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

Lead: Faced with confiscation, Abbot Richard Whiting of the Cathedral at Glastonbury, at Christmas 1539, sent his trusted steward, Thomas Horner with a gift to appease King Henry VIII. This futile gesture turned out to be rich opportunity for Jack Horner.

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

Content: In its early years, the Reformation in England, was none to secure. King Henry VIII remained a theological and emotional Catholic

until the day he died. The primary reason for removing England from allegiance to the Roman Church in 1534 was that the pope refused to give him a divorce from his first wife who could not produce for him a male heir. The Protestants around Henry were always a little nervous that the King, on a whim, might act on his true Catholic sentiments and go back to Rome. His chief minister, Thomas Cromwell, convinced the King that if he dissolved the monasteries of England he could accomplish two things. By confiscating them the King could fill his depleted treasury, something that always appealed to Henry, and, because many monasteries were hotbeds of Catholic sentiment, he could suppress a potential threat to the

newly Protestant Church of England. In 1536, Henry and Cromwell began to close the monasteries. The King kept some for himself, but wisely distributed the balance to his family, friends and supporters throughout the realm. This land transfer meant a large number of influential people would be committed by pure self-interest to the survival of the Reformation.

Legend has it that one of those benefitting from the dissolution was Thomas Horner, steward to Richard Whiting, the Abbot of the Cathedral at Glastonbury, an ancient monastery south of Bristol in southwestern England. Whiting hoped to appease the King so he sent the King the deeds

to twelve manorial estates owned by Glastonbury. He secreted the deeds in a Christmas pie and sent them to London in the care of his trusted steward, Thomas Horner. Horner must have realized that the Abbot's gesture was futile, that King Henry and Cromwell would have the monastery none the less and then Horner would be out of a job. On the trip to London, he popped open the pie and stole the deed to the rich manorial estate at Mells. Next time: The betrayer earns his plum.

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

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