

**BAILIFFS and MAYORS  
of the BOROUGH of BANBURY,  
1553/4 - 1973  
and TOWN MAYORS, 1974-2008**

*Jeremy Gibson*

The year 2008 is being celebrated as the four hundredth anniversary of the Charter granted to Banbury by James I on 28th June 1608. This Charter was indeed of great importance, and under its regulations the Borough of Banbury was governed for much of the next two and a quarter centuries, until 1835.

However, Banbury had been incorporated as a Borough with its first Charter more than fifty years earlier. This introduction is to explain the significant differences between the two.

In 1954 our Borough Council issued a substantial commemorative booklet entitled a *Souvenir of the Quarter-centenary of the Granting of the Charter of Incorporation to the Borough of Banbury by Queen Mary on January 26th, 1554*. By this Charter the governance of the borough was granted to a Bailiff, Aldermen and Burgesses. It later becomes clear that the Bailiff was to be chosen from the twelve Aldermen and twelve Capital Burgesses.

The actual year of incorporation is slightly misleading, due to the different forms of dating which then applied. The year that is legally specific and is used in the enrolled charter is the regnal year. Grants and suchlike emanating from the sovereigns were dated by the year of their reign. Edward VI died on 6 July 1553 and, despite the brief attempt to install Lady Jane Gray, Queen Mary's reign was reckoned to have started from that day. Thus on the Charter our grant is dated "1 Mary". However, then (and until 1752) the civil and legal year began on Lady Day, 25th March, so that January, February and 1st - 24th March were in the same year as the preceding nine months. Banbury's charter was dated 26th January, which at the time would have been considered still to be in 1553.

The present style of measuring time was devised that century by Pope Gregory XIII, but, mainly due to Henry VIII's split with Rome, was not officially adopted in England and Wales for a further two centuries. Even