

LORD NORTH AND BANBURY CORPORATION

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The foregoing article by Ross Gilkes on the Banbury Journal throws an interesting light on the arcane voting patterns of Banbury Corporation, though, as an official record, rather less on the influences which led to electoral results. It is therefore useful to have at least one source of personal and private comment by a Corporation member, however untypical he was of his colleagues.

Lord North, elder son of the Earl of Guilford, of Wroxton Abbey, then aged only 22, was elected Member of Parliament for the Borough of Banbury in 1754. He was returned twelve further times, until the Earl's death in 1790. The franchise was confined to the eighteen members of the Common Council (to which North himself was elected in 1758), and except in 1784 his return was unopposed. He was a member of the Government from 1759 and Premier from 1770.

The Earl's extensive correspondence is preserved in the North Collection at the Bodleian Library, Oxford [MS North].¹ There are several letters in 1758 and 1759 from Lord North to his father relating to Banbury and the Councillors, which throw an intimate light on the way the North family ensured retention of the seat.

MS North d.23, f.71. Grosvenor St. [London]. 19 January 1758 [extract]:

I was very sorry to hear of Sansbury's death.² Your Lp. Knows best how far it is eligible or necessary to admit Barrett. I wish you had a better Agent. I write a letter to Deacle by this next to tell him I have got Thos. Tayler restored to the out-pension. I do not know whether they intend to pay him his arrears or no. I will endeavour to procure the payment of them...

MS North d.23, f.85. Ash. 23 September 1758 [extract]:

I received a very polite letter from the Mayor of Banbury [William Greenall] with an account of my Election [to the Council], and return'd my answer last post before I received yours of the 17 of this month. In my letter to the Mayor I excused myself from waiting upon the Corporation at present, but promised to myself that honour on the first opportunity. If therefore we put off our journey thither till Spring I must write another letter and assign some fresh reasons for that further delay.

¹ Permission from the Bodleian for publication is gratefully acknowledged.

² Mr Samuel Sansbury, senr., Justice of the Peace, buried 18 January 1758.