

*Printed for William Thorpp Book
seller in the Citty of Chester, &
are to be sold by him there, at his
Shop at the hand & Bible neere the
high Crosse, & at the Stationers Ar-
mes in the Watergate Street,
Where alsoe Books both new & Old
are to bee bound and sold,*

**CURIOUS BOOKPLATE OF
WILLIAM THORPP,
CHESTER, 1664.**

On Chester Literature,

Its Authors and Publishers,

DURING THE SIXTEENTH AND SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES.

BY MR. THOMAS HUGHES.

HAVING, some three or four years ago, become the fortunate possessor of a curious book-plate, dating probably from the period when printing was first introduced into this venerable city, I take the liberty of submitting it to the notice of the Society, with a few passing remarks on the early history of a profession with which I am myself in some measure connected.

The literary history of Chester, prior to the national advent of the printing-press in the 15th century, is indeed a dreary blank. Few and far between were the privileged individuals who could read or understand the ponderous tomes of MSS. preserved in the Cathedral and other monastic libraries of the city,—fewer still were they to whom those volumes were open for inspection. There were no Mechanics' Institutes or public libraries, no Archæological Societies in those days,—no *London Times* or *Chester Courant* to relieve the monotony of our city's life;—with the men of Chester, in those bygone times, their very “ignorance was bliss,” and with most of them, beyond doubt, it was held to be the height of “folly to be wise.” But a brighter and better day was about to dawn upon England, and Chester itself, somewhat late it is true, ultimately felt the happy influence of the change.

The Chester “miracle plays” of the 14th century, and the “*Poly-cronicon*” of Ranulph Higden, which was the third book printed by the immortal Caxton at London in 1482, may be cited as in some degree qualifying these remarks; and the “*Holy Lyfe and History of Saynt Werburge*, very frutefull for all Christen people to rede,” as the author, Henry Bradshaw, himself modestly styles it, is another and a later case in point. But these works, be it remembered, were all productions of St. Werburgh's cloister, and for aught we know to the contrary, were the only proofs of a literary taste existing in the city. The downfall

of monasteries secured for our benighted city, among other advantages, the establishment of the King's School; from which valuable seminary emerged some of those intelligent men, the Chaloners and Holmes, who were the literary pioneers of Cheshire in the latter part of the 16th and beginning of the 17th centuries. Nor must we forget those splendid contributions to the early history of our country, which we owe to the genius of Holinshed and Speed, both of whom were natives of this fair county palatine. These are names and men the "world votes well of;" and certainly, after a lapse of some 300 years, it is gratifying to reflect that never, since the day of their first publication, have those works been more eagerly coveted, or higher prices given for their possession, than now.

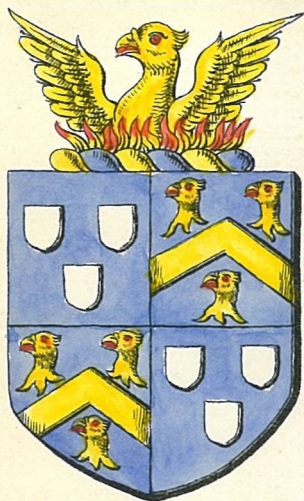
Although, in 1592, the Company of "Paynters, Glaseors, Imbroudereres, and Stacioners," had long existed in Chester, there does not seem to have been a single tradesman in the city then absolutely engaged in the business of a Stationer. Literature was at that time, as we have already stated, almost in its cradle. The disciples of Caxton, busily employed on their glorious calling in and about the metropolis, had no leisure or inducement to settle in old Chester, especially as but few of the citizens, even those, alas! holding the highest positions, could accomplish the simple feat of signing their own names! No wonder, then, that at the date referred to, a stationer's shop was a thing unknown to our streets and rows. The small quantity of paper required by our wealthier merchants and clergy would, in all probability, have come from the kindred stores of the painters, or other members of the privileged company.

It is curious to note that there is, even now, no *Printers'* Company at Chester: the very trade of a printer had no existence when those guilds were enfranchised,—monks were the only printers, common reeds the types, and clerical fingers the presses then solely in requisition. Even the *Stationers* are not named in the earlier charters, and we only hear of them during and subsequent to the reign of Elizabeth, about which time they would appear to have been grafted on to the original Company of "Paynters, Glaseors, and Imbrotherers."*

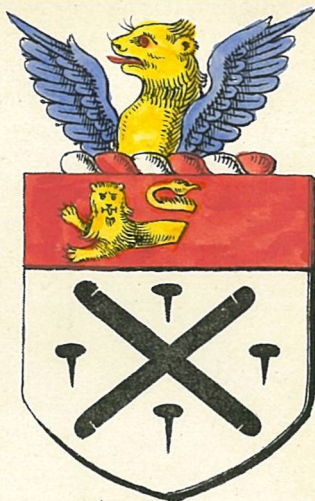
Incongruous as may appear to us this association of trades—"painters, glaziers, embroiderers, and stationers"—it was certainly otherwise at the time we refer to. In an age when ignorance so largely prevailed, the painters must have been men of more than ordinary intelligence, having certainly a fair general acquaintance with the mother tongue, and the taste to adapt that knowledge to the

* The arms of the four associated companies, as shewn on the accompanying plate, are copied from an original drawing, by the second Randle Holme, attached to one of the Company's earliest volumes of accounts.

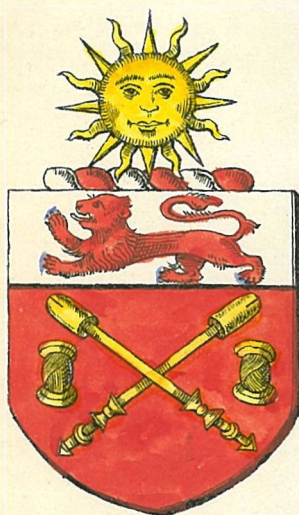




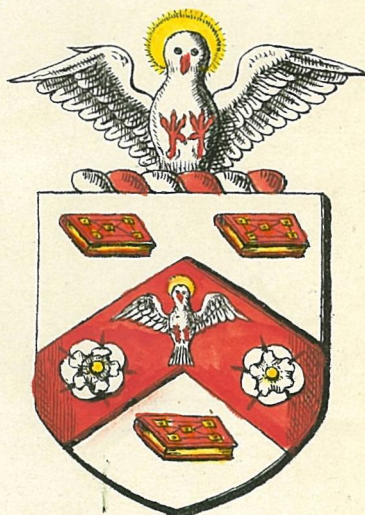
Paynters.



Glasiers.



Imbroderers.



Stacioners,

From a drawing by Rendle Holmes, A.D. 1621.

H. J. Bellars lith. 1898.

ARMS OF THE UNITED COMPANY OF
PAINTERS, GLAZIERS, EMBROIDERERS, & STATIONERS,
CHESTER.

requirements of their customers. The glaziers, again, when stained or painted glass was so much in fashion,—and the embroiderers, when that art was in the zenith of its glory, would be little behind their brethren, the painters and stationers, in either education or taste. As a proof of this, we read that when, in July, 1577, “the Earl of Derby, the Lord Strange, with many others, came to this city, and were honourably received by the Maier and Citizens, the *Shepherds’* Play was played at the highe Crosse, with other triumphs at the Roods Eye.”* This was the play always performed by the painters and glaziers’ company, and was no doubt chosen for representation before the Earl on account of the superior merit of the actors.

Thomas Chaloner, the poet and player, was at this very time connected with the painters’ company, and was resident in Chester with his family. By trade an arms painter, and withal an antiquary whose enlightened researches the genealogists of Cheshire feel justly proud of, Chaloner was also a member, and an important one too, of Lord Derby’s celebrated company of players. Several volumes of his collections, and not a few of his poems, the latter of more than mediocre merit, exist in the British Museum.†

To Thomas Chaloner, on January 10, 1587, was Randle Holme, the first of that honoured name, apprenticed for the term of 10 years. On the death of Chaloner, in 1598, Holme became his successor in more ways than one; for seemingly not content with the flourishing business alone, he shortly afterwards took to himself the widow also of his deceased master. Jacob Chaloner, son of the poet painter, whom he rivalled in zeal for antiquarian pursuits, was in his turn apprenticed to Randle Holme, his step-father, in 1602. These Randle Holmes, down to the fourth generation, were settled in Chester, and connected with this Company; while the result of their industrious and joint labours in the antiquarian field, during that lengthened period, is to be found in the 257 volumes of ponderous MS. now adorning the library shelves of the British Museum.

The *first* Chester stationer appears to have been William Holme, who was admitted a brother of the associated company on June 12, 1592, and to whom, in the following year, one John Garret was bound apprentice for the term of nine years. This William Holme, who was cousin of the first Randle Holme, of heraldic notoriety, was Alderman of the Stationers’ Company from 1601 to 1604, and dying, at the age of 63, in July, 1617, lies buried in Trinity Church. His funeral would seem to have been attended by the brethren of his company, for in the account of their disbursements for that year we

* *Vale Royal of England*, Part II. p. 201.

† Chaloner held also the important post of Ulster King-at-arms.

read that there was "Spent at the buriall of William Holme, xx^d." William Holme had a son John, bound apprentice to him March 25, 1602, of whom I can afterwards find no trace,—probably he left Chester, and tried his fortune in some other locality.

Almost coeval with Holme, but a trifle later in point of time, we find Peter Ince, stationer, admitted into the company February 5, 1613. He was alderman of this guild from 1635 to 1642, and became during that period celebrated in our local annals as a staunch friend of William Prynne, the nonconformist, on account of whom, in 1636, he suffered a fine of £500. Peter Ince died in 1648, and by his last will* it appears that he was a cousin of William Ince, Mayor of Chester in 1642, and some time M.P. for the city. His house was in Watergate Street, and a legacy left by him is secured thereon, and still paid in bread, every Sunday, to the poor of Trinity parish, Chester.

Contemporary with Peter Ince was Thomas Humphreys, stationer and notary public, and Alderman of the Company in 1654, whose son David and grandson Thomas followed the same literary occupation. David Humphreys became, later in life, a clergyman in Chester, and was, I think, a Minor Canon of the Cathedral.

It need scarcely be told that while the old charters remained fully in force, none except freemen of the city and company concerned dared establish themselves in business within the liberties of Chester. In 1636, as was frequently the case in previous years, attempts were made by strangers to set up shops, otherwise than at Chester fair, in opposition to the tradesmen protected by the company. The monopolists were naturally tenacious of their rights, and were not long in bringing the offenders to summary justice. Accordingly we find in the records of the Stationers' Company, the following entries under the year 1636:—

"Given y^e macebearer his fee for feching of Ric. Thrope, the Stationer, before Mr. Maior, for setting up a shoppe in y^e city, being a forenerviij^d."

"Spent more on Munday after, to suppress Richard Thrope when we had a warrant from Mr. Maior for shutting in of his shoppe...ix^d."

This proceeding seems to have had its due effect, for the refractory stationer was compelled to purchase his freedom of the company, in order to keep open his new establishment. Thus, on February 22nd, 1637, we find that "Richard Thrope, stationer, by extraordinary favour was admitted a brother, and payd for his fine v^{li}." It appears that Thrope had not served his apprenticeship at Chester, but in London, hence the objection to him as a "forener." He served the office of Alderman of the Company in 1665.

* *Report of the Commissioners for enquiring concerning Cheshire Charities*, 1838, p. 392.

In 1655, Thomas Humphreys the elder being Alderman of the Company, his grandson and old apprentice, Thomas, was elected a brother. At this juncture the elder Humphreys, doubtless from death, for he must have been a very old man, disappears from the stage.

The following year, viz. in 1656, Daniel King, painter, and a member of the Company, published that most curious and interesting work to all Cheshire men, the "Vale Royal of England," which was the joint compilation of two natives of the county, William Smith and William Webb. King was the son of William King, of Chester, baker, and was apprenticed for ten years to the elder Randle Holme on the 3rd of September, 1630. He was afterwards, for a long time, in business at Chester; but having removed to London, he there published the "Vale Royal." He visited Chester in the Restoration year, 1660; and in the records of the Company for that year we find that there was "Spent at the entertainment of Mr. Kinge, when he was at Alderman Holmes his house, in wine, sack, ale, and cakes...xij^s. viij^d." Daniel King died in the following year, 1661-2.

And now, in 1657, three years before the final overthrow of the Cromwell party, we are introduced to the acquaintance of the individual whose advertisement gave rise to the compilation of this Paper. Upon St. Luke's Day, October 18, 1657, William Throppe, stationer, probably a son of the Richard Throppe before-mentioned, was admitted into the Company, and paid on his election the sum of £2 10s. In honour of the event, we find him presenting his brethren with a dinner, the expense of which amounted, according to the Company's records, to £1 13s. 4d.

In 1661, the Stationers' Company sought and obtained from Charles II. a renewal of their charter, and the following entries relative thereto appear in the accounts for that year:—

"Spent at Namptwitch goeing about our Charter to the Earle of Darbyvj^s. viij^d."

William Thorp was one of the prime movers in this business, and the next entry in the accounts refers to him more particularly:—

"Spent by William Throppe when he went to Lancasshire to haue the vice-chamberlaine's hand and approbation for the examplyfying of our Charter, both horse and man, and horsehire.....ij^l. xvj^s. iij^d."

In 1662, William Thorp became Steward of the Company, and Richard Throppe, son of Richard Throppe the elder, entered the brotherhood, at the same time joining his father in business as a book-seller and stationer.

Shortly after this, the Phœnix Tower on the City Walls, in which the Company then, and for upwards of a century previously, met for the despatch of business, required a new roof; and we find Alderman

Randle Holme and our William Thorp, stationer, each contributing 5s. towards the expense of the work. The Phoenix Tower was usually decorated with garlands of flowers, and the floor of the upper chamber strewn with rushes, on the day of their annual meeting, the festival of St. Luke; and in the books of the Company we continually find payments recorded for "gilding the little phoenix"—the very bird now ornamenting the front of the Tower—and for "dressing it with flowers," this latter duty being performed by the wives and widows of the associated brethren.

Two years later, viz. in 1664, William Thorp issued the curious book-plate, a *fac-simile* copy of which accompanies this Paper. It is, as will be perceived, not without some slight artistic as well as heraldic interest; and is stated, in a pencil note made on my copy by a former possessor, to have been engraved by Hollar. This statement may be open to some question, but I am not sufficiently conversant with the work of that 17th century engraver to hazard an opinion upon the point.

To the proper right of the plate, we see the arms of the city of Chester,—three lions dimidiated, impaling three garbs. On the opposite side appear the arms of the Stationers' Company, their crest—"a dove displayed," being introduced, though without heraldic sanction, upon the upper point of the chevron. Immediately underneath, added apparently by another engraver, is Thorpe's own coat, "checquy argent and sable, on a fess or, three martlets sable." These arms are likewise to be seen, impaled with those of William Ince, on the latter individual's monument in the Holy Trinity Church, Chester. Ince married, for his second wife, a daughter of Alderman Thomas Thorpp, of Chester. Again turning to the engraving, we see below the shields a man's hand extended towards a handsomely bound and clasped Bible, between which are the initials of Thorpe's name—W. T. Under all comes the inscription, reading somewhat quaintly to our modern ears:—"Printed for William Thorpp, Book seller in the city of Chester, & are to be sould by him there at his Shop at the hand and Bible neere the high Crosse, & at the Stationer's Armes in the Watergate Street. Where alsoe Books both new and Old are to bee bound and sould."

This book-plate, or fragment of title-page, as the case may be, I bought some years ago, in an old black frame, from Mr. John Gray Bell, of Manchester; and from enquiries since made in the most likely quarters, there does not seem to be another copy of it now known. Our venerable associate, Mr. Hawkins, of the British Museum, had never

* The *Phoenix* is the crest of the Painters' Company, and to this circumstance the Tower in question owes its name.



THESE are to give notice, That at the Sign of the *Hand and Bible* in this City of *Chester*, that any one that stands in need or hath a desire to buy any *Bookes*, may there be furnished with several sorts of New and Old, or have *new* and *old* bound at a reasonable price; and smal Pictures in black and white, and in colours, And also several sorts of Maps smal and large, black and white, and in colours. Likewise white paper of several sorts, gilt and ruled for Musick Books, and ruled for books of Accompts, and coloured paper of the best. Sealing *Wax* hard and soft. *Pennes*, *Pensils* black and red. And also *Inkhorns* of several sorts; and *Letter-Cases*, black boxes, *Vellome*, *Parchment*, *Spectacles* of several sorts, & *Cases* for them of several sorts, *Mouth-glue*, *clasps* for books, *Quills*, *Wafers*, *New-bookes* and *Newes* weekly.

WILLIAM THORPPE.

B. J. Bellars lith.

FAC-SIMILE OF
A CHESTER STATIONER'S HANDBILL,
Temp: Charles II

seen it until it met his eye in my own collection. It is right to mention, *en passant*, that Mr. Hawkins is himself the owner of perhaps the largest and most valuable private collection of Cheshire books and prints in the world.

Welcome as was to me the acquisition of this rarity, I chanced still more recently to let upon another, at least equal in curiosity and interest to the book-plate of William Thorp. This was no other than a printed circular or handbill issued by this same individual, the which has been here carefully reproduced in *fac-simile*, as the earliest specimen of Chester typography now known to be extant. It is without date, but as William Thorp is known to have died in 1675, it cannot be very far from 200 years old.

The handbill sufficiently speaks for itself, and a more quaint or curious literary production it would be difficult to meet with! It was found pasted within the cover of an old volume by Mr. G. H. Crowther, bookseller, of this city, who, knowing my mania for such matters, carefully detached it, and laid it aside for my portfolio.

What "mouth-glue" refers to, in the latter part of the advertisement, is somewhat problematical. The arrival of "*newes weekly*," too, sounds peculiarly odd to us in the present day, with the *London Times* and other daily papers lying upon our tables on the very morning of publication,—to say nothing of that marvellous conductor of news, the Electric Telegraph! There was no newspaper printed at Chester for some 40 or 50 years after this date.

William Thorp was one of the original subscribers to Blome's *Britannia*; and it appears by the impalement on his coat of arms, as engraved in that work, that he married a sister or daughter of Thomas Allen, Esq., of Greenhills, in this county,—the latter gentleman being also a subscriber to the work. Thorp served the office of Churchwarden of Holy Trinity parish, Chester, in 1673, just two years before his death.

In 1670, one Peter Bodvel, stationer, opened a shop in Chester, without the leave of the Company. Accordingly, the following items occur in their book of accounts for that year, shewing that the transgressor soon repented of his sins:—

"Item, for fetcheng Mr. Bodvel before the Maioriv^d."

"Item, spent att Mr. Bodvels house after he was admitted a brotherviij^s."

Bodvel was made steward of the Company the following year, having previously had apprenticed to him for seven years John, son of Randle Minshull, macebearer of this city, and an inn-holder. Bodvel died in 1674, and John Minshull completed his term with Elizabeth Bodvel, his master's widow.

On October 18, 1676, he was admitted a brother of the Company,—he and the younger Richard Thropp being then the only two Booksellers in business at Chester. Throppe seems to have failed in trade about 1680, and to have become a pensioner on the Company, his place being supplied by one George Atkinson, who died in 1682.

To Atkinson, in 1684, succeeded Humphrey Page, bookseller; soon after whose reception into the Company we find engaged in litigation with his brother stationer, John Minshull, for that he, Minshull, “had set up *two* shops in the city,” contrary to ancient usage. It would seem that Page got the better of his opponent, that the brethren were highly rejoiced thereat, and that a regular jollification was the result, as witness the following items in the Company’s register of payments for 1685:—

“Spent at Mr. Minshull’s (the Wolf’s Head) at a dinner of Humphrey Page, for ale bear and tobacco.....	vjs	iv ^d .
“For 4 bottles of wine, and one of sacke	vjs	iv ^d .
“For suger and nutmegs	v ^d .	
“Given to the fidler	vj ^s .	
“Given to y ^e maids of y ^e house	ii	

Having satisfactorily disposed of his antagonist Minshull, Humphrey Page, flushed with conquest, speedily embarked upon a second crusade. The Grocers of Chester, not content with selling tea, sugar, and other like commodities, sought to share in the profits of the booksellers also. This, of course, could not be tolerated; we therefore read as follows in the Stationers’ Company’s accounts for 1688:—

“Paid by y ^e consent of y ^e Company concerning Mr. Huitt, Grocer, for selling of Bookes.....	xviij ^s .	vij ^d .”
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They are likewise recorded to have spent on the same day in wine and beer, at the Wolf’s Head, Garter Tavern, and Fox and Goose, 11s. 6d. painfully discussing the while this important question.

It was in 1688, just about this time, that the third Randle Holme printed at Chester that laborious work which has made his name famous in the heraldic world,—the “Academy of Armoury,”—one of the most curious and extraordinary medleys that has ever issued from the Chester or any other local press. It is a large thick folio volume, with numerous illustrations; and although my two Thorpe relics are at least 20 years older, yet this work of Randle Holme’s is full of interest to Cheshire men, as being not only exceedingly rare, but also the earliest complete work now known to have been printed and published in Chester.* At the time his book was published, Randle Holme was Alderman of the Stationers’ Company, which office he held for a long series of years. He was also gentlemen sewer to King Charles II., and deputy to

* An alphabetical Index to the families whose arms are blazoned in this work was published, in folio, in 1821.

Garter, king of arms. His father, the second Randle, had been Mayor of the city in 1643, and died in 1659.

In 1691, the grocers had again become poachers on the booksellers' preserve; and on July 21, we find there was "Allowed unto John Minshull, stationer, which he hath laid out of a suitt against Nathan Jolly, grocer, i^{li}. xvj^s. vjd.* It is to be presumed that this suit was decisive, for we read of no more troubles between them.

John Minshull was a man of considerable importance in Chester: he is frequently referred to by local writers of his day, and he served the office of Mayor in 1711, having, in 1687, dined with his diocesan, Bishop Cartwright, at the episcopal palace, as appears by that prelate's "Diary," published by the Camden Society.

In 1691, Joseph Hodgson, who was the son of Gabriel Hodgson of Minshull Vernon, and an old apprentice of John Minshull's, became a brother of the Company. In 1704, Randle Minshull, son of John Minshull, also joined the fraternity: but, as we have confined ourselves simply to the men of letters of the 16th and 17th centuries, it only remains to state that, in 1700, there were but three booksellers resident in Chester, viz.: John Minshull, Humphrey Page, and Joseph Hodgson. Of Minshull and his son, enough has been already said. Humphrey Page was Mayor of Chester in 1707, and his son, John Page, stationer, filled the chief magistrate's chair in 1755. Joseph Hodgson was Mayor in 1717, and his afterwards apprentice, John Lawton, whose father, John Lawton, had been an innkeeper at Chester, was honoured with the like dignity in 1770.

Finally, then, the existence of these two literary relics, and their strange re-union, after the lapse of two centuries, in one and the same collection, will, it is hoped, be taken as a sufficient apology for thus thrusting them upon the notice of the Society. Independently of this, I feel sure that, in a literary and historic society such as ours, any attempt to illustrate the lives of those men who were the first purveyors of that literature within our venerable city, will be received with cordial sympathy and favour.

The following additional extracts from the books of the Stationers' Company will not be devoid of interest, especially in connection with the foregoing Paper. Under the year 1620, we read that there was

"Payd at Mr. Maior's Taverne.....i^s. ijd."

"Payd to Moyes Dalby for mending the glasse windoes of the meeting house (Phoenix Tower)vj^s. viij^d."

* Nathan Jolly and Robert Huitt, the two grocers here shewn to have been "at loggerheads" with the Company, each issued a copper token at Chester in the reign of Charles II.

Then come some interesting entries relating to the ancient pageants upon Midsummer Eve :—

- “ Given to a berrage for severall works about the Phenix for Midsomer showxviij^d.”
 “ To three men for carrieng the phenix, and for leadinge the horssexviij^d.”
 “ To Sir Henry Bunburie’s man for his paynes about the horsse... [xviij^d.”
 “ Shoes, hose, and gloves for y^e child.....ij^s. x^d.”
 “ Payd for riban and shoetiesx^d.”
 “ Spent at dressinge the childe.....v^d.”
 “ For our banquet at Midsomer Evevij^s.”

In 1622, we have two curious entries relating to the Holme family, by which it appears that they then resided in Castle Street, perhaps in that newly-fronted timber building on the north side, now occupied as a bakehouse. Their residence here will account for their being buried in St. Mary’s Church :—

“ Payd for sacke and clarid wyne at William Holme’s dynner to y^e company at his father’s new buldinge in Castlelaneix^s.”

“ Payd for sacke and wyne at Rand. Holme’s dynner the next day for the company and their wives at the same placevj^s. ij^d.”

Taking into account the quantity consumed, it would seem that the presence of their wives on the latter occasion had a beneficial effect on the potations of the brethren. From Castle Street, Randle Holme afterwards removed to Bridge Street, to the large dwelling-house erected by him there, known in later years as “ Old Lamb Row.”

In August, 1625, there was “ Spent in wyne to entertayne the wardens and others of the company of Stationers of Londonij^s. vj^d.”

Under the year 1632, we find the following items :—

“ Payd Thomas Wayte for mending the glass windoes in y^e (Phoenix) towerxviij^d.”

“ Payd Garratt for mending Abraham’s picture in y^e window....x^d.”

John Garratt was, as previously stated, an old apprentice of the first Randle Holme. “ Abraham’s picture” has vanished from the window, having probably been destroyed during the Siege.

“ Payd for Lining of the Record Rowle of y^e bulding of y^e tower... [vij^d.”

This “ record roll,” which would doubtless have afforded some curious particulars as to the early history of this Tower, is not now to be found among the muniments of the Company.

These entries might be multiplied *ad infinitum* ; but enough has been adduced to shew that the ancient records of this and the other companies established in Chester are full of matter eminently useful to the local historian, and not without interest to the general reader.