

## SNIPPETS FROM THE ARCHIVES

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The Steeple Aston Parish Book records the decisions made by a 'Special Meeting of the Vestry, April 17<sup>th</sup> 1769':

*'Whereas great complaint has been made of the misapplication of the parish money in Extravagant & needless Expences – Now for the better and more effectual prevention of such complaints for the future, it is agreed by the parishioners in this present Vestry assembled in manner following' –*

*1 Every vestry meeting to be held in the church and notice to be given in advance.*

*2 The overseers of the poor to be allowed 3s. for journeys on parish business but 5s. if more than 6 miles.*

*3 Overseers conducting business at a publick house – no more than 1s.*

*4 The constable to be allowed 2s.6d. for his charge and trouble in settling his accounts, and that the 7s.6d. usually spent, to be hereafter suppress'd and for ever discontinued.*

*5 3s. only for the ringers on the King's Accession and on Gunpowder Treason.*

*6 The churchwardens are to be allowed to spend only 1/ at a time with any workman in treating about church repairs.*

*7 It is agreed that 5s. only is to be spent by the parishioners in settling the accounts at Easter.*

*8 It is agreed that these articles are to be read over every Easter when the parish Accounts are settled.*

We can sense a good deal of righteous indignation behind this careful record. Local administration – the care of the poor, the maintenance of the highways and law and order – was the responsibility of the ecclesiastical parish, whose ratepayers met every April to elect from among themselves the parish officers for the next year. These would be the two churchwardens, who were responsible for the maintenance of the church and usually were the Trustees, with the incumbent, of any parish charities; the Overseers of the Poor, who bore the burden of collecting the poor rate and of administering poor relief to those who needed it; the Surveyors of the Highways whose sole but difficult job was to keep the roads in good order; and the parish constable, whose duties included the moving on of the indigent before they could claim relief from the parish.