

Samuel was consecrated Bishop of Chester in S: Margaret's Church, Westminster, on the 12th April 1726. During the service he preached a lengthy sermon on his duties as a Bishop and he is one of the few English Bishops who was not required to take a Doctor of Divinity Degree. From this point he is called Bishop Peplow to avoid confusion with his son.

No sooner had he been consecrated when a fresh legal difficulty at once arose. The Bishop of Chester was visitor to the Manchester College and the Warden of Manchester was one of the people to be visited. But the two offices were now united in the same person and he could not visit himself. After much unseemly contention between the Warden and his Tory clergy, who fearlessly maintained their old principles and carried their nominations in the Chapter House, the government of the day passed a measure empowering the King to visit the Collegiate Church of Manchester whenever the Wardenship should be held along with the Bishopric of Chester, an event which has not since occurred and never will again as the Office of Warden of Manchester was changed to a Bishopric in 1847.

By November 1726 Bishop Peplow had established himself and his family at Chester and he decided it was time to make use of his new powers. He soon appeared in the Chapter House at Manchester to preside over its deliberations. That month he tried to relieve the Rev Assheton of his appointment as Chaplain to the Warden of Manchester. Assheton was an unyielding Tory and had been given the office by Dr Gastrell without Samuel's permission as Warden. Bishop Peplow had 'vigorously opposed the appointment at the time' but had been powerless against his predecessor at Chester, Dr Gastrell.

On December 6th 1726 Dr Deacon of Manchester wrote to his friend John Byrom describing Bishop Peplow's somewhat unorthodox behaviour:

'I should have written to you before, but Mr Cattell scribbled last week and gave you some account of matters. I thank you for all your wit, nonsense, trumpery, information and co. In return, you must expect nothing but plain, downright Lancashire stuff from me. The Bishop was afraid of his own shadow, or rather he was not afraid at all; for though he said he should be murdered if he went to the Old Church, yet he could go out in a dark night and sup with Ford, a Manchester tallow chandler. The justices did sit and examine, but it signified not much on either side. AS to mobbing, there has been no such thing, only on the Saturday that the Bishop had declared publicly he would install Mr Whittaker (who is gone at present) the people crowded to church and that was all; and after service, when Mr Copley desired the Bishop they might adjourn to the chapter house, the Bishop said, No, He would make the church a chapter house; for you must know he had a good talent at making one thing another. But the greatest piece of news I have to send is, that the Bishop sent for Mr A. on Thursday last and suspended him. The pretence was his preaching without a license, which was uncanonical; but no one could expect the canon to be put in execution (for it is almost obsolete) unless a Bishop had given notice of it. And why should he fall upon Mr A. the first out of such number who want the same instrument! However this signifies nothing to his place. But a petition was drawn up, signed by the borough reeve, church wardens and many inhabitants, and presented last Saturday, to which the Bishop said he would consider of it for some days. Yesterday he sent word to the Old Church that he would go there today (for it is above a fortnight since he was there) and answer the petition, which accordingly he did by tearing it in pieces and saying it was signed by sons but non jurors, (thought neither I, as you may imagine, nor, I believe, any other, had anything to do with it) scoundrels and people who had no families. It is said that the Bishop had forbid Mr A. to print his answer to the "Reasons" telling him it was writing against a peer, but for all this we are resolved to have the three papers you know of come out some way or other, but Mr is desirous of having your categorical consent first, which therefor I desire you to send by the first post to him or me. We need fear nothing as to law; and as to suspicious, we need not feel them as long as we are safe; and therefore let us have your consent immediately. AS to the lapse, there is nothing in it, as the lawyers say; for a lapse is when an ecclesiastical benefice is not filled by the patron in six months, then it falls to the Bishop; if vacant six months more, then to the Archbishop; if six more, then to the Crown. But this is no ecclesiastical benefice; a chaplain in only a college officer and there is not so much as any provision made in the charter in the case of a vacancy, so there is in that of a fellow, and even there it is no lapse, for the Crown puts in in two months, and is never called beneficium but officium. Besides if it was lapsed, the Bishop filled it; so that they have it both ways. And I doubt not

but the King's Bench will demolish Pope Hildebrand Firebrand, and we will blow him up, mortify him and break his heart.'



Bishop Peploe in old age - artist unknown

The letter written to John Byrom by Rev Thomas Cattell referred to in the above document also exists. He was another Tory member of the Chapter at the Collegiate Church at Manchester and discussed the dispute over the appointment of Mr Whittaker remarking 'The Bishop makes a great noise, and I fancy will do.' The letter confirms the strife which existed between Bishop Peploe and his Tory Chapter at Manchester, and he was evidently trying to replace as many of them as possible with Whig allies.

During that month Bishop Peploe held a private ordination at the new "church in Manchester called St Ann's, it's congregation was predominately Whig and it is said they prayed for the Hanoverian King with greater fervour than the 'Old Collegiate Church'. The ordination of 5 deacons and one priest at St Ann's was highly irregular and many considered it to be a direct insult on the Old Church, especially as all six were Whigs and the two unsuccessful candidates were Tories. The very same afternoon the Rev Thomas Cattell preached a sermon in front of Bishop Peploe and in it he stressed that a Bishop and his church should be independent of all state and government affairs.

It also appears from Rev Thomas Cattell's letter that Bishop Peploe had already appointed Whittaker as a replacement for Assheton at this time, but the latter evidently refused to accept the Bishop's ruling; each Sunday when the Warden was away on Episcopal duties different members

of the Chapter took it in turns to preach at the Collegiate Church and they were always aided by the Warden's chaplain who had his own stall. The Sunday after his appointment Mr Whittaker, the new chaplain, offered to officiate for Mr Whitworth whose turn it was to preach, but when he walked over to the chaplain's stall he found Mr Assheton was already occupying it and had no intention of moving.

Bishop Peploe appointed his nephew William Peploe to be his secretary at this time and he appears to have been put in a very difficult position for when Mr Whittaker went to him and demanded Mr Assheton's stall and surplice, he replied that he had no right to either - even amongst Samuel's closest retinue loyalties were divided.

On the Tuesday of that week a new Chapter was appointed at the Collegiate Church but Bishop Peploe, instead of coming himself, sent the following letter to Mr Bolton and Mr Copley, two of the fellows of the Collegiate Church:

"Gentleman, I hope you will not accuse me of Breach of Promise for not coming to ye Chapter House, according to agreement to choose officers, when I tell you that I have credible Information that there was a design to down me, which, amongst others was one vile Expression that the mob used towards me on Saturday night. I cannot understand this in any other sense that there was a design to murder me. That this mob is still kept up you very well know; and that they are prepared to execute any mischief as soon as their leaders give them ye word, I have very good reason to believe; and therefore I shall not venture myself until I can do it with safety and co."

For some time after this incident Bishop Peploe would not go to prayers at the Old Church although he attended St Ann's pretty regularly.

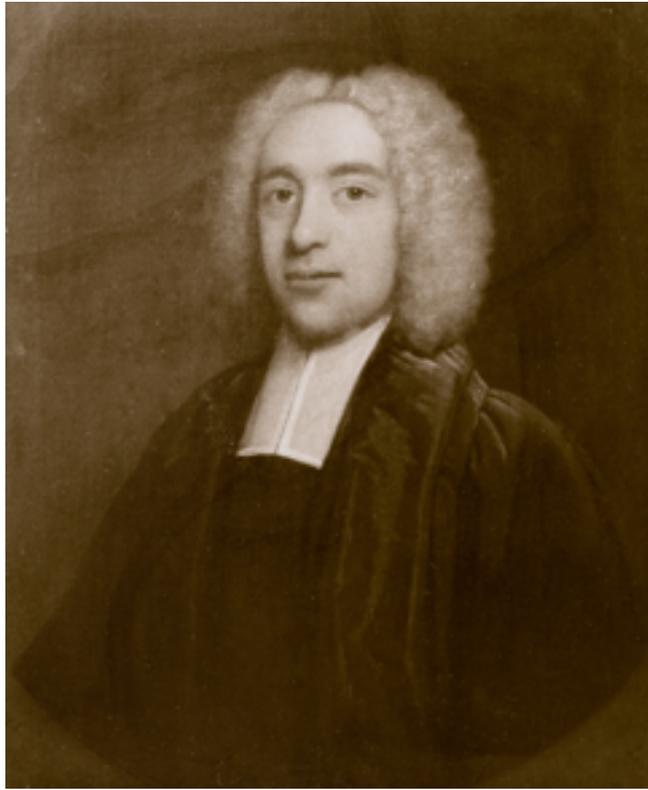
The records show Assheton still refused to accept the Warden's appointment of Whitaker as chaplain with the result that Bishop Peploe decided to suspend him altogether from the Collegiate Church, and following this action a petition was made by various townsmen of Manchester which supported Assheton's cause. Bishop Peploe sent word to the leaders that he would receive it in the Old Church which he accordingly did by tearing it in pieces, and saying it was signed by none but 'Non-Jurors, Scoundrels and People that had no Families.' The number of people who set their names to the petition was 341 of whom 41 sign with a mark (X) and about 60 of the names are those of women.

In February 1727 Bishop Peploe was informed that the petitioners had offered to give up Assheton's cause and chaplainship provided he withdrew his suspension. Bishop Peploe appears to have agreed with the terms for the next year the Chaplaincy was again being offered out to contenders and the Collegiate Church unanimously elected Adam Banks (1694-1751) to fill the appointment in January 1728. Bishop Peploe at first refused to admit him, no doubt on account of his Tory and non-juring principles, but finally yielded in August 1728.

Secretary William Peploe seems to have spent some time at Manchester at this time and acted as a go-between facilitating communication between his belligerent uncle and the Tory Chapter of the Collegiate Church. On 25th November 1726 he was examined by the local magistrates over a disturbance at Manchester Collegiate Church when people played football in the Millingate.

A rather happier event took place in the January of 1727 for Bishop Peploe's second daughter Anne married James Bayley of Withington. In early life James was a merchant in Manchester, and in 1735 he became one of the Constables of the town. Ten years later, in 1745, Bishop Peploe instituted him as the Registrar of the Diocese of Chester. Manchester's contemporary local paper, the Mercury, said of him at his death in 1769 'in him were united the good christian, the affectionate and tender husband and the sincere friend.' He was an active J.P. and was made High Sheriff for Lancashire in 1757. It could be said of James and his wife that they were inseparable for Anne survived him by only two weeks.

Bishop Peploe's son Samuel Junior graduated from Wadham College, Oxford with a degree in civil law on October 29th 1726 and was then admitted into Holy Orders. He was, it is said, 'a learned and pious man who was remarkable for his attendance on public worship.' He was also most conscientious in the discharge of his public duties and people found him more approachable than his father as he had not inherited his warm temper. His sermons were preached with ease and dignity, and he somehow managed to cover any controversy with less acrimony and more precision than was observed in many of his contemporaries. He shared the same politics as his



Samuel Peploe Junior as a young man by Hamlet Winstanley

father but lacked Bishop Peploe's spirit and as Warden of Manchester, twenty years later, withdrew from the town when the armed rebels entered. For most of his life as a clergyman he was subordinate to his autocratic father and was therefore apt to practise appeasement when faced with the militant tory clergy in the diocese of Chester. None of his sermons were ever printed.

He was, however, an academic, well read man with an enquiring mind and John Byrom was flattered in the interest Samuel Junior showed in his newly invented method of shorthand:

Tuesday 9th December 1725

Mr Samuel Birch spoke to me as I rode up the Deansgate, and told me that Young Mr Peploe had a design to learn my shorthand.

John Byrom was the inventor of a revolutionary system of shorthand based on phonetics which for a while was taught at both Oxford and Cambridge Universities and used by the clerk in the House of Lords. Both Charles and John Wesley used it but in the 19th century it was superseded by the system used to this day.

In May 1727 John Byrom mentioned to his wife another occasion when he had met Bishop Peploe and discussed with him the possibility of Samuel Junior learning the new system of shorthand:

'It happened that the Bishop and Dr Clark were there at dinner; I called there when they had done and passed an hour or two with those three famous men; I told the Bishop how I had met with his son and was to go with him. and Mr Glover talking of his opinion of our shorthand, the Bishop mentioned his son's learning.'

Bishop Peploe may have decided at this time that such disharmonies that existed in his Episcopate could only be gradually eliminated by judicious appointments and he exploited his patronage to the full. When the Manchester dispute had finally receded he installed his son Samuel Junior as Prebendary of Chester Cathedral on the 4th July 1727. He held his stall for 44 years and it had been held by his predecessor Archdeacon Thane for almost the same length of time. A week later he was instituted to the Vicarage of Preston, which his father had resigned on the nomination of King George II, and on the same day he was collated by his father, in right of his See, to the Rectory of Tattenhall. Six months later he was also presented to the Rectory of Northenden, co

Chester, once again in succession to Archdeacon Thane. This was not a political job like like the Wardenship of Manchester that he was to obtain eleven years later, but was in fact the gift of the Dean and Chapter of Chester of which he was a member. His critics said that at best the appointment was a breach of public decorum and at worst Samuel Junior, as an already surfeited pluralist, 'exposed himself to the vulgar charge of accepting the benefice for the sake of the emoluments attached to it.'

Such an accumulation of patronage was considered to be a gross abuse of a solemn trust and immediately caused a scandal throughout the Diocese of Chester. In any case this extraordinary series of gifts to his son did little to uproot Catholicism in Lancashire, and in 1734 Samuel Junior as Vicar of Preston wrote to The Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge asking for a supply of anti-Catholic tracts to use as 'Antidotes against the poison infus'd [there] by the popish Missionaries'. As he noted, 'in a Parish so large and so populous, and so infested with Popery', initiatives of this kind were such 'absolutely necessary . . . to keep the people to the observation of their Duty'. This wording suggests that he was thinking merely in terms of containing Catholicism's expansion, not of trying to break its influence in the town. Such an attitude was wise and realistic.

Samuel Junior was by now, thanks to his father's totally unscrupulous patronage, a wealthy man in his own right with sufficient income to make a good marriage.

On December 27th 1727, Samuel Junior was married at the Collegiate Church to Elizabeth Birch of Hereford, the only daughter of the Rev Thomas Birch, Rector of Hampton Bishop, who had died almost twenty years earlier in 1712. He was the younger brother of Bishop Peploe's second wife, and the latter would have been well aware that both Elizabeth's Birch uncles were by now reaching the age of sixty and neither had produced any children. It was therefore probable that Elizabeth would be their eventual heir and thus bring into the Peploe family the Birch estates at Garnston near Hereford. Garnstone (the final e was a later edition) had been bought in 1661 by Elizabeth's great uncle Colonel John Birch, a rather unscrupulous officer in the Civil War, who had at different times supported both Cromwell and Charles II depending on their relative successes. (His complete history has been admirably written up by Mr Heath Agnew in his book 'Roundhead to Royalist, a biography of Col. John Birch' (1977). This used as its primary source material a manuscript diary kept by his secretary Roe of Birches actions during the Civil War, and the original is still in the possession of our family but kept for safekeeping in Hereford Records Office). It is interesting to note that Samuel Junior was marrying his stepmother's niece. The first member of this Birch family to obtain fame and fortune was Willielmus de Birchis who obtained his arms (Three fleur de lis on a field azure) by seizing the French standard at the battle of Poitiers, and his descendents continued to use the same shield which can be seen on Colonel John Birch's full length monument in Weobley Church

In June 1728 Bishop Peploe began his first visitation of his diocese as Bishop of Chester, and his refusal to resign the Wardenship of Manchester made confrontation inevitable. The visitation of the Bishop was undertaken every 6 or 7 years and it's aim was to guide the clergy in their work, but he could hardly advise himself as both Bishop of Chester and Warden of Manchester. John Byrom did not swallow the Bishop's idea of making the King honorary Visitor in such a situation:

April 2nd 1729

'I have been with Mr Brooks twice since his arrival. If proper pains are taken I question whether the Bishop will get such an act as he desires; it seems to me such a stretch for power on the Crown side that the unbiased whigs themselves will hardly sure go into it, for by the same step the King may become Visitor of all the churches, colleges and co that are held in commendiam as they call it.'

He also met William Peploe, the Bishop's secretary and they discussed the terrible strife which existed at this time:

March 2nd 1728

'I met Mr Secretary Peploe t'other day in a coffeehouse, and had a deal of talk with him about the Fellowship and co. He said the Fellows strove against the stream, that they had better comply and lease, and the like. Have they made any election? or do they move for another mandamus, or how?

In this, his primary visitation, Bishop Peplow emphasised that the clergy had a duty to obey the higher powers set over them, and he reminded them that they would be required on all proper occasions to declare themselves obliged to maintain the Protestant succession. The clergy were to recognise all those Protestants who made a peaceable and conscientious use of the liberty which the law very properly allowed them, and to accept all except those non—jurors who expressly refused the oaths to the Hanoverian Kings. Clericalism was attacked; church wardens were instructed to watch over the behaviour of the clergy, and the laity advised to judge their ministers according to their own understanding of the Holy Writ.

John Byrom wrote of a particularly turbulent meeting at the Manchester Collegiate Church which took place between Bishop Peplow and his clergy at this time:

June 4th 1728

‘At the parish meeting of June 4th 1728 I went there with my brother Byrom and found a great number of people there; and hearing Mr Chetham the Lawyer talking away pretty loud I thrust in among the people and got upon the seat near the wall or window of the church, and heard him and the Bishop making speeches against the regularity of the meeting and took occasion at last to put in my verdict amongst them.

The Bishop made a long speech, which turned chiefly upon Mr Copley’s behaviour to him, who was sworn upon the word of God to pay him obedience; that the meeting was irregular, because due notice had not been given him of the meeting and the purpose of it; he being the minister, there should be no regular meeting without him. I took notice in answer to that, that the meeting was duly notified by the minister himself, Mr Copley, that it had been read in church when his lordship was there. Mr Chetham was very violent and uneasy against the meeting, and I took every opportunity of taking him up. The first time I spoke, he said, “Dr, you do not speak like a lawyer, or like a sedate parishioner.” I said I did not pretend to speak as a lawyer, but as a parishioner, of which the gentlemen there present would judge. I think it was the first time that I said anything that Mr Chetham told me so, and that the answer as to the minister came after. I asked Mr Chetham after he had talked away a bit, whether he spoke as a parishioner or as a lawyer! He said, as a parishioner, that he did not come there as a lawyer. Nay, said I, I ask because you found fault with me just now for not being a lawyer. The Bishop and he said much to prove, or rather assert, that people were not apprised of the meeting; I said I thought there had not been a parish meeting this great while the purpose which was not universally known as this. I understood Mr Chetham to say once that he would sign against it, but he could not, the book being at the other end of the table, but when they gave it him he would not; upon which I said, I perceive Mr Chetham would sign while he could not, but when he could, he would not. I said in answer to the representation which they gave of the affair of the chapel of my Lord of Derby “Are these the notorious falsehoods that have been talked of? Why every man’s eyes may convince him of the truth of them”

Mr Chetham said I was tall enough of myself, without being placed so high. I told him he was so very loud that it was convenient to be well situated to oppose him, and he heard against him. The Bishop once said, rising up, as he was obliged to do to be heard by me, “Doctor, you have the advantage of us.” I said, “I know of no advantage I have of you but that I am of the right side of the question, and that is a terrible advantage I own.”

Then came one Beswick to vote, and forsooth he must read the preamble, and then Mr Chetham told him not to vote, and he did not, but yet good and took up the room and hindered others coming up to the table, upon which I desired that he might move off and make room for such as wanted to vote, both he and the house correction man Oldham. “Yes, yea, Dr, Says Mr Chetham, “send for the constables to carry away the inhabitants.” “Nay,” I said, “but as you are a director to them, only please to use your influence with em to withdraw, since they have nothing to do there, having refused to vote.” Berwick went off, but Oldham stood by the Bishop. Mr Chetham was very severe and rude in his reflections upon the vote, the meeting, the parishioners, used the words “scandalous,” “irregular,” “unlawful,” “blindfold,” and I took him up every now and then, and said he had reflected upon the parish, if I was to use his own words, in a scandalous manner. When Mr Chetham and Mr Copley were at high words, I spoke to the Bishop and said, “My Lord, no doubt

your Lordship will think fit to interpose your authority, seeing one of your clergy ill treated." The Bishop rose up and said, "Dr, you of all men (I think) ought to know that there are persons here that pay no regard at all to my authority," to which I said, "My Lord, I conceive the question is not about your Lordship's authority, but that of the parish; if your Lordship means me, I must say that I have not designedly disregarded your Lordship's authority." "No, Dr," says he, "That was far from my thought."

The Bishop said, "here is one that does not know the meaning of the meeting," pointing to a man behind his chair, to which somebody said, "He is a Presbyterian," and then I said, "This man's ignorance is easily accounted for; the notice for the meeting was given publicly in the church, and it seems he never comes there. Honest friend, if you would know these things another time you must come to church." One man coming to vote, the Bishop desired him that he might know what it was about and he said to the man, "Honest man, are you for building up a place for divine service and the worship of God according to the Church of England, or are you not!" Says the man, "I am for having it as it was." Says the Bishop, "he gives an evasive answer." And then I said, "it is plain enough from his answer what the man's mind is."

After Mr Chetham had left his place some time, and I saw nothing that wanted speaking to, I came down, somebody saying to me, "Nay, sir, you must stay, choose who does or who does not." But I said I would come down again if there was any occasion. When I was down, several came about me with, "How do you do, Lawyer?" and gave me thanks for speaking in favour of the town. My father Byrom was in the Churchwarden's seat, and they told him how I had been talking, and he said he heard me; but I suppose he could not hear what I said because of the noise.

I went to look at the chapel, where I saw the wall which they had built half way, of which the Bishop had said at the meeting to Mr Kenyon that according to the rules of optics the white wall would yield more light to the aisle by the light reflecting from the side window than the windows from the other side of the chapel did now, which I thought a strange paradox, though.

Afterwards, Mr Justice Chetham and the Bishop walking by the chapterhouse, I joined them and fell into discourse about it, and to my wonder a little, they were mighty free and answered my questions civilly, the Bishop saying, among other things, that the chapel was always a separate place for worship from the church; I said, "No otherwise than the other chapels were round it." He said, "Yes for there were no separate places for worship but in that chapel," to which I said, "If you will please to walk in here, my Lord, I will show you the remains of an old altar." "I never observed any such thing," said he, so I brought him into Trafford chapel, where there are the crucifix and several other pictures, and a place that looks as if the altar had just been taken away almost, but yet the Bishop could not see it, and he argued that there were seats in the chapel; I showed him how the very seats, the old seats, were yet remaining there on the further side of this chapel, and that, to be sure they were on the other side before they were taken down for the new seats which he would not allow, though it was plain as possible.

Both he and the Justice said that any man that understood the laws of light, or rules of light, must know that it would be lighter than before, when the wall was build, which I said did not seem so to me.'

Bishop Peplow appears to have disagreed with the clergy at Manchester Collegiate Church about how best to fit up the Derby Chapel on the north side of choir, its dimensions being almost as large as an average size parish church.

In 1729 he increased his unpopularity still further by making his son Archdeacon of Richmond. The beautiful Yorkshire town of Richmond lies nearly a hundred miles away from Manchester, and what ever its attractions may have been, it is unlikely Samuel Junior ever visited his parish more than once or twice a year. Bishop Peplow fuelled the situation by accusing some of the more influential fellows in his diocese of taking those offices which required little work but brought in their occupiers large salaries.

At the same time it was announced that the Manchester races would take place at Kersal on June 13th 1729 and the two following days. Horse racing had taken place at Manchester at irregular intervals for over 200 years and so there was a considerable outcry when Bishop Peplow opposed the races and sternly prohibited the clergy from attending them.

Occasionally ill feeling towards Bishop Peplow and his son became threatening according to an article from the Newcastle Courant of Tuesday 9th 1731:

'They write from Preston of the 27th instant that the Rev Mr Peploe, Vicar of that place, and son the Bishop of Chester had the following letter laid at his door;

Mr Peploe

I am an Acquaintance of yours, but a stranger to this Town, and at present having occasion for a little money, desire you would put 10 guineas wrapt up in a piece of brown paper at the bottom of your Horse Stock, your not complying herein, will occasion a great disaster, for I will by G-----, fire your house, and you and your family; I'll also murder your Father, that hallow Piece of Deceit, and rob him in his Journey up to London; remember what thou and thy Father has done to one Mr Ellison, By G-----d thou shall pay dear for it; mind what I have written, for by the Mass, me and my Gang upon not complying with their Desires, setting a watch, or exposing this letter, will put our Wills in Execution.

Never-the-less Samuel Junior gradually earned himself a better reputation in the diocese than his father when it came to matters of the purse, and notwithstanding his lavish preferments, is said 'not to have been anxious in taking care of his own interests, nor a proficient in economy'. In 1732 he gave to Broughton Church near Chester 2 silver chalices, and also 2 pewter flagons. This and other such gifts gave him a local fame and he seems to have valued it.

Bishop Peploe too had more considerate sides to his character and it appears his sermons were much admired both at the time and by later historians, for he prepared them with care and they were thought to be sound, orthodox and well written. However in March 1733 Lord Egmont recorded in his diary that he had been asked to carry the sword of state before His Majesty King George II to the court chapel. Lord Egmont enjoyed the service, it being St Patrick's Day and the first Sunday after the Prince of Orange's wedding, but remarked that 'Dr Peploe, Bishop of Chester, preached a sermon on mortification, which was an odd subject for a new married company. The text was as odd—'Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted'. Bishop Peploe was not always in harmony with the world about him!

It is certainly true that Bishop Peploe was unusually severe when it came to entertainment and in the same year as the mortification episode he strongly denounced the public dancing assemblies of Manchester as improper places of resort for the clergy and strictly inhibited their attendance. In this respect he was probably anxious that his clergy should be more circumspect and decorous in their manner of living than they seem to have been, but it is sad to record that they compared him to Cromwell and regarded him as little better than Puritan.

In the year 1735 Bishop Peploe once again found himself at loggerheads with his Tory Chapter at Manchester. Whenever he visited the Chapter House it was observed that he came to collect the fines incurred by the Fellows during his absence, and this was done with so much rigour and severity that it was occasionally resisted by them. Nor were the Fellows slow to catch a 'fearful joy' and to avail themselves of His Lordships necessary absence to enforce such fines as he himself incurred. During this visit, owing to some differences which had arisen on this subject, John Byrom of Manchester and Dr Dunster, the Vicar of Rochdale, both of them impartial and discriminating men, were engaged by the Fellows, probably with the Bishop's concurrence, to accommodate the points in dispute, but the result is unknown. The Fellows proffered themselves to be 'ready for peace's sake to hearken to any measures that might be judged advisable'.

In 1729, six years before this incident, John Byrom had been in London as an associate of John Bradshaw of Darcy Lever near Manchester, and the latter had also learnt Byrom's famous stenography with which he wrote his diaries. This John Bradshaw was an old friend of the Peploe family and married in 1735 Bishop Peploe's youngest daughter Elizabeth at her brother's living of Northenden near Chester. John Byrom could not be at the wedding himself but sent his old colleague a pair of gloves as a wedding present.

Some days after the wedding John Byrom had a drink with Samuel Junior and John Bradshaw at the latter's house in Manchester. Elizabeth Bradshaw was not there so the three made merry on a bottle of wine and John Bradshaw told his friends of how he had been cheated over his new waistcoat for which he had paid three guineas.

Meanwhile Bishop Peploe was amusing himself by feuding with his Chancellor, the previous Bishop's nephew, Peregrine Gastrell over the prerogatives of the latter's office. Eventually he cited

Gastrell to the Archbishop's Court at York to justify his receipt of money for commutations of penance, but Gastrell defended himself with vigour and the case was dismissed; Ten years later the affair kindled again when Gastrell complained that 'after the failure of his case the Bishop had illegally usurped the Chancellor's due fees'.

The same year as the court case Bishop Peploe had further contact with the Gastrell family over various tithes belonging to the See of Chester situated at Cottingham in East Yorkshire. The tithes were let leasehold by the Bishop of Chester for the See and as the lands were very profitable, it was usually the Bishop or his family who took the leasehold. Bishop Peploe's predecessor at Chester, Dr Gastrell, had taken the tithes for half the Rectory of Cottingham during his term of office, and in 1737 the other half became vacant. Bishop Peploe, always shrewd when it came to monetary affairs, immediately leased the tithe to his son Samuel Junior and then sublet them at considerable profit with the aid of the Gastrell's family steward. Eventually Samuel Junior obtained the other half of the Rectory from Peregrine Gastrell, and with the exception of a court case in 1758 to evict an unwanted tenant, the Cottingham tithes brought in a sizeable and trouble free income to the Peploe family for over 180 years. By 1883, after various additions, the families Yorkshire estates had increased to 648 acres of land bringing in over £2000 a year in rents for the then leaseholder Daniel P-Peploe, but his son dispersed the last remaining pieces of land in 1914 by which agriculture in Britain had become considerably less profitable.

Bishop Peploe also obtained various estates in Caernarvonshire by the same method, but these were less significant in both size and value, and were given up in 1860. Probably the small estates Bishop Peploe bought freehold in 1744 surrounding the villages of Hapsford and Thornton in Cheshire again caused the family more trouble than they were worth for they were situated on the Frodsham marshes and were subject to annual flooding by salt water. However if the 1000 acres of land he had purchased at Bradley in Staffordshire are also taken into consideration it is clear he had made quite exceptional use of his episcopal revenue and it is unlikely that anyone other than an 18th century Bishop could amass such a fortune from the church.

Westminster Abbey was where Bishop Peploe had first been consecrated and in June 1733 he returned there to preach a sermon on the anniversary of the beheading of Charles I. The Bishops took it in turn each year to preach a sermon on this date.

In 1738 Bishop Peploe finally resigned his office as Warden of Manchester. It will be remembered that a legal difficulty had arisen on Samuel's consecration to the Bishopric twelve years earlier, as one of his duties had been the visitation of the Warden and the two offices had been united in the same person. The problem had never been satisfactorily solved and most people breathed a sigh of relief at Samuel's resignation that year.

But Bishop Peploe was not to be beaten as at his instigation the King appointed Samuel Junior as Warden instead and he was duly installed on the 25th October 1738. At the same time Bishop Peploe fulfilled his ambition of becoming Visitor to the College and he seems to have 'exercised his functions with his usual acerbity towards the Fellows'. The impression has probably been given that Bishop Peploe's behaviour to all the clergy was highly exceptionable, but his attitude towards the Diocesan clergy at Chester was very different. He is said to have been 'greatly beloved by them, notwithstanding the failing of a warm temper which was constitutional, and which was too often aggravated by causes he might have avoided.'

Bishop Peploe had less success with the city magistrates in Chester and in 1739 he was involved in a dispute with the Mayor of Chester, who, being refused admission into the newly constructed Abbey Court by the Bishop when proclaiming war against Spain, ordered the gates to be broken down. In the same year he wrote to the Duke of Newcastle saying that he had secured a Whig majority in the Cathedral Chapter, and the clergy 'of the honest side of the question' had increased in the city, but it must be admitted that his successes on this score were limited. Soon after his quarrel with the Mayor of Chester Bishop Peploe erected two new galleries in the choir of his Cathedral, and this more constructive attitude on his behalf brought at least a temporary peace to the town.

The great composer George Frideric Handel visited Chester on his way to Ireland in 1741. He had been invited to Dublin by the Duke of Devonshire to produce a series of charity concerts as by this period his popularity in London was on the wane. Performance costs had risen and he was losing money fast - accordingly he was suffering from insomnia, depression and rheumatism. His operas were loudly denounced by some churchmen as profane and unseemly, and theatres such

as the Covent Garden Theatre where his works were performed were regarded in some quarters as the low haunts of dubious characters.

On his way over to Ireland the winds were wrong for crossing the Irish Sea and he was delayed at Chester. He used his time by rehearsing with some singers from the Chester Cathedral choir, but the results were not good. On one occasion, having asked the cathedral organist to recommend any choristers who could sing at sight, Handel auditioned a printer named Janson who was supposed to have a good bass voice. Janson, however, was useless. Handel in fury said, 'You scoundrel, didn't you tell me that you could sing at sight?' to which the hapless printer replied, 'Yes, Sir, and so I can, but not at first sight!'

Bishop Peploe, who liked music and owned two spinnets, was therefore most likely present at the very first performance of Handel's Messiah that took place in Chester Cathedral, and it has subsequently become one of the most popular pieces in the repertoire of English classical music.

William Peploe, the Bishop's nephew, died in 1742 and was buried at St Giles, Cripplegate. His will, written in 1734, left everything to his wife Elizabeth but no record of their marriage has ever been found, and it is not known what became of Elizabeth after her husband's death although it would appear they were childless. William also mentions a legacy of £100 given to him by his friend William Baker, citizen and glover of London who died in 1730, but the document rather suggests Secretary Peploe was not that well off when he died.

In the spring of 1743 Bishop Peploe arrived in Manchester to start the third visitation of his diocese. He began in his familiar anti Roman Catholic strain by denouncing the need for weekly communion.

"The weekly communion is likewise a great and grievous innovation, and an heavy charge upon all parishioners. No matter for primitive practises or ancient Canons. They are all Popish. The Church of England enjoins her members to receive but three times in the year."

He also informed the Collegiate Church that the names of people having the sacrament should be taken the day before. The Tory chapter put up their usual resistance and correctly observed that the rubric at the end of the Common Service in the Prayer Book plainly states that at Cathedrals and Collegiate Churches, where there are many priests and deacons, the communion should be received with the priest at least every Sunday.

On this occasion it was noticed that Samuel Junior, as Warden, 'spoke very handsomely for the body' and that his father the Bishop was occasionally 'a little harsh with him'. Over this point of religious dogma the views of father and son diverged and Samuel Junior earned himself quite a reputation as a donator of Communion Plate throughout the diocese.

Despite opposition from both his son and the Tory Chapter, Bishop Peploe succeeded at this time in compelling the Fellows at the Collegiate Church to have monthly instead of weekly communion and this continued to be the custom for over a century, evidently the law of the church was nothing to Bishop Peploe.

Soon the whole of Manchester spoke of Bishop Peploe's visitation proceedings and the situation was inflamed still further when he demanded an account of the offertory money over the previous few years. He spoke of various occasions when sums of money had disappeared and 'he could never learn what became of it'. He spent some time in rummaging the old register book to obtain information on the late chaplain of Manchester, Roger Bolton, of whom it was said 'so little did he love Manchester that he seldom came to town but when he came for his money, and then he could scarce stay to preach a sermon.' Although he had died some years earlier Bishop Peploe proved him to be 'an errant stinking knave who had cheated the poor out of God knows how many hundreds of pounds by not paying his absence money'. The Rev Cattell, one of the Fellows of the College wrote to a friend "His Lordship would not be driven away, but still kept hovering over this wretched absence money at which he cast many a rueful glance and made many convulsive girds and snatches, and at last fairly and roundly told us 'I expect it and I will have it'. And now the murders out. O auri sacra fumes! What a filthy rout and pother is here about this odious pelf!'

On April 14th 1743 Edward Byrom wrote from Manchester to his brother John about the Visitation:

Honoured Sir: On Friday last the Bishop of Chester came to town to hold his visitation, and began yesterday morning in the same form as usual (Mr. Roberts the Registrar calling the clergy and the

rest of them over first). He began first with John Fletcher and desired to know of him whether he submitted to his Visitorial power, because he had objected to it before. To which Mr. Fletcher replied, he could not give a direct answer. The Bishop then wanted to know what was the matter. He answered, that he understood that his lordship came only to adjourn the Visitation, because his counsel was not come from London as was expected. The Bishop was angry at him then, and said. Did he not know that he would come and visit them at that time according to his agreement! Upon which Mr. Fletcher desired he might have a little time, or that if his lordship intended to do business, he should be very glad to have counsel. The Bishop told him that he had already submitted to his power by interrogating him at the former visitation; besides, he had had the opinion of the most learned man there was. Mr. Fletcher then desired he might have counsel. The Bishop said he would not trouble himself any more about him. The Bishop then proceeded to enquire a little further into the case of the absence moneys, and proved first (by chapter books) the election of Mr. Bolton and Mr. Copley, and their deaths, and said that the poor had been cheated out of a very great sum of money, being the absence moneys of these two Fellows. (I suppose Mr. Bolton had been absent most part of his time, being both rector of Taxall and curate of Stockport, and that he seldom came to town but when he came for his money, and then he could scarce stay to preach a sermon ; and that Mr. Copley had been absent a good part of his time, so that there was about the sum of £500 due tor their being absent and kept from the poor.) He said likewise, he proposed to them several times in chapter to have the absence money settled, but they refused so to do, and they would hear of nothing that he proposed. Then he went about his own absence money, and complained loudly against them for stopping that, when he was summoned to attend in particular by the Queen. That he had had the best opinion in England about it, and that he insisted upon having it again ; said that he had been sadly abused by them all, particularly by Mr. Cattell, of some things that have been said since he was here last (I believe it is about what passed at our house one night when Dr. Leigh was there and Mr. Cattell, but my mamma will tell you about this affair much better.)

This day at the visitation the Bishop opened it with a little speech, that as he had heard that what he had said yesterday was said to be abusing the ashes of the dead, he thought proper to let them know that it was not so ; he was not abusing the ashes of the dead, but it was doing the poor justice (or some words to that effect). The reason why he said so was that somebody had said that he was abusing the ashes of the dead yesterday, and I believe his son Mr. Bradshaw happened to hear this, and so told his lordship. He began about reading the exhortations to the Holy Communion, about having the Sacrament every Sunday and not taking in the people^s names the day before. He said that having the Holy Communion every Sunday was a new doctrine and of their own making ; that it was against his mind when they began it, and a deal more on that subject. He said that peoples names that received the Sacrament should be taken down on the day before ; that it was a thing done in the primitive church, and that they might as well do it here. (Here Mr. Hoole, happening to be present, spoke something against it, that it could not be done when persons lived a great way from this town and did not come till Sunday. Mr. Cattell likewise said that it was a thing they could not do, when there were above seven hundred communicants). He mentioned the Prayer before Sermon, and argued with them a good while on that subject. Lastly he said he demanded an account of the Offertory money that had been given several years, where and how it had been disposed of, and insisted upon having an account. He mentioned several sums and different times that had been received for that use, and he could never learn what became of it, particularly one day there was carried a large bag from the table and he knew not what became of it. I believe the churchwardens for the several years can give an account of it. My uncle was churchwarden a few years since, and saith he can give an account of what he distributed, for he gave it himself. And then his lordship adjourned till to-morrow morning at eleven o'clock.

Honoured Sir : As above, I have sent you an account of what I can remember. My uncle Houghton and Mr. Battersby have both taken an account of what has passed. Mr. Catteli would have writ to you himself this post, but has not had any time since morning. The town is very full of talk about it. I have not any other news to send you at present. I was in the chapter house myself both days. The Warden{*} speaks very handsomely for the body, but the Bishop is sometimes sharp a little with

him. I shall be very glad to hear from you when you have an opportunity. My mamma will write to you herself, and orders me to conclude, for it will be too late. We are all very well at present, and I hope you received my hurt letter. Mr. Cattell and I and Mr. Houghton and Mr. Battersby went to the old coffeehouse last night over against here, for them to compare their notes, and I to help them out, and they are pretty correct. My sisters join with me in duty to you, and I beg leave to conclude myself your dutiful and obedient son — Edward Byrom

At last, on April 18th, Samuel finished his visitation and perhaps the Rev John Cattell should have the last word.

‘On Monday, part the third of our Visitation was finished and if it never be published it will certainly be an unspeakable loss to the world, although some ill natured critics affirm that the errata will be much longer than the pure text’.

Although Samuel's method in dealing with his clergy was questionable, he certainly had good grounds to complain and the case of Roger Bolton was by no means exceptional.

In late May 1745 news began filtrating through to the large Jacobite population of Lancashire that their French allies, aided by the Jacobite Irish Brigade, had repulsed George I's pragmatic army at Fontenoy. This spectacular success' against the best British Regiments stimulated Jacobite hopes and within a month Prince Charles Edward, the Young Pretender, was sailing for the west coast of Scotland with a small party of followers.

The government was taken by surprise and Bonny Prince Charlie, as he later became known, met with little resistance. By October he had captured Edinburgh and his force numbered 400 horse and 4500 foot; London began to panic.

On the 13th of that month Bishop Peploe, staunch to his earlier principles, preached a sermon at Chester Cathedral attacking the rebels and their faith, it was later published under the title ‘A strong reason why Protestants should steadily oppose the present rebellion’.

However there was still little military resistance and the Young Pretender invaded England, capturing Carlisle on 17th November. As the days passed it became increasingly clear that the rebels would soon reach Manchester and Samuel Junior, who was a staunch whig but lacked his father's spirit, withdrew from the town for his own safety. So it was that on the 29th November Prince Charles Edward Stuart entered the Jacobite stronghold of Manchester and, it is said, was ‘enthusiastically welcomed by the Fellows of the Collegiate Church’. The Jacobites held the town for over a fortnight and on December the 10th they took ‘Old Mr Bayley’ prisoner. He was the father of James Bayley who had married Anne, daughter of Bishop Peploe, some 15 years earlier. He too was a Whig and was also one of the principle merchants of the town, he was therefore a prime target for the rebels. They later released him on his giving the Prince his word of honour to fetch £2500 in 2 hours or surrender himself again a prisoner. Mr Bayley then went to the Coffee House where the principal inhabitants used to meet, and it was proposed that he and a Mr John Dickenson should give promissory notes, payable in 3 months, to such as would find the required sum. It appears these terms were complied with for the money was paid about two o'clock.

By now the main body of Jacobites, with ever diminishing strength, had reached Derby, but a superior force of regular troops under Cumberland and Ligonier blocked their advance at Lichfield, with the result that the tide turned and the Prince was soon in retreat. The spring of 1746 found the Jacobite Rebellion to all intents and purposes crushed and the tale of Prince Charles Edward's escape to France has, of course, become one of the great epics of the Highlands.

Meanwhile in Manchester the unhappy controversies of the day slowly subsided and public peace was restored. However Samuel Junior seldom resided at Manchester during this period as the Chapter clergy were still so much opposed to his and his father's views on the great political questions of the day and he also experienced great difficulty in cooperating with them even in the ordinary affairs of the church. The fellows at this time vindicated the principles of non-resistance to the Catholic faith and the Divine right of Kings and it is said Samuel treated them with ‘coldness and disfavour’.

Two years later Bishop Peploe found it prudent to hold his fourth visitation of the diocese; he began his discourse by once again condemning Roman Catholicism as the diocese was still then regarded as Jacobite and Popish.

He was, however, more concerned with the quality of his ordinands who were said to be 'a whole colony of poor raw boys taken from home bred insignificant schools, and ordained Deacons on some sorry titles, mere readers places'. In his charge of 1747 he delivered a discourse on clerical duties to encourage them and to enable them to refute the attacks of those who regarded them as 'useless and burdensome, idle and superficial, in ministerial performances'. He again emphasised the need for circumspection in the giving of letters testimonial and urged the need for a clause stating that the referee was personally acquainted with the candidate. He threatened to inhibit unlicensed intruders. Pluralism and non residence was condemned and this must surely have produced some sarcastic witticisms from those of his critics who were acquainted with Samuel Junior's numerous appointments.

No doubt Bishop Peploe's conduct over his ordinands had been instigated by various attacks made by some of the senior clergy in his diocese. In 1743 the Vicar of Kirby in Lancashire, a peculiar belonging to the dean and parish of York, had complained of one of the curates in his parish, who had been ordained by Bishop Peploe, and of the ineffectiveness of the Bishop's attempts to discipline him. As early as 1738 Samuel had ordained 24 year old Lawrence Sterne, great grandson of an Archbishop of York, and given him the living of Sutton in the forest. Sterne, who later became famous for his comic or satirical novels such as 'The adventures of Tristram Shandy', was said to have been quite unsuitable for the priesthood and 'was to spend much of his time in nearby York at Coffee Houses, Concerts and other such Galas.'

However Bishop Peploe's condemnation of Pluralism was unquestionably hypocritical for the following year he made his son Chancellor of Chester upon Peregrine Gastrell's death. In his defence it could be said that Samuel Junior, with his degree in Civil Law, was admirably suited for the job as one of the functions of the Chancellor of the Diocese was to sit as Judge at the Court of the Bishop, the so called Consistory Court; it was here that the churches legal business was transacted. The panelled Consistory Court at Chester, dating from 1636 and situated on the ground floor of the south west tower of the Cathedral, is the only surviving example of it's kind in England. On the back wall is the canopied Judge's seat where Samuel Junior would have sat, and on the right, high up on the wall, hangs his Cartouche of 1775. It is an elaborately carved copy of the Peploe Coat of Arms as granted to the family in 1753.



The Consistory Court at Chester Cathedral with Samuel Junior's coat of arms on the wall

I possess the original patent from his father making Samuel Junior Chancellor and below the Bishop's signature, Samuel Cestriens, which already shows signs of Bishop Peploe's advancing age, hangs the impression of his silver seal; It shows the 3 mitres of the Bishopric of Chester impaling the arms of 'Peplo of Shropshire' said to be a 'Chevron, Ermine, between 3 martlets and a mound with a cross patty for the crest'. In 1744 Bishop Peploe had had a search made for these arms in the records of the College of Arms, but no information could be gleaned. At the same time he was shown, by a Mrs Sturger, a painted escutcheon which she said were the arms of the ancient family of Peploe of Peploe Castle which some of the name captured by killing a Danish Giant. The escutcheon, painted in a bad hand, was not signed by any herald and was therefore of no authority. A search was made in the College records but with no result. However Bishop Peploe may have liked the romantic story attached to Mrs Sturger's escutcheon as from that time onwards he used the arms of the ancient family of Peplo of Peplo castle in Cheshire; these arms were said to be: Azure, a chevron raguled counter-raguled between three bugle horns or., the three bugle horns being the Wirral horns of Cheshire. However it appears he never bothered to have his episcopal seal recut.

In 1750 Bishop Peploe reached the age of 72 and it must have given the old man great pleasure to be present at the first marriage of his granddaughter Anne Bayley to her distant cousin, the Rev Abel Ward, Rector of St Ann's, Manchester. He was a grandson of Bishop Peploe's uncle, the Reverend John Peploe of Penkrudge, and his mother was Mary Peploe who had married Thomas Ward at Penkrudge in 1706. Furthermore Abel was a man after Bishop Peploe's heart; frank, outspoken and above all a Whig. He was at one time Bishop Peploe's chaplain and only a year after his marriage to Ann Bayley at Northenden was preferred to the office of Archdeacon of Chester. All the family respected him, and his descendants, the Peploe-Wards continued to live at Chester until well into the 19th Century.

As time went by and Bishop Peploe reached old age, a certain mellowing of his character could be observed; disagreements became fewer and old quarrels were forgotten. No one could really say that he was ever loved in his diocese but at least the old hatred that had existed in certain sections of the community became less and it was replaced with a kind of respect. Many people were therefore sorry when Bishop Peploe died in the spring of 1752 at his house by the River Dee in Chester and his son recorded the event as follows:

'Mem: Feb 21st 1752, being Friday — my dearest parent departed this life about half an hour after 11 o'clock in the fore—noon.

He was buried behind the high altar in Chester Cathedral, and the position is still marked by a marble plaque in the floor which reads:

S+P
Epus CEET:
1752

It was here that Bishop Peploe's lead coffin, with a mitre and the initials S.P. on it, were found during restoration work in 1844. It was said to have been a particularly long coffin indicating Bishop Peploe was a very tall man.

His monument, of Derbyshire marble, decorated with cherubim and foliage, can be seen at the south range in the nave of the Cathedral; on it there is a significant sentence which reads 'Qualis erat supremis dies indicabit'.

In his relatively short will he left to the Poor of Dawley Co. Salop 40/— yearly rent from his estates in Staffordshire to buy bibles, common prayer books and church catechisms, he never forgot his humble origins. To his eldest but unmarried daughter Mary, who had looked after him and his wife, Bishop Peploe gave, amongst other items, his episcopal robe and his two spinets:

'To Mary, dau. silver tea kettle and lamp, silver basin and milk jug, silver boat, silver teaspoons, silver canister and coffee pot, china tea sets, clock standing in lobby, 2 large glasses in drawing room, 1 set of silver knives and forks, 1 feather bed, 1 doz. chairs, 2 fire grates with fenders, shovels and tongs, 2 tables, 6 pairs sheets, 6 table cloths, 13 napkins (all on wife's death only).'



Bishop Peploe's memorial in Chester Cathedral

Samuel Junior, as only son and heir, inherited all his father's estates together with 'the newly erected message in Chester, and his wife Elizabeth was left a £200 annuity.

Bishop Peploe's handwritten codicil continues to make more personal bequests of his belongings and money to his family:

I give to my kinswoman Elizabeth Brierley of Salop eight pounds a year for her life, after the death of her father, out of my personal estate, or out of my real estate, exclusive of her husbands having any thing do do with it, or payable to her as my executors shall think best.

I give to my daughter Mary Peploe any of my carpets which she shall choose. I give to her also my silver cream boat, large silver waiter, my coffee mill, two small silver waiters, six common silver spoons, silver snuffers, silver castors and frame, two silver candlesticks, two silver mugs, the tea table in the drawing room, the little folding table in the drawing room, the little calico bed and the sheets of new damask linen. I give likewise to my sayd daughter my silver soup spoon, or ladle as she thinks best. I give her the least of my framed pictures in the drawing room. I give her one of my Buro's, I give her half a dozen of pewter dishes and three dozen of pewter plates of her own choosing. I give to her also the Jack in the kitchen, two tossing pans or two spits. These things I

give to my daughter as above but order of my wife that she should have the use of them during her life if she pleases.

Witness my hand and seal this eighth day of September in the year of your Lord one thousand, seven hundred and fifty.

Saml Cestriens

'I recommend justice, peace and love to all my family S.C.'