



# WOLSEY 450

COMMEMORATIVE BROCHURE

JUNE 1980 20p





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TOWN HALL,  
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April, 1980

Thomas Wolsey, certainly Ipswich's most celebrated son, if not the greatest, died in 1530. During his lifetime he had risen from humble origin to become the most powerful of Henry VIII's subjects and it is fitting that we should celebrate his life on the occasion of the 450th Anniversary of his death. It may well be asked, however, what relevance does Wolsey have for twentieth century Ipswich, a bustling industrial and commercial town whose character is changing almost as rapidly as technology advances in our modern world.

I believe it is appropriate and, indeed, essential that we should take stock, periodically, of our antecedents and our heritage and, undoubtedly, Thomas Wolsey deserves our attention in this respect. Not only that, but it is arguable that in the early 16th century he embodied much of the character of present day Ipswich - thrusting, ambitious aims combined with a deep sense of tradition.

Although there is little physical evidence of his life in Ipswich - apart from the ancient gateway that stands near St. Peter's Church - his name has captured the imagination of many people in the town, both natives and new residents, and we find it in the Wolsey Art Gallery (itself a memorial to the 400th anniversary), the Wolsey Chamber Orchestra and, most recently, the Wolsey Theatre.

'Wolsey 450' continues the tradition and I look forward to a series of events which will help to bring extra life and colour to the town, encourage visitors from home and abroad and bring together many organisations in co-operation with the Borough Council's Recreation and Amenities Department.

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## WOLSEY — THE UNLOVED CARDINAL

BY J. J. MALING

◀ Cardinal Wolsey

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THOMAS WOLSEY was born between 1471 and 1475. The evidence is conflicting. A colleague certainly congratulated him on becoming an Archbishop before he was 40, and that was in 1514. On the other hand apparently he believed himself to be 59 not long before his death in 1530, 450 years ago this coming November.

The story found in most reference books is that his father, Robert Wolsey, was an Ipswich butcher; but somehow in Victorian times Robert was promoted slightly and became 'a prosperous grazier'. It would never have done for some Victorian butcher's boy to get ideas above his station. More recently he seems to have become a simple butcher once more. George Cavendish, who knew Wolsey well and wrote the classic life of the future Cardinal on which all the others are based, merely said that Robert was 'an honest poor man'. The evidence suggests that Wolsey senior was not as poor, nor indeed as honest as all that.

Obviously Robert was both butcher and cattle dealer, as many master butchers were and are. Perhaps when Thomas spoke of his father as poor (for Cavendish was quoting his words), he wished to emphasise his own lowly origins and therefore the exceptional qualities he had displayed in rising above them.

Robert must have been fairly well-to-do for a man of his class. He had property in at least two Ipswich parishes. As a lucrative sideline he did a bit of dealing in cloth and he also owned a pub which got him into trouble once or twice. At one time there were complaints that the place had become a resort of 'friars and loose women', whether separately or together it would be invidious to enquire. Also he was fined for charging too much for his beer. So Robert sounds like a pretty average businessman of his time, ready to try anything he could get away with. I forgot to mention that he was also a churchwarden. Clearly Thomas came from no pauper household.

In Tudor times Ipswich was a compact town. Its population, small by modern standards, was crowded into narrow streets, mostly unpaved, and alleys in which household rubbish was dumped, giving the roaming pigs and dogs . . . and the flies . . . an easy living. Butchers like Robert Wolsey slaughtered their beasts in the streets and the blood ran into the open drains which carried the sewage, some of it, into the river. Nearly everyone was permanently verminous. Most of the wells were polluted. Epidemics were common and the odds on a child seeing its 10th birthday were about evens. Only the tough survived.

Yet Ipswich was a busy, bustling, cheerful place





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with a thriving trade. Foreign seamen in search of drink, or women, mingled with wool merchants from High Suffolk or the Midlands, and monks of various orders. Farmers from the surrounding countryside chattered with corn dealers. Few people starved, for fish was cheap and plentiful; and for those who could pay for it fresh shiploads of seacoal came into the quay nearly every day.

This was the town Thomas left when his father sent him to Oxford.

Wolsey took his degree at an early age even for those days, just how early depending on which year is assigned to his birth. Soon afterwards he became a Fellow of Magdalen, then Bursar of the College. This post he had to leave when there was some dispute about the way he handled the foundation's financial affairs. Apparently he had overspent without authority on building Magdalen tower. He never had much regard for authority.

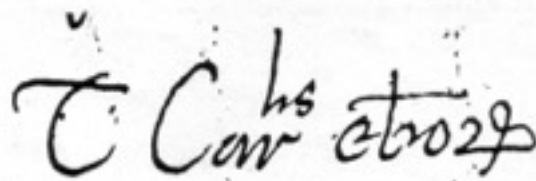
However, as many people had discovered before and have found since, the main value of University residence is in the opportunities it provides for making friends with influential people. This Wolsey did. One could not deny his ability nor his capacity for hard work; both were exceptional. But it is not unknown for able and hardworking men to remain in obscurity. Where Wolsey differed from some others was in that he possessed a burning ambition. There was never a time when he was not completely ruthless in promoting his own interests. He allowed nothing, nobody, to stand in his way.

Through the influence of two of his students, sons of the Marquis of Dorset, he became Rector of a small town in Somerset in 1500. There he distinguished himself by being put in the stocks by a local landlord and magistrate, apparently for drunkenness.

'Sir Amyas Paulet . . . set the schoolmaster by his feet', says Stow. (1580)

Various other livings soon came his way, including that of Redgrave, Suffolk, in 1506. A series of accidents led him to Court, though as is often the case with ambitious men, the accidents were not as accidental as they might have been. It was sometimes more a question of persuading the right man to make the right suggestion in the right place at the right time.

One of his early appointments was as chaplain to the Archbishop of Canterbury, where his Oxford investment paid its first dividend. On the prelate's recommendation he next went to a similar position with the King's deputy in Calais, then an English possession. The deputy, Sir Richard Nanfan, died the following year, but not before he had drawn the King's attention to



Wolsey's signature: courtesy the Suffolk Record Office

the many talents of this extraordinarily hard-working young man. Henry VII sent for Wolsey and appointed him Royal chaplain. He soon found that his new confessor was a skilled diplomat. Of course he was. Who can negotiate better than an East Anglian cattle dealer? Bargaining was in his blood. (A cattle dealer's handshake is often worth more than a diplomat's signature.) Had he stayed in his father's business in Ipswich, the ruthless, self-seeking Thomas would have ended up owning every cow in Suffolk.

The King must have told his son that Wolsey was a man with a future, for when Henry VIII succeeded his father in 1509, Thomas was made Royal Almoner and also a member of the Council, the King's senior advisers.

War had been declared on France and war gave Wolsey the opportunity to prove his value to the King. It was Wolsey who raised and organised a huge army and got it safely to France. It was defeated, but Wolsey escaped the blame for that. He made himself indispensable and by 1512 he was no longer merely a member of the Council. For all practical purposes, he was the Council. He seldom consulted his colleagues.

In 1515 he became Chancellor. Henry was a man who much preferred hunting, dancing, music, gambling and womanising to dealing with affairs of state and he was only too glad to allow Wolsey to relieve him of his more onerous duties, though occasionally he intervened, possibly just to show that he was still in charge. Nevertheless for the next 14 years Wolsey was the effective ruler of the country.

Between 1509 and 1518, among many parishes and minor but financially rewarding offices, Wolsey took over four Deaneries, three Bishoprics (and two more later), and an Abbey (St. Albans, a rich prize), as well as becoming Archbishop of York, Cardinal and Chancellor. Had it not been for the perversity of Archbishop Warham of Canterbury in living beyond the normal span, Wolsey would have collected that province too. It might be added that at one time he had also been promised nothing less than the Papacy by

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the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, in a diplomatic deal, and he never entirely gave up hope of it. Actually his chances were remote. Charles was willing to promise anything which did not involve him in personal inconvenience or expense, and in any case the crown of St. Peter was usually the perquisite of Italians.

Many of the positions mentioned above were held by Wolsey simultaneously. He never even visited his province of York until near the end of his life, after his dismissal by Henry VIII. They were regarded merely as a source of income; and how he needed income! Bribes, threats, blackmail, corruption of all kinds helped to increase it.

Huge though his resources had become, every penny was required. He lived in unexampled luxury, outshining even the Royal court itself. He was certainly greedy for money, but even more than money he loved the power which it gave him. He made many enemies, for his style of life was sure to arouse jealousy. Nor did he take his professional celibacy too seriously, for he had several children. There was nothing unusual in this. In those days it was not unknown even for Popes to be attended by groups of unexplained 'nephews'.

One of his mistresses, according to John Skelton, fellow East Anglian, but admittedly no friend of Wolsey, was a lady from Thetford named Lark, the daughter of an innkeeper of that town. A son resulting from this liaison was well looked after, being presented to two rectories and later becoming Dean of Wells, while a daughter was comfortably established in a convent. The lady herself was eventually married off to a Mr. Legh, which made everything look a little more respectable. Her brother, having become Master of Trinity Hall, Cambridge, joined the Cardinal's household as his confessor. Presumably he was kept busy. It was an early example of that fine old game, Happy Families.

Wolsey started to build his two colleges at Oxford and Ipswich in 1525. It need hardly be said that the money needed for these projects did not come out of his own pocket. He suppressed 21 monasteries and sold their property to raise it. The Oxford foundation, Christ Church, was completed by the King after Wolsey's death. (The original name was to have been Cardinal College.) The Ipswich college was abandoned unfinished; the only sign of it now is the gateway in College Street.

Camden, having praised Ipswich as 'having an Haven commodious enough, fenced in times past with a trench and rampire, a good trade, well peopled . . . adorned with foureteene



Churches, large and stately edifices . . .' comments: 'I say nothing of foure religious houses now overturned and that sumptuous and magnificent Colledge which Cardinal Wolsey a Butchers sonne of this place, here began to build, whose vast minde reached alwayes at things too high.'

(' . . . whose vast minde . . .' how skilful Camden's translator, Holland, was at putting the kernel of the description in a few words of beautiful English.)

It is fascinating to speculate about just how much Wolsey's background and particularly his East Anglian roots influenced him. At least as far back as Chaucer's time and no doubt long before that, East Anglians had a reputation for being argumentative and much given to going to law, just as Scots are said to be mean and the Irish . . . well, Irish. All these suggestions are probably slanderous, but like most slander, they have a small grain of truth in them.

Wolsey, as Lord Chancellor, and therefore head of the legal profession, had every opportunity for going to law in style. History shows that though quite untrained in that field he was a successful lawyer. Indeed it was in the province of the law that his impact was most lasting. Not surprisingly, he enjoyed being a judge; for after all, no one is more powerful than a judge in his own court. He managed to speed up the process of the law, even more notoriously slow than now. Two famous courts Wolsey did not found, but he greatly increased their status and the number of cases with which they dealt.

Chancery was a civil court dealing with disputes over land, property and similar matters; and Wolsey's influence on it was apparent for generations after his death. So often a judgement in Chancery was dependent on a clear mind and common sense, and the Chancellor had both.

The other court, the Star Chamber, has a bad name now. Almost any court which makes arbitrary and unjust judgements attracts that



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title, used disparagingly. But the Star Chamber, warts and all, was a vast improvement on what had gone before. Especially it now tried cases which formerly had been heard by ecclesiastical courts, often with ludicrous results.

Is it too fanciful to believe that an East Anglian upbringing was partly responsible for Wolsey's great interest in legal matters? Certainly a boyhood in a district where it was not unknown for a man to take his neighbour to court when his shadow fell on the complaining party's land might have had some influence on the lad.

In any town in East Anglia today (and I would guess it would have been much the same five centuries ago, for our character hasn't changed as much as all that) a person of exceptional ability is usually thought of as some kind of a freak, especially if he makes no secret of the fact that mentally he's a cut above his neighbours. Wolsey had a high opinion of himself; he was the vainest of men and he would not have failed to make this clear even perhaps in his younger days.

The man in the street would have laughed behind his hand or even in front of it when he heard of this butcher's boy and his ridiculous ambitions. Well, yes, it had to be admitted that

the lad was clever. Going to Oxford College, was he? Old Bob the butcher was getting a bit above himself, sending the youngster there. No wonder his beer was dear! Still, young Tom might well turn out to be a tolerable country parson, no worse and no better than many another... that was if he could find a patron.

Then as the honours poured in, Dean, Bishop, Archbishop, Cardinal, Chancellor, Ipswich's attitude would have gradually changed to one of admiration, not so much of Wolsey as of Ipswich. Naturally there would have been many remarks of the 'I knew him when he was a boy' variety, for name dropping is not a 20th century invention. But most of all it would have been Ipswich which would have been praised. Ipswich must be a remarkable town to have produced so remarkable a man, it would have been said.

Wolsey himself, being from Suffolk, would have understood this perfectly well. Could there not have been an element of 'I'll show these yokels what I'm made of' in his mind? The foundation of the great Ipswich college which was to have borne his name would have been the final touch had he lived and prospered a few more years. Was it intended as a sign of devotion to his fellow townsmen? He had not paid much

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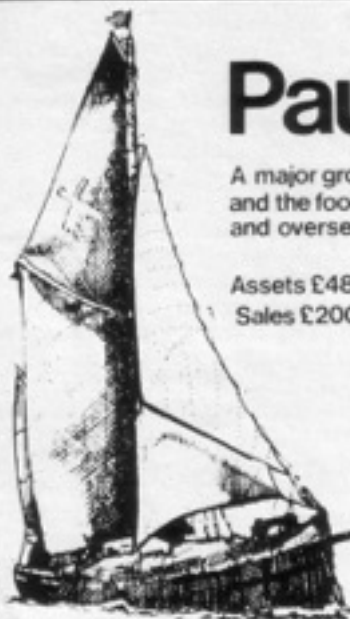


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attention to them throughout the greater part of his years of power. Or was it intended as a sign of defiance, even contempt? 'Look on my works ye mighty and despair', Shelley tells us was inscribed on that broken arch in the desert. The quotation could apply equally well to Wolsey's college at Ipswich; and even the final irony would not be lacking.

On the Church Wolsey had little lasting influence, though perhaps by his suppression of monasteries when it suited him he provided an example for his Royal master. Baskerville says Wolsey was 'more successful in suppressing than reforming them, but since he could not reform himself this is perhaps natural.'

Although his foreign policy had not been outstandingly successful, Wolsey's decline can really be said to have started about 1524. Having invented income tax, Wolsey needed more money for a proposed continental invasion. He tried to raise what was called an 'amicable loan'. The results were far from amicable, for there were riots in various parts of the country including his own home county of Suffolk. The Duke of Suffolk tried, without much success, to pacify the disaffected 'since ye be my countrymen'; and later the Duke of Norfolk arrived with an armed band. When he demanded to know the name of the ringleader he was told 'Captain Poverty'. At

this stage the King himself intervened. The loan was abandoned and so was the invasion.

But the Cardinal's eventual downfall was due to his handling of the King's proposed divorce from Queen Catherine of Aragon. Strictly speaking, no divorce was demanded. The King was seeking a declaration that the marriage had been illegal in the first place and that it was therefore void. Wolsey's position was that he was in favour of the 'divorce'. But while the King was madly in love with Anne Boleyn, what the Cardinal sought was a dynastic marriage into the French Royal family. Shall we say he was pro-divorce, but anti-Anne; and Anne proved a dangerous enemy.

A contemporary opinion of Wolsey, hardly impartial in the circumstances, was that of Queen Catherine herself. And it must be admitted that if one makes due allowance for the Queen's justifiable rage when it was suggested that after bearing Henry half a dozen children (though only one was living), she had never been legally married to him, her description of Wolsey was not entirely inaccurate.

She told the Cardinal: 'But of this trouble I only may thank you my Cardinal of York, for because I have wondered at your high pride and vainglory and abhor your voluptuous life and abominable lechery, and little regard your

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presumptuous power and tyranny; and therefore of malice you have kindled this fire and set this matter abroad.'

After Wolsey's fall from power, now that the King's protection had been withdrawn from him, his general unpopularity became even clearer. His possessions had mostly passed to the King, and the Cardinal begged Henry 'humbly, on my knees with weeping eyes' to take care of his colleges at Oxford and Ipswich. As we have seen, only the Oxford project was rescued.

Yet Henry remembered past services. When Wolsey became ill the King sent his own doctor to tend him and he also sent a ring in token of his continued friendship. Anne too, much to her own surprise, one imagines, also sent a token.

By this time Wolsey had gone, some years late, to take up his duties as Archbishop of York. He did so in some state, so Henry must have left him some part of his fortune. He had 160 followers in his retinue. But Anne still intrigued against him, for she believed, with some justification, that the King might still recall him. Henry had hinted as much; when exasperated by the inefficiency of his Council he had told them in so many words that the Cardinal was a better man than any one of them.

The Council included Norfolk, who had long

promoted Anne's ambitions; and it was Anne who threatened to leave Henry unless Wolsey was arrested. In due course Henry submitted and a charge of high treason was preferred against the Cardinal. He was being taken under guard from York to London, where his destination would have been the Tower, when, at Leicester, he was taken ill and died late in November 1530.

The famous 'last words': 'If I had served God as diligently as I have done the King He would not have given me over in my grey hairs', were said to the officer in whose charge he was, the Constable of the Tower, Sir William Kingston. They appear slightly amended in Shakespeare's Henry VIII, though it is generally believed that that part of the play was by John Fletcher.

And that's the end of the story. What a mixture the man was. Corrupt and lecherous, yet highly intelligent; a man who seldom worked fewer than 16 hours in a day; capable of any crime or cruelty to further his ambitions, yet with all the smooth charm of an experienced diplomat.

Certainly he was by far the most celebrated man ever to come out of Ipswich; but not the best loved. Never the best loved.

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## PROGRAMME OF EVENTS FOR WOLSEY 450

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- On sale from  
**June 1980** 200 (limited edition) Medallions, silver-plated. Replica of the Conder token. Available from Christchurch Mansion, on a first-come-first-served basis, at £4.25 each.
- 200 (limited edition) of Commemorative mugs. On sale at around £4.50 from Ipswich School, Ipswich Museum, Tourist Information Centre, Christchurch Mansion, and Suffolk College of Further and Higher Education.
- 20th June** Ipswich School Speech Day. Guest Speaker: G. R. Elton, Professor of English Constitutional History at Clare College, Cambridge, on the theme of Wolsey.
- 21st June** Ipswich School Commemoration of Benefactors. The Dean of Norwich will also choose the theme of Wolsey.
- 9th August** Ipswich Carnival: It is hoped to have a special class of float on the Tudor theme.
- 7th September** The Annual Procession from Wolsey's Gateway to the site of the Shrine of Our Lady of Ipswich in Lady Lane to commemorate the first procession, inaugurated by Wolsey in 1528.
- 7th to 10th September** *Son et Lumière* at Ipswich School, beginning at 8.30 pm.
- From 18th September** Competitive Schools Quiz.  
 First Round — between 18th September and 3rd October  
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 Semi-Final — between 20th October and 24th October  
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 The Final will be held in the Wolsey Theatre before an invited audience. It will be recorded by Radio Orwell and broadcast at a later date.
- 27th September** A Tudor Evening at Christchurch Mansion, organised by Friends of Ipswich Museums.
- 24th-29th November** Exhibition depicting Wolsey and His Times, and the History of the Post as initiated by Wolsey. Open daily in the Robert Cross Hall of the Corn Exchange.
- 29th November** Production of a hand-stamp and first day cover. Available at the above exhibition.
- 29th November** Commemorative Service to mark the date of the 450th anniversary of Wolsey's Death. Service conducted by Canon Tarris, St. Mary-le-Tower Church, 11 am., and will be attended by the Mayor and his Councillors who will process through the Town from the Town Hall to St. Mary-le-Tower Church. At the Civic service the Bishop of the Diocese will preach (The Rt. Revd. John Waite) and the service will be attended by many Town organisations. It is hoped that the Wolsey Theatre Company will take part in the service.



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## THE CARDINAL'S COLLEGE

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BY WILLIAM SERJEANT

WOLSEY'S GATEWAY in College Street, Ipswich, stands as a proud but now somewhat forlorn relic of a proud but, in the end, forlorn enterprise. This worn and modest structure, held in much affection still by the townsfolk, is all that remains of the grand design by Thomas Wolsey to establish in his native town a college to rival the finest and most distinguished of such foundations. His grand design was, in fact, a twofold one — to build a great new college at Oxford, to be called Cardinal College, and to build a great new school with the same name in Ipswich. The school would rival those of Eton and Winchester and would stand in the same relationship to the college as did Eton to Kings, or Winchester to New College. The two linked foundations would be a tribute to his birthplace, and to the university which educated him and embarked him upon his astonishing career. They would also provide a fitting memorial to a man so eminent as the Cardinal Archbishop, Lord

Chancellor and, for a time, virtual ruler of the realm of England.

There were two other ways in which the plan fitted with Wolsey's inclinations, and was, one may guess, a project near to his heart. The choice of a school as his gift to his birthplace and as his memorial there reflects a genuine conviction of the importance of educational opportunity — not surprising, perhaps, in one for whom it had been the stepping stone to such great things — and he had moreover, considerable personal experience of the value of a school associated with a university college. While still at Oxford, as a Fellow of Magdalen College, he held the appointments successively of bursar and master of the college school. He was thus well qualified to understand the management, financial and educational, of his proposed new foundation. Additionally, both at Oxford, where at the beginning of his career he had been closely associated with the building of Magdalen bell tower (said to be 'the loveliest



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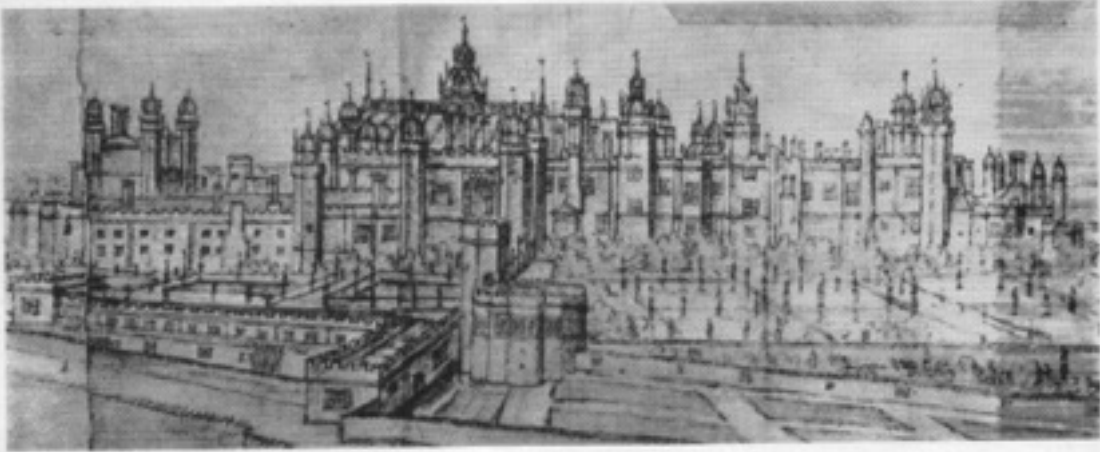
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Hampton Court viewed from the river  
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thing in Oxford'), and later when he achieved high office in church and state, he showed an inordinate fondness for building and a taste for magnificence regardless of expense, which is most notably displayed at Hampton Court, but of which there are many other examples. Here then was the opportunity, which he clearly intended to take, to add to his tally of imposing buildings. In a personality which all-too-often displayed to the world the less attractive features of arrogance, greed and gross ostentation, Wolsey's care for education and love of fine architecture are more worthy attributes and there is irony in observing that an enterprise of so praiseworthy a kind, begun so well, and at the height of Wolsey's power, should have turned out to be so ill-fated.

To speak of Thomas Wolsey's intended 'gift' to Ipswich does not quite reflect how things were done. What he gave were his enthusiasm, his power, his influence. By means of these he was able to provide the money needed to pay for the foundation. Much — indeed most — of this was obtained by persuading the Pope and King Henry to authorise the dissolving of a number of small monasteries and the transfer of their income to the school. (Again, there is irony here. The Cardinal of the Church set an example that the King was not slow to follow. Within 12 years, all those monasteries, great and small, that had been so important a part of the social fabric of England in the Middle Ages, had ceased to exist). Preparations had begun in 1526 or 1527, when the site of the Priory of SS. Peter and Paul, Ipswich, near the river, was chosen for the school. As well as the site and the monastic buildings, including St. Peter's Church, the lands and possessions of the priory in 54 parishes were

acquired by its suppression. Other small monasteries suppressed at Wolsey's request included Blythburgh, Dodnash, Felixstowe, Horkesley, Mountjoy, Rumburgh, Snape, Tiptree and Wicks. These brought many manors and parsonages and extensive estates to the endowment of the new school.

It is to be remembered too, that the 'new' school was not the first of its kind in Ipswich. The old grammar school where Wolsey received his earliest education was already of respectable antiquity, having existed since the early 15th century. Wolsey also secured for his new creation the endowments of the old school, and it seems very likely that he saw his new foundation as the continuation, on a much more impressive scale, of his own old school.

The Royal charter of foundation was issued on 28 July 1528, although the foundation stone had been laid on 15 June. The Cardinal was not present, and the stone was probably laid by John Holt, Bishop of Lydda. The total planned establishment was an imposing one, larger than that of Eton College, and comprised a dean as head of the college, a sub-dean, 12 fellows, or priests, eight clerks, who would sing the services, a master in grammar, two ushers, or under masters, 50 boys, and 12 old men, who as bedesmen would pray for the King and for the founder. Besides these members of the official foundation, there were many other staff — butlers, cooks, housekeepers, financial officers, eight boy choristers, and a host of household servants.

Wolsey himself spared the time to set out the course of education, providing for eight forms and specifying the appropriate level of studies

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for each. Interestingly, in one respect he was considerably ahead of his time, giving this admonition to the master — 'The tender youth is not to be treated with severe blows, or even threatening looks, or any other kind of tyranny. For by injustice of this kind the keenness of their intelligence is often extinguished'.

The school was already active and flourishing by the beginning of 1529, notwithstanding that the building was still far from complete, and teaching was being carried on in some of the old priory buildings. The master, William Goldwin, was able to report to the Cardinal that 'the flock hourly increases so that the house is too small to hold the number of boys comfortably'. In mid-1529 the Dean, William Capon, a distinguished Cambridge scholar and one of Wolsey's chaplains, also wrote that 'the school is well attended and must be enlarged'. Wolsey was in constant touch with progress, consulting with the masons about the plans, and ensuring supplies of stone and timber. He bullied the Dowager Countess of Oxford for stone he thought she owned at Harwich, and, more to the purpose, got a licence from the King of France to obtain supplies of high quality stone from the famous quarries at Caen. A 1,000 tons was to be supplied by Easter 1529. There was evidently intense activity in late 1528 and the early months of 1529.

The Cardinal had provided in the foundation charter for an annual procession from the college, which was dedicated to St. Mary, to the Chapel of our Lady of Grace in Lady Lane, a celebrated shrine and place of pilgrimage. The first such occasion was arranged to take place on 8 September 1528, when the college was visited by distinguished guests, including Stephen Gardiner and Thomas Cromwell, bringing on behalf of the absent founder (presumably busy with affairs of state) rich gifts of plate, ornaments and vestments. A great company of notables from town and county was also assembled for the occasion and joined in the lavish celebrations and feasting. The procession through the town had, alas, to be abandoned, it being 'a day of fowle wedder and rayned sore contynewally' and a procession in the college church (St. Peter's) had to be substituted. Despite this minor disappointment the school was thriving until Autumn 1529, and all seemed set fair for it to attain that distinction and honour which Thomas Wolsey had worked so energetically to achieve.

Unhappily, no sooner was the school fairly established when its founder lost the favour of the King. The story of his fall is well-known. It was as swift and precipitate as his power as the King's chief minister had been high and seemingly

unassailable. He surrendered the Great Seal in October 1529 and was ordered into retirement first at his house in Esher, then in his archiepiscopal palace at York.

From the moment of Wolsey's disgrace his enemies fell like vultures on the endowments of the school. King Henry himself set the example by sending his agents to make an inventory of the valuables, and to carry off a wealth of plate, vestments and ornaments. The tenants of the college lands, who had little liked their new landlord, took the opportunity to withhold the rents upon which the school depended for its income: some of them despoiled the estate by theft of timber and cattle. The Dean struggled manfully among all the ensuing chaos to keep the school functioning in the early months of 1530, but its fate was finally settled in September, when royal commissioners declared the estates of both of Wolsey's colleges to be forfeit to the Crown, following which Henry formally dissolved them in October. This action greatly distressed the by now sick and wretched Wolsey, who pleaded with the King to take pity on 'his poor colleges'. Whether for this reason, or to enhance his own reputation, Henry did reprieve Cardinal College, Oxford, which he re-established as a royal foundation and renamed Christ Church.

He did not, however, choose to show the same consideration to the Ipswich college. In due time, it is true, he took pity on the town and school so far as to restore the old school lands which Wolsey had taken over for his new foundation. The grammar school education of children never entirely ceased, and a school on the older, more modest lines re-established itself: the present Ipswich School is in direct succession to this revival of the very ancient Ipswich school. But the site of Wolsey's College was granted to Thomas Alvard, a member of the royal household and strangely enough both a former member of Wolsey's household, and a nephew of a former prior of the priory of SS. Peter and Paul. The buildings that had been erected at so great expense and labour were pulled down as rapidly as they had risen, and the stone either carried off to be used in the building of the King's great palace at Westminster, or sold off locally. Sadly, Thomas Wolsey's attempt to do something outstanding and of lasting value for the place of his birth turned out to have been left too late. When he died at Leicester Abbey on 29 November 1530, on his journey to London to face charges of high treason, his intended great college was already dissolved and extinguished. All that is left in mute witness of what might have been is the small brick gateway which bears his name.

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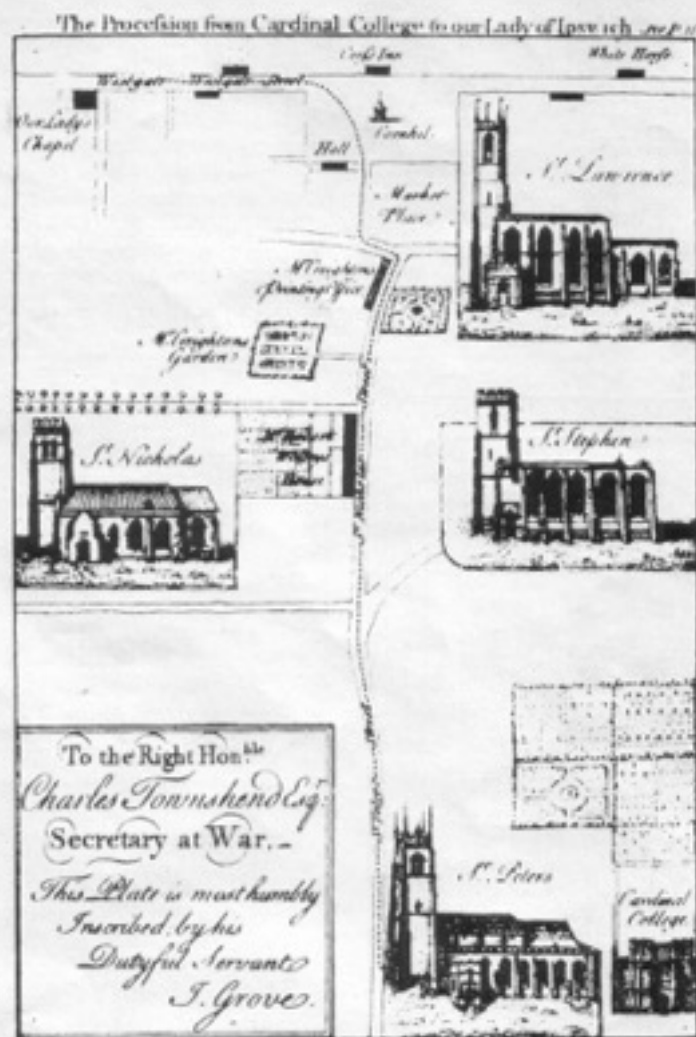
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The procession route, reproduced from Groves Dialogues  
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## WOLSEY'S PROCESSION

BY STANLEY SMITH

FOR MANY centuries, 8th September was an important day in Ipswich. The leading citizens would meet in conclave and elect officials to be responsible for the care of the town in the coming year. The Burgesses and Members of Parliament, the Bailiffs and the Portmen, the Clavigers or key-keepers — all these and others would be appointed, with penalties should they fail in their duties.

It was also the traditional date of the Birthday of the Blessed Virgin and, in at least the four parish churches dedicated to Mary, there would be special commemorative services. The same would happen at the little Chapel of Our Lady of Grace in Lady Lane.

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countless pilgrims. It was also attended by well-known personages — including Catherine of Aragon, Henry VIII, Princess Blanche (daughter of Henry IV), Sir Thomas More and Cardinal Wolsey. Records tell of a royal wedding, when Princess Elizabeth (daughter of Edward I) was married to John, Count of Holland in 1297. The chapel was famous, mentioned in national histories and listed second only to Walsingham.

Thomas Wolsey built a College in Oxford, which was opened in 1525, and made plans for a similar foundation in Ipswich. Taking over the old Priory of SS. Peter and Paul (behind the present St. Peter's Church), work commenced at once and the 'College of Secular Canons Dedicated to the Virgin', more often called 'The Cardinal's College of St. Mary', began its short life in early 1528.

The Cardinal's detailed planning had included the complete curriculum and regulations. These included a directive that every year, on 8th September, there should be a procession from the College to the Chapel in Lady Lane — in honour of the Birthday of the Blessed Virgin.

The Principal of the College was Dean William Capon and it would seem that he took great care that all his instructions were faithfully carried out. It is fortunate that most of the letters that he sent to the Cardinal have been preserved and that these include details of the procession and of those taking part. In addition, two old books give valuable information. These are *Dialogues between Cardinal Wolsey and Cardinal Ximenes* by a 'Mr. Grove of Richmond', which even includes a map of the route taken, and the *Life of Cardinal Wolsey* by his personal Gentleman-Usher, George Cavendish.

It would appear that the procession of 1528 was the only one to take place. There are no records of it ever being repeated. By the following year, the Cardinal was in royal disfavour and, although the Chapel was still in existence, it was probably considered unwise to repeat the journey.

Cardinal Wolsey was not personally present; but the fact that important members of his staff attended would lead to the conclusion that he considered the occasion to be one of importance.

In a long letter to his master, Dean Capon said that 'upon Our Lady's eve' he, with all the College staff, the Sub-Dean, six priests, eight clerks, nine choristers, all the servants, the Prior of Christchurch, the town Bailiffs and Portmen and 'twenty-four gentlemen of the county' made their way to the Lady Lane Chapel and there 'sang Evensong as solemnly and devoutly as we could'.

The total number taking part is not given,

but it must have been quite large. The Prior would certainly have had an entourage and, if the term 'all the servants' included personal as well as College employees, this would add to the list given. Beside that, it is most probable that members of the public would join in. The use of the phrase 'as solemnly and devoutly as we could' can have been caused by the difficulty of finding room in the small chapel for such a crowd.

At the chapel, the procession was joined by Mr. Stephen Gardiner, the Cardinal's Secretary, Mr. Thomas Cromwell, his Solicitor, a Dr. Lee and Mr. Humphrey Wingfield, a prominent local personality and a personal friend of Wolsey. Dean Capon's letter continued to say that 'all of which accompanied us home again to your Grace's College with as loving and kind a manner as I have seen'.

Mr. Grove gives details of the route of the procession and states that 'they went out at the West-door, through the whole length of St. Peter's Street, then through St. Nicholas' Street, past the house where the Cardinal was born, cross the Butter-market, then by the Herb-market, then over the Corn-hill, past the Market-cross and the Town-hall, formerly St. Mildred's Church, then through St. Matthew's Street, under the West-gate and to the Chapel of the famous image'.

All this took place on 'Our Lady's eve', 7th September, and not on the day ordered by the Cardinal. We are left with the conclusion that it was most probably a grand rehearsal for a larger and more impressive ceremony to be held on the next day.

This is borne out by a further quotation from the Dean's letter, in which he reported that 'on the next day, which was Lady Day, the 8th day of September, it was a day of foul weather and rained sore, so that we could not go in procession through the town to Our Lady's Chapel, according to the statute by your Grace made, but we made as solemn a procession in your Grace's College as could be devised'.

In his book, Mr. Grove gives a long list of the people present and says that 'both the Church and the Church-yard were filled'.

We are told that the Dean entertained the important visitors to dinner, that 'all were satisfied with what was provided' and that 'everyone drank what they thought proper, after which they departed, expressing their high veneration and respect for the Cardinal'.

---

*Stanley Smith is the author of The Madonna of Ipswich, just published by East Anglian Magazine Ltd, price £3.50.*

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Sir Brian Tuke, First Master of the Posts, c. 1516

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## ROYAL MAIL

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BY GLADYS WILTON

CARDINAL WOLSEY is seldom given the credit for being the originator of the Royal Mail, yet it was certainly his control and influence that brought it about. Letters of State had been carried by messengers and running footmen for many years; merchants and others used the common carriers for conveying their letters.

The many appointments held by Wolsey necessitated a large amount of correspondence both at home and abroad, and the Cardinal

demanded an efficient method of conveyance. Brian Tuke was secretary to Wolsey and he was appointed to the Royal household as treasurer of the King's Chamber. One of his duties was to pay the messengers. This led to appointment by warrant, likely to have been issued by the Cardinal, of 'Master of the Posts'.

Running footmen gave their name to many of the Tudor inns where they rested on their journeys. Wolsey had such messengers in his vast



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