The Commissioners' Return of 1552 on behalf of Edward VI

Although Henry VIII had made himself the head of the Church of England in 1535, services in this church, and across England, remained much as they had been under Catholicism. Henry never permitted the renunciation of Catholic doctrine or ceremony and reasserted this doctrine in The Act of Six Articles of 1539.

Edward, born in 1537, was the only son of Henry VIII. His mother was Henry's third wife, Jane Seymour. His education was provided by tutors who were influenced by the Protestant ideas spreading across from Europe, which, although rejected by Henry, had been warmly embraced by advisers such as Thomas Cromwell who was executed in 1540 during Henry's reign.



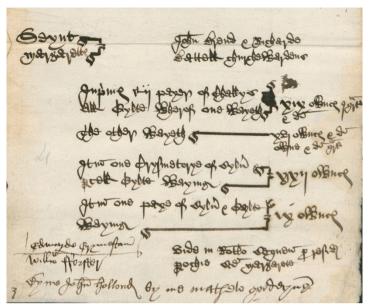
In 1543 Henry signed the Treaty of Greenwich bringing peace between England and Scotland through the betrothal of Edward to the seven month-old Mary, Queen of Scots. The Scots later repudiated the treaty and they renewed their alliance with the French, which led to an invasion of Scotland by Henry in 1544. This war was to continue into Edward's reign.

When Henry died in 1547 Edward VI became king at the age of nine and a Regency Council was appointed to exercise power on his behalf. His reign was to last just six years, but it brought about major religious and political change. The years were also marked by economic problems, partly due to the cost of the war with Scotland, and partly due to social unrest.

Edward, influenced by his Lord Protectors, Somerset and Northumberland, was much more radical than his father in his establishment of the Church of England in line with Protestantism. Services were required to be said in English rather than Latin, many of the liturgical furnishings and some items of precious metal were no longer used during the services, and clerics were no longer required to be celibate.

In 1549 the crown appointed Commissioners to demand that incumbents and churchwardens provided inventories of church valuables. Ostensibly this was to ensure that those items no longer in use were not removed from the church without the permission of the congregation, and that any money raised was used for the benefit of the parish. In effect, however, it was to enable the crown to establish the value of the items held by the church so that they could be removed and used to support the exchequer and to pay for the cost of wars.

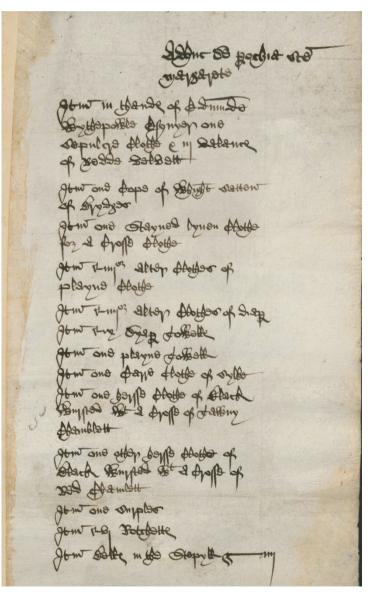
The following is a transcript of the 1552 return for St Margaret's Church. Where necessary explanatory notes have been included for ease [thus], although most words when spoken will sound like their modern equivalent.



Saynt Margarette

John Brend and Richarde Cattell churchwardens.

Inn primis [primarily] vij payer [seven pairs] of challis [chalices] all gylte [gold or gold plate] wherof one wayeth xix owence [19oz, 540g]... The others wayeth xvj ownce. [16oz, 450g]. Itm [item] one crysmetory [a chrismatory – a small receptacle containing consecrated oils used in religious rites] of silver parcel gylte [silver and gilded on part of the surface] waying xxij ownce [22oz, 624g].



Item in thande [the hands] of Edmunde Wythepowle esqwyer [More recently known as Withipoll Esquire] one sepulchre clothe and iij [3]. of redde velvet. [possibly sold to this person]

Itm one cope [a long cloak worn by a priest] of whyght satten [white satin] of brydges [thought to be modern day Bruges]
Itm one stayned lynen clothe for a crosse clothe [a banner attached to a processional cross]

Itm iiij [4] alter clothes of playne clothe Itm iiij [4] alter clothes of diap [unknown].

Itm six towelle

Itm one playne towel

Itm one carre [square, from the French carré] clothe of sylke

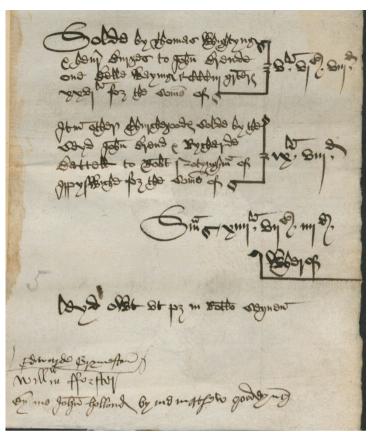
Itm one hersse clothe of black worsted wt [with] a crosse of tawny chamblett [used to cover a coffin]

Itm one other hersse clothe of black worsted wt a crosse of red chamblett

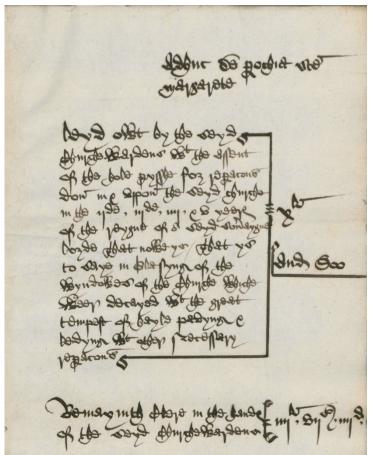
Itm one surplus

Itm vj [6] rotchette [or rochet, a long white vestment]

Itm belies in the stepyll iiii [4]



Solde by Thomas Whythyng and Henr. Bryges to John Brende one belle waying ccciij quarteres xxvj li [pounds] [303 quarters 26 pounds, or over 75 cwt or about 4,000kg which seems impossibly large for the time and size of the church] for the some [sum] of v^{li}.vj^s.viij^d. [i.e. £5 6s. 8d, £5.33 or about £2,750 in today's money] Itm other churchgoodes solde by the seyd John Brend and Rycharde Battell to Robt etynghm of Yppyswiche [Ipswich] for the some of ix^{li}. viij^d. [i.e. £9 0s. 8d.,£9.03 or about £5,000 in today's money] Total (Smm) xiiij^{li}.vij^s.iiij^d. [i.e. £14 7s. 4d., £14.37 or about £7,500 in today's money]



churchewardens wt the assent of the hole pysshe [whole parish] for repacon don in and [here as a mediaeval ampersand] upon [repairs done in and upon] the seyd churche in the ij^{de}, iij^{de}, iiij and v yeere [the 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th years] of the reygne of [the] seyd sovraygne lorde that nowe ys [i.e. Edward VI is the present king] that ys to saye in Glasyng of the wyndowes of the churche whiche weer decayed wt (with) the great tempest of hayle, pavying and ledyng wt other necessary repoacons [in glazing the windows of the church which were decayed with the great tempest of hail, paving and leading with other necessary repairs].

Leyd owt [laid out i.e. spent] by the seyd

Remaining clear [i.e. once payments have been deducted] in the hande of the seyd churchewardens iiij^{li}.vij^s.iiij^d. [i.e. £4 7s. 4d., £4.37, or about £2,250 in today's money]

Translation courtesy of Dr Simon Cotton BEM CChem FRSC

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