

The Taverners

Taverners have lived in England
For more than eight hundred years;
We know this from the family tree,
Compiled in the 17th century,
By Francis Taverner, Lord Mayor of Hexham
Who traced his line back to the village of Elmham.

In the middle ages many Taverners lived,
By selling wines and ale and mead;
Like William le Taverner in Lichfield,
In the year twelve hundred and six.
We know that a hundred years later,
Another le Taverner, named Walter,
Was Baron of Sandwich port in Kent,
And Thomas, also in Kent, near Rochester,
Another Thomas at Overton near Chester;
Peter le Taverner sold wine in York,
Gilbert in Northampton felled trees,
William dwelt in Darlington by the North Sea,
Richard in St.Albans, and John in Stirling;
Who went on a Crusade to fight for the King,
In the middle ages it would be fair
To say there were Taverners everywhere.

Geoffrey Chaucer, the poet of fame,
Had a grandfather Robert de Taverner by name,
Believed to be innkeeper and to make shoes,
(From which the name of Chaucer comes.)
And by supplying wine for the royal thirst,
Became Deputy Butler to Edward I.

Records are few for the fifteenth century;
Some could have died in the dreadful Black Plague,
But of families in East Anglia we know.
Ralph le Tavener owned land at North Elmham,
Which passed on to grandsons John and Henry;
John became a soldier and fought
With Henry the fifth at Agincourt;
Canon Robert of Wolsingham monastery
Sent his sons to university.

From there the family spread and grew
In Essex, London and Liverpool,
Thence to Ireland Across the sea,
To Cork and Lisburn and Limerick,
Some records were lost in antiquity,
But others survived to a later date,
And these are the ones we now shall relate.

The Mayor of Bristol

The travellers all had gone to their beds,
In the tavern in Bristol town,
Weary and ready to rest their heads,
Before the dawn of another day,
Should see them once again on their way.

Downstairs in the inn, their places
Were very quickly filled
By the town's rich and worthy burgesses,
And craftsmen, honest and skilled,
Each of them loyal to his Guild;
Ready to fight
With all their might,
For the customs they knew
To be just and right.

King Edward I had granted a charter,
To the freemen of Bristol town,
To make their wares and ply their trade,
Without imposition of taxes and tolls,
Except for maintaining the town's walls and roads,
Which might otherwise be worn down;

But Edward II who followed after,
To sit on the English throne,
Kept not the promise his father had made,
And forgot the good things he had done.
His constable, aided by some merchants keen
To gain power and wealth,
(They were called 'The Fourteen'),
Went down to the docks, and by guile and stealth,
Demanded from traders a revenue.

The townsfolk would not pay more than was due.
In despair, they turned to their Mayor,
The innkeeper, John le Taverner.
He advised them first to appeal to the King,
And to London they sent a deputation.

But Edward's mind was on other things;
Wars in the North 'gainst the Scottish nation
Had sadly drained the royal coffers,
Edward would take any money offered;
But he promised to send aid to Bristol town,
Assured the protection of the Crown,
And instructed the constable who lived there,
Ambitious Bartholomew de Badlesmere,
To see that all obeyed the law.

The tolls were collected, as before.

Taverner's Tales

The people of Bristol wanted to stay
Loyal to their king always,
Again they appealed to him for aid,
Again royal promises were made.
Edward sent learned men to view
The Bristol scene; a custos and lawyers,
They were all friends of Bartholomew,
So what they reported was not strictly true.

The Mayor called a meeting at the Guildhall
For Guild members, bailiffs, and The Fourteen,
To meet King Edward's newest committee,
Led by Thomas de Berkeley,
While the townsfolk waited patiently,
To learn what the outcome of it all may be.

At last Berkeley went out to tell them all
What the King's agents intended to do;
The townsfolk objected to what Berkeley said,
And a riot began in the street outside,
Many were injured, and twenty died,
Crushed by the mob where they happened to fall.
Some of the craftsmen were ready for blood,
John Taverner calmed them as best he could;
They allowed the judges to pass in safety
To the nearest church, where they would stay
Out of harm's way, until the next day.

The Fourteen sent word to Badlesmere,
Hoping that soon King Edward would hear,
Their version of what had passed that night.
King Edward believed their tales to be true,
Sent a sheriff to Bristol, to arrest those who
Were supposed to have started the fray,
He demanded the culprits to Gloucester must go,
To be punished. That seemed to be fair and right,
But the men who were called had reason to know, '
False tales would be told, and justice not done
In fear of their lives they stayed away,
And the King outlawed them, every one.

The townsmen of Bristol would always be true
To their country, and to the King;
But to give up their rights they were not willing,
And deep in their hearts they knew
Though learned and fair these new judges may seem,
They would listen to Badlesmere and The Fourteen,
The taxes would never reach the town
To stop the walls from crumbling down.

Taverner's Tales

Something clearly had to be done.
At all of the gates they built barricades,
Placed sentries to keep out anyone,
Sent by the sheriffs or Badiesmere,
At night they the 'castle moat they drained,
Destroyed the King's mill, and took off the grain.

When King Edward heard of these terrible deeds,
The Sheriff of Gloucester was straight away sent,
To arrest Mayor le Taverner with all speed,
And punish him with imprisonment,
Wherever in England he may be found.
John le Taverner and his friends knew then
They must flee at once from the Sheriff's men.
To leave England was their only chance,
And from Bristol docks they sailed to France.

In exile they lived for more than three years,
While King Edward was having a very hard time.
Barons and bishops refused to take arms
In the royal army against the Scots;
But one who staved loyal was Badlesmere.
Promoted to be in charge of Dover,
The Channel fleet, and the Cinque Ports,
He hastened to London, and the King's court,
For him the battle in Bristol was over.

Without the constable's aid The Fourteen
Were forced to abandon their greedy scheme.
The new custos, Maurice de Berkeley,
Was a reasonable man, as all could see;
So to him John Taverner's friends now appealed
For the outlawing of the Mayor to be repealed
Many could prove he had done no wrong.

To King Edward a petition was sent,
And this time the monarch did relent.
He issued pardons to Taverner and Martyn,
For lands and possessions to be restored.

Soon John le Taverner was Mayor again,
Representing the town in Parliament.
The taxes collected were properly spent.
The rebellion of Bristol had not been in vain.

Richard Taverner 1505-1575

In Norfolk a sign for the village of Brisley
Shows Richard Taverner, its famous son
Sitting reading his Bible, diligently,
With Brisley church a short distance on.

In Cambridge he attended Corpus Christi
Then went on to Oxford to gain a degree,
And a second in Cambridge in Gonville Hall,
In Philosophy, Greek, and Divinity.

He taught in Cambridge for a while,
And studied abroad when he was able;
When short of money he came home again,
To teach Greek, and study at Staire Inn,
Then to Inner Temple to study law.
Went to court in 1534,
To serve Thomas Cromwell as a clerk;
Married Margaret, a goldsmith's daughter
Who four sons and three daughters bore;
He published New Testament translations
And helped in work for the Reformation.

In 1540 Cromwell fell from power,
And Richard was imprisoned in the Tower.
When released he retired to his manor in Surrey;
Became Member of Parliament for Liverpool.

When Queen Elizabeth came to the throne
She made him High Sheriff of Oxfordshire;
And thus ended an outstanding career.
He was buried near his first wife, at Woodeaton.
The estate was divided between his sons.

The Explorers

The 17th century Taverners of Hoxton
Felt an urge to travel on
One of these was Granado, Francis's son,
Who died at sea when he was young,
Robert died on a voyage to Maryland,
Others went to Lisburn, in Ireland.

Before 1607 John was in Virginia,
While Henry became a fearless sea captain,
First he commanded the 'Expedition'
Touring Carolina and the Florida shores,
Seeking a safe haven for the 'Mayflower',
In the 'Elizabeth' round the Barbary Coast.
Then back to London again with his wares
In the 'Martha', tobacco from Barbados
To take to Scotland, but when he arrived,
The King's ships were waiting in the Clyde.
To gaol for a while he had to go,
What happened then, we do not know.

Edward Taverner stayed in Hoxton,
Farming the family's land;
Jeremy was an artist;
He too stayed close at hand.
William, a lawyer also wrote plays
Produced on stage in London town,
While another William born in 1702
Was a landscape painter of great renown.

Samuel Tavernor, 1621 - 1696

Samuel Tavernor joined Lord Cromwell's force,
When he was a brave and eager lad,
The first promotion that he had,
Was to be Captain of a Troop of Horse
When he was only twenty-two.
He married Ann Gibbs from the village of Worth,
And to thirteen children she gave birth.

On the death of Ann he married Susannah,
In nearby Canterbury.
He was honoured again in 1653,
Made Governor of the Castle of Deal.
On day he hid behind a hedge to hear
What the Baptist preacher had to say;
(It would never do for him to be seen!)
But he liked what he heard of their doctrine,
And was baptized in the Delf Stream.
Restoration of the Monarchy brought persecution
For those not of Catholic faith,
They met in houses and in the open air,
Secretly at night, because they did not dare
To meet openly during the day.

His career as a soldier was not a life
That would fit Samuel's new belief,
So he resigned from his honoured post;
And moved away from Deal, to Dover;
His days as a fighting man were over.

Samuel bought a shop, in Market Lane,
To sell groceries and other provisions,
For defence of the town he stored gunpowder there,
While preaching Baptism to those who would hear;
A Baptist centre grew in his shop,
But that did not meet with royal approval,
So Samuel was told these things had to stop.
Though persecuted he still carried on;
Until for a while to gaol he was sent,
Then at last the government seemed to relent,
And they were allowed to preach again.
In a part of his garden in Market Lane
Members met, in the stream to be baptised,
Later 'a church was built on the site,
And in recognition of all he had done
The street as Tavernor's Lane became known.