

SN 5766 - Churchwardens' Accounts of the Parish of St. Peter's Ipswich, 1563-1664

Study Documentation

*British Library Addn MS 25344
(copy on film at Suffolk Record Office Ipswich JC1/1(4))*

Edited by

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Introduction

The churchwardens' accounts provide a detailed insight of the life of an urban parish adjusting to the demands of changing religious and civic life from the early part of Elizabeth's reign to the Restoration.

Religious Transition, Dissension and Conflict

In the initial years the accounts are dominated by the struggle to raise money to provide for clergy and sexton in the aftermath of the Dissolution. Previously Augustinian canons from the priory of St Peter and St Paul had officiated. As well as the levying of a rate for the 'gathering of the minister's and sexton's wages assessed of the parishioners', (1564-5, folio 1v) the accounts record periodic receipts from Mr Withipoll, (owner of the advowson and holder of large tithes) eg 'for his half year due unto our minister at the 'Feast of thannunciation of Our Lady' and at 'the Feast of St Michael tharchangell'. The phraseology suggests a residual influence of the old religion far removed from the expressions and attitudes evident a century later, eg the language to justify the dismissal by the parish of churchwarden James Blithe for his failure to uphold the parish's 'ancient' right to elect and appoint their own minister. (1663; folio 109r)

Religious dissension is reflected in 1616 by payments '...concerning the presentment of recusants by Master Chancellor's command' and in 1617 the minister Mathias Mann was the subject of a petition to the Bishop to arbitrate in a dispute over payment and his refusal to leave the parish. In 1636 (folio 71v) payment was made 'for the rail in the chancel' presumably in response to Laudian requirements. The accounts of 1652 record another conflict when legal action against parishioner Jeremy Cole was threatened for the recovery of a silver bowl and plate 'which rest in his hands.' Sadly, the circumstances in which he refused to hand over the disputed items are not stated. His signature is endorsed 'desents' among the others ordering proceedings against him (folio 98v). Signatures at the conclusion of each account increased from four when they first appear in 1566 (one with merchant's mark; folio 9r) to 31 in 1664, (some with symbols or marks,) indicative of a continuing transition towards extended involvement by members of the congregation in the affairs of the parish.

In the final years the accounts detail an unsuccessful claim by the parish upon Viscount Hereford of Christchurch for payment of 56 years arrears towards the provision of 'an able minister' (1663;

folio 110r). Subsequently a copy of an Order in Council made in 1640 annulling such liabilities was obtained and is included with the accounts (folio 110v).

Parish Property

Periodic inventories of parish goods and equipment include items relating to the conduct of services, eg obtaining copies of Erasmus' Paraphrases, books of homilies and in 1603 'a carpet for the communion table'. More mundane items for parish use include 'a newe furr ladder' in 1584 (folio 26r) made by churchwarden Robert Dabenye, a local carpenter whose other handiwork includes the cucking stool now preserved in Christchurch Mansion, Ipswich.

Building and Maintenance of the Church Fabric and Churchyard

Of particular interest are the accounts relating to the rebuilding of the east wall of the chancel in 1593 (folio 30r). The accounts also provide a wealth of detailed information of expenditure for various material and tools, as well as the services of craftsmen and labour needed for routine repairs to the fabric of the church, the boundary walls of the graveyard and paving and cleansing of adjacent streets. Among various labouring tasks performed were small amounts paid to parishioners named Wolsey, possibly relatives of the former Cardinal Archbishop, a native of the borough.

Charity

Details of payments resulting from Matthew Brownrigge's significant benefaction for 'the setting of the poore on worke for ever' are featured from 1641 until entries cease without explanation in 1650. There are also records of occasional disbursements to 'the most poor and impotent' of the parish; also occasional gifts to poor scholars, mariners, soldiers, etc. including 'a Skottish gentleman' in 1632 (folio 65v).

Presentation of Accounts

The accounts (in English) are of great interest in the way in which they were written and compiled, with considerable variations in pattern and style of presentation. Roman numerals (without £ s. d. columns) were used initially to record quantities of materials and money, with a gradual, at times clearly hesitant transition to Arabic. A mixture of Roman and Arabic numerals sometimes occurs in the same accounts, eg 1570; folio 11v). The standard of penmanship varies with each set of churchwardens, ranging from accomplished hands to those who were, perhaps, more used to holding the tools of their various trades than pens!

Editorial Conventions

Conventions used are based largely on those of the Suffolk Records Society.

Original spelling has been retained for complete words, but abbreviations are expanded where the meaning is clear; spelling of the expansion used follows that of the initial entry in cases where the word has been given in full, eg pd = paid or payed, etc. Where this is not given, modern spelling has been used. Original arithmetic calculations have been followed, even where these are incorrect. Sub columns are in *italics*.

< > = deletion.

\ / = insertion from above; / \ insertion from below.

() = marginalia, (left or right margin) moved into main body of text on a line by itself.

[] = introduced word or symbol not in m/s, eg [£ s. d.] col.

[?] part of a word or figure uncertain.

[illeg] no part of word or figure can be safely determined.

Light punctuation has been added where this clarifies meaning.

Use of capital letters has been modernised.

Roman figures have been changed to Arabic, except where embedded in text.

Abbreviated signatures such as Jn^o, Jo, Robt, Willm, Tho, etc have been expanded to John, Robert, William, Thomas, etc.

Abbreviations in the text have been expanded as follows:

& = and
 acc/acc^o = account
 agt/ag^t = against
 am = amount
 annoq/Ano/An^o = anno
 Berks = Berkshire
 Bpp = Bishop/p
 diap = diaper
 Dec = December
 d/dd/delyv^r = delivered
 depte = depart
 D/dm = domini
 Ea = Earl
 Eliz = Elizabeth
 Ester = Easter
 ff = f/F (except names
 such as Raffe, Haffen, Affillde and words such as
 office, ruff (ie roof), offryngs
 foll^o = followeth
 It/It^m = Item
 Impmis = Imprimis
 Inpr^r = Inprimis
 Ipsw^{ch} = Ipswich
 Jan = January
 j/jun = junior
 Jo/J^o/Jno = John (but mis
 -spelled Jhon is retained)
 li = lbs (where context
 suggests weight rather than £)
 Lo = Lord
 Lopps = Lordshipps
 m'sh = marsh
 Mrch = March
 Ma^{tie} = Majestie
 md = memorandum
 m'chant = merchant
 mydsom = midsomer
 Myc = Mychelmes
 Mynist^r = minister
 ob = ½ (except where
 embedded in text)

or/o^r/ow^r = our
 ovseere = overseer
 Pd = Paid/Payde
 p'chment = parchment
 pfitt = profitt
 pishe/pyshe/prshe =
 parish/e
 p^r = pair
 pt/pte = part
 q/qr/qrs = quarter/s
 r^r/R^rd/Rec/Rec^r =
 received (or variants eg received, recyved, etc)
 recov = recover
 Rchd = Richard/Rychard
 Robt = Robert/
 Robart/Robarte/
 Robarde
 sd = said
 Sct = St
 Sen/sen^r = senior
 shill = shilling/s
 silv = silver
 Sm/Summ = Somma
 Sr = Sir
 Tho = Thomas
 timb^r = timber
 Trearer = Treasurer
 W^m/Willm/Wyllm/Willia
 = William (or Willyam, etc)
 wch/w^{ch} = which
 w'/wth = with
 w'all = withall
 wid/widd =
 widow/widdowe
 Xoffer/X^o/Xpo^r =
 Christopher/Christoffer
 y^e = the
 yⁿ = in
 yong^r/yonger = younger
 y^t = that