

so, many did change to starting the year on 1st January. Banbury's earliest parish registers, recording events from 1558 (although before 1580 from lost originals) adopted this from the start.

To avoid confusion the year (for January to 24th March) might be shown as "Old Style" if starting on 25th March or "New Style" if on 1st January. Most historians silently accept the year as starting on 1st January, though records requiring precision and no ambiguity will show the year for these months as, say, "1553/4". So, although our first Charter was at the time granted in 1553, we rightly date it from 1554.

A description of the first Charter, Banbury's early years as an incorporated Borough and the events and reasons for the townsfolk seeking a replacement Charter in 1608, as well as sources for the detailed records of these times, are listed on page 000. For our purposes, the most significant of the changes were the reduction in number of [Capital] Burgesses from twelve to six (Aldermen remained at twelve), and the change in name for the annually elected leader from "Bailiff" to the prestigious "Mayor", as borne by most boroughs.

Throughout our town's history since then, the office of Mayor has been significant – the sovereign's representative in the borough until its abolition in 1974. At times, particularly in the seventeenth century, it was one of "hands-on" control. This was exemplified by the riots in 1656 in which the Mayor very visibly came into conflict with the townsfolk. In the eighteenth century and until the electoral reforms of the 1830s the Mayor and Corporation wielded little influence except in the election of Banbury Borough's Member of Parliament, for the franchise (those entitled to vote) was restricted to these eighteen men. The North/Guilford family at Wroxton Abbey successfully "persuaded" most of these to back their candidate, elections generally being unopposed. With 1835 and electoral reform, the borough council once again resumed their rightful place in local government and the prestige of the office of Mayor was restored.

The following lists of Bailiffs and Mayors of the Borough are based, initially, on that (to 1954) in the commemorative booklet issued in 1954. *Banbury Corporation Records: Tudor and Stuart* (B.H.S. 15, 1977) provided a fresh list, identifying many of the early Bailiffs and several later seventeenth century Mayors up to 1693. Some are still missing between then and 1705, a time of political dispute and even "rival" mayors, when, unsurprisingly, records are missing.

Names of Mayors of the Borough from 1954 to 1974 and subsequent Town Mayors have kindly been supplied by the Town Mayor's office.