

Queen Anne was a feeble and indecisive monarch throughout her reign, and when in 1714 she died without naming her successor, George of Hanover was immediately proclaimed King.

The Jacobite population had been waiting for King James to cross the water and claim the throne and in Preston like many other northern towns there were excited demonstrations. People displayed the white rose openly, they wore the Stuart oak leaves, they sang Jacobite songs and wrote vicious lampoons against the Hanoverians. They were therefore stunned when the fat German princeling stolidly, almost reluctantly landed at Greenwich, entered London and was crowned at Westminster Abbey, especially as he spoke not a word of English.

Then in August 1715 the Earl of Mar landed at Newcastle to give advance warning to the Jacobites that James would be returning to England backed by an army provided by King Louis of France. Soon the Old Pretender's Jacobite adherents took to the roads, recruiting anyone they could and a Jacobite army began to form. By November it was in Lancashire and on the 9th the Jacobites converged on Preston. Many of them owned town houses there and the winter season had by now begun; the men were already preparing entertainment for the Jacobite officers whilst their excited wives and daughters thought how best to beguile their expected guests. Meanwhile the Duke of Marlborough, in charge of the Hanoverian army, had guessed Preston would be the gathering place for rebels and that there he could round them up. 'While the rebel forces were wining, dining and courting from "Wednesday 'till Saturday and Preston was agog, Marlborough drew near'.

On the eve of the forthcoming rising Samuel spoke in his pulpit of the dangers ahead. "The Pretender is indeed of disputed family. Whilst the Bishop of Rome has disciples in England expect designs against our religion and liberty."

Little did the gay crowds enjoying a rare social occasion know that as night fell on Friday 11th of November eight regiments were amassing across the River Ribble, and also to the east of the town. The rebels had barricaded all approaches, six captured ship's guns had been dragged in on improvised carriages made from Sir Charles Hoghton's carriage wheels. The best marksmen had taken up vantage points on roof tops as snipers in Church Street and on the church tower to Samuel's consternation but there was little he could do about it. There was firing of guns and elation amongst the rebels. Meanwhile the King's Redcoats and some eager and valiant nail makers from Chowbent under their minister, armed with antique weapons from the Civil War and makeshift pikes hammered overnight on their forges, made ready to surround and take Preston with all the rebels in it.

Despite the noise from the trenches being dug by the Jacobites outside in the churchyard, Samuel continued to denounce the rebels from the pulpit. The story goes that a Jacobite soldier went up to him and threatened to kill him if he continued reading the prayers for the reigning house. "Put James for George" demanded the soldier. Samuel was steadfast and said "Soldier, you do your duty and I'll do mine". His attitude was so determined and dignified that the soldier shamefacedly withdrew.

This story was subsequently told to King George I who is reputed to have said "Peep low, Peep low is he called?" Then with a Hanoverian oath: he added, "But he shall Peep high; I shall make him a Bishop!"

To the rebel officers in Preston the situation now looked serious; the Northumberland rebels under Lord Derwentwater, the Highlanders under Maclintosh, and the lowland Scots were each given their positions to defend. Before that Saturday was over the English troops had made their way over the fords or through the side allies to Church Street, and had fought for, taken and fired many town houses. The fire and smoke forced the defenders from the barricades near the church, followed by Friargate Street, and only darkness stopped the fighting. The rebels began to wonder what had happened to their Jacobite allies from Fylde and South East Lancashire, from Burnley and points east? Were they hiding, watching or actively engaged?

By Sunday morning Carpenter's Dragoons had arrived to hem in the the Jacobites. The Scots were still battling on, but the leaders under Colonel Oxburgh as their spokesman were for seeking terms. He was passed out secretly of the town to treat with General Wills. 'Anger,' confusion and despair seized the Jacobites when they realised their leaders had 'sold them'. On Monday morning, outside the Mitre Inn, the officers put down their swords, whilst the rank and file silently piled up their weapons in a great heap in the market place, and as silently allowed themselves to

be herded into the parish church in their hundreds. Among them were some who claimed wrongful arrest; they had merely been bystanders!

Inside Samuel's church the main body of rebels sat down to a meal of bread and water beside fires made from pew linings that they had previously torn out. They were later herded up and taken to fill the jails of Lancaster, Liverpool and Chester.

So at last a kind of peace returned to Preston, and at least the soldiers were gone. But many of the houses had been totally destroyed and some inhabitants had relatives or friends who had been killed or were now being accused of raising troops, marching with swords drawn, dining with the rebels or drinking James III's health. Samuel had the difficult business of bringing back some order to his parish and the distrust that had existed between himself and his parishioners must have increased tenfold after the occurrences of the previous week.

When the turmoil caused by the Battle of Preston died down, Samuel resumed his project to build a new chapel at Grimsargh. Preston was a large parish and possessed three townships within its boundary all of which were situated over three miles from Samuel's church. None of them had a convenient place of worship and Samuel feared the inhabitants were being exposed to 'temptation and popery' as at least 6 Catholic priests lived in the parish of Preston at this time.

Samuel's old friend Sir Charles Hoghton, who had already helped to increase the congregation by various beneficial actions, now offered some land on which a chapel could be built and Samuel himself ensured that at least £10 a year would be available to pay a curate, besides what the inhabitants would themselves subscribe. A school was also to be started at the chapel and the whole project in the spring of 1715 just needed the approbation of Dr Gastrell, then Bishop of Chester, and head of the diocese in which Preston was situated.

It is curious that in Samuel's letter to Dr Gastrell dated April 1715, he signs himself "Yr Ld p's unknown, but very dutiful son and obedient servant Saml Peploe." Little did Dr Gastrell know that his family were soon to have a feud with his 'unknown rector' which was to last over twenty years.

Dr Gastrell gave his permission and a chapel was built at Grimsargh the following year, but it was entirely rebuilt by the Rev John Cross in 1869.

At the same time Samuel was concerned with the education of his own son who became known as 'Samuel Peploe Junior' by his contemporaries to avoid confusion. The young Samuel spent the first 17 years of his life in Preston and it was here that he learnt the vernacular of Lancashire. In later life he generally addressed the lower orders in their own 'uncouth and original tongue', although it is clear he had a purer English at his command when the occasion required it.

In 1716 Samuel Junior was sent to Sedbergh School in Cumbria which continues to exist to this day. He was a contemporary of William and Robert Cotesworth, aged 15 and 14 respectively, and they mentioned Samuel favourably in their letter home:

Saturday May 5th 1716

Hon'd Father

We are about ten in our Latin class (which is the 4th) among which is one Pepploe, the parson of Preston's son, a very sober lad, but I can scarce give another in the seat the same character, except those we brought along with us.

Your Dutiful son

Robert Cotesworth

A fortnight later the Cotesworths had occasion to meet more of the family at Preston:

Sedbergh Saturday Night May 19th 1716

Hon'd Father

I cannot omit ye extraordinary Civilities we had shewn us at Preston by Parson Peploe, ye Vicar. We carried him a letter from his son. He gave us a glass of wine and set a nephew of his about ye town with us who gave us an excellent description of the battle. When we went home to our lodgings at night he sent his nephew to invite us to dinner, and accordingly we went. Our dinner was a salmon and a pudding, a Quarter of Lamb, and Rasp Cream, and a glass of wine. We were never so much made on in any place in our lives. I do not know how we shall be able to make ye

least return. I believe there is not a Priest within an hundred mile round better affected to ye Government than he. He has two sermons publish'd that he preached before ye Judges. I fancy that a letter from you as an acknowledgement of his favour would oblige him. If you'll please send it to me i'll get it forwarded.

Your Dutiful son
Robert Cotesworth

The nephew mentioned in the letters is William, son of Samuel's brother Jonathan, and in January 1720 he was admitted into the Honourable Society of the Middle Temple. He subsequently became secretary to his uncle Samuel after his advancement to the Bishopric of Chester in 1726.

After Sedbergh Samuel Junior went to Wadham College, Oxford and matriculated in February 1719 at which time he was described as the son of Samuel Peplow, clerk of Penkridge, co Stafford. He graduated in Civil Law in 1726.

After the Battle of Preston in 1715 Samuel became actively involved in helping the Commission for Forfeited Estates and he compiled an elaborate report of 'Estates granted to superstitious uses in and about Preston'. Some sections of the landed gentry around Preston were found to be funding the Jacobite cause and supporting the Roman Catholic Church and its clergy. The Forfeited Estates Commission was established at Preston and it is said Samuel 'eagerly supplied it with information about such estates in his parish.' He was convinced that their sequestration would significantly weaken the hold of Popery in the town and the surrounding area and many estates were confiscated after the unsuccessful rising the year before. It may have been in



Samuel Peplow as Warden of Manchester in 1718

acknowledgment of his assistance in this office that he was made Bishop of Chester ten years later, rather than his famous retort during the Battle of Preston whilst saying prayers for the king.

Furthermore in November 1715, the Lancashire bench was drastically remodelled: most Tories were removed from it and they were replaced by Whigs who now enjoyed a commanding majority. The effect on the Catholics, as one priest observed, was immediate. In contrast to 'the Quiet we

had enjoy'd under the late Magistracie', he noted, the Tories' 'Successors were active and severe in their Office.'

In 1716 a Commission was set up in Liverpool to hear the various court cases arising from the Jacobite Rising of the year before. A team of Judges travelled down from London on the 11th January and their Assizes were opened with a sermon by Samuel who thundered from his pulpit, "I do not mean law should be strained in prosecuting the offenders; who no man has the least to fear under the mild and gentle government of our prince, but a dire court against those who have so justly incurred notice of it"

George I was certainly grateful to Samuel for his staunch support of the Hanoverian cause and in 1718 nominated him to succeed Dr Richard Wroe as Warden of the Collegiate Church of Manchester, an extremely important post especially at that time when the town was a centre for Jacobite unrest. The head of the diocese, Dr Gastrell, Bishop of Chester, and most of his clergy were strongly Tory, and with this in mind the King was advised to nominate Samuel with his reputation for being a staunch Whig.

The decision was unpopular with Dr Gastrell and his supporters not only because of Samuel's political beliefs, but also he only held a master of arts degree and the statutes of the College required that the Warden should be at least a Bachelor of Divinity or a Doctor of Laws. However Dr Gastrell dutifully offered Samuel his support in obtaining the required degree should any unforeseen difficulty occur and Samuel himself fully intended to return to Oxford to acquire it.

But Archbishop Wake of Canterbury intervened and used his right (dating from 1534) to confer upon Samuel the Honorary Lambeth degree of Bachelor of Divinity without having to proceed to Oxford in the regular way. Presumably the Primate felt it a matter of some urgency to place a strong ally in the predominately hostile Diocese of Chester.

But this action served to make Samuel even more unpopular as the Archbishop was thought to have cast a slur upon Oxford and as a result Dr Gastrell still refused to institute Samuel, although he was in fact made Warden on April 17th 1718. '

The dispute continued and the matter was taken to the King's Bench who decided against Dr Gastrell who thereupon published the 'Bishop of Chester's Case "with regard to the Wardenship of Manchester in which it is shown that no other degree but which are taken at the University can be deemed legal qualification for any ecclesiastical preferment in England.' After the printing of this at Oxford the University publicly thanked the Bishop of Chester for having 'so fully asserted the rights, dignities and privileges belonging to the Universities degrees in this book'.

Many people, however, were still exasperated with the ruling of the King's Bench and questioned the Archbishop's power; Samuel's popularity fell to an all time low and one learned gentleman of the time wrote in his diary 'This Peploe is a vile fellow1'

The case continued and was first tried at the Lancaster Assizes on the 13th August 1722, four years after Samuel's appointment. The argument in favour of the Archbishop's right to grant the degree which dated back to Henry VIII's reign was, it is said, conducted with much 'learning and research'. The hearing occupied 15 hours.

Three years later the case was again carried by appeal before the King's Bench where it was eventually decided in the Archbishop's favour on 22nd May 1725. This long and acrimonious debate 'on this trivial point having lasted 7 years at last on the 3rd March 1725, Samuel Peploe S.T.B., was instituted by his proxy, Mr Francis Hooper into the Wardenship of Christ's College, Manchester, by Roger Bolton and James Copley, the fellows,' and it is recorded that at the same time 'Francis Hooper, in the name and stead of the said Samuel Peploe, Bachelor of Divinity, did take the usual oaths required by the statutes of the said College.'

The Collegiate Church, now Cathedral of Manchester, is much the same as it was in Samuel's day except during the war incendiary bombs blew out the windows and reduced many of the surrounding buildings to rubble. The old church is situated just by the River Irwell and Samuel and his family lived in the Vicarage on Manchester's main street called Deansgate. The street is still there although little of any age remains and the Vicarage was demolished to make way for a new church called St Johns.

Samuel faced an impossibly difficult task at Manchester and he was never a great success as Warden. His strong will and warm temper frequently brought him into unnecessary collision with his clergy. He was always regarded as a powerful and unflinching man in politics but a feeble and

incompetent prelate, expressing opinions and trying to apply principles totally incompatible with the ritual and dogma of the church he was pledged to support.

The explosive political situation in Samuel's Manchester days expressed itself by a difference in dress; when Samuel was away at Preston ladies in plaid petticoats and gentlemen in plaid waist coats representing Stuart preferences frequented the Collegiate Church, while other ladies with orange ribands and other gentlemen with orange handkerchiefs worshipped at St Ann's Church, or at the Cross Street meeting house. In the Collegiate Church, when the prayer for King George was mumbled over, the people rose from their knees; 'in St Ann's church that prayer was replaced with special emphasis and fervour.'

In 1720 a further dispute arose between Samuel and his old adversary, Dr Gastrell, Bishop of Chester. Dr Gastrell had licensed the Rev Richard Asheton to the vacant chaplaincy in the Collegiate Church without asking the Warden's advice and Samuel considered this to be an act of gross interference. Six years later, after Samuel had succeeded Dr Gastrell to the see of Chester, he tried to set aside Asheton's appointment and to secure that of a chaplain named Whittaker, this unedifying dispute distracted the Collegiate Church for some years. Samuel at this time appears to have been at loggerheads with most of his Tory chapter at the Collegiate Church and from the year 1717 until 1725 there is an ominous hiatus in the College Register and nothing but leases and annual audits are recorded by the registrar. Canon Raines, the historian of the Fellows of Manchester, records that John Copley, a strong Tory who was elected Fellow of the Collegiate Church in 1706 'disliked his Hanoverian Warden Samuel Peploe and he feared Copley's strong Saxon language was not always in accordance with 'yea' and 'nay' when he spoke of the Warden'. Indeed the Collegiate clergy frequently used to taunt Samuel for his association with a body of separatists, who did not acknowledge any authority on religious matters and who refused to submit to any restraints imposed by the church, who hesitated to admit the Divine Authority of the Holy Scriptures, or to confess their belief in the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity, whilst they zealously advocated the Hanoverian succession and proffered to dread the encroachments and designs of Popery. Many heated arguments were put forward at this time including in 1722 a pamphlet styled 'An argument proving how mischievous to all governments a political clergy has been' which must have dealt hard blows to Samuel; whilst the clergy of Manchester would have writhed under the sharp lashes of another tract which had then just appeared: 'Episcopal Traytors or Priests awkward to Politicians'(1722); and Bishop Gastrell and others were boldly reminded of 'The Manners and Method of Proceeding against Bishops for High Treason (1722).

In 1725 Dr Gastrell, Bishop of Chester died and the government of the time was determined to eliminate the sedition and disorder in the See. Cheshire was one of only four counties where the clergy were overwhelmingly Tory and with this in mind Samuel was appointed to succeed Dr Gastrell at Chester. In fact the clergy probably became increasingly more Tory after his succession as many of them saw Samuel's subsequent activities to be heretical. Dr John Byrom, the 'sturdy Churchman and diarist of Manchester' who is perhaps better known to this age as author of the Christmas Hymn 'Christians Awake, Salute the Happy Morn' recorded the event in various letters to his wife:

January 18th 1726

'Mr Peplow kist his Majesty's fist for the Bishopric of Chester and the Wardenship of Manchester on Sunday; they are to go together from this time forth. This piece of news I suppose will raise much speculation in our country. Some say Mr Peplow will hold our Wardenship in commend-am'.

January 27th 1726

'That I writ of Mr Peplow was taken out of the newspaper I had then in my hand. Private advices said, that night, that he was not made Bishop at all, and other private advices that they had seen him kiss the King's fist; so I told you what was printed, and therefore must be true. But Bishop he will be to be sure, and a very remarkable case it is. Mr Walker told me it struck him much that it seemed to be a stroke of providence that might raise many moral reflections in a man's head, that a Bishop should for seven years plague a poor man for pure plaguing sake, and then die, and this very man be invested with the very office of that very Bishop who had so used him. I told him the reflection was just enough so far, that sooner or later justice will prevail; but for construing providence in the accidents of mortal life too rigorously, or to make whig or tory providence it, might

lead one too far; but Mr Peploe's advancement to the Bishopric has something very uncommon in it after all'.

Chester was not a rich diocese and many Bishops just regarded it as a stepping stone to richer dignities as expenses were high. The Bishops were expected to maintain their traditional hospitality and their palace, and make occasional subsidies to clerical charities. Samuel Senior, who throughout his life was determined to make a fortune for himself and his family, quickly realised that it would be necessary for him to supplement his relatively slender income by holding other benefices. With this in mind he retained his Wardenship of Manchester for almost half his episcopate and made his son successively Archdeacon of Richmond, Warden of Manchester and eventually Chancellor in 1748, acts of such flagrant nepotism that even in eighteenth century Chester they were thought to be scandalous.

Indeed many people thought Samuel a miser for in order to 'raise a fortune for his family' he was said to have lived in a mean, inhospitable manner and to have allowed the old episcopal palace to decay to such a great extent that his successor found it absolutely necessary to rebuild it.



Samuel Peploe's official portrait painted in 1733 by Hamlet Winstanley and hung at Garnstone until the 1950'ties.