

**Volume 3**

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**Little Jack Horner and the  
Glastonbury Monastery - Part I**

**Lead: "Little Jack Horner sat in a corner eating of Christmas pie,..."  
Legend has it that his name wasn't Jack but he definitely pulled out a plum.**

**Tag: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.**

**Content: King Henry VIII of England had a serious problem. As he moved into middle age he began to despair of ever producing a son with his Queen Catherine of Aragon. She was deeply devoted to her husband but could not deliver to him the male heir**

**which he was convinced would secure his family's lock on the English throne into the future. After repeated attempts to convince Pope Clement VII to dissolve his marriage, he renounced the jurisdiction of the Roman Catholic Church. With the Act of Supremacy in 1534, the King, not the Pope, became head of the Church in England. With this new power he divorced Catherine and married Anne Boleyn. Anne did not give him a son, but her successor, Jane Seymour, did and Henry considered his dynastic problems largely solved.**

**The transfer of authority from the Pope to the King posed another problem, one which Henry quickly turned to his advantage. Catholic**

clergy for the most part are divided into two main groups. Secular priests work "out in the world" and are governed through the chain of authority from the lowest parish priest up through the ranks to the Pope. As Supreme head of the Church Henry could more easily command the loyalty of this group, but the regular clergy were a different matter. They lived apart, in monasteries, and took their orders more directly from the Pope. Henry correctly saw that if he ever were to exercise control over the Church in England he had to get rid of the monasteries, seditious outposts of an enemy power. They were also very wealthy. Over the centuries gifts from rich and poor alike had given the monasteries rich endowments and

**control over great chunks of valuable land. By dissolving the monasteries, the King could rid himself of a potential challenge to his authority and fill the ever needy royal treasury. In 1536 he confiscated the smaller monasteries, in 1539 the larger ones. One of the last and richest was Glastonbury. Its abbot, Richard Whiting, was a stubborn man and to get rid of him Henry relied upon the treachery of Whiting's steward, Thomas Horner, whose betrayal may be remembered in a famous nursery rhyme. Next time: The prize at Glastonbury.**

**At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.**

## Resources

**Baring-Gould, William Stuart. and Ceil Baring-Gould. *The Annotated Mother Goose: Nursery Rhymes Old and New, Arranged and Explained.* New York, NY: Bramhall House Publishing, 1962.**

**Butler, Lionel and Chris Given-Wilson. *Medieval Monasteries of Great Britain.* London, UK: Joseph Publishing Company, 1979.**

**Gasquet, Francis Aidan, Cardinal. *Henry VIII and the English Monasteries, Seventh Edition.* London, UK: G. Bell and Sons, Ltd., 1920.**

**See also website on nursery rhymes:  
[www.tbdesign.com/jackhorner.html](http://www.tbdesign.com/jackhorner.html)**

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