

Fines were also imposed on those who refused to serve as Aldermen. Burgess, John Miller, elected Alderman on 8 July 1745, on the death of James West, did not accept and was fined [172b, 173]. In 1753 there was another aldermanic vacancy, created by the death of George Robins, and the Rev. Francis Wise and the Rev. John Wardle, Vicar of Banbury, were chosen to contest it. Mr Wise was elected on 21 May, but refused to accept, as indeed did Mr Wardle, who was elected on 29 May [220, 221]. By unanimous vote of the Common Council, Mr Wise was again chosen to stand as Alderman on 1 November 1758, and again refused to serve; this, of course, meant a fine of £5 – as had his earlier refusal in 1753 – and it may well have been this expensive consequence which persuaded him to change his mind to accept election and to be sworn as Alderman on 7 December 1758 [251, 252].

However, refusal to serve as Justice of the Peace did not incur a fine. Thomas Stokes, licensee of the Three Tuns in the Horsefair (Banbury's leading tavern, now incorporated in the Whately Arms) and named in the 1718 Charter as one of the Borough's Capital Burgesses, refused the office on 16 October 1734 [101b], as he did again on 23 September 1735 [111].<sup>4</sup>

The voting figures given in the Journal extracts indicate a consistent lack of enthusiasm and commitment on the part of Aldermen, Burgesses and Assistants – 48 men in all – whose responsibility was the election of the borough's Mayor. A total of only 21 votes was cast in 1749 to elect George Robbins, Charles Hide in 1759 and William Hows in 1760. The highest total number cast – 30 – returned Thomas Bradford in 1752; in fact, the average turnout in the years 1723 to 1760 was no more than 25. It was the responsibility of the Sergeants-at-Mace to deliver – either in person or by message – the summonses to all council activities, but so few turned up for the election due on 5 September 1737 – Charter Day – that 'no Mayor could be chose' [126] until the following day when Thomas Stokes was preferred to Fulke Rainbow by 20 votes to 2. Thomas Stokes had also been involved in 1730, when absenteeism (only eight Aldermen, four Burgesses and six Assistants attended) delayed both his election and his taking the mayoral oath until 18 December [71b, 72, 73].

Apart from mayoral elections there were also occasions when the business of the Common Council was similarly impeded by the failure of

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<sup>4</sup> See J.S.W. Gibson, 'The Three Tuns in the Eighteenth Century', *C&CH*, 8.1, 3.