

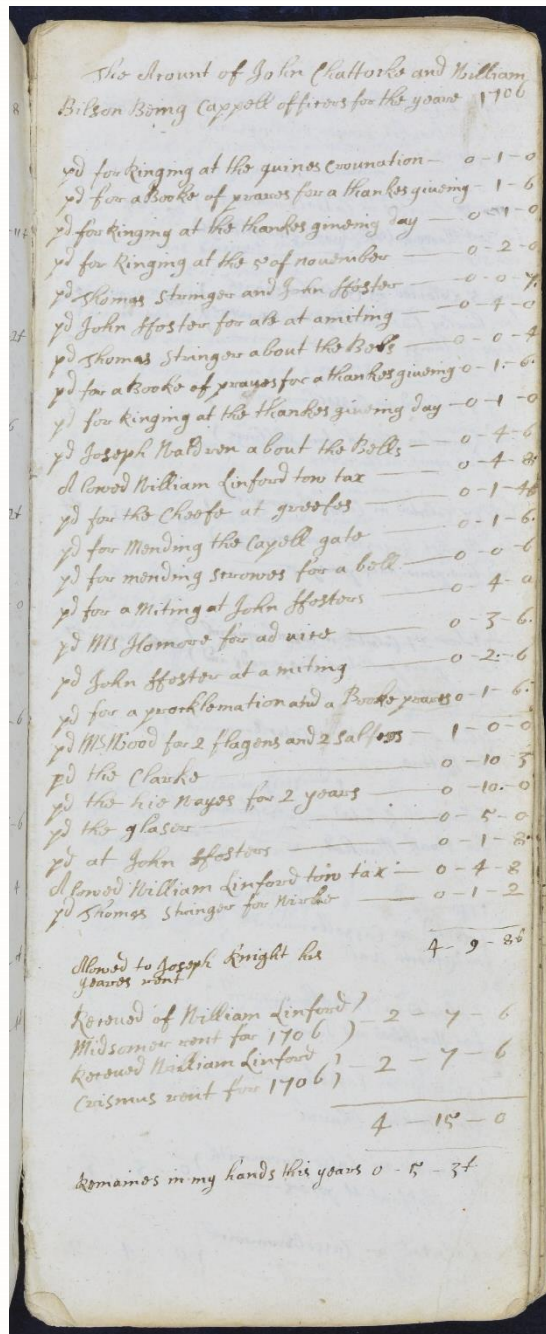
Document of the Month September 2021

For September's Document of the Month, we've chosen this entry in the Churchwardens' Accounts for the Parish Church of St Mary and St Margaret, Castle Bromwich. The entry, dating from 1706, details the payment for the ringing of the church's bells to signify the coronation of Queen Anne. A transcript of the entry can be found below:

"The Account of John Chattocke and William Bilson Being c[h]appell officers for the yeare 1706

p[ai]d for Ringing at the quines crounation -0-1-0"¹.

¹ Churchwarden's account for the Parish of St Mary and St Margaret, 1706, Warwickshire County Record Office, DRB105/10.



Account of John Chattocke and William Bilson, Churchwardens' Accounts for the parish of St Mary and St Margaret, Castle Bromwich, Warwickshire County Record Office, DRB105/10

This is the first entry in the account for John Chattocke and William Bilson. The amount paid for the ringing of the church bells is listed as 1 shilling, which according

to the National Archives Currency Converter tool, is worth £5.25 in today's money. There are other entries for payments for things such as wages, tradesmen and even the ringing of the bells to commemorate the anniversary of the Gunpowder Plot.

Queen Anne

Born in 1665, Queen Anne did not lead an easy life. By the time she ascended the throne in 1702, she had lived through the Glorious Revolution of 1688, suffered ill health, and she had been pregnant 18 times². Sadly, of these 18 pregnancies, only 5 of the children were born alive and none survived to adulthood.

Her oldest child, 'William, Duke of Gloucester' died just five days after his eleventh birthday in 1700³. This left Anne with no heir to the throne, which prompted the passing of the Act of Settlement 1701⁴. This act was motioned to ensure a Protestant successor to the English throne and eventually the throne of Great Britain. The decided successor was Sophia of Hanover, but due to her death in 1714, her son 'George, Elector of Hanover' took the throne from Anne.

On 23rd April 1702, Queen Anne was crowned 'Anne, Queen of England, Scotland and Ireland' at Westminster Abbey. On her coronation day, Queen Anne had to be carried into Westminster Abbey on an open chair by Yeoman of the Guards due to suffering from gout, although she did manage to leave the ceremony on foot⁵.

At the time of the coronation, there were 6 bells at Westminster Abbey⁶ which would have been rung at the ceremony. Church bells up and down the country would also have joined in the celebrations. The bells would have also been rung on the anniversary of the coronation throughout the reign of Queen Anne. As this entry notes, St Mary and St Margaret honoured this.

At the time she ascended the throne, the country was very divided in political views. After 3 unsuccessful attempts at uniting the kingdoms of England and Scotland, on 1st May 1707, the Act of Union⁷ was implemented. This made Queen Anne 'Anne, Queen of Great Britain and Ireland', giving her a second title of her reign.

² Information gathered from *Anne, Queen of Great Britain and Ireland*, Encyclopaedia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Anne-queen-of-Great-Britain-and-Ireland> (accessed 12/08/2021)

³ Information gathered from *Anne (r. 1702 – 1714)*, Royal Family, <https://www.royal.uk/anne-r1702-1714> (accessed 12/08/2021)

⁴ Information gathered from *1701 Act of Settlement*, UK Parliament, <https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/evolutionofparliament/parliamentaryauthority/revolution/collections1/parliamentary-collections/act-of-settlement/> (accessed 12/08/2021)

⁵ Information gathered from *Queen Anne*, Westminster Abbey, <https://www.westminster-abbey.org/abbey-commemorations/royals/queen-anne> (accessed 12/08/2021)

⁶ Information gathered from *History, Abbey Bells*, Westminster Abbey, <https://www.westminster-abbey.org/about-the-abbey/history/abbey-bells> (accessed 12/08/2021)

⁷ Information gathered from *Act of Union 1707*, UK Parliament, <https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/evolutionofparliament/legislativescrutiny/act-of-union-1707/> (accessed 12/08/2021)

Queen Anne died on 1st August 1714, aged 49, and was buried on 24th August 1714 at the same place her coronation was held 12 years earlier, Westminster Abbey. She was the last Monarch of the Stuart house and her death passed the British Crown to the House of Hanover.

Churchwardens and their accounts

Churchwardens are lay officials in charge of the running and maintenance of a parish church, land and property. They were first appointed by the first canon of the Council of London in 1127, however, the role has changed somewhat over time⁸. Their accounts record income and expenditure relating to the church. As the parish church was an integral part of English society for many years, they are an excellent source of information for anyone looking into social, local and even family history⁹.

Churchwardens' Accounts often mention maintenance and repairs to the church, payments to craftsmen, payment for vermin control, and even payments for items such as communion wine! You can also sometimes find information relating to vestry minutes and elections¹⁰.

The example we have chosen to highlight for Document of the Month shows one example of an entry you can find in the Churchwardens' Accounts. The subject of bells appears frequently in Churchwardens' Accounts, but usually in relation to the casting, repair and purchase of bells. This volume for St Mary and St Margaret features many entries relating to the ringing of bells for coronations and coronation anniversaries. According to J. Charles Cox's book about Churchwardens' Accounts, it was customary for the church bells of each parish the King or Queen passed through to be rung upon entry and exit. Cox also mentions other royal occasions that the bells were rung on, such as royal birthdays and anniversaries. The parish clerk of St. Botolph, Aldgate, even noted in their accounts the ringing of the bells to mark the execution of Mary Queen of Scots in 1586-7¹¹.

St Mary and St Margaret's Church, Castle Bromwich

A place of worship has existed on the site of St Mary and St Margaret's Church for over 800 years. The first piece of documentary evidence mentioning a church is a charter dating from 1165, granting Castle Bromwich by the de Peynel family to Tickford Priory¹².

⁸ J. Charles Cox, *Churchwardens' Accounts: From the Fourteenth Century to the Close of the Seventeenth Century*, Methuen & Co. Ltd., page 1.

⁹ Information gathered from *Churchwardens' Accounts*, Borthwick Institute for Archives, University of York, <https://www.york.ac.uk/media/borthwick/documents/5Churchwardenabt.pdf> (accessed 11/08/2021).

¹⁰ Information gathered from *Churchwardens' Accounts (Parish)*, Gen Guide, <https://www.genguide.co.uk/source/churchwardens-accounts-parish/> (accessed 11/08/2021).

¹¹ Information gathered from J. Charles Cox, *Churchwardens' Accounts: From the Fourteenth Century to the Close of the Seventeenth Century*, Methuen & Co. Ltd., pages 211-219.

¹² St Mary and St Margaret, *Castle Bromwich Church: The First Evidence*, http://www.stmaryandstmargaret.co.uk/history/castle_bromwich_church.aspx (accessed 11/08/2021).

The current church building, which is Grade I listed, is a 15th century timber framed building encased in red brick and stone by Thomas White of Worcester between 1726 and 1731¹³.

Much more detail about the history of the church and the parish can be found on the St Mary and St Margaret church website: <http://www.stmaryandstmargaret.co.uk/history/>.

Churchwardens' Accounts Project

This example came to light via a project to transcribe and eventually publish the early Warwickshire parish accounts. This project is a collaboration between the Dugdale Society, Warwickshire County Record Office and My-Parish. The project aims to make the accounts more accessible. More about the project can be found at the following

link: https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross_fac/myparish/projects/wpa/.

¹³ Historic England, *Church of St Mary and St Margaret*, <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1075951> (accessed 11/08/2021)