

**THE HISTORY OF JOHN
WINCHCOMB: USUALLY
CALLED JACK OF NEWBURY,
THE FAMOUS CLOTHIER**

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The History of John Winchcomb: Usually Called Jack of Newbury, the Famous Clothier by
Thomas Deloney & James O. Halliwell

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THOMAS DELONEY & JAMES O. HALLIWELL

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*I hereby certify that the impression of this reprint of the
History of Jack of Newbury is strictly limited to twenty-six
copies, no extra perfect copy being preserved either in the
waste or even in proof-sheets.*

November, 1859.

Thomas Richard

THE
History of John Winchcomb,
USUALLY CALLED
JACK OF NEWBURY,
THE FAMOUS CLOTHIER.

WRITTEN BY
THOMAS DELONEY, A.D. 1597.

EDITED BY
JAMES O. HALLIWELL, ESQ., F.R.S.

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P R E F A C E.

WARWICK is not more popularly associated with the adventures of the celebrated knight Sir Guy, nor Southampton with those of the equally renowned Sir Bevis, than is Newbury with the name of the prosperous clothier, John Winchcomb, who for nearly three centuries, if not for a longer period, has been distinguished by the familiar appellation of Jack of Newbury. There is, however, this distinction peculiar to the history of the last named personage, that whereas even the names of Guy and Bevis are fictitious, the popular novel of Jack of Newbury concerns not merely a real individual, but details circumstances founded partially on well-ascertained facts and partially on details derived from traditional sources. Jack's real name was John Winchcombe alias Smalwoode, an eminent clothier of Newbury during the reigns of Henry VII. and Henry VIII. He realized a large fortune; and, amongst other benefactions to Newbury, is said to have built the church vestry. In his will, dated in January, 1519, the year in which he died, he is de-

scribed as "John Smalwoode the elder, alias John Wynchcombe, of the parisshe of Seynt Nicholas in Newbery." He gives "to the parisshe church of Newbery, towards the buyding and edifying of the same, 40*l.*," besides donations to the various altars. He directs that he should be buried "in our Lady chauncell within the parisshe church of Newbury aforsaide by Alice my wif, and a stone to be leyde upon us bothe." His wife Alice had been long dead at the date of this will, as he had again married, and left a widow named Joan, who is mentioned and liberally provided for. There are also legacies to numerous individuals, and to every one of his servants. Amongst the former may be mentioned forty shillings to Sir John Waite, parson of Newberry, "for the recompens of my tithes negligently forgotten": the "Sir," it is hardly necessary to observe, not being the title of knighthood, but the ordinary Anglicized one from *Dominus*, the scholastic denomination of clergymen, as we have the parson Evans termed Sir Hugh Evans in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. The will was proved on March 24th, 1519, by the testator's son John, who was residuary legatee.

John Winchcomb died within a few weeks after the date of this will, as appears from a brass effigy in Newbury church bearing the following inscription,—
"Off your charitie pray for the soule of John Smalwode alias Wynchcom and Alys hys wyfe; John dyed

the xv. day of February, A.D. 1519." This memorial must be distinguished from a stone monument of a man in armour, with three wives, six sons and five daughters, which is sometimes vulgarly stated to represent Jack and his children, but which really belongs to another family. Winchcomb died at an advanced age, six years after the battle of Flodden, so that the tradition that he was present at that celebrated contest is probably an error, though it is very possible that he may have furnished a company for the service of his country. There is also a tradition that he entertained Henry the Eighth and Queen Catharine at Newbury. The site of his house is believed to have been partly the ground upon which the inn bearing his name now stands, and it is said that his workshops extended to the marsh. Certain it is that ancient carvings, some of which undoubtedly belonged to the Winchcomb family in the sixteenth century, were discovered some years ago in pulling down old buildings in that locality. Jack's family attained to some social distinction; for his eldest son John obtained a grant of arms, and one of his descendants was the owner of Donnington castle. A portrait of this son, taken in 1550, when he was in the sixty-first year of his age, is, I am told, still preserved at Newbury. Supposing, therefore, that Jack himself married very early in life, this fact of the son's age in the year 1550 would incline us to place the father's birth in 1470 at the very latest; but he pro-

bably first saw the light some years before the date last mentioned.

Some of the principal facts in the life of Winchcomb were unquestionably in traditional circulation at Newbury at the close of the sixteenth century; for when that prolific pamphleteer and novelist, Thomas Deloney, made him the subject of a romance, the leading circumstances of his history were faithfully adhered to. Deloney's novel of *Jack Newbury* was licensed to T. Myllington on March 7th, 1596, and it was undoubtedly published soon after that period, but no copy of so early a date is now known to exist, the earliest one I have met with being the ninth edition, published by Cuthbert Wright in 1633. This is no doubt, with the exception of the orthography and perhaps some little of the idiomatic language, a faithful reproduction of the earlier copies. This complete version was several times republished, but in the last century abridged editions of it were sometimes issued, and the modern chap-book copies are generally mere fragments of the original. The romance, although highly illustrative of old manners and customs, is of small literary merit. It chiefly consists of a number of desultory stories, some of which have no relation to the subject of the history, and ends, like *Rasselas*, with a conclusion in which nothing is concluded.

THE
PLEASANT HISTORY
OF
JOHN WINCHCOMB,

In his younger yeares called Jacke
of Newberie, the famous and worthy Clothier
of England : declaring his life and love,
together with his charitable deeds
and great hospitality ;

And how hee set continually five hundred poore
people at worke, to the great benefit of the
Commonwealth ; worthy to be
read and regarded.

Now the ninth time Imprinted, corrected and enlarged, by T. D.

Haud curio incidiam.

LONDON :

Printed by ROBERT YOUNG, *and are to be sold by*
CUTHBERT WRIGHT. 1633.