THOMAS ROBERTS AND THE LEICESTER MAP DATED 1741

by John Seary

A map of Leicester dated 1741, bearing the signature of Thomas Roberts, forms part of the published records of the Borough of Leicester (RBL throughout this paper). The aim of this paper is to show that this was not a conventional map of the town at that or any other date, but was intended to mark features of what was already Leicester’s past on a street plan of the early eighteenth century. Some biographical details of Roberts are included, together with speculation on how the map came into existence.

INTRODUCTION

Thomas Roberts’ map is a familiar landmark in the history of Leicester. It was known to John Nichols who wrote: ‘However in the plan of Leicester by Mr. Thomas Roberts (which for the part of a surveyor is very exact)….” 1 Subsequently, it disappeared from view and seems to have been unknown to Gimson and Russell, whose Leicestershire Maps was published in 1947. A copy, in poor condition, was discovered, before the publication in 1967 of vol. 6 of the Borough Records, and was included in the volume. The edges of the map were trimmed, presumably to improve its appearance, resulting in the loss of a small amount of text; subsequently, some features were excised and moved before the map was photographed. It is a copy of this altered map that was reproduced to accompany Robert Hill’s paper in the transactions for 2011. 2 The original was restored as far as possible to its former appearance and is now held at the local record office. 3

The Records of the Borough vol. 6 covers the Chamberlain’s accounts for the period 1689–1835. The inclusion of the map suggests that the editor, G. A. Chinnery, considered it to be an eighteenth-century street plan of the city, although he did not accept that it dated from 1741. As the Editor of vol. 5 of the Borough Records he would have known about the 1712 entry in the Hall Books of the Corporation, of an order to pay Thomas Roberts £12 for his pains in making a survey of the Corporation. 4 Hill (above) states that the layout of the Saturday market on the map is consistent with the situation in 1711 and this was altered in 1714–15, but the borough did not pay for a printed map in 1712, to which a date of 1741 was later added. They paid for a survey upon which a map was based subsequently.

The map is unusual in appearance: North is placed on the left-hand side of the sheet, and there are naive drawings of churches and unusually uniform houses lining

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3 ROLLR 4D6 in PD3/6.

the streets. Some of the features were not contemporary with one another at any time: St James’ chapel had disappeared before 1708 when the Great Meeting House was built. Some features appear to be later additions to the map.

I would suggest that Thomas Roberts used the survey which he had produced to create a map showing his ideas about the positions of various features of Leicester’s past. This paper proposes a possible history of the map and how it was modified. Some of the history recorded in the map is discussed also.

THOMAS ROBERTS

Before the publication of Hill’s paper little seems to have been written about Roberts, and I see this account as capable of some amplification. The letter to which Hill refers, dated May 1725, was written to William Stukeley, the noted antiquary. One side of this letter comprises a scale plan of the Rawdykes and their relationship to the River Soar, together with information on the dimensions and location of these earthworks. This letter would seem to be the justification for Nichols crediting Roberts for one of Stukeley’s engravings, reproduced by Nichols as Fig. 4 of Plate I of vol. 1, though Stukeley had given the image a more fanciful appearance by continuing the banks round to form an elliptical *cursus*, peopled by small horsemen. The dimensions given by Roberts in this letter are quoted by Nichols as a footnote.

The reverse of the letter reads:

> The Books I desired your thoughts of, are not for my own Study; but for my Son, who is about 16 years of age. And is Apprentice with a Carpinder & Joyner, A very Noted man And a great undertaker of Buildings. If at any time it Should be in my power to give you any Sattisfaction I shall be proud of the Oportunaty & the Greater the Drugery, with the more pleasure. Mr. Cart gives his Service to you with which I Humbly beg your acceptance of a Gratefull Acknoledment due for your late kinde and good Advice with all favors done to your very humble Servant
> Thos Roberts
> Leicester

This letter not only enables the location of the biographical data quoted by Hill, it also links Roberts, Stukeley and the Reverend Samuel Carte, and, in addition, indicates that Stukeley had been helpful to Roberts.

The Borough Records list Roberts as an innholder and victualler; in addition, he was also a land surveyor and is recorded as such in the Dictionary of Land Surveyors. Lincolnshire Archives (LA) hold two estate surveys and a copied map by a Thomas Roberts, with dates of 1714, 1715 and 1716. The signature of Thomas Roberts on the plan of South Ormsby of 1716 is a good match for that on the

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8 J. Nichols, *ibid.*., vol. 1, pt 1, p. 4.
10 LA, Tyr/2/21.
11 LA, MM/4/21/6.
12 LA, MM/4/20/1.
Leicester map dated 1741. Presumably, although he held the license, someone else must have looked after the inn whilst Roberts was away surveying. Hill suggests that Roberts’ survey of 1711 was concerned with the buildings owned by the Borough. Whether or not a land surveyor might have undertaken a survey of buildings, it is clear that Roberts’ map was produced from a competent land survey which, from the market place evidence, must have been carried out before 1715. This writer suggests that it was this land survey for which the borough paid £12 in 1712.

**THOMAS ROBERTS’ MAP – SUGGESTED DEVELOPMENT**

In conjecturing as to how Roberts’ map came into existence, it is necessary to refer to a number of maps and plans.

- **Map A.** (Fig. 1) This is a street plan of Leicester, devoid of any lettering, and including many details which relate it to the following maps. This map is bound into the ROLLR original Nichols’ History, vol. 1, pt 3. At 0.14m × 0.19m it is considerably smaller than the 1741 map and, although produced from the same survey, it is likely to antedate, but not to have been a precursor of, the 1741 map.

- **B1 and B2** are maps of Leicester dated 1722. B1, which was included by William Stukeley in his 1724 *Itinerarium Curiosum*, showed the line of the Roman wall. He added ‘Roman’ details such as the road to *Vernometum*, the Roman Pottery and The Bath, which is shown as a small classical structure. B2 is a slightly different version found in the second edition of the *Itinerarium Curiosum* in 1767. This version was reproduced by John Nichols.

- **C.** This is a map of which no copies are known, and whose existence and contents are inferred in order to account for 1741. This writer considers that this map can be dated to between 1722 and 1725, and that alterations were made to the plate engraved for map C, to produce map D, and that these changes may have been made in more than one phase.

- **D.** This map bears the date 1741. It is now accepted that 1741 is the date when alterations were made to the printing-plate of Roberts’ map.

- **E.** This is the so-called Van der Gucht Map which was printed from the plate after further alterations such as the inclusion of The Exchange, built in 1748.

**THOMAS ROBERTS’ SURVEY**

The sum of £12 may seem a large amount to have paid for a survey in 1711–12, but in fact surveyors were highly paid. *The Dictionary of Land Surveyors* records: ‘Their status rose; by 1755 it has been estimated that engineers and surveyors earned more than many government officials, the parish clergy, clerks, surgeons and doctors, though less than solicitors and barristers.’

The area surveyed by Roberts’ was limited to land which belonged to the corporation. A record of 1727/28 reads: ‘Ordered that the Road at the bottom of

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Fig. 1. Unlettered plan of Leicester, referred to as map A.
Belgrave Gate leading to the Spittal House (so far as belongs to the Corporation) be paved about five yards broad.\textsuperscript{12} Another record of May 1741 states: ‘Ordered that the Chamberlins do pay out of the Town Stock five pounds being a free gift given by the corporation towards the Charge in making a New Road in the Spittle House pool.’\textsuperscript{13} This suggests that the reason that maps A, B, C1 and C2, and the 1711 survey, did not extend as far as the Spittle house was that the Corporation was not responsible for it. The Spittle house on the 1741 map is thus an addition to the plate made subsequent to the road works, to which the corporation had made a contribution. These records and their dating would seem to explain the discontinuity between the two sections of road as marked on the map.

**The Stukeley/Carte Map B**

The dates on the engravings in William Stukeley’s *Itinerarium Curiosum* indicate that he was in Leicester in September 1722. At this time he will have made contact with both Roberts and the Rev. Samuel Carte. Roberts, who had made his survey in 1711, was able to supply Stukeley with a plan drawn up from it (map A), which he used to draw the map of Leicester in the first edition of his publication. Stukeley could use his own observations to determine his hypothetical line of the Roman town wall and would have been supplied with other historical place-names by Carte. These included The Farm, the Roman Pottery, The Bath and The Hermitage. For the last two, Stukeley included his own imaginative drawings.

Roberts’ letter to Stukeley is bound into an original copy of Nichols’ History, as is map A. It is possible that both were extracted from Stukeley’s documents. Map B shows the same area of the town as that shown in map A: Welford Road is omitted from both maps, although it is marked on John Speed’s plan of 1610 as London Waye. It could be that Stukeley’s idea of showing Roman sites on a modern plan of the borough inspired Roberts and Carte to produce their own map showing later sites of historical importance. The names chosen for inclusion by Stukeley could also have been an influence as the four noted above appear also on Roberts’ map.

**THE THOMAS ROBERTS’ MAP**

As Roberts died in 1727 he could not have been responsible for the 1741 date on map D: it is, however, likely that the signature on the left-hand side at the bottom of the dedicatory scroll is his. The most probable explanation is that Roberts had drawn a historical map based on his survey and that there could have been at least two versions bearing his signature, the first leaving no known copy, the second with the date 1741. Further evidence is provided by the signature of the engraver – M. V dr Gucht Sculp. The Dictionary of National Biography records that Michael Vandergucht, Engraver, was in England from 1688 until his death in 1725. The 1741 date must therefore have been added to the printing after the death of the

\textsuperscript{12} *RBL* 5, 110.
\textsuperscript{13} *RBL* 5, 141.
The Mayor Recorder Aldermen
Common Council of the City of
The Boro of
Of the West Country City of
The Infinity
A True Plan of Grounds
of the Leicester Corporation

by LEICESTER

The Building Laid Out
Curtain
The Roman Walls
The Rivers
The Park

Statement in the S E of the great Ondler Road called the Foys
Remarcad for three lesser of other Roman Agitations
Discovered on and about it
Amount by the Surveyor with an Expedition A.D. 1727
One of the famous places of the East in the East
Of the North of the direction of the tenth century
First laid out upon the Plan of E. Hall (Blanchmore)
In 1535 restored A.D. 1633

Innately since after and before with several Religious
Monuments of other Buildings
Revised by a Man in 200 years
Much later restored

To the exact Designs is Hereby Dedicated

by A. Nibbs. 1741.
original engraver. Other alterations will have been made at the same time, and the
evidence for the Spittle house suggests that this was included for the first time in
1741.

Map A was not a precursor of map D, although there are a number of features
that they both have, derived from the same survey.

The Saturday market area
As with map A, the layout of the market on map D is consistent with the date of
1711. There is greater detail on map D, which is consistent with map A being a draft
for Stukeley who had no interest in, and did not include, market stalls on his map.

The area south of Millstone Lane
Welford Road does not appear on any of the maps, although it was marked as
London Waye by John Speed on his view dated 1610. It may be that, as with the
Spittle house, the land between the roads now known as Granby Street/London
Road and Oxford Street was not in the hands of the Corporation at the time, and
was therefore excluded from the survey. There are several pecked lines marked on
all the maps; from west to east these seem to represent:

1. The line of the modern Marble Street.
2. The line of the modern Pocklingtons Walk.
3. The line of Welford Road working back from Welford Place to Hotel Street.
4. Two parallel pecked lines which seem to represent Horse Fair Lane, which
   was marked on Speed’s plan of 1610. All of these probably represent tracks
   or pathways that were built up as streets at a later date.

The gates
The representations of the South gate and the Magazine on map D are similar, but
the North and East gates are depicted differently. For all four gates, the images on
both maps A and D are the same.

The Jewry Wall
This is recorded similarly on both maps A and D, but more clearly on D.

Buildings
The rows of buildings shown alongside the roads on map A are broadly similar to
map D although simpler, consisting of ground plans which are rectangular strips
parallel to the roads. This seems to be a convention and takes no account of the
fact that some buildings will have been aligned parallel to the road, and others
perpendicular. On map B the ground plans of the houses are drawn with projections
to the rear similar to other town maps in the Itinerarium.
Features of Map D dated 1741

1. East is at the top of the page. As map A has no lettering, there is no correct orientation: the orientation of map D was the choice of the mapmaker. It is different from that of map B.

2. The plan of the streets covers the same area as map A, except that an extension of Belgrave Gate has been added to accommodate the Spittle house.

3. The houses are in the same position as those on map A plus a few additions. The outline of the houses on map D are similar to those on map A, but those on map D have been embellished with identical gables and chimneys.

4. Property boundaries are marked in a few places on map A. These appear to have been part of the survey. Many more have been added to map D, although they may be nothing more than conventional ornament.

5. The ground plans of churches are marked on the map, although they were not surveyed and are inaccurate. On map D these are replaced by small naïve drawings.

6. Churches, some streets, and other features, are named on the map. The variations in the style of lettering used may indicate different phases in its development.

The page includes a decorative cartouche surrounding the Leicester cinquefoil, an engraving of ‘A South Prospect of Leicester’ and a scroll, the text of which is addressed to the great and the good of the town and county:

A True PLAN or GROUN DPLOT of the Antient Corporation of LEICESTER.

There follows a list of ancient names for the town, together with brief notes on its history. It concludes with Thomas Roberts’ signature and the date 1741. There is a key to 28 places which are marked on the map by numerals.

The copy of map D, reproduced in the Records of the Borough of Leicester, is in poor condition. There were several creases and splits, and the edges have been cropped. This has cut down ‘chappel’ on the right-hand side (south) of the map to two clear letters and half of the ‘a’. If the top of the map (east) had been cropped this would have interfered with the engraving of the South Prospect: instead, it has been excised and placed lower down, and covering the encircled number 21 which represents The Pound. This lay on the south side of Humberstone Gate and has been cut out and placed on the other side lower down. The original arrangement is shown in Fig. 2.

The inferred original (map C) could date to any time between the survey in 1711 and the death of Van der Gucht in 1725. Its most likely date is post 1722, the reason for this being that the concept seems to have been influenced by Stukeley’s map B. Confirmatory dating evidence comes from the statement in the scroll that Leicester had been governed by a mayor for 480 years (see Appendix below). The gratitude expressed in Roberts’ letter of 1725 may well have been for help and advice on the project, given to him by Stukeley. Help which may have included an introduction to the engraver, Van der Gucht.
Influences identifiable in the features of the map are Stukeley’s concept, Carte’s historical knowledge, and the Borough Records which include written documents and a map of Leicester, said to date to c.1600.

Both Roberts and Stukeley mark ‘The Bath’, although the drawings are different. This appears to relate to an archaeological find of c.1612, about which Nichols quotes manuscript notes by William Burton, additional to his book.14 These describe a chamber which Burton guessed to be a Roman *stouphe* – or hot house to bathe in. This was situated ‘near unto the town, without and between the North and West gates’. I suggest that Stukeley attached the name ‘The Bath’ to the position of a building on Roberts’ survey in approximately the described location and that Roberts copied this on his later map.

Roberts also marks ‘Brick Kills’ (a dialect form or spelling variant) where Stukeley has ‘Brick kilns where was antiently a Roman pottery’. Recent excavations have located brick kilns in this general area,15 but those marked by Roberts are more than 200m to the east. Throsby quotes Samuel Carte: ‘At the brick-works near the horse-fair-lees, in digging clay, the workmen do still often find Urns Coins and other remains of the Romans.’16 This possibly led to the mentioning of a Roman pottery.

A photograph of the c.1600 map was included by Gimson and Russell, and an unsatisfactory redrawing included in *RBL* 3.17 This map has none of the survey accuracy shown by Roberts. Whilst most conventional maps had north at the top of the page, as did Stukeley’s, the c.1600 map has south at the top. Roberts opted for east at the top. The streets of the c.1600 map were lined with simple representations

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14 *Nichols, ibid.*, vol. 1, pt 2, p. 356.
17 *RBL* 3, facing xvii.
of buildings, as was Speed’s view of 1610. Roberts adopted a compromise so that the buildings did not overlap the edges of his carefully surveyed streets. He tried to depict three-dimensional buildings within the area of their ground plans; chimneys were drawn on the side away from the roads, so that in Swines Market those on the left of the street extend to the left while those on the right extend to the right. Roberts marked High Street in two places on the main north/south road through the town, just as ‘The Hye Streete’ was marked twice on the c.1600 map, although the name of the road was High Cross Street. The c.1600 map shows St John’s Lane as ‘a Lane’ and St Peter’s Lane as ‘a Street’. Roberts marked both as ‘Lane’. The name ‘St Peters’ is a later addition, while St Johns was already present denoting the site of St John’s Hospital, as on Stukeley’s map. Both Stukeley and Roberts mark in the north-east corner of their maps ‘The Farm’, but no buildings are marked on maps A, B or D that could be associated with a farm in the modern sense of the word. The c.1600 map marks ‘The Bishops farm where the Town have commons for horses, kyne and swyne’. Documents in the Borough Records are likely to have led to the inclusion of a number of features, such as Pike head, Old Town Hall, Gun dike and E of Leicester Ground.

Stukeley and Roberts differ in their marking of friaries. Roberts marked ‘Black Fryers’ on the island in the river by the West Bridge. This seems to reflect John Leland’s account of his visit to the friary at around the time of its suppression, but not published until 1710–12. Stukeley marked ‘Augustinian fryers’ at this point, an idea which has persisted. The marking of ‘White Fryers’ on Roberts’ map is consistent with Carte’s account of the finding in 1718 of a pot of Roman coins at the entrance to White Friars.

**THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MAP**

This paper discounts the possibility that there was a printed map prior to 1722 and that the antiquarian features were added to an earlier plate. The corporation will have received written details from the 1711 survey, probably with a rough draft and possibly a fully drawn plan. They would not have required a printed map. It seems to this writer that Stukeley’s visit to Leicester inspired Roberts to create a printed map to illustrate the Leicester of the past. This means that a map of c.1723 still has the market layout of 1714. For Roberts’ historical map this was an advantage as it presented an accurate survey of bygone Leicester.

A number of additions were made to the printing plate between its original state and the version of 1741:

1. The extra length of Belgrave Gate with the Spittle house in the north-east corner shows the work the Corporation had made a donation in towards 1741. This is indicated by the abrupt change in the width of the street.
2. The engraving of the South Prospect is an addition to the printing plate, this is shown by the frame which crosses the lines which form the end of Barkby Lane (19) (Fig. 3). The moving of the South Prospect lower down the page on the copy in the Records of the Borough 6 created a dislocation in this feature.
3. The original plate of map C was engraved with precision, and, as on map A, streets and the river terminate exactly at the frame line. It is unlikely that the person who took such care would have allowed names to interfere with the pre-existing lines on the plate. On map D the words ‘St James’ Chappell’ extend so far that they cross the frame of the map. ‘Meeting’ (the Great Meeting House) overlaps trees engraved previously, with the name ‘St Peters’ being almost invisible in the trees. ‘Hermitage’ has been added too close to buildings on Welford Road. This name appears on the numbered key as 27, but the number is not on the map. It could be that the figures were erased and a second number, 16, HorsePool, substituted. Some of the letters used were engraved in more than one style. There are two forms each for the capital letters F, G, M, N and W. It is possible that these alterations were made at different times, and that there were other versions of the map before 1741.

Map E, The Van der Gucht Map

This map was described by Gimson and Russell,\textsuperscript{18} and was also mentioned by Derek Charman,\textsuperscript{19} who stated that the only known copy was in the edition of Nichols that is now housed at the ROLLR. Gimson and Russell pointed out that this map shows the Exchange built in 1748. Charman was wrong in attributing the map to John Van der Gucht, one of the sons of Michael Van der Gucht, who engraved some of the Leicestershire views included in Stukeley’s \textit{Itinerarium}, together with the first edition map. However, map E is in fact a further adaptation of the Thomas Roberts’ map and still bears the inscription ‘M. V dr Gucht Sculp’. Obvious alterations include the erasure of the last two lines of the dedicatory scroll which included Roberts’ name and the date AD 1741. Traces of the tops of the capitals T and R are still discernible. In


the key, ‘23. Shambles Gainsborrow & Market Shops’ has been erased and replaced by ‘The Exchange’ with no reference number. On the map itself the market buildings that were part of the original survey have been removed, although traces can be seen and the new building is included. The original reference number, 23, remains.

The inclusion of a brief history of the borough on the scroll on D and presumably on map C is consistent with Roberts’ intention to illustrate Leicester’s past. The post 1748 inclusion of The Exchange was part of a series of additions to the map which became progressively more like a contemporary street plan.

ASPECTS OF LEICESTER’S HISTORY ILLUSTRATED ON THE MAP

High Street/High Cross Street

A feature of the history of Leicester is the idea that there was a street called High Street whose name was changed to High Cross Street, whilst a street called Swines Market adopted the High Street name. Roberts’ map would seem to support this. While this idea contains some truth, the name High Cross Street had been applied to Leicester’s main north–south road long before 1741 (or 1711).

The confusion has its roots in the fourteenth-century records which were customarily written in Latin. At that time the town had four principal roads leading from the centre to the principal gates. The contemporary Latin for a main road is alta strata, and a record of 1355 ordained that no pigs might wander within ‘the quatuor altas stratas, ringed or unringed’. It is of course possible to read alta strata as ‘high street’ and later, when the records were written in English, this was the term used. Both terms were descriptions of the road, not a name as would be used today. They were always written using lower-case initial letters, whereas named streets such as Soar lane or Dead lane were capitalised. By the time of Roberts this subtlety had been abandoned, and contemporary records mention high street, high street, High street and High Street.

Alta strata, or high street, occurs frequently in the records when the bounds of a property are described. Customarily these state that a property lay between the property of person X and that of person Y, and stretched from the high street to the property of person Z. The name of the high street is not given, nor any indication of which high street is meant. Another term in use was regia strata, usually translated as king’s (or queen’s) highway – again a description not a name. High Cross Street was in use for the north–south main road by 1610 as this is how it is recorded on Speed’s map of Leicester of that date, and is later noted as such by Samuel Carte. Nichols quotes:

Oct. 15, 1711, John Wilkins, alderman, told me that about 1667 or 1668, digging in a yard belonging to a house in High cross Street, near the Water-house, being the corner house, where the street grows narrower (the yard is situate on the South side next the West end of the Friars); having dug about 12 feet deep, he discovered a very fine floor...

20 RBL 2, 103, edited by M. Bateson, C. J. Clay, 1901.
21 J. Nichols, ibid., vol. 1, pt 1, p. 11.
This illustrates the value of Roberts’ survey. By reference to the map it is easy to see that this discovery was made some 55m south of the street now known as Peacock Lane, with the abrupt narrowing of the road shown clearly. An equivocal reference to High Street occurs in 1523: ‘the Swynes market shall be kepyped from this day forth in the Parchment Lane and nomore in the Hy Street which [is] in the Est Yate.’ This could be Hy Street as a name or a description. Charles Billson noted that ‘the old Swinesmarket was rekhristen High Street’, but the borough records do not reflect this. In 1557 the sixth ward of the borough is described as ‘the Swynes Markytt, that is to say from the Hyghe Crosse unto the Est Yate’. In this case Swynes Markytt appears to be the name of the street, but in 1569 the building which would become known as the Lords Place was sold for £100. It was ‘situate in a street called High Street or the Swines Market’ and in 1587 there is a reference to ‘High Street alias Swines Market’. These references show that by then both names were being used for the same street. The Victoria County History suggests that ‘High Street gradually received its present name’, implying that it was not being used for High Cross Street.

**E[Earl] of Leicester Ground**

This is 25 in the key and on Roberts’ map in the road now known as Bath Lane. Abutting the west side of the lane at this point is a small trapezoidal area which is not marked on map A. This feature covers a small area of about four square metres. This section of the map was used as an illustration by McWhirr and Cooper.

There was an Earl of Leicester until 1351 when the Earl of Lancaster and Leicester was made Duke of Lancaster. These transitions resulted in the common bakehouses of the Earl, in Leicester, being described as belonging to the duke and subsequently to the king (or queen). Similarly, a document of 1392 refers to ‘the land of the duke of Lancaster’ in the same general area. It is unlikely an area would still have been known as the Earl of Leicester’s Ground as late as Roberts’ time. This suggests that he was illustrating a situation that existed centuries before he drew his map. The earls’ presumably held land in a number of places within the town, but Roberts’ site for number 25 reflects a record of 1344 which states that the Earl of Lancaster and Leicester granted waste land 60 feet in length and 30 feet along the river for a privy for the ease of the whole community. The Leicester Hall Books refer in 1800 to ‘two pieces of Land taken out of the Common Dunghill in the

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22 *RBL* 3, 25.
24 *RBL* 3, 89.
26 *RBL* 3, 240.
29 *RBL* 2, 204.
30 *RBL* 2, 61.
lane near the West bridge’.\textsuperscript{31} Perhaps Roberts regarded the dung hill as the obvious successor of the place for easement and located number 25 in that place.

**The Gun Dyke**

This is number 15 on Roberts’ list: he placed it at the junction of the road into the Castle Yard with the modern Castle Street. No feature on the map corresponds to this item, with the last known reference to it being (apart from this map) 1546. It is possible that Roberts marked a historical site whose location he had inferred. This presumably influenced James Thompson, who wrote ‘the Gun-dyke so called in an ancient map and formerly part of a dyke round the castle and St. Mary’s church’.\textsuperscript{32} Archaeological work in the area around the castle has, as yet, not located this feature. The Gun Dyke may have been an embankment rather than a trench; it is possible that it might have been part of a rampart which had backed a Roman town wall.

**Shambles Lane**

This street illustrates the difficulty in evaluating the accuracy of the markings on Roberts’ map. He designates Shambles Lane as the road that was later known as St Nicholas Street. Certainly this road passed the southern end of the St Nicholas Shambles from, at the latest, when it was rebuilt in 1682. However, this road must have been one of the four high streets as it leads from the High Cross towards the West Bridge. Did it really become known as a lane?

The Chamberlain’s accounts for 1708 contain a reference to ‘piece of ground… near the house lately built where the house lately stood called the Mayors old hall and near St. Nicholas Church’.\textsuperscript{33} In 1772 this same property was a ‘piece of ground … called the Mayors Old hall in Shambles lane near St. Nicholas Church’.\textsuperscript{34} This would make Shambles Lane the north–south road running beside the weekday shambles. Stukeley, in the second version of his map, dating to 1767, crowds the words ‘Shambles Lane or Applegate Street’ into the short stretch of road south of St Nicholas Church. This would not have been necessary if either name had applied to the road later known as St Nicholas Street, and it is possible that Roberts was incorrect in his marking of Shambles Lane. Interestingly, there is in the ROLLR copy of Nichols a proof from the plate for Nichols’ copy of the Stukeley map, which shows Shambles Lane in the same position as Roberts. This has been deleted in black ink and a corrected location indicated.

**Mayors Old Hall**

This appears on map D as number 12, although it is clear from the record of 1708 (above) that the building had disappeared before that date.

\textsuperscript{31} RBL 5, 317.
\textsuperscript{32} James Thompson, *The History of Leicester from the time of the Romans to the end of the seventeenth century*, p. 481. Leicester, J. S. Crossley, 1849.
\textsuperscript{33} RBL 6, 75.
\textsuperscript{34} RBL 6, 216.
Pike head

This is number 8 on map D. It appears in the records in a petition of 1652, pleading for the repair of ‘an ancient weare called by the name of Pike head belonging to the said (Trinity) hospital’. This had been destroyed in the Civil War, but formerly ‘the water was a very clear current carrying away the filth of the said house’. Without it the residents were said to be suffocating. No such feature is marked on map A and on map D, Roberts placed number 8 at a little distance from the river but below the level of the hospital.

At the end of the nineteenth century, work carried out in The Newarke, to create a new road approach to the river, destroyed a part of the hospital. A tunnel was discovered on the northwest side of the hospital and another on the southeast immediately opposite. The latter would seem to be the inlet for the ‘very clear current’, and near the end furthest from the hospital slots were found in the walls, and a hole in the roof, providing evidence of a sluice. The tunnel on the northeast would have carried away the effluent. Pike head was presumably a weir across a small stream in The Newarke, which created a pond. The periodic opening of the sluice would have flushed through a channel beneath the hospital latrines. A plan of these tunnels is published in the Transactions of the Society for 1900. Roberts’ number 8 must be based on his guess of the whereabouts of the Pike head.

St James Chapel

The name occurs at the right-hand edge of the map, but the building is not marked on either map A or D as it no longer existed. Samuel Carte, writing in the first 20 years of the eighteenth century, stated that the walls were standing within living memory. The Records of the Borough of Leicester note that, in 1688, Madam Frank paid 1 shilling per annum for the tithe of St James chapel, but, by 1708, William Franks the same sum for the tithe of St James Chapel Close. It is only the chapel close that is mentioned thereafter in this connection. The last reference to this payment as the tithe of the chapel is in 1691/92. Given that changes in the borough records may lag behind changes on the ground, the building may have been lost before this date. Roberts clearly knew the location, as St James Chapel Close is mentioned in the borough records up to and beyond its acquisition as part of the land of the Infirmary. He used it as a reference point in his letter of 1725, ‘from the S. Gate to the utmost end of the Town called St James Chappell is 1600 foot And from St James Chapp to the N.E. end of the Rawdykes is 2160 foot’. The name extends beyond the edge of the map, suggesting that it was not part of the original and may have been added after Roberts’ death.

35 RBL 4, 430.
36 TLAAS, vol. ix, pt 1, 4, 5, 1900.
38 RBL 6, 92.
39 ROLLR BR III/2/92.
CONCLUSION

Thomas Roberts produced an accurate survey of Leicester in 1711, which is a valuable record of the layout of the town at this date. He clearly had access to many of the entries in the Borough records. Maps produced subsequently, which are based on the survey, contain historical information which has to be treated with caution.

APPENDIX

‘Been Governed by a mayor 480 years’

The map of Leicester produced by Thomas Roberts includes a brief summary of the history of Leicester, which concludes with the statement ‘been Governed by a mayor 480 years’. If it were possible to determine the date of the first mayor, or to be accurate, the date that Thomas Roberts believed to be that of the first mayor, then the statement could be valuable dating evidence for the map.

It is possible, thanks to a number of connected references, to be reasonably certain that the source of Roberts’ information was a list of mayors now known as the Oxford Roll. The reasons for this belief are:

1. Thomas Roberts is known to have been acquainted with Samuel Carte as he passed on Carte’s regards to William Stukeley in a letter of 1725.
2. Nichols quotes Carte, ‘that in a little book in 8vo, formerly in the custody of the mayor’s clerk, a person named William, son of Henerie, is styled alderman of the gyld of Leicester’.40 This reference is dated 1203: a date which is an error, and is known only from the Oxford Roll.
3. The Oxford Roll is an 8vo book of the Kings of England, published in 1576, to which manuscript notes on the mayors of Leicester have been added in hand-writing, which appears to date to the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century.41 The book was clearly published for just such a purpose. It has a line for each month of each calendar year, together with the dates for the start of the regnal years and the years Anno Domini, together with space for the notes of the owners. It was thus possible to take a date expressed in one system and then read off the date in the other systems.

This book was deposited in the Bodleian Library by Nichols, who was executor for the antiquary Richard Gough. A copy on microfilm is available at the Record Office.42

It is now accepted that Gild Roll No. 1 was a source used in compiling the Oxford Roll.

40 Nichols, *ibid.*, vol. 1, pt 1, p. 97.
41 Bodleian Library, G.A. Leic. 8o 16.
42 ROLLR, MF172.
4. John Throsby recorded that Carte had communicated his collections to Browne Willis in answer to questions about Leicester;\textsuperscript{43} Browne Willis, in his \textit{Notitia Parlimentarium} of 1750, records ‘made a mayor-town 1248’.\textsuperscript{44} The date is again taken from the Oxford roll, but though the latter states that Peter son of Roger was created mayor in 1248, it does not state that he was the first to hold the office.

The 1248 information was not available to Bateson because, as she recorded, there are a number of torn entries for 1248.\textsuperscript{45}

As Roberts was working from the Oxford Roll, the information that he had was that Leicester had two aldermen (the precursors of the mayoralty) in 1241, and that Peter was created mayor in 1248. It was thus clear that the first mayor was created between the years 1242 and 1248. His 480 year statement clearly does not mean that he was writing in 1728 (480 years after 1248), as he had died in 1727. If he was writing in, say, 1724, he could have said ‘governed by a mayor at least 476 years’ but not longer than 482 years. It would have made better sense to quote a rounded approximate figure of 480 years lying between the known extremes. Reversing this argument indicates a date for the map of 480 years after 1242–48; that is, between 1722 and 1728. As the engraver of the map is known to have died in 1725, the evidence is that the map was first produced between 1722 and 1725.

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\textsuperscript{43} Throsby, \textit{The History and Antiquities of the Ancient Town of Leicester}, 182, Leicester, 1791.

\textsuperscript{44} Browne Willis, \textit{Notitia Parlimentarium}, 31, pub. author, 1750.

\textsuperscript{45} RBL. 1, 64.