of sheriffs, in English, in Atkyns’s *History*.

Wantner Revealed in his History

The text of the *History* contains over a hundred inputs from Wantner which tell much about him (see Appendix 4). They are cast in an idiosyncratic style in which he often took the reader into his confidence over the planning and progress of the *History* and candidly acknowledged his difficulties and failures. He addressed the reader with an informality most unlikely for a serious work of history, occasionally breaking into doggerel rhyme. Throughout the *History* he

didactically explained matters that he thought might be unfamiliar, and introduced his own esoteric and largely irrelevant knowledge on a slender pretext. At the end of his account of the cathedral in the second book he added his own list of ten of its merits, and concluded with a painful play on the names of cathedral dignitaries which makes embarrassing reading after three centuries.

The History is pervaded by a spirit of piety, not always expressed with Christian charity. He invoked 'the blessed assistance of Almighty God' when starting work on one book and came to the end of another 'through the gracious assistance of my Heavenly Father'. He was an ardent supporter of the Established Church, calm enough when noting the total absence of Dissent in Newent – 'to the glory of God be it spoken and to the honour and praise of Christ's ambassadors there residing', – but in a more historical perspective quite uncharacteristically vituperative; he could not forgive the insinuation of Benedictine popery into Gloucester abbey and neither, he would have it, could God. Into his survey of the cathedral in post-Restoration times he inserted an extravagant survey of recent Church history, and likewise his account of the hospitals of Gloucester was interrupted by a thousand words of exhortation of the virtues of charitable giving. In it he asserted that 'the gift is doubled by a speedy deliverance', no doubt ruefully recalling his experiences when seeking subscriptions.

Wantner Appraised

If critical appraisal may include admiration for sustained industry it must certainly be afforded Wantner in full measure. Equally he deserves sympathy for having to accept at the end of his days that the hopes long held of a published work had come to nothing. By then he had accumulated much of value to offer. He is at his best as a recorder of his own and recent times (see Appendix 2), where he usually abandoned literary pretension to give well-ordered and occasionally vivid accounts of matters sometimes not recorded elsewhere, some of them significant in national history. This is especially so for the city and cathedral of Gloucester, where as clerk of St John's parish he was well placed to observe both civic and ecclesiastical affairs. His enthusiasm for seeking out and recording anecdotal matters, some gleaned during his travels in the county, often led to a relish for local history that is frequently entertaining (see Appendix 3).

Unfortunately Wantner pretended to more than a mere recorder, and as a historian he leaves little to be said in his favour. Some licence may be extended to a modicum of inadvertent error but not to errors of fact recorded with such circumstance that they could not have been oversights. Thus, John Parker was recorded as succeeding William Malvern to become the last abbot in 1540, whereas the last abbot was William Malvern, *alias* Parker, elected in 1514. Wantner compounded his error by saying (rightly) that the abbey was resigned by the prior, (wrongly) in 1558, i.e. 1 Eliz. He described James Brooks, the only Marian bishop of Gloucester and a figure of some historical significance, as 'consecrated the third bishop of Gloucester in the first year of Queen Elizabeth, 1558'. In what was ostensibly a translation of a contemporary charter he ascribed the title of Defender of the Faith to Richard III. He maintained that the Statute of Mortmain of the time of Edward I was designed to counter the baneful influence of the Jesuits. Remarkably in a field that was Wantner's great interest, errors in the recording of coats abound, and provoke a grave suspicion that he attributed to his subjects the arms of others, or even invented a coat. In his descriptive list of abbots of Gloucester the account of John de Gamage was confused by the intrusion of an entry relating to a fictitious John Gagg, whose supposed armorial bearings were given in detail, and an error even more blatant assigned to Abbot Peter (*fl.* 1104) a coat of arms devised in the time of Henry VIII.⁹ Such obvious failings apart there are throughout the text of the

9. This information was given by Mr Patric Dickinson, Richmond Herald.

History many less blatant but still palpable errors which show it to have been written with little care. Especially in the tabulations of nominal and numerical data there are frequent differences between the text of the History and the corresponding working papers which can only rarely be seen as deliberate corrections, and where Wantner's data differ from generally accepted authority they carry no suggestion of an independent investigation. The cumulative effect of these failings is to destroy confidence in Wantner's pretensions as a historian.

Nevertheless the story of Wantner's life and works should not end with selective strictures on his shortcomings, for we owe to him much that would otherwise be lost. Moreover he deserves to be remembered as a personality of Gloucestershire history, albeit a lesser one – a warm-hearted enthusiast for whom, prolix and didactic though he could be, cheerfulness was always breaking in.

APPENDIX 1

The contents of the 'History' as proposed in 1685.

To the Nobility, Clergy and Gentry of the city and county of Gloucester
 Abel Wantner, citizen of Gloucester and inhabitant of Minchinhampton
 in the county aforesaid, most humbly certifieth:

That for twelve years past he hath made it his great business and design to collect the antiquities and other remarkable observations of his native city and county into one entire volume, being a large and true History of the City and County of Gloucester, in folio.

Now for the better information incouragement of all gentlemen and others that are willing to promote the completing of so good and useful a work (by way of subscription) the author hath here inserted a brief abstract of the most remarkable heads therein contained, purposely to satisfy the curiosity of many who possibly thereafter might seem unwilling to subscribe, before they know the subject matter on which it treateth.

Be pleased therefore to observe, That first you have the original foundation of that once most stately fabric the ancient abbey or monastery of Gloucester, with its continuation till Canute the Dane.

Secondly, you have a compendious memorial of the now cathedral church of Gloucester, with the names of each founder, and how endowed, with the variety of other remarkable passages, from Edward the Confessor to King Henry the Eighth.

Thirdly, you have its ordained constitution into a bishop's see, with their prescript rule of living, their yearly stipends and other allowances, the time when every bishop and dean was consecrated and installed, to the late unhappy wars, with several other things relating thereunto.

Fourthly, you have its particular dimensions, both within and without, with an account of all statues, monuments, memorials, and coats of arms therein contained, with the articles (of the chapter) of the foundation, the supposed valuation of every minister, and other men's places belonging thereunto, by the year, with the names of every bishop, chancellors, and dean, archdeacons and prebends that have been since His Majesty's restoration to this present year, with most of their coats of arms.

Fifthly, you have the original denomination and building of the village, borough and city of Gloucester, and by whom augmented and increased, traced through the ancient Britons, Romans, etc. to the second year of King Richard the Third; begun with variety of historical relations and continued with sundry remarkable and modern observations, briefly compiled out of the most approved authors, as well before as since the Conquest.

Sixthly, you have a particular survey of the strength and fortification of the city of Gloucester before its demolishment with a compendious narrative of the river Severn. After this you have a general survey of the whole city by way of delineation with the ancient names of every street and lane, the descriptions of the demolished churches, where they stood and to what parishes they are now annexed.

Seventhly, you have a particular description of every parish church now standing in the city, with an account of all statues, monuments, memorials and coats of arms therein contained, and what charitable gifts, are bequeathed to the poor of every parish.

Eighthly, you have an account of all hospitals, almshouses, free schools and other charitable endowments within the city, with the names of their founders, and how many poor people each of them entertaineth, and what yearly or weekly allowance each of them have; and when, and by whom, each of the chiefest and most eminent places in all the city were built, with many other

memorable observations relating thereunto.

Ninthly, you have the constitution of its government, their number and assistants, their usual manner of election and bringing home of the mayors, etc., the extension of the mace and many other remarkable passages, with an account of the names and coats of arms of all the most noble and potent princes that have been dignified with the honourable titles of earls and dukes of Gloucester [with the ancient and present arms of the city *deleted*].

And lastly, you have names of every mayor, from its first being made a city to the restoration of His Sacred Majesty, and from thence to this present year you have the names of every mayor and sheriff, with most of their coats of arms.

So much for the city.

Now for the general description of the county:

First you have the particular division thereof, according to ecclesiastical order, branched forth into ten deaneries, briefly compiled into eight columns. In the first you have an alphabet of every parish church and chapel belonging to every deanery in the county, and to what abbey, monastery or other religious house it belonged. In the second you have the names of the present patrons, in the third the names of each minister, in the fourth the supposed valuation, in the fifth their tenths, in the sixth their procurations, in the seventh their pentecostals and in the eighth their synodals.

Secondly you have a particular division of the whole county according to the common or civil jurisdiction, principally separated into four columns, which is afterwards drawn into thirty hundreds and lastly subdivided into parishes, hamlets and tithings, all alphabetically.

Thirdly you have an account of every market town as it lieth within its respective hundred, with its original denomination, how situated, extended and bounded, either with hills, rivers, woods and commons, the constitution of their governments, the antiquity of their charter; lords of the manors and the particular trade on which each town dependeth, and how far distant it lieth from the next adjacent markets.

Fourthly you have the description of every church belonging to every market town, by whom and when some of them were built, and to what saint dedicated, with an account of all statues, monuments memorials and coats of arms contained in any of them, and to what family they belonged, etc.

Fifthly, to the intent that the pious and charitable endowments of all well disposed Christians for and towards the relief of their poor distressed brethren may be publicly recorded to future posterity I have here inserted a catalogue of most, if not all, the hospitals, free schools and other good and commendable gifts bequeathed either to the church or poor in any market town or village within this county, with the names of each donor, and how many poor people every such hospital or almshouse doth entertain, and what weekly allowances, and other privileges they have, and what every schoolmaster and usher (if any) have by the year, and by whom paid.

Sixthly you have in every hundred of all Roman and Mercian fortifications, Saxon rampires and Danish camps, with the signification of those piles of rubbish earth called barrows, and what hath been found under many of them, as also your chequer-work pavements, stoves, numismatas, veins of ore, quarries, and variety of solid stones found up and down many places in this county etc.

Seventhly for the better preservation of the honour and antiquity of the nobility and gentry of this county to further ages I have at the end of Forest division inserted an alphabet of all His Majesty's present justices of the peace of this county, their seats and coats of arms.

Eighthly at the end of Kiftsgate division you have the names, seats and coats of arms of all the high sheriffs, and knights of the shire that have been in the county since His Majesty's most happy restoration.

Ninthly at the end of the Seven Hundreds division you have an account of the names, seats [and coats of arms *deleted*] of all the knights, baronets and knights of the Bath belonging to this county and when they were dubbed or created.

Tenthly, for the better illustration of the work you have at the end of Berkeley division the names, seats and titles of honour appertaining to the greater luminaries of the county, viz. the viscounts, barons, lords, earls, marquesses and dukes, gradually ranked according to their ascending qualities, with their shields of honour, mantlings, supporters and mottos displayed by precious stones.

Eleventhly you have a small tract of the military jurisdiction and discipline of the county, to which is annexed a list of all His Majesty's commissioned officers that now are, according to their several places of command in a regimental order and how many soldiers every parish, hamlet and tithing provided.

Twelfthly you have an alphabet of the private gentlemen's names, seats and coats of arms.

And last of all you have the original denomination, situation, enlargement and continuation, with sundry other remarkable observations on the famous city of Bristol from its first foundation to the late unhappy wars etc.

APPENDIX 2

Wantner as recorder of his own times.

The following extracts from the 'History' are selected as examples of Wantner at his best.

The chronological account of the city of Gloucester in Wantner's first book, which is entirely derivative in its earlier stages, concludes with much that must have drawn on personal observation. The extract below covers the period from the Restoration to Wantner's own day. It includes an instance of Wantner's readiness to interrupt his exposition with long interpolations, in this extreme example by a transcription of the current charter of the city which occupied thirty-three pages.

(Book 1, ff.24v.–42v.)

In the 12th year of the reign of King Charles II, 1666 the Oatmeal market house, and public pump which stood at the east end of St John Baptist church, were converted to private uses.

In the 13th year of his reign, 1667, he commanded the walls and the gates of the city to be thrown to the ground because they shut them against his father.

In the 23th year of his reign the king was pleased to call in their charter, being the first charter in the kingdom that he took into his own hands.

Here followeth the present charter of the city of Gloucester. [*A transcription of the charter of 1668 follows.*] In this charter is contained the heads of all the former charters granted by several kings and queens to the village, borough and city of Gloucester.

In the 16th year of the reign of King Charles the second A.D. 1671 the four stewards of the city were discharged of their places, viz. Mr John Matthews Mr Daniel Comeline, Mr William Lugg and Mr Daniel Collens, being the last that bore that office in the city, and in their places was chosen a chamberlain, Mr Matthew Bower.

In the second year of the reign of King James the second A.D. 1685 John Hill Esq., being the mayor of the city, did set up a mass house in the new Tolsey of the city.

The next year following the aforesaid mayor Hill (for he continued mayor two years) with consent of the chamber of the city caused the effigy of King James the Second to be most curiously cut out of stone and placed on the top of Trinity conduit looking westward, which cost the city (with the adorning of the conduit) three score pounds sixteen shillings and twopence.

The same year His Majesty King James the second came in his royal progress to Gloucester where he was most magnificently received by the mayor, aldermen, sheriffs and common council in their formalities kneeling and then presented the king with one hundred pieces of broad gold, each worth £1 6s. 0d., and paid Sir Thomas Dupper for the city's homage fees £36 6s. 8d. All the chiefest streets and lanes of the city was covered either with gravel or sand and all beset with green boughs and branches of trees, and strewed with variety of flowers and garlands not a few, so that the city seemed to be more like a pleasant grove than what it was. Through which His Majesty accompanied with his nobles and thousands of people rode to King Edward's gate, which giveth entrance into the college upper churchyard, where the dean and prebendaries of the cathedral met His Majesty without vestments and received him on their knees, and from thence attended him to the deanery where His Majesty resided. The next morning His Majesty went privately to see the cathedral and the whispering place, and the same afternoon was graciously pleased to touch and stroke in the Ladies' Chapel of the said church 103 persons that were troubled with the distemper called struma, or the king's evil, and gave unto each of them a medal of gold to hang about their necks.

In the beginning of the reign of King William and Queen Mary the stately effigy of King James, which stood on the top of Trinity conduit, was most opprobriously and contumaciously thrown

down by some of the duke of Bolton's regiment, which then quartered in town, and broken all to pieces, and in contempt to His Majesty was most scornfully and ignominiously put into a wheelbarrow and rugged down the street to the quay and thrown there into the river Severn.

In the second year of the reign of King William and Queen Mary, Trinity conduit, on which King James his effigy stood, was taken down, and the cistern and pipes removed under Trinity tower.

In the third year of their reign, A.D. 1691, Doctor Robert Frampton, the then Lord Bishop of Gloucester, was displaced of his bishopric for refusing to take the oaths of allegiance and supremacy, and Doctor Edward Fowler, a prebendary of that church, was consecrated Bishop of Gloucester in his stead.

The same year [*recte* 1694] King William conferred the honour of knighthood upon John Powell, citizen and town clerk of Gloucester, Esq., and afterwards made him one of the barons of his honourable Court of Exchequer.

The same year the new pyramidical glasshouse at the quay was built by Mr Thomas Brown, Mr Benjamin Hyett and Mr Henry Footen, who were then the undertakers and partners in the carrying on of that work.

The same year the new water works at the Westgate bridge, which supplieth the city with Severn water, was begun to be built, by Mr Thomas Nichols, plumber, Mr Lowbridge and Mr Dench. The two last sold their half parts unto the mayor Thomas Longdon, Alderman Thomas Webb and Mr Thomas Lloyd. And Mr Sam. Palmer bought the other two shares of Mr Lowbridge and Mr Dench.

The same year the new causeway from the hithermost rails on this side St Margaret's hospital to the uppermost part of St Mary Magdalen's hospital, was raised and new pitched at the city's charge.

In the 10th year of King William A.D. 1699 the dissenters' meeting house without the east gate was built.

The same year the causeway from the sign called White Hall in Barton Street to the gout that crosseth the way was raised and new pitched.

In the 11th year of his reign A.D. 1700 the dean and chapter of the cathedral of Gloucester did cause the highway behind the college wall (from the blind gate by the Pelican) almost to the end of Hare Lane to be raised and new pitched raising the footway so far as the new pitching went.

In the first year of our most gracious Sovereign Lady Queen Anne, A.D. 1702, John Powell aforesaid was made one of the judges of her Majesty's Royal Bench.

In the second year of her reign some of the citizens of Gloucester were at the charge of procuring an act of parliament for the building and establishing of a public workhouse, for keeping the poor of the city at work. In order thereunto they took a lease from the city of the great house at the Eastgate (called Bridewell formerly) for the poor to work in until the new workhouse was finished, which was never yet begun.

In the 5th [*sic MS*] year of her reign, A.D. 1705, the highway from Alving Gate (alias Anne Gate) was raised and new pitched, so far as the Red Lion Back Gate.

The same year the crown of Mr Scrivens's conduit was taken down, new built and beautified.

In the 5th year of her reign, A.D. 1707, the Reverend Doctor Knightly, dean of Gloucester, and several other gentlemen, finding the decay of the public workhouse for the poor (beforementioned) to be such that there was no likelihood of its being maintained or being kept up, under that notion promoted (in its stead) the setting up of a charity school for the education of poor children of the city of both sexes, the boys to read and write and the girls to spin and sew, allowing the master twenty pounds a year and the mistress ten pounds a year, which is continued with great

encouragement and good success to the everlasting praise and honour of those who were and are the promoters thereof.

In the year aforesaid, March 6th, being the commission day for the assizes, or gaol delivery, for the city and county of Gloucester, it was observed, and a thing worthy of notice, that the judge, Sir John Powell, knight, the High Sheriff, Henry Wagstaff, Esq., and the Under Sheriff, Benjamin Hyett, gent., were all of them inhabitants and free burgesses of the city of Gloucester at that time.

At a Quarter Sessions held for the city and county of Gloucester A.D 1709 it was ordered that Maisemore bridge, of wood, which (within the memory of man) had been burned down, should be built with stone, and arched over the river Ouzbourne (as Leland calls it) which was undertaken by one Henry Englynd, a bricklayer, and accordingly finished the next year after. As also the causeway from Maisemore bridge to Over's bridge was raised and made four foot wider than it was before and new pitched from one end to the other, which cost the city of Gloucester two hundred pounds. And one hundred pounds was raised by peoples' benevolence, and two hundred pounds was raised out of the parish of Maisemore.

Wednesday August 10th 1709 was brought up the river Severn to the quay of Gloucester a young whale or grampus which was near twenty foot in length.

About the latter end of April A.D. 1710 one Robert Meek of Barton street in the tithing of St Michael's in the city of Gloucester had a sow which carried six pigs, five of them according to nature but the other was a most deformed creature having two heads, two bodies, conjoined in the middle, four eyes, four ears and eight legs, two tails but so strange sort of face that it was a very difficult thing for anyone to give a true description of it. This monster of a creature was publicly shown by beat of drum in the city of Gloucester and elsewhere to the great admiration of all spectators.

Upon 28th September A.D. 1711 being the eve of St Michael the Archangel, the royal effigy of our most gracious Sovereign Lady Queen Anne was set up betwixt the High Cross conduit and the wheat market, not far from the royal effigy of King Charles II which stands upon the end of the wheat market house, Caple Paine Esq. being then mayor; but not finished and set forth to public view till the Queen's birthday, February 6th, Samuel Hayward Esq. being then mayor. Which most noble piece of art work was made by John Ricketts of the city, carver, worth £50 the making.

The High Cross aqueduct or conduit being out of repair was thoroughly amended, richly painted and most nobly gilded and finished October 4th 1712, Samuel Hayward Esq. being then mayor.

In the month of August A.D. 1713, James Furney Esq. being the mayor, the Chamber of the city began to build the New (or Little) Quay for the better convenience of unlading and burdening their trows and barques which saileth up and down the river.

Wantner's first book includes accounts of the six city churches demolished during the civil war and of the five survivors, of which that of St John the Baptist (where Wantner was parish clerk), is set out below. In content and presentation it resembles those of the churches of Gloucester and of the market towns described in his third book. Characteristically Wantner in recording his wife's death draws attention to her social position. His brief reference to the financial status of the living is an abbreviation of a note in his working papers: 'Tis now a rectory in the gift of the Lord Chancellor, but of so mean a value by reason that lands and tithes formerly belonging thereunto is clearly lost, that were it not for the parishioners contributing thereunto it would hardly be worth any man's acceptation.'

(Book 1, ff. 53-55v.)

Of the church dedicated to St John Baptist.

This lovely spire church standeth near the upper Northgate which was built by Æthelstan the 25th king of the West Saxons and made into a priory of Black Canons of St Augustine. It was

afterwards made into a chantry and annexed to Trinity Church in the 13th year of King Edward III, 1340. There was also another chantry, dedicated to the Holy Rood, to which the abbey of Gloucester did present. There was likewise a chapel in this church dedicated to St Bridget. In the reign of King Henry VI the church of St John the Baptist in Gloucester was a sanctuary, for after the battle fought at Tewkesbury between King Edward IV and King Henry VI A.D. 1471 the two Lords Stafford (father and son) and Sir Thomas Lovell with others took sanctuary in this church. In the 13th year of the reign of King Henry VIII 1522 the abbey of Gloucester were patrons of this rectory.

The church consists of a large body with an aisle of the same size and a fair chancel.

It is now a rectory depending on the inhabitants' benevolence.

Charitable gifts bequeathed to this church and poor of this parish.

Hugh ap Howell of this parish, gent., gave by his last will two tenements lying in the lower Northgate Street now in the possession of Alderman Rodway, the chief rent thereof being £1 6s.8d. to the use of the parish.

John Weyman of this parish gave by will one tenement lying in the lower Northgate Street near the inn called the Red Lion, now in the possession of Mr Francis Yate. The chief rent thereof being twenty shillings.

John Soames, an alderman of this parish, gave by will one pound six shillings and eight pence a year for ever, part thereof to the minister for preaching a sermon in the said church the Sunday after the Purification of the Virgin Mary and the remainder to the poor of the said parish, binding several houses in St Mary Aldates parish for the payment of the said monies yearly, which houses are now in the possession of Mrs Lyes, widow.

Mr John Keylock of this parish gave by will three pounds a year for the reading of divine service every Wednesday morning for ever.

John Hayward, gent., an alderman of this city gave by will several tenements in St Aldates parish towards the maintenance of two poor widows of this parish, allowing them six pence a week and house rent from two little houses by the church door.

Sir Thomas Rich, knight and baronet born in this parish gave to this parish eight pieces of gilt plate, viz. two silver gilt flagons, two bowls with covers, one basin and a chalice; as also one damask communion table cloth and a napkin. One crimson communion carpet lined with red silk, one crimson velvet pulpit cloth lined with red serge, and a cushion of velvet, all richly fringed, edged and tasselled, with deep gold lace.

Daniel Lysons of this city, gent., gave to the poor of this parish thirteen shillings a year in bread for ever.

Sarah Wright, widow, gave ten shillings a year to the poor of this parish to be distributed in bread for ever. And 16s. every second year for the clothing of poor widows and fatherless children of this parish, which is now given in bread to the poor.

Mr John Crumwell of this city gave to the use of this parish two acres and a half of land lying in Cow meadow and the Windmill field, the rent thereof for the buying of coal for the poor people of this parish at Christmas, and to be distributed according to the discretion of the trustees appointed for that purpose etc.

Monuments and memorials in the church.

In the north side of the chancel are four monuments.

The first is the memorial of Eleanor the wife of William Shepherd, gent., the daughter of William Hayward an alderman of this city, who departed this life in childbirth July 2nd 1650. Her epitaph:

She feared God, she lov'd his word and ways,
 She was her husband's crown, her kindred's praise.
 Of modest prudent, pious carriage, she
 Might to her sex a living pattern be.
 But see! Before five lustres she had told
 The great good shepherd took her to his fold.
 Her fears are past, her throws and pains are ceast
 Her labour's don, and she is now at rest.
 Ask you why she so soon is gon, I'll tell
 What we who knew her think, God lov'd her well.

Their coat of arms: Sheppard: Ermine on a chief gules 3 battleaxes erected or. Hayward: Or an eagle displayed with two heads sable.

The second is erected in memory of Edward Grevil of this parish and Mary his relict, the daughter of William Hayward aforesaid with several others of that family. He died May 15th 1669, she died April 4th 1690. Grevil: Sable a cross and bordure engrailed or bezanty. Hayward: as before.

The third is erected in memory of Robert Carpenter, gent., but no coat of arms thereon. He died January 22nd 1669.

The 4th is erected in memory of Martha the relict of Thomas Peirse of this city and of Rebeccah Merret widow, their daughter, which said Rebeccah and Martha lieth both interred in this church, but no coat of arms thereon. Martha died February 16th 1699; Rebeccah, December 14th 1696.

At the upper end of the chancel stands a fair monument and demi-effigy of Thomas Price, Esq., twice mayor of this city, captain of foot and major of horse to King Charles II, who died January 14th 1678. He married with Dorothy the daughter of John Driver of Aston in the parish of Avening in the county of Gloucester, gent. Price, Driver: Their coats of arms: Argent a lion rampant sable per pale indented argent and azure two lions rampant respecting each other counterchanged.

On the other side of the chancel wall stands a very fine effigy monument of black and white marble, erected in memory of Mrs Dorothy Price (by her entirely beloved sister Mrs Bridget Prior) the daughter of the aforesaid Major Thomas Price, whose rare endowments is most eloquently set forth in the said monument, as followeth:

To the memory of the once graceful and now glorious virgin Dorothy Price, daughter of Major Thomas Price of this city, whose modesty, piety and affability added so real a luster to her exterior beauty that it rendered her the joy of her parents, the honour of her family and the delight of all that knew her. Prepared by those divine accomplishments for a more heavenly conversation in the year of her mortality XXIII and of her redemption MDCXCIII she was received into the habitation of the blessed. Her loving and dearly beloved sister Bridget desirous at once to show and express her grief and gratitude erected this monument of their mutual love which after time hath ground this marble into dust and buried all monuments in oblivion shall preserve to immortality.

Price: Her coat of arms: the shield is lozengeways argent a lion rampant sable.

On the right hand of the last stands the memorial of Richard Broad, once sheriff of this city. He died October 14th 1670. His coat of arms: Azure a chevron between 3 leopards' heads cabossed coronated proper.

Upon the next pillar stands the memorial of John Matthews of this city. He died December 12th 1656.

In the south-east end of the chapel dedicated to St Bridget (where the officers of the parish do hold their vestry) lieth interred the body of Mrs Alice Wantner, the wife of the author. She was

the daughter of John Elton of Tetbury in this county, graduated doctor of physick, a branch of the ancient and honoured family of Hazle House in the county of Hereford.

In the middle of the chancel under a large blue stone lieth the body of John Seames, once mayor of this city, etc. His effigy, and his heirs', are enchased thereon in large plates of brass and at the foot of the stone is written in letters of brass, viz:

Here under buried John Seames lyeth
 Who had four wives, the first Elizabeth
 And by her six sons and daughters five
 Then by Agnes, his second wive
 They sons had seven, daughters plenty
 The full number in all six and twenty
 He passed to God in the month August
 One thousand five hundred thirty six years just.

In the chancel on a square piece of brass is written to the memory of Robert Lawrence, son of Robert Lawrence of Sevenhampton, gent. He died 1670.

In the same chancel an inscription for Thomas Adams, alderman, who died 1621.

Another inscription for Richard Keylock, sheriff, who died 1636.

Another for Richard Bosley, sheriff, who died A.D. 1677.

In the south aisle there is an inscription for Hannah the wife of John Hiett, mercer. She died 1673.

In the cross aisle (next to the mayor's seat) lieth interred the body of Richard Smith, twice mayor of the city. He died July 31th 1637. Smith: His coat of arms: Argent a fess between 3 millrines in saltire sable.

Next to the last lieth interred under a large blue stone (enchased with the effigies of a man and woman in plates of brass) the bodies of John A'Bruges and his wife and at the foot there is written on a plate of brass in old text as followeth:

John A Bruges, gentleman, lieth buried heare
 Sometye of this county worshipful squire
 The 9th day of April flesh and blood died he
 One thousand four hundred fourscore and three
 And Agnes his wife, good woman shee
 They'n been turned to dust, so been yee
 Of earth we been made and formed
 And unto earth we been turned
 Have this in mind and memory
 You that live here, learn how to die
 And behold your own destany
 For as ye been now, so sometime were we
 Jesue for thy Moder Mayden free
 Have mercy on us for great pity
 And give them joy and everlasting life
 That prays for John a Bruges and Agnes his wife
 That their pains releaced may be
 Of charity say a Paternoster and an Ave.

Next to the last lieth interred the body of Francis Yeate of this parish, shoemaker, who died February 24th, 1699. This honest, substantial tradesman when he died had seven apprentices living. Six of them carried his corpse to the grave, and the seventh preached his funeral sermon,

viz. Mr Merret schoolmaster of St Mary de Crypt school.

At the foot of the last lieth interred the body of Mr James Commelin, physician. He died May 12th 1668. Commelin: His coat of arms: Argent a fess between 3 demi-unicorns salent sable.

As one goeth toward the pulpit in the alley there lieth the body of William Russel, twice mayor of the city. He died January 24th 1681. Russel: His coat of arms: Argent a chevron between 3 cross-crosslets bottony fitchy sable.

The next inscription to this last is that of John Hayward, an alderman of this city. He died June 8th 1640.

Wantner's description of the cathedral in his second book is the account of a perambulation. After visiting the nave and the Lady Chapel, he moved to the whispering place, and with a passing mention of twelve more chapels then turned to the great cloister. His list of the names of 'persons of honour' who were buried there includes some not recorded by Leland and otherwise unknown. Wantner then moved on to the new library. A comparison with his working papers reveals a change of mind; previously he had been 'desired not to mention the Parlimentary officers involved in its construction . . . when learning and loyalty were both greatly discountenanced'.

(Book 2, ff.114v.-115v,)

I am now come to speak of the great cloister, whose outside wall is seven times round a complete measured mile. having on the south side twenty places (or seats) for scribes to write the affairs or business of the church before printing was found out. Near the middle of the west quarter stands a door which giveth the entrance out of the deanery into the cloister and into the garden within the cloister which appertaineth to the deanery. In the north quarter of the cloister standeth the lavatory (or fountain) for the priests and others that belonged to the abbey to wash their hands and faces; on the other side in an arch of the wall was the place where they hanged up their towels to wipe in. In the east quarter of the cloister in an arch of the wall stand a very fair monument erected in memory of Elizabeth, the beloved wife of Abraham Rudhall of this city, bellfounder and surveyor of the cathedral. She died November 7th 1699. Also in memory of his 3 sons, viz. Isaac who died April 22nd 1697, Jacob who died October 4th 1699 and Joseph who died October 11th 1701. On the left hand the last monument stands a lofty and well built great wainscot door which giveth entrance into the old chapter house and new library, which place (according to Leland) was formerly set apart for the burying of the nobility and gentry even as the Lady Chapel is to this day. And to prove the same I will now give you the names of several persons of honour and quality that were buried there in the days of old, whose names were written on the walls near the graves wherein they were laid.

Hic jacet Rogerus, comes de Hereford.

Hic jacet Richardus de Strongbow filius Gilbert, comes de Pembroke.

Hic jacet Gualterus de Lacy.

Hic jacet Hughi de Lacey.

Hic jacet Philipus de Foy, miles.

Hic jacet Bernardus de Nova Marcatu.

Hic jacet Peganus de Cadurcis.

Hic jacet Adam de Cadurcis.

Hic jacet Alured frater de Utred.

Hic jacet Helius de Brimpsfield.

Hic jacet Patrick de Cadurcis (alias) Chaworth.

Hic jacet Patrick filius.

Hic jacet Rogerus de Barkley.

Hic jacet Ralphus comes de Chester.

Hic jacet Gozeline frater.
 Hic jacet Gilbertus de Clare comes de Glouc.
 Hic jacet Robertus comes Hereford.
 Hic jacet Thomas de St John.
 Hic jacet Helius de Hereford.
 Hic jacet Hugh de Kilpeck.
 Hic jacet Wegnebald de Drew Balssdon.
 Hic jacet Robartus comes de Glouc.
 Hic jacet Robertus de Oily.
 Hic jacet Willielmus de Scealers.
 Hic jacet Walterus de Clifford.
 His jacet Robertus de Newmarch.
 Hic jacet Richard comes de Chester.

These noblemen beforementioned, with many others, who in their life times had shewed themselves bountiful benefactors to this abbey, were all interred in the old chapter house, as appeareth by their several tombs, which is now called the library, of which I am next to treat of.

The inside, or ornamental part of this library (I do not mean the books), was built in the very heat and vigour of the late civil wars, when learning, loyalty and piety were much discountenanced, yet notwithstanding all obstruction the chief promoters and first moving wheels that carried on this most noble work was Captain Pury, junior, and Captain Heming, who showed their inward zeal and outward affections, though clouded, both to church and state by placing the royal ensign of England and France with that of the principality of Wales and the dukedom of Gloucester at the upper end facing the coming into the library, erecting between them the four cardinal virtues, viz. Prudence, Justice, Fortitude and Temperance, all of them richly carved in the best of oak, standing up on pedestals and pillars erected between them after the Corinthian order. Moreover, to adorn this noble library they placed aloft, in the same order, upon pedestals between pillars seven figures most richly carved representing the seven liberal sciences, viz. Medica., Mathematica, Arithmatica, Musica, Retorica, Dialectica and Gramatica. And on the left hand are placed in the same order eight other figures, viz. Chronica, Historica, Philosophica, Poetica, Millitaria, Marcatoria, and Archina, all of them most richly carved, standing upon pedestals between pillars and other excellent carved work, being a very noble, lovely and costly performance. The only thing wanting to adorn this library and to beautify the minds of the learned are books, which I heartily wish were better furnished.

The following account of the cathedral gates from Wantner's working papers has more detail than his 'History'. Its precise observation of the present-day scene is typical of many of his topographical references.

(MS. Top. Glouc. c. 2, f. 132.)

There are three principal gates that leadeth to the cathedral. The first is called St Peter's gate, which leadeth into the upper part of the churchyard. The second was originally called the abbey gate because it led directly to the abbey, but of latter years it was (and still is) called King Edward's gate, in regard that it was built with part of the people's offerings at King Edward's shrine, and therefore called King Edward's gate, which was a very stupendous structure, but falling to decay part thereof was lately taken down and rebuilt as it now standeth. The third gate stands at the west end of the lower churchyard which was built, according to Leland, by one Osborne, cellarer of Gloucester, which was formerly a noble pile of building, having had on the top thereof a lofty embattled tower. There is another gate on the north side of the church made of late years more for necessary uses than any other thing, which standeth just before Mr Abraham Rudhall's

bellfounding house, which now serves to pass through the grove (or common orchard) to the college free school, to the bishop's palace and from thence to the deanery or repair to any other part of the cathedral.

APPENDIX 3

Anecdotes of local history...

Wantner was eager to record striking episodes of local history, which he appeared often to have gleaned from hearsay during visits. Some are obviously fanciful, while others, if sometimes hard to believe, have the authentic ring of traditional tales handed down orally. Some are set out below.

(Book 3, f. 167v.)

I shall conclude my discourse of Bisley with a Gloucestershire proverb, viz. There is one, said Pearse, when he fell in the well. Which saying was thus occasioned: The church of Bisley being out of repair the officers of the parish set some men at work to mend what was amiss. Amongst those labourers there was one called Pearse, who with the rest at dinner time came into the churchyard where there was a winch-well, and where they usually sat round whilst they did eat their victuals. Now it fortuned that as they were just waiting for the striking of the clock to go to work, that as the clock struck Pearse replied There's one, which word was no sooner spoke but he fell backward into the well and was there drowned.

(Book 4, f. 210v.)

Within the memory of man there was in the parish churchyard of Notgrove in the county of Gloucester a sepulchral stone with the representation of a monk in his sacerdotal robes cut thereon, which stone was removed from out of the churchyard, by the consent of the minister, churchwardens and others of the parish, into the town for the making of a trough for the cattle to drink in, which was no sooner done but the same evening those cattle that came to the well to drink out of that trough were immediately stupefied with a kind of madness, insomuch that they bellowed and roared and ran about leaping over gates, hedges and ditches in such a confused condition that it made an uproar in all the village; and moreover there appeared coaches and horses, and lights and fires, to the great astonishment of the beholders. After which the minister and parishioners who first caused the sepulchre to be moved out of the churchyard agreed to have it carried back again and put into its proper place; which being done all things were afterward as it was before. All which is to be attested by several old men now living in the said parish.

(MS. Top. Glouc. c. 2, f. 152.)

In this parish here dwelleth few or none but a company of poor weavers which do usually upon the day aforementioned meet together under a certain great tree where is ready a wheelbarrow covered with green boughs. Now after such time as they have nominated the Mayor (as they usually calls him) they give him a formal drunken oath and so place him in the single wheel chariot with a wooden bowl in his hand and driveth him through the town where he drinketh out of his bowl at most houses as they pass by, having 3 or 4 of the black guard on each side with great log swabs attending him. After this they truckels him down to a great pond where after some nonsensical speech to the mayor of purpose to bring the people round the pond they rush him and the barrow into the middle of the water, where presently he with his bowl and his guard with their swabs do so bemire and wet the standers-by that it causeth a great deal of mirth and laughter. After this they draws him forth and wheels him in the same picket to his cott, where is ale and cakes, music and dancing and something else for strangers, and at last they make a collection. And this custom they have held from time to time for above three hundred years, as I am credibly informed.

(Book 4, f. 221v., s.v. Berkeley.)

The first original of the mayor of Ham. There was an honest farmer that lived in the tithing of Ham whose name was Legg, whose wife being brought to bed he took his horse and rode to

Berkeley market to buy provision for the baptising of his child. Now after he had put his horse at his usual inn he went for to buy what he had occasion for, which having done he ordered the butcher to bring down the meat which he had brought to the inn, being about eighteen pound weight (besides several other necessaries), which he puts up into his bag and tieth it fast. The honest farmer having done his marketing and the butcher having a good customer they stuck close to the pot and the pipe till they were very merry; and having discharged the reckoning away goes the farmer to his bag and up he takes it on his back and trudges home with it (being near a mile) when his servants saw, and knowing he took a horse with him they admired why he should slave himself so and to put himself into so great a sweat, whereupon they asked him what was become of his horse that he rode forth with. He answered that he took no horse with him, but they soon made him sensible of his mistake, and thereupon he sent one of his men to Berkeley, and brought back the horse. This being publicly discoursed of at the christening of the child they all agreed to make him mayor of Ham and appointed a day when he should give them a treat, which accordingly he performed, and from that time ever since when any gentleman (or others) committed any gross mistake, as some has done by pounding of their own cattle, &c., they then maketh him mayor of Ham and then he maketh a great feast, and most of the gentry and neighbourhood thereabout are invited to it, where they inquire amongst themselves who committed the last mistake, and then they make him the next mayor, and so it goes round.

(Book 3, f. 167v., s.v. Bisley.)

A little before Christmas A.D. 1707 the lofty spire of Bisley church through the violence of a great storm was thrown aside, whereupon one Larrum of Minchinhampton (a bold but dexterous fellow in repairing of steeples and setting up of weathercocks) undertook to set it upright, who in the performance thereof having fixed several bell ropes together which reached from the top to the bottom for men to pull by, he having almost brought it to perfection hastily called to the men below, whilst he sat on the bowse above, to pull away, who drew the ropes with such vigour that they pulled down the top of the steeple and him together and so perished in the fall.

(MS. Top. Glouc. c. 2, f. 157v.)

There was a thief, who having stolen some sheep was driving them along, meeteth (at Wickwar town end) with a poor man. The thief desireth this man to drive his sheep through the town for him, and he would pay him for it, pretending that he would meet him at the other end of the town. Upon this the poor silly man undertaketh the sheep and driveth them, but he had not gone far but the hue and cry overtaketh him with the sheep, for which he was condemned to be hanged, and accordingly he was, upon Charfield Down, but before he was executed he prayed to God that he would cause the two dead posts of the gallows to grow as a token of his innocency, which accordingly did till of late years, when one of them died, the other yet remaining alive, and sprouts out her branches as well as the other trees. This is generally received for certain truth.

APPENDIX 4

Revelations of Wantner's character.

The following examples of Wantner's contributions to the text of his 'History' are selected from the many that illustrate the personal element that he brought to it.

Commentary to the Reader.

(Books 1–5, *passim*.)

I will give you a personal account of . . .

It only remaineth that I give you . . .

I might have abbreviated this long narration . . .

Give me leave to acquaint the reader . . .

Here I should proceed according to my scheme to have disposed of Grumbold's Ash . . . but I thought it better to dispose of Kingswood here.

I confess it beyond my poor abilities to give you a true and significant description thereof.

[an anecdote] I was desired to insert but to conceal some names.

I never could certainly find out . . .

In all my enquiries . . . I never could find out where that custom lieth . . .

The charter of King Charles I I much want.

I suppose that there are more gifts bequeathed to this town . . . I should be very thankful if I had the rest.

So how to make these two to bear / I know not, 'tis beyond my spear.

Whose names and inscriptions should I recite / Would be o'er tedious for me to write / Or you to read with any great delight.

In pursuance of this tract I shall endeavour to use as much brevity as possible, in regard the subject on which it treateth is very copious.

Didactic Expositions.

(Book 3, f. 203.)

Now in regard those are the first (of that nature) [i.e. barrows and Roman fortifications] that I have met with in my gradual survey of the county I think it may be very expedient to give the reader a brief description and explanation not only of the Roman fortifications but likewise of the Saxon rampires and the Danish camps. ‘

And first of the Roman fortifications.

After such time as the Romans had possessed this island they commonly fortified themselves upon the highest sites or the most impregnablest hills that could meet with, forming their camps in such order that the cloud or forepart thereof should be a natural defence unto it, and the other parts they artificially secured by raising deep and high trenches for three or four ascents one above another; planting themselves so near together that if they were assaulted in the night they would mount to the top thereof and make a great fire as a signal to the rest.

Similar accounts follow of 'Saxon rampires', Danish camps' and barrows.

(Book 3, f. 196.)

Now for the better information of the reader I will here lay open the obscure meaning of the beforegoing hard and unaccustomed names and withal their significations, because they are not explained in the charter *De Foresta*, where they are likewise very often mentioned.

Imprimis: The word pannage is the money taken by the agisters for the food (or feeding of hogs) with the mast in the king's forest.

Similar brief definitions follow of the terms passage, paage, lastage, stallage, talage, pesage, pitage, tirage *and* murage.

(*Book 4, f. 190v.*)

Now in regard I should have occasion throughout this fourth book to mention some of the meaner preferments in the church, viz. impropriations, vicarages, parsonages, rectories, corps, sinecures, chapels and donatives, I suppose it may not be unsuitable to the work in hand if I here give you a brief account of them all.

Of appropriated churches.

Now those churches which are said to be appropriated are such as by the consent of the king and bishop of the diocese are under certain conditions tied (or as the form runneth) united, annexed, and incorporated unto monasteries, collegiats and hospitals, either that for the said churches were built within the lordship's lands or else granted by the lords of the said lands, who endowed them with some revenues which (after monasteries and abbeys were destroyed) became lay fees; and these are again of two sorts, viz. the one with vicarages, the other without.

Similar descriptions follow of the seven other 'meaner preferments' identified by Wantner.

Esoteric Knowledge Displayed.

(*Book 1, f. 129.*)

And since Mr Speed in his Chronology acquaints us that there is no river in England better stored with fish, give me leave here to render you an account of what sort of fish is bred in this river of Severn, as firstly the barble, bleek, botling, bream, chub, carp, dace, elvers, eels, eels-conger, flooks, flounders, gudgings, jacks, lampernes, lamprays, mullet, pyke, plaice, perch, prawns, roach, salmon, samblets, smelts, shadds, sole, shrimps, tench, trouts, tways.

Personal Views Introduced (after the description of Gloucester cathedral).

(*Book 2, ff. 123–23v.*)

Now to wind me out of this labourinth give me leave to acquaint the reader that I have heard divers persons of quality, and gentlemen that have travelled beyond sea, and many ingenious artists, say that the buildings of the cathedral of Gloucester is the noblest and most finest pile of stoness (set apart for the worship of God) in all the kingdom, which is agreed upon by all men of judgement that ever saw it. And although it must be allowed that Westminster for sepulchres of kings and York for ancient monuments and Salisbury for a steeple, windows and doors and marble pillars surpass all others in England, yet when all is done there is not any cathedral (or church) in Great Britain that can parallel the cathedral of Gloucester for eleven choice and remarkable things comprehended in one church, which are as followeth: First, for a most noble and magnificent tower, or minster. Secondly, for eight tunable bells and chimes. Thirdly, for a great sermon-bell which weigheth sixty-five hundred pounds, whose note is bemi sharp and whose sound hath been distinguished down the river Severn as far as Lydney, which is fifteen miles from Gloucester. Fourthly, for a lofty choir and the tresayick roof. Fifthly for two side aisles one above the other on the right and left hand the presbytery; the like is not in any other cathedral in England. Sixthly, for an east window case of stonework and glass. Seventhly, for a whispering gallery. Eightly, for two slender arches that supporteth the north and south sides of the tower. Ninthly, for a stately and spacious chapel which hath two aisles in it like a church. Tenthly, a neat and stupendous cloister or quadrangle. Eleventhly and lastly, for a most magnificent library, not for books but for the variety of most curious carved work therein contained. Besides the aforesaid varieties I may justly add to them a sweet and noble double organ whose diapasons hath been heard above a mile out of the city.

And one thing more I dare affirm, viz. that there is no cathedral in the kingdom that is governed by such noble persons as the cathedral of Gloucester lately was, viz.

A king, a duke, a lord, a knight, a squire

Were heads, and members, in this church and choir.

Explained: Benjamin King D.D.; a prebend; Richard Duke B.D.; a prebend; Edward, Lord Bishop D.D.; Knightly Chetwood D.D., dean, esquire by virtue of his place and of the quorum a justice of the peace.

Extravagant Opinions Expressed.

(*Book 2, f. 98.*)

No sooner had this monastery received those monks being men endowed with no saving knowledge nor sober conscience, but were blinded with utter darkness and impossible of all Christian duty, and hardened against all virtue and godliness, Almighty God, being a jealous God, of his honour suffered those monks to be rooted out by permitting the devouring flames to consume all the buildings of the monastery and to be laid level with the earth.

(*Book 2, ff. 110–10v.*)

The thick mists and fogs of superstition and idolatry which have overspread this kingdom being dissipated by the transcendent rays of the merciful King of Heaven and his agent and viceregent here on earth, viz. King Henry VIII, the pure and unpolluted orthodox religion with its Episcopal government in one uniform order of common service and prayer, and of the administration of the sacraments and ceremonies of the Church of England, were restored and confirmed by act of parliament in the first year of the reign of King Edward VI A.D. 1546 which continued in its holy order during his life. But no sooner was he dead and his successor Queen Mary invested in her throne A.D. 1553 but she repealed that act to the great decay of the due honour of God and the discomfort to the professors of the truth of the Christian religion, for which truth's sake she sacrificed in her short (but overzealous) reign four hundred and seventy and seven persons, of which number five of them were bishops and one and twenty ministers of God's word. After whose fiery death (for she died of a burning fever) her sister Queen Elizabeth of glorious memory in the first year of her reign A.D. 1558 made void the Act of Appeal and caused the holy scripture (the sacred word of God) to be freely and publicly read and preached in the sanctuaries of our own mother tongue, and the blessed sacrament of baptism, and the Last Supper to be duly administered in both kinds and re-established (as much as in her then lay) the ancient holy catholic and apostolical rites and ceremonies of the church of England as it was in the days of King Edward VI. In which happy and flourishing state it continued during her prosperous reign and the peaceful reign of King James I, notwithstanding the sundry (but vain) attempts of the pope, the devil and the Spaniard, and all their emissaries, against their persons and the episcopal government established in this kingdom; but what the open enemies abroad could not perform by power or policy the native subjects of its own land accomplished at home in the reign of the pious martyr King Charles of ever blessed memory under the pretence of religion and reformation, making the first a hood and the last a cloak to hide and cover their villainous and bloody designs, which when they had once accomplished they soon trampled hierarchy and monarchy underfoot, abolishing all regal or kingly government, abrogating as well the civil as the ecclesiastical laws of the kingdom. And what was worse (if worse might be) in contempt of God and his most holy word (or what is most agreeable thereunto) they burnt the book instituted, the book of common prayer or divine service, in the open streets, and either murdered, banished or imprisoned the professors of it. And in hopes of eradicating not only the worship and service of God, but the very sanctuaries of the Lord in which he was daily worshipped, that either burned or other ways destroyed.

*Pious exhortation**(Book 1, ff. 94–6.)*

Charity for certain is the rich man's school, where he ought to learn acts of mercy, both in heart and hand. The disciples had all things amongst them in common not by legal community, but a charitable communication for charity is not perfect unless imparted. The charitable man is the best friend unto himself, laying up in store for the time to come, for every good work that he doth is a grain of seed for life eternal. Read the scripture, which, if you believe, put it forth in practice and let your good works go before you that Our Father's name in Heaven may be glorified. Charity ought to be free, for it is accounted not gift, when that which is given can no longer withhold. The gift is doubled by a speedy deliverance: lay not up riches where moths and worms will corrupt and for children that are wicked that will play and sport their father's grave, but rather follow the example of Our Blessed Saviour who went up and down doing good in healing diseases and doing works of alms and charity, than which he hath not laid upon us any other duty with a stricter injunction.

My prayer therefore is that God may so open the hearts of rich and wealthy men to the performance of this so good and pious a work that these words may belong to you: viz. Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you, for I was an hungry and ye gave me meat, I was thirsty and ye gave me drink, I was a stranger and ye took me in, I was naked and ye clothed me &c.