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Knight Family

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Banbury Corporation
Records:
Tudor and Stuart

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opportunity to read the detail which any historical account must omit; and, in particular, to get an idea of who the actual families and people that took the lead in town affairs really were.

The Sixteenth Century: Government under the First Charter

To start with, following the often-discussed first Charter and the list of the first Bailiff, Aldermen and Burgesses, there comes a list of Freemen - some 130 in all. These were the responsible tradesmen who made the town what it was, and many of their descendants were the men whose surnames recur throughout these records.

Although during most of the period the accounts for each year give little detail, for the very first year recorded, 1555-6, they are far more detailed than later, and give a very good idea of the sources of revenue which must have remained unchanged, even if the amounts received varied and grew with inflation. The expenditure for that heady first year, the feasting and special pageant which marked the celebrations, the gifts to those who had helped to obtain the grant of the Charter, all can be found reflected in John Longe's accounts, as well as the building costs of the first Town Hall, the paving of part of the Market Place, the removal of the punitive instruments from the Castle, and other gestures of independence.⁵ Although William Barnesley had been appointed Bailiff under the Charter of 1554, he appears to have died soon after, and it was during John Longe's term of office that the new Corporation was properly established.

The various Regulations and Oaths make it clear how responsibly the offices of Bailiff, Justice, and membership of the Corporation were taken. The restrictions on the townspeople, and the need for them, are shown by the 'Orders and Pains' of 1564. Some light is thrown on other Corporation officials, such as the Chamberlains (there were two at a time during the sixteenth century, with relatively frequent changes), and the Town Wardens, who administered the charities.

In the 1560's the Knight family first come to prominence. The baker, John Knight, owned much property in the town and built the still-surviving Reindeer Inn in Parsons Street. There was at the same time another John Knight, a mercer, on the Corporation. They are sometimes identified in the records by their trades, but in other cases can easily be confused. A generation later the baker's son, William Knight, was to dominate Banbury affairs.

Then comes a gap of nine years, from 1574-5 until 1583-4, when the records are totally missing, so that even the names of the Bailiffs are unknown. It was around this time that the death took place of Thomas Oken, a Warwick mercer of considerable wealth and

5. Comparison may be made with the "Bristol City Chamberlains' Accounts in the 16th and 17th Centuries", ed. D.M. Livock (Bristol Record Society, vol.24, 1965). This publishes the full accounts for the years 1556-7 and 1627-8.

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character. By the terms of his will, the relevant part of which reproduced, he ensured the perpetuation of his memory in Banbury, Stratford and Warwick; his name is recalled throughout the pages covered by the Accounts Book, and the very last entry, made in 1656-7, concerns the charity he created. The money he left to the Borough was to be lent out on security to provide capital for tradesmen, the lack of which was a great problem in the days before banks and the apparatus of modern finance. The picturesque ceremony and distributions from which members of the Corporation themselves benefited is well described in the excerpt from the Warwick town records of 1656-7.

The Accounts Book resumes the record in 1584, and thereafter continues virtually uninterrupted until 1693. In 1585 a roll of quitrents on Crown property gives an indication of some of the property holders in the Borough; these included the churchwardens of Lapwicks in Warwickshire, who still owned property in Banbury as late as 1818.⁶

In 1588-9, and again in 1591-2, we get a record of the minor office-holders - Constables, Tithingmen, Ale-tasters, Searchers, Sealers of Leather, and, in the latter year, not only a list of Corporation members, but also their actual signatures. In 1590 there is another list of most of the town's leading inhabitants, signatures to a petition to Lord Burghley on the threat, later carried out, to eject Thomas Brasbridge, the puritan Vicar of Banbury.⁷

The year 1597-8 sees the first of the loans which characterise the next twenty-five years - loans by members of the Corporation and others, to create a stock for the poor, or to defray Corporation expenditure, and their repayment by instalments. The following year there is a list of charitable funds, of which far more details are found in the Charity Decree of 1602/3. That year, 1597-8, also records the dismissal of the Beadle - a minor matter in itself, unique in being the only record in this book of the way Corporation members actually voted. It probably foreshadows the row that brewing and was to come to a head in the Star Chamber case of 1599-1600. That legal proceedings had already started is shown by reference under 1596-7 to law charges in answering George Blire (or Blincowe), who brought the case. The deposition of Matthew Knight, the sole surviving document, naturally only gives one side of the case, but its revelations, of which there is no hint in the official record, are fascinating. This Matthew Knight was a mercer so it is probable he was a son of, or at least related to, the mercer John Knight mentioned above.

6. Bodleian Library, MS. D.D. Dew, c.2.

7. The comment in V.C.H. Oxon., x, p.98, on the conspicuous absence from the petition of the Hawten and Vivers families is misleading. The heads of two families, Gerard Hawten of Calthorpe and Andrew Vivers, had both died in 1588, and their sons were almost certainly still minors.

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The Seventeenth Century: William Knight and the Second Charter

It seems that the lawsuit went against Blinco and Matthew Knight, for the clique headed by William Knight, the Wheatleys, Henry Showell and John Gill, remained firmly in power, and the Second Charter, of 1608, only reinforced their position. The pedigree on page 271 shows their close relationship. The involvement of John Gill is particularly interesting. He lived at Wickham and was not a tradesman or merchant but a member of the minor gentry. He was actually descended from Peter Gill, the first Town Clerk, and had a double link with William Knight. Intriguingly in one record the surname of his second wife's first husband is given as Fennys, but no relationship with the Fiennes of Broughton family has been traced.

William Knight himself had inherited most of his father's considerable property in Banbury. He had been educated at Merton College in the University of Oxford and at the Inns of Court. Several of his sisters had married men important in Banbury. As the Star Chamber lawsuit makes clear, his influence in the Corporation was paramount. This was confirmed by the 1608 Charter in which he was appointed Chamberlain for an indefinite period. He had already long been a Justice of the Peace and he evidently also acted as Town Clerk for a time (see 1616-7). It was his influence (together with that of his nephew, the famous William Whately, Vicar of Banbury from 1611 to 1639) which must have done much to gain for the town its reputation for puritanism.⁸

The new Charter of 1608 made elaborate provision for the foundation of a Hospital of Our Sovereign Lord James the King, or the King's Hospital of Banbury, but despite the arrangements made for the appointment of a Guardian and Governors and the exercise of their authority, it must be assumed that it did not materialise as no further reference to it is known. Public buildings that did get erected, however, were the Wool Hall and, in due course, a new Town Hall, both financed by William Taylor of Middleton Cheney, whose connection with Banbury was clearly very strong.

With William Knight's appointment as Chamberlain in 1608 it became customary for this post to be held for long periods by the same man. This continuity, which doubtless helped the smooth running of the Corporation's affairs, must have added to the influence of an already important official. Knight remained Chamberlain for twenty years, as did his successor John Austen. Later in the century Samuel Reynolds held the post for fifteen years.

From 1612-3 on, with occasional exceptions, an annual record was made of the election of the Mayor and of Corporation officials.

8. A monument to him still survives in St. Mary's church, Banbury, of which the inscription was printed by A. Beesley, "History of Banbury", pp.494-5. A drawing of the now-lost bust which surmounted it appeared in William Fotts, "A History of Banbury", 1958, p.265, and in B.H.S. vol.7.

9. For the role of the Chamberlain, see "Bristol City Chamberlains' Accounts",

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Soon it also became customary to list (in strict order of : the members of the Corporation attending the Mayor-making in September. It is this listing which has made it possible to work out, from the Second Charter to the end of the record in approximate date of election to the Corporation of each first as Burgess and then on promotion to Alderman. With the parish registers and probate records, the Corporation and their (often surprisingly long) periods of service are first time, identified and established. The pedigrees on pages 280 show the close degree of relationship between many of

In 1622-3 and again in 1630-1 reports from the Mayor to Council throw light on the market prices prevailing and taken by the Corporation to relieve the poor. The Great Banbury occurred on 2nd March, 1627/8, and although the Corporation Accounts make no reference to this, the opportunity has been taken to record the text of the printed appeal issued by the Mayor to list of those receiving relief, from a document in the City Record Office.

Lord Saye and Sele and the Civil War

The Earl of Banbury, Lord Knollys, died in 1632, and the corporation elected as High Steward in his stead William Fiennes, Lord Saye and Sele, 'Old Subtlety' of Parliamentary fame, an example of the close affinity between puritan Banbury and the nonconformist Fiennes family.

This sympathy with Lord Saye and Sele's principles was put to the test in the running battle over Ship Money and correspondence from the State Papers (Domestic) in 1636 and dramatically what was involved in the passive- and not so passive- resistance to what were considered unjustified taxations. The office of Mayor was clearly an unenviable one for Whately, and it is understandable that there was such difficulty in persuading anyone to succeed him.

The troubles of the Civil War are revealed more by what is missing from the Accounts Book than what is recorded. The statement for 1643-4, made five years later, sums up the situation "By reason of the disturbances of the times there were no receipts nor disbursements during the Mayoralty". The Mayor may again have been the unfortunate Nathaniel Whately, but things were worse under his successor, Aholiah West. The House of Commons explains the calamitous state of affairs in September 1645 which prevented a new Mayor being elected.

With the end of the War, the inhabitants of the town were finally successful in securing the demolition of the half-timbered houses which had suffered the cause of sieges, fire, destruction and plague. A remarkable difference in 1647-8 records an incidental benefit to the town arising out of sale of materials from its demolition.

BIOGRAPHIES

- Howes, John**, Vicar of Banbury, 1639-1641. Inducted 26 June 1639 (under 1638-9). Involved in dispute with Lord Saye and Sele and Banbury puritans, and summoned before the House of Lords, Dec 1640 (Beesley, pp.296-8). Mem. 1641-2 (re loan).
- Huckell, Thomas**. Mem. 1621/2. Estreats, 1624-5, 1627-8, 1629-30, 1638-9. Sergeant at Mace, 1626-7, 1628-9, 1630-1, 1632-3, 1633-4, 1637-8, and at death. Taster of victuals, 1646-9. Mar.(1) Elizabeth (bur. 7 May 1631); (2) 4 Dec 1631 Mary Bently (bur. 23 Mch 1638/9); (3) 4 July 1639 Margaret Bury (bur. 5 Aug 1645). Bur. 14 Aug 1654.
- Ingram, William**. Bapt. 12 July 1640 son of William. Taster, 1666-7, 1668-71. Bur. 22 Feb 1672/3.
- Isaacson, James**. Member of Parliament for Banbury, 1698. Assistant, 1699. Petition to Privy Council, 1699.
- Jackman, Josiah**, mercer. Born c.1619 (aged 38 in 1657/8). Survey, 1653 (North Bar). Sheep-pen dispute, 1655-6. Constable, 1657-8, 1658-9. Bur. 26 Feb 1697/8 (poor).
- Jackson, Roger**, blacksmith. Burgess, 1554. Thomas son of John Collins apprenticed to, 1554-5. Chamberlain, 1554-5, 1555-6. Signed orders, 1557-8. Ref. to standing in market (Orders and Pains), 1653-4. Alderman by 1568, to death. **Bailiff**, 1568-9. Auditor, 1572-3. Bur. 22 Feb 1585/6.
- Jordan, Thomas**. Bapt. 20 Jan 1599/1600 son of Clement. Taster, 1650-62. Mar. 6 Oct 1625 Dorothy Briggs (bur. 14 Oct 1659). Bur. 26 Oct 1666.
- Judd, Thomas**. Bapt. 25 July 1619 son of Anthony and Joane of Neithrop. Tithingman, 1644-5.
- Jugges or Tugges, John**. Burgess, 1554. Will, PCC, 1555.
- Kendall, Timothy**. Ref. in accounts, 1605-6. Tithingman, 1606-7. Mar. 4 Feb 1604/5 Katherine Edon (1613/4 Corporation loan). Will, 1612, PCB 135.
- Kenning, John**, mason. Bapt. 10 Dec 1637 son of John and Alice. Tithingman, 1672-3, 1673-4; Constable 1674-5, 1675-6. Mem. 1674-5, 1687-8 (bonds of Harding's money). Mar. 6 Dec 1671 Sarah Mason. Bur. 11 Apr 1704 ('sen.'). PCB.
- Kenning, John**, stone-carver. Bapt. 2 Sep 1677 son of John. Auditor, 1714. Bur. 5 Dec 1747. Will, PCC.
- Key, Richard**. Ref. in accounts, 1675-6. Tithingman, 1677-8. Mar. 29 Dec 1650 Ann White. Bur. 16 Mch 1683/4.
- Keynton, Thomas**, shoemaker. Searcher and sealer of leather, 1613-4, 1614-5, 1616-7. Town rents, 1616/7 (St. John's). Mar. 24 Nov 1588 Elizabeth Horwood. Bur. 4 Aug 1618. PCB 203.
- Kimbell, John**, labourer. Bapt. 4 June 1648 son of Thomas (or 1651, son of Samuel). Tithingman, 1676-7. Bur. 11 July 1690. PCB.
- Kinch, Robert**. Sergeant at Mace, 1608-30 (refs. most years). Bur. 7 Mch 1632/3.
- King, Henry**, baker. Tithingman, 1658-9, 1659-60. Mem. 1674-5 (bond of Harding's money). Mar. 2 Mch 1654 Margaret Claridge (bur. 1 Nov 1691; PCB) - Mem. 1687-8 (bond for Oken's money). Bur. 5 June 1685.
- King, John**. Freedom, 1625-6. Fire relief, 1628. Tithingman, 1642-3; Constable, 1643-4. Wool-weigher in sheep/wool market, 1655-6 (sheep-pens dispute). Mar. 18 May 1632 Katherine Bently (bur. 4 June 1632). Bur. ?29 Dec 1673.
- King, Robert**, mercer. Tithingman, 1606-7; Constable, 1616-7, 1617-8. Ref. in accounts, 1618-9, 1621-2. Bur. 6 July 1638.
- Knight, Bezaleel**. Born 1660, son of William (d.1672). Assistant, 1683-4. See Pedigree 1; C&CH II, 10, p.162; III, 4, p.65.
- KNIGHT, JOHN**, 'the elder', baker. ?Freeman, 1554. ?Burgess, 1557-8 (signi orders). Alderman by 1566, to death. Chamberlain, 1561-4. **Bailiff**, 1561-2, 1586-7 (3 times Bailiff, M.I.). Auditor, ?1569-70, ?1573-4, 1581; Town warden, ?1573-4, 1583-4, 1584-5, 1585-6. Quit rent, 1586. Mar. Joan (bur. 29 Dec 1590. Will, PCC) - ref. under Charity Decree, 160 Bur. 25 Nov 1587. M.I. Will, PCC. Later refs., re charities, 1598-9, u Charity Decree, 1602-3; Survey, 1606 (St. John's Street). See Pedigrees
- KNIGHT, JOHN**, mercer. ?Freeman, 1554. ?Burgess, 1557-8 (signing orders). lайн, 1561-2, 1565-6. Warden of Town Houses, 1561, 1562, ?1565-6, ?1573-4. Possibly **Bailiff**, 1566-7, 1571-2. Auditor, ?1569-70, ?1573-4. Except whe are differentiated by their trades it is difficult to know which of these the baker and the mercer, is referred to in the period pre-1574.
- Knight, John**, shoemaker. Searcher and sealer of leather, 1642-45. Taster victuals, 1647-51. Bur. 30 Sep 1651.
- Knight, John**, Vicar of Banbury, 1677-1701. Born c.1652 son of William, of grove, Som. B.A.: M.A.(1675), Oxford. Also Rector of Tusmore, 1683; of ton, 1693-1704. D.D., 1698. Assistant to the Corporation (temporarily re 1687-8). Refs. in accounts, 1684-5 (to 1686/7), 1686-7 (to 1687/8). Let Lord Saye and Sele, 1700. Mar. 1688/9 Hannah dau. of Col. John Fiennes. Died 6 June 1704 (at Broughton), M.I.
- KNIGHT, MATTHEW**, mercer. Born c.1544 (aged 60 in 1604). Warden of Town Ho 1583-6, 1587-8, 1589-90, 1591-2. Constable, 1587-8. Auditor, 1589-90, 1591-2, 1595-6. Petition, 1590. **Bailiff**, 1594-5. Poor loan, 1597/8. Mem. re ch 1598-9. Star Chamber case, 1599-1600. Charity Decree, 1602-3. Survey, 1 Barkhill; North Bar). See Pedigree 5.
- KNIGHT, WILLIAM**. Bapt. 14 Nov 1558. Son of John and Joan. Merton College, 1577 aged 18. Inner Temple, 1581. Quit rent, 1586. Justice of the Peace in 1588-9, 1591-2, 1597-8, 1608 (Charter), 1627-8 (fire appeal). Auditor, 1589-90, 1593-4, 1597-8, 1604-5. Petition, 1590. Warden of Town Houses, **Bailiff**, 1595-6, 1600-1. Poor loan, 1597/8. Star Chamber case, 1599-1600. Refs. in accounts, 1601-2, 1602-3, 1606-7, 1611-2. Charity Decree, 1602-3 Lease of tenements in Sheep Street and Sugar Bar Street, 1603. Borough bo (juror) 1605-6. Survey, 1606. Assistant and Fellow of the Hospital, 1608 ter). Chamberlain from 1608 (Charter) to 1627-8. Wool Market loan, 1610/1611-2. Corporation loan, 1612, 1612/3, 1613/4, 1615, 1615/6, 1617/8, 161620/1. Town rents, 1616/7 (Sheep Street). Town Clerk, 1617/8. Mem. and to Privy Council, 1630-1. Mar. Elizabeth Phenice (see Pedigree 1)(bur. 6 1629). Bur. 19 Sep 1631. M.I. Will, PCC. See Pedigrees 1, 7.
- Knollys, Sir William**, Baron Knollys of Greys (1603), Earl of Banbury (1625). Chief or High Steward, 1608 (Charter). Ref. to death, 1632, on election o successor. Died 1632. See D.N.B.; Complete Peerage.
- Knottesford, Nicholas**. Tithingman, 1660-1, 1661-2; Constable, 1662-3, 1663-4. Election of parish clerk, 1664-5. Assistant, 1683-4. Mar. 7 Dec 1655 A Steuart, wid. (bur. 16 Mch 1700/1).
- Lamprey, Robert**, joiner. Taster, 1625-6, 1628-9, 1629-30. Fire relief, 162 Bur. 17 Jan 1646/7.
- Langham, Edward**. Ref. in accounts, 1627-8. Tithingman, 1631-2, 1632-3; Cons 1633-4, 1634-5. Burgess from 1652 to 1658-9. Auditor, 1651-59. Mar. Hanna (bur. 8 May 1671).
- Langham, John**. Tithingman, 1657-8.
- Langham, Samuel**. Bapt. 26 Aug 1632 son of Edward and Hanna. Constable, 1658 Mar. Ann (bur. 2 Sep 1660).
- Langston, John**. Alderman on replacement Corporation Son 1600

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