

THE BANBURY JOURNAL, 1722-1761

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The Banbury Journal provides a valuable insight into the workings of the town council over the years 1722 to 1761.¹

The town's governing Charter, granted by George I in 1718, had vested the whole business of the corporation in the Common Council, composed of the Mayor, twelve Aldermen (from whom the Mayor was chosen) and six Capital Burgesses;² for all municipal purposes these eighteen men constituted the ruling body of the borough.

At the base of the council hierarchy a minor role in proceedings was played by thirty Assistants, elected by the Common Council from among the 'good and discreet men inhabiting the said Borough or elsewhere', whose purpose – according to the Charter – was 'from time to time' to 'be assistant and helping to the Mayor'; in practice, however, their main contribution was to join with the members of the Common Council to elect the Mayor, who would, himself, have risen from the position of Assistant to that of Burgess and thence to Alderman.

The Charter required that the Mayor be elected on the first Monday in September and to serve for one year from the Feast of St. Michael the Archangel (29 September), on which date he would be sworn into office. The mayoral elections in the years from 1723 to 1760, which are recorded in the Journal, followed a simple procedure: first of all, the members of the Common Council would meet to select two of the Aldermen to stand as candidates; in 1736, for example, the first Council nominees were three former Mayors – Richard Burrows (1714), Blagrave Gregory (1723 and 1729), and Edward Box (1733) – but all were rejected; new names were put forward and, after further discussion and subsequent votes, Henry Pettipher and William Greenall – neither of whom had yet served as Mayor – were chosen for election; William Greenall became Mayor in 1736 and again in 1744, 1748 and 1758 when he died in office; Henry Pettipher was never elected [119, 120b].³ The Councillors were joined by the Assistants in the final choice of Mayor.

¹ Oxfordshire Record Office, B.B. XV/ii/1. First 35ff (1718-21) missing.

² Capital Burgesses are subsequently referred to (except in quotations) as 'Burgesses'.

³ Journal page numbers.