

## Why was the 'Survey of Worcestershire' not published?

Jan Broadway

It is generally and understandably assumed that, had it not been for the civil war, Thomas Habington's 'Survey of Worcestershire' would have been published in the middle years of the seventeenth century. An assumption that is apparently supported by the juxtaposition of the dispatch of the completed manuscript to the Warwickshire antiquary Sir Simon Archer for his comments concerning its publication with the first ransacking of Hindlip by soldiers in November 1642.<sup>1</sup> In the paper I want to suggest that publication in the form Habington envisaged in his table of contents was not a realistic prospect when he drew them up and probably never had been. When it came to publishing, commercial pressures were as strong in the seventeenth century as they are today and it is my contention that most local history in Stuart England was always destined to remain in manuscript.

The questions that potential publishers asked of a manuscript in the seventeenth century were the same as those that confront their contemporary counterparts. How big is the potential market? How much will it cost to produce each copy? Are there illustrations, tables or features that will increase the cost? Can I sell 500 copies at a profit? How long would it take to sell them? Would it be better to increase the print run and so reduce the cost per copy? Or will I end up with a warehouse full of unsold books? We actually have little evidence about the size of print runs or how well individual books sold. Indirect evidence includes the appearance of reprints and second editions and the complaints of authors. Very occasionally we come across more direct evidence. In September 1666 William Dugdale was using a garret in the College of Arms to store unsold copies of his books, when the building was burnt to the ground in the Great Fire. He lost around 300 copies of his *History of St Paul's*, published in 1658, and 500 of his *History of Imbanking and Draining* of 1662. The print run of each was unlikely to have been more than 1,000 and 50 or more copies would have been required for subscribers and as gifts to patrons. Dugdale was a successful author, who made a financial profit on at least some of his publications, but the failure to rapidly shift his stock indicates the perils of publishing local history in Restoration London.

Although there was a great deal of research into local history in the decades before the civil war, comparatively little was published. A national overview was provided by William Camden's *Britannia*, which went through several editions in Latin and English. There were

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<sup>1</sup>SBT DR37/Box 87/103; C. Don Gilbert, 'The Composition of Thomas Habington's 'Survey of Worcestershire'', *Recusant History* 26 (2003), 415-25.

also the two volumes of Michael Drayton's topographical poem *Poly-Olbion*, the slow sales of the first volume of which apparently delayed the publication of the second. By 1640 the published county histories were William Lambarde's *Perambulation of Kent*, Richard Carew's *Survey of Cornwall* and William Burton's *Description of Leicestershire*. These sat alongside John Stow's *Survey of London* and William Somner's *Antiquities of Canterbury*. The majority of works by local historians remained in manuscript. Some antiquaries only ever sought scribal publication through the circulation of presentation copies of their manuscripts. John Smyth of Nibley circulated the three substantial volumes of his *Lives of the Berkeleys* among members of the family in manuscript, although each apparently received a printed copy of his introduction. Other works circulated in manuscript before being published. The circle of Midlands antiquaries to which Habington belonged in the 1630s were not aiming for scribal publication; they believed in print. In 1636 Dugdale reported that in the preface to his intended second edition of the *Description of Leicestershire* Burton would mention the accounts of Northamptonshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire to be produced by Sir Christopher Hatton, Archer and Habington. Burton himself was turning his attention to Staffordshire, for which the manuscript left by Sampson Erdeswicke and copied by Dugdale would provide a basis. Of this impressive programme of work only *The Antiquities of Warwickshire* was eventually to appear two decades later.<sup>2</sup>

The usual method of securing the publication of a manuscript was to sell it to a member of the Stationers' Company, who would licence it, take care of printing and distribution and take any profit. From a brief survey of the published works and their authors it is clear that, when approaching a member of the Stationers' Company with a manuscript of local history, it helped to be a published author or to have an established scholarly reputation. Drayton was well-known as a poet before he embarked on *Poly-Olbion*, while Stow had published chronicles and annals. Lambarde had published a collection of Anglo-Saxon laws. Camden was a master of Westminster school and a recognised scholar, while Carew belonged to the Elizabethan Society of Antiquaries. Burton had published a translation of *The History of Cleitophon and Leucippe* from the Greek as a law student. Although he retired to Leicestershire after having been called to the bar, he corresponded with scholars such as Sir Robert Cotton, John Selden and the herald Augustine Vincent and when he approached a London publisher it was as the elder brother of Robert, author of *The Anatomy of Melancholy*. The exception among published local historians, who had not

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<sup>2</sup>Hamper, *The Life Diary and Correspondence of Sir William Dugdale* (1827), 155.

established an earlier reputation was William Somner. *The Antiquities of Canterbury* was his first foray into print and his association with scholarly circles in London seem to have come later. However, as registrar of the ecclesiastical courts of Canterbury Somner would have had some prior contact with his publisher Richard Thrale, who had published Laud's visitation articles in 1638.

In respect of being a published author, Habington was apparently in a good position. His translation of Gildas, originally produced when he was a prisoner in the Tower in Elizabeth's reign, appeared in print in 1638. His publisher was William Cooke, who also published his son William's works *Castara, The Queene of Aragon, The Historie of Edward IV* and *Observations upon Historie*. Cooke would presumably have been Habington's first choice of publisher for his Worcestershire manuscript, but his absence from the record after 1641 suggests that he had died before it was ready. After his brief flurry of activity Habington's son William published nothing further, apparently failing to establish a relationship with an alternative publisher.

The agreement of an influential figure to accept the dedication of a county history also seems to have increased its chances of being published, although by how much is uncertain. It appears that at times of political instability, patronising local history provided a means of reinforcing local support. Richard Carew's *Survey of Cornwall* was dedicated to Sir Walter Raleigh. Having circulated in manuscript, it was published in the last year of Elizabeth's reign at a time when Raleigh was keen to reinforce his standing in the West Country during uncertainty over the succession. The publication of Burton's *Description of Leicestershire* and Somner's *Antiquities of Canterbury* followed parliamentary attacks on their respective dedicatees George Villiers, then marquis of Buckingham and William Laud, archbishop of Canterbury. According to his later account Burton's work had been completed long before and 'was on a sudden raised out of the dust, and by the force of an higher power drawn to the press'.<sup>3</sup> Following Buckingham's death, Burton informed Archer in December 1628 that his new edition would be dedicated to the Earl of Leicester, who had recently succeeded his father.<sup>4</sup> In practice Leicester had little connection with the county from which his title derived, his estates being in Kent, but there was no more obvious candidate and Leicester did have a reputation as a scholar that made him a suitable dedicatee. When William Dugdale published *The Antiquities of Warwickshire* in

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<sup>3</sup>Daniel Williams, 'William Burton's 1642 Revised Edition of the "Description of Leicestershire"', *Leicestershire Archaeological and History Society Transactions* 50 (1974-5), 30-6.

<sup>4</sup>Bodleian, Eng lett b 1, 18.

1656, it was dedicated to Hatton. Dugdale had served as Hatton's secretary in Oxford during the civil war, when Hatton had received a peerage and served on the king's council. Having spent eight years in exile in France, Lord Hatton returned to London in 1656. Dudale's dedication, acknowledging Hatton's support for learning, was part of the construction of his former patron's post-war identity.

Rather than a dedication to a single individual Habington began his manuscript with a preface to the nobility of the shire, the 'Cedars ... flouryshinge above us in the sunshyne of fortune and in her stormes more subiect to blastes; ... the pretious dyamondes in the coronet of our county gyvinge lyght to the inferiours howe to direct theyre lyfes'. The preface is not dated, but internal evidence suggests that it was written by January 1640. The nobility named by Habington are Lord Coventry, the Earl of Shrewsbury, Lord Windsor, Sir Walter Devereux and Sir Robert Berkeley. The ordering of the list indicates that the preface was written during the life of the first Lord Coventry, who as Lord Keeper of the Great Seal took precedence over the Earl of Shrewsbury. Coventry died in office in January 1640. If Habington had written the preface later, the second Lord Coventry's name would have been placed after Lord Windsor and before the baronet Sir Walter Devereux. The list of the nobility is interesting for its inclusions and omissions. As members of the House of Lords the presence of Coventry, Shrewsbury and Windsor was unexceptional. The exclusion of Worcestershire's other peer, Edward Sutton, lord Dudley, may be explained by his financial insolvency and political unimportance. The inclusion of Sir Walter Devereux is at first sight mysterious, since there were baronets such as Sir William Russell and Sir Thomas Lyttelton with deeper roots in Worcestershire and closer links to Habington. Devereux was, however, in line to inherit the title of Viscount Hereford on the death of his cousin, the childless Earl of Essex. Sir Robert Berkeley earned his place as the county's only judge and for his support of Habington's enterprise over several years.<sup>5</sup> A somewhat surprising omission was John Thornborough, bishop of Worcester. His seat in the House of Lords and his implied assistance to Habington in granting him access to the diocesan records in 1636 might have been expected to earn him a place. Since the burgesses of Droitwich placed Thornborough in the same category as Shrewsbury, Coventry and Windsor by admitting all four men to their number, his omission by Habington appears to have been deliberate – presumably either on personal or religious grounds. Thornborough was a convinced Calvinist with a reputation for harshness against

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<sup>5</sup>Bodleian, Eng lett b1, 108.

recusants as the Jacobean bishop of Bristol. In his last years he found himself increasingly in conflict with the cathedral community of Worcester, including Habington's friend Nathaniel Tomkins. It is noticeable that in his text Habington described Thornborough's tomb at Worcester with its alchemical symbolism without making explicit reference to the bishop.<sup>6</sup>

Even in 1640 Habington's Worcestershire nobles did not have the significance of Raleigh, Buckingham or Laud. Coventry was a conscientious bureaucrat rather than an influential political figure as Lord Keeper, while the Earl of Shrewsbury was excluded by his catholicism from an active role on the national stage. Habington's preface to the nobility also acts as an indicator of how events overtook his work before the final draft was completed. As we have seen, Lord Keeper Coventry died at the beginning of 1640. In February 1641 Sir Robert Berkeley was arrested and in July articles of impeachment were presented against him. In the 'Survey' Habington wrote of Berkeley: 'Here you see him ascending to the Noonstead of fortune; lett my withered age never behold his declining'. The judge's fortunes had, however, plummeted before Habington's draft was completed. Within a month of Archer receiving the draft, the death of Thomas, lord Windsor without an heir brought an end to another of the county's noble families. Before it was finished, none of Habington's Worcestershire nobles was in a position to lend significant support to the publication of his work or to regard it as a useful tool for improving their own standing.

Whether a manuscript would be taken up by a Stationer depended on its subject, structure and length. As a subject for county history Kent had several advantages: it was comparatively large and populous; it was close to London and many people travelled through it on their way to France; it had played a significant role in the nation's history; and it had some distinctive features that differentiated it from other counties such as land tenure by gavelkind. These factors persuaded Ralph Newbery to publish Lambarde's *Perambulation*, which at 450 quarto pages was a reasonably substantial work. It was illustrated by a map of the Saxon heptarchy – a somewhat surprising image for a book on Kent, but the copperplate was based on a woodcut that had been used in Lambarde's earlier work on the Saxons. Lambarde's *Perambulation* and the use of the same approach by Camden in *Britannia* established the perambulation as the appropriate form for chorographies. The initial print runs of both works would have been quite short, but a second run of both were produced quickly. The popularity of Camden's work was such that

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<sup>6</sup>Thomas Habington, *A Survey of Worcestershire* (1895), vol 1, 32-4, 470; volume 2, 446-7.

there were half a dozen ever expanding Latin editions before an English translation appeared in 1610. Lambarde's work was less popular, but sold sufficiently well to prompt a second, revised edition in 1596. This time a map of the Kentish beacons, initially printed for the information of local officials, was included.

Unlike Kent, Cornwall would have been a *terra incognita* to many Stuart gentlemen. Their interest was likely to be aroused by its unfamiliarity, isolated position at the very tip of the country, distinctive language, customs and mysterious, neolithic remains. As Carew's *Survey of Cornwall* was a comparatively short book of around 170 pages written in a similar style to Lambarde's *Perambulation*, it was worth John Jaggard taking a chance on it in 1602. He did not go to the expense of including a map of the county. There appears to have been no second print run and the second, amended edition mentioned by Carew four years later never appeared. This suggests that Cornwall did not sell as well as Kent.

Since Leicestershire lacked the immediate marketing appeal of either Kent or Cornwall, it was an unlikely candidate for the next county history. Burton's *Description of Leicestershire* was comparatively long at around 350 pages, adopted an alphabetical ordering and combined text and images on the same page in a way that complicated the printing process. It is somewhat surprising that the book was printed in the first place. The failure to publish the intended second edition, which by its final draft had expanded to be some three times as long, is unsurprising.

As the commercial success of previous county histories was limited, a publisher was unlikely to be enthusiastic about a substantial manuscript on a county without distinctive appeal presented in an unusual form. Habington's work was just such a manuscript. Worcestershire lacked Kent's large population, nor was it much visited. It lacked the distinctiveness of Cornwall. Like Leicestershire it lacked an obvious, immediate appeal to a bookseller. Moreover Habington's manuscript was long and arranged in an idiosyncratic manner that exceeded the county boundaries and neither followed the established perambulatory form nor Burton's straightforward alphabetical order. Habington divided his manuscript into two books, 'one of the clergy and one of the laity', arranging the majority of the county's manors according to their medieval lordship. Excepted were the city of Worcester and towns of Droitwich, Bromsgrove and Bewdley, which were to come between the account of Worcester cathedral and that of the bishop's manors in the first

book.<sup>7</sup> When Habington sent Archer his draft, he admitted that 'some feare it wylbee to teduous & voluminous', but he believed that 'great caution' would be needed in any editing, 'least in weedyng my writings they plucke out the best flowers of the wourcke'.<sup>8</sup>

Particularly contentious was his account of the manors of the bishop of Worcester, which took him outside Worcestershire into Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire, Middlesex and beyond. Habington's scheme was ambitious and the achievement remarkable, but whether anyone in the London book trade would have been willing to take it on without a considerable amount of editing is doubtful.

An alternative to interesting a London Stationer in a manuscript was to finance and manage the publication oneself. This was the approach that William Burton chose for his proposed second edition, presumably since no Stationer would take the financial risk involved. As he remained in Leicestershire, Burton was obliged to work through an intermediary. In 1638 his friend Sir John Lambe, an ecclesiastical lawyer, undertook to find a printer and recruit 'fit and able correctors'. Given his age, Habington too would have needed to work through an intermediary. It would, however, have been difficult to find someone with the necessary time, experience and determination. Many authors began the process of self-publication, but comparatively few brought it to completion and working through intermediaries made success even more unlikely. In the 1650s William Dugdale was to prove adept at getting substantial antiquarian works through the press. The *Monasticon Anglicanum* was the magnum opus of the Yorkshire antiquary Roger Dodsworth, but their friends apparently agreed that his efforts in taking the manuscript through to publication were such that Dugdale had earned his place with Dodsworth on the title page. This work was followed in quick succession by his own *Antiquities of Warwickshire* and *History of St Paul's*. Dugdale's hands-on approach included buying the paper, delivering it to the printers himself and doing his own proofreading. The degree of control over the final book that his involvement allowed Dugdale encouraged him to continue to self-publish, even when as an established author he could have handed over his manuscripts to others. The costs associated with this approach were substantial. In 1666 just 30 pages of the third volume of the *Monasticon Anglicanum* had been published, when the manuscript was destroyed in the Great Fire. According to Dugdale's own account, he had spent £50 on the paper and printing of these thirty pages. This constituted

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<sup>7</sup>Habington, *Worcestershire*, vol 1, 27-32

<sup>8</sup>SBT, DR37/Box 87/103.

a significant outlay. It was the same as he had paid for his daughter Helen's apprenticeship to a haberdasher in the Royal Exchange and five times the annual allowance he paid his clerks for drawing up pedigrees and copying documents.<sup>9</sup>

Dugdale was only able to finance the printing of his own works by raising subscriptions. Individual subscribers were encouraged to pay for engravings of cathedrals and monastic sites, funeral monuments and country houses in the *Monasticon Anglicanum*, *Antiquities of Warwickshire* and *History of St Paul's*. The effort required to secure subscriptions was immense and relied heavily on personal contacts. It also took a long time. The erratic page numbering of *The Antiquities of Warwickshire*, which includes substantial gaps, indicates how sections were printed as they were financed rather than sequentially with the printer and Dugdale guessing how many pages would eventually be in the previous section. In securing subscribers for *The Antiquities of Warwickshire*, Dugdale relied heavily on Archer's efforts to extract subscriptions from the local gentry.

The best opportunity for Habington's manuscript to achieve contemporary publication almost certainly came in the early 1650s. Late in 1653 Archer encouraged Dugdale to contact Cassibelan Burton and William Habington about seeing their father's manuscripts through the press. His expectation was presumably that Dugdale would lend his practical assistance, as he was then in the process of doing with the *Monasticon*.<sup>10</sup> The other manuscripts mentioned by Archer in this letter were Sampson Erdeswick's *Survey of Staffordshire* and an account of Cheshire written by William Webb in the 1620s. Archer had a copy of Webb's manuscript and this was subsequently published with Dugdale's encouragement by his friend Daniel King as part of *The Vale Royall of Cheshire*.<sup>11</sup> Webb's manuscript had the advantage of being short and not in the hands of someone who felt proprietorial towards it. Dugdale and King were also able to make use of contacts with an interest in Cheshire to further their work and also acquired other manuscripts to create a viable book.

Dugdale, whose wife's family came from Staffordshire, apparently began work on Erdeswick's manuscript, expanding the account of Wolverhampton. His work on Staffordshire was overtaken by other projects, but after the Restoration Dugdale encouraged the effort that eventually produced Robert Plott's *Natural History of*

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<sup>9</sup>Bodleian, MS Top Yorks, c36, 14; MS Wood F41, 65.

<sup>10</sup>Hamper, *Sir William Dugdale*, 273.

<sup>11</sup>J. Broadway, 'A convenient fiction? The county community and county history in the 1650s' in Jacqueline Eales & Andrew Hopper eds., *The County Community in Seventeenth-Century England And Wales* (2012), 39-55.

*Staffordshire*, although Walter Chetwynd's more antiquarian account which would have utilised Erdeswick never appeared. As for Burton's manuscript, when that was in the care of Sir John Lambe in 1638, Dugdale had criticised it as 'fouly faulty' and in need of correction.<sup>12</sup> Editing it for publication would have been a major task. Moreover Cassibelan Burton was not likely to exert himself to seek subscribers and the deaths of Sir Thomas and Sir Robert Shirley had robbed Dugdale of his best scholarly contacts in Leicestershire. Although he may not have seen Habington's completed manuscript in 1642, Dugdale would have been sufficiently familiar with the work as it progressed to know that it too would make substantial demands on an editor. Moreover, he lacked the influential contacts in Worcestershire, who might have helped him seek support for the work. Indeed, in 1639 he had been involved in a manorial dispute with Sir George Devereux of Sheldon Hall, younger brother of Habington's dedicatee Sir Walter. William Habington's own death in 1654 removed the possibility of him playing a similar role in promoting the book as Archer did for *The Antiquities of Warwickshire*.

The one part of Habington's work that might have appeared in print in the seventeenth century was his account of Worcester cathedral. Having published *The History of St Paul's* in 1657, Dugdale planned a second edition towards the end of his life as part of the effort to raise money for the rebuilding of the cathedral. It was planned to include in the volume an account of York and Carlisle. He had plenty of material on both of these cathedrals and good contacts with a number of northern antiquaries, who he could rely on to promote the work. He had drawings of York minster prepared by his clerks during his visitation of Yorkshire in the 1660s and in 1682 he obtained drawings of Carlisle through Sir Daniel Fleming.<sup>13</sup> Habington's account of Worcester would have been an appropriate addition to this project, but it would have required local backing to persuade Dugdale that the additional cost of including it would be recovered through increased sales of the whole. As it was well known for at least three years that Dugdale was preparing a book of cathedral histories, there was plenty of time for interest in publishing Habington's account to manifest itself.<sup>14</sup> It appears that there was no great interest in the work or that publication of the whole was preferred.

After the Fire Dugdale had withdrawn from playing such an active part in publishing his

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<sup>12</sup>Bodleian, MS Eng Lett b 1, 256-7.

<sup>13</sup>HMC, Report 12, part 7, 187-8.

<sup>14</sup>Bodleian, MS Eng Lett c. 130, 25.

own works, preferring to sell the rights to his manuscripts to commercial publishers. Given his track record potential publishers were able to predict with some certainty how many of his books they were likely to sell. In his final years Dugdale increasingly used intermediaries such as his son John and son-in-law Elias Ashmole, but still found that his personal intervention was occasionally required to maintain momentum. By 1681 he had established a relationship with the publisher Moses Pitt also undertook work for the Royal Society and was involved in an ambitious project to produce a huge twelve volume world atlas. Overwhelmed by other projects, Pitt needed regular encouragement to remind him of his commitment to Dugdale's work. With Dugdale's death this encouragement faltered and the publication of his manuscripts was then overtaken by Pitt's bankruptcy. This was not an auspicious time for Habington's grandson, also Thomas, to attempt to find an editor willing to prepare the *Survey of Worcestershire* for publication. In the 1690s he approached the aging Anthony Wood, the historian of Rutland James Wright and Dr Hopkins, who had contributed to the Worcestershire section of Gibson's *Camden*. It appears that editing the manuscripts was too great a task to attract a published author. An impoverished academic might have been more easily persuaded to take on the task, but such an editor would have required paying.<sup>15</sup>

The second edition of *The History of St Paul's* finally appeared in 1716, edited by Edward Maynard. Maynard, a Northamptonshire clergyman, had been shown the manuscript by Dugdale's grandson at the house of Lord Digby. As Maynard's friend John Hough became Bishop of Worcester the following year, it seems bad luck that Habington's history of Worcester cathedral did not find an editor in Maynard. Extracts were finally published by Richard Rawlinson in 1717 within his larger compilation of the *Antiquities of Cathedral Church Worcester*.

While commercial realities prevented the majority of antiquarian manuscripts appearing in print at the time of their composition, many were subsequently edited for publication in the following two centuries. The degree to which works were amended or 'improved' varied, but their publishers invariably edited them to suit their market. When Habington's *Survey of Worcestershire* eventually appeared in print in the 1890s, the editor excised the material concerning other counties and abandoned Habington's intended ordering of the work. A similar, though hopefully more sympathetic, assault on the manuscript would have been needed to make publishing the work commercially viable in the seventeenth century. In my

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<sup>15</sup>D.C. Cox, 'Worcestershire' in C.R.J. Currie & C.P. Lewis, *A Guide to the English County Histories*(1994), 426.

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opinion it was undoubtedly commercial reality and the lack of a good editor rather than the civil war that prevented the contemporary publication of Thomas Habington's *Survey of Worcestershire*.

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