

Our Family Ancestor- John Maundrell of Keevil An English Martyr

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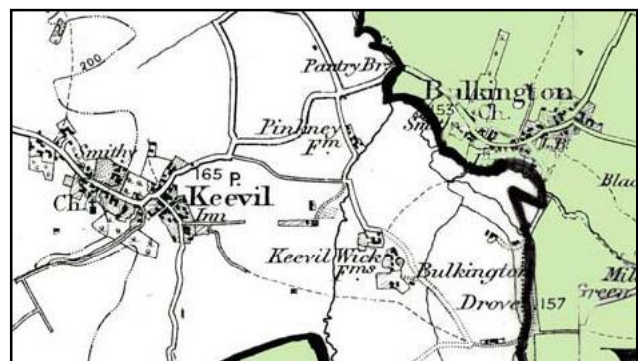
Most English people with a sense of history are familiar with the 'Marian Persecutions' and the attempts by 'Bloody' Queen Mary I to force England back to Roman Catholicism during her brief reign from January 1556 to November 1558. Instead of winning the hearts and minds of the English people through the burning of 'Protestant heretics', Bloody Mary actually left a legacy of a widespread fear and hatred of Roman Catholicism. As a result of the later settlement of the Church of England under her half-sister, Elizabeth, and the subsequent war with Catholic Spain, England's future became linked to Protestant reformation. To be truly English became a matter of subscribing to the Protestant faith and everything foreign was deemed alien and Catholic. Catholicism in the minds of the English was linked with tyranny and persecution and with the tortures of the Inquisition. The dread of having a Catholic monarch was to shape English history for generations, for example the religious divides in the British Isles were to lead to the Gunpowder Plot of 1605, the Civil Wars of the three Kingdoms from 1642-1651 and to the Glorious Revolution of 1688.

John Foxe in his '*Book of Martyrs*' said that about 300 people were burnt to death for their Protestant beliefs during the reign of Queen Mary. One of those executed was my family ancestor John Maundrell of Keevil.

John Maundrell's story

John was born in about 1510, the son of Robert Maundrell of Rowde in Wiltshire and according to Foxe he 'was brought up in husbandry'. He became a yeoman farmer at Bulkington near Keevil and he married a woman called Alice. John Foxe says that John's lifestyle was 'honest and charitable, as his neighbours are able to testify' and that he was of 'good name and fame'.

Map showing the location of Bulkington near Keevil, from the wiltshire.gov.uk community website



John was much impressed with William Tyndale's Bible and converted to the cause of Protestantism. He became one of those active in pressing for a reformation of the English Church. Foxe says that he 'became a diligent hearer, and a fervent embracer of God's true religion, so that he delighted in nothing so much as to hear and speak of God's word, never being without the New Testament about him, although he could not read himself. But when he came into any company that could read, his book was always ready, having a good memory, so that he could recite by heart most places of the New Testament...'. The evangelical zeal of the convert is very apparent from his subsequent actions.

During the reign of King Henry VIII John got himself into trouble with the authorities when he questioned Roman Catholic practices such as holy water and holy bread in his local church in Keevil. He was taken before Dr Trigonion at Edington Abbey and was sentenced to be publicly humiliated in Devizes by being forced to walk around the market place dressed in a white sheet and carrying a candle, probably much like that shown in the picture below from Foxe's *'Book of Martyrs'*. After this incident John's fervour for the cause did not abate and after Queen Mary came to the throne Foxe says that he 'left his own house, and departed into the County of Gloucester, and into the north part of Wiltshire, wandering from one to another to such men as he knew feared God, whom as a servant to keep their cattle he there did remain with John Bridges or some other at Kingswood; but after a time he returned to his country, and there coming to the Vyes, to a friend of his called Anthony Clee, had talk and conference with him in a garden, of returning home to his house'. He did so and came into the acquaintance of a stonemason called John Spicer and a tailor called William Coberley.



On a Sunday in March 1556 the two Johns and William disrupted a service in the Church at Keevil by calling on parishioners to abandon a ritual procession worshipping an idol that they carried and interrupting the reading of the Bede Roll. Headman of the parish, Robert Barksdale, took no regard of their words. But when John Maundrell called the concept of purgatory 'the Pope's pinfold' (pinfold - a pound for stray cattle) which the other two confirmed, then at the command of the Priest they were removed from the Church and put in the stocks and the next day on the command of a local Justice of the Peace they were taken to the gaol at Fisherton near Salisbury in Wiltshire. All three were examined and questioned by the Bishop of Salisbury, Dr Capon and the Chancellor of the Diocese, William Geffrey who approached their charge from the Roman Catholic Queen with particular zeal. The prisoners refused to concede and they denied the Pope's supremacy and called the Pontiff the antichrist.



The final examination of the three prisoners took place in the old parish church of Fisherton Anger on 23rd March 1556 and they stated that 'they believed in God the Father, and in the Son and the Holy Ghost, the twelve articles of the creed, the Holy Scripture, from the first of Genesis to the last of Revelations'. They refused to subscribe to Romanist doctrines including the



Transubstantiation to which they answered 'the Popish mass was abominable idolatry and injurious to the blood of Christ and the use of images. John Maundrell said that 'wooden images were good to roast a shoulder of mutton, but evil in Church; whereby idolatry was

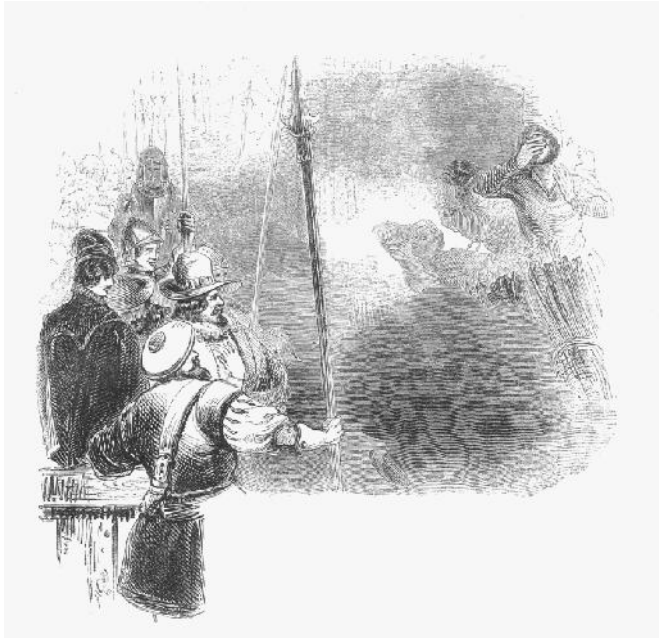
committed'. Denying the supremacy of the Pope they were challenged whether they would have a Church without a head, to which they answered that 'Christ was the Head of his Church' and that under Him was the Queen. The Chancellor challenged them further and asked whether they would have a woman as Head of the Church and they answered 'yea, within her Grace's dominions'.

The three were condemned and delivered to the local Sheriff, St John, to be burnt at the stake at a place between Salisbury and Wilton. This is assumed to be at a place which was later called 'Gallows Gate' at the junction of the Devizes and Wilton Roads and which was later used for executions. It is shown in the Andrews map, above, of Salisbury 1773.

The execution on 24th March 1556 would have been an awful spectacle; John Spicer said to the Sheriff "oh, Master Sheriff, now must you become the butcher".

Foxe describes the Martyrdom –

'On coming to the place, they kneeled down, and offered their prayers secretly together, and being undressed to their shirts, John Maundrell spoke with a loud voice "Not for all Salisbury," which words men judged to be an answer to the sheriff, who offered him the Queen's pardon if he would recant. After that in like manner spake John Spicer, saying, "This is the most joyful day that ever I saw." Thus were these three godly men burned at two stakes, where most constantly they gave their bodies to the fire and their souls to the Lord, for testimony of his truth'.



Left, the Martyrs of Maidstone at the stake in 1557.

Right, the Martyrs of Lewes in 1555, at prayer before the burning.



William Coberley appears to have met a particularly grisly end and took a while to die in the flames, according to John Foxe, because of the wind and it's affect on the flames. His flesh was burnt from his left arm and with blood and matter issuing from his mouth he doubled over. But just when the people thought that he and the others had succumbed, his body rose up again.

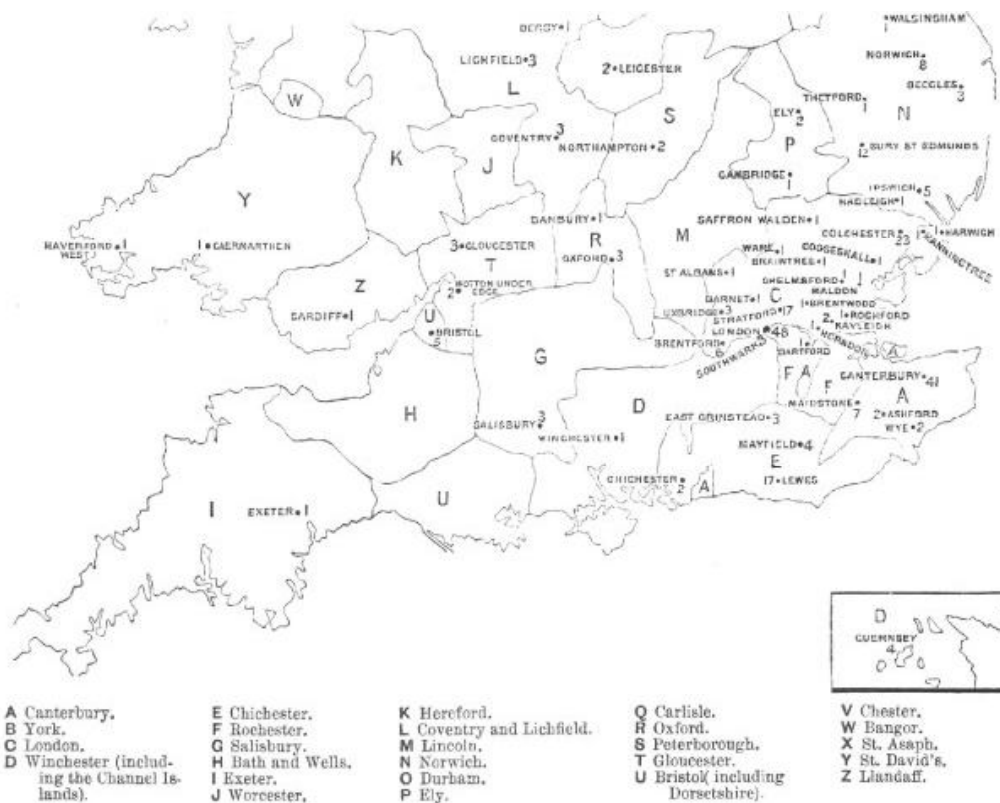
There are plaques commemorating the three Martyrs in Salisbury on the wall of Malmesbury House in the Cathedral Close –



and on the wall of Saint Emmanuel Church on Wilton Road –



The map on the next page shows where the English burnings took place according to English Diocese (from The English Reformation by WH Beckett 1890) which clearly shows the Salisbury Martyrs.



The site of the current Slug and Lettuce pub in Salisbury on Fisherton Street, according to local historian Matty Penny, probably used to be called Maundrell Hall after our family ancestor.

There is a Maundrell Close in Rowde, either named after John or his father who farmed in the parish.

The family line from my grandfather to John Maundrell can be seen on page 5.

Sources

Book -

“The Acts and Monuments of the Christian Church, by John Foxe 1563”
Chapter 33, pages 151-154

Websites -

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'Keevil', A History of the County of Wiltshire: Volume 8: Warminster, Westbury and Whorwellsdown Hundreds (1965), pp. 250-263. URL:

<http://www.british-history.ac.uk>

<http://www.salisburyemmanuel.org.uk/index.html?/articles/JohnFoxe.htm>

Pictures from John Foxe's Book of Martyrs –

<http://www.exclassics.com/foxe/foxeills.htm>

Useful and Interesting Weblinks

For the full story about Queen Mary visit this weblink –

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_I_of_England

A full description of the Marian persecutions is available via this weblink –

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marian_Persecutions

About John Foxe who wrote about the Martyrs –

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Foxe

About the reformation –

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reformation>

