

PAROCHIAL ACCOUNTS, SEVENTEENTH CENTURY,
ST. NEOTS, CORNWALL.¹

By THE LATE GENERAL SIR J. H. LEFROY, K.C.M.G., F.R.S.

The Parish Register of Births, Deaths, and Marriages in St. Neots, Cornwall, exists in a very complete form from 1549 onwards, having been written out fair in a large folio volume of beautiful penmanship, in 1624. We have however, what is more uncommon, the Churchwarden's accounts presented at the Easter vestry for each year, with one or two exceptions, from 1600 to 1709. This volume is not in nearly so good preservation, but can be made out, and presents a great many interesting and curious entries, which appear worthy of being brought into notice.

I propose to begin by transcribing the entire account as it stands for the year 1609, the first year in which it is complete with the date. There is a loose sheet dated 1602, but the form does not vary, and *mutatis mutandis* one year is much like another.

Comput. Johannis Isacke et Johannis Smith Gardianorū pochiæ S^{ti} Neoti fact et capt septimo die Maij Anno Dni 1609 et Anno Regni dni nri Jacobi Dei gratia Angliæ ffancie et Hiberniæ Regis fidei defensor, etc. septimo, et Scotia xlij.^d

Receits

Imprimis	Received of thold Wardens at the daye of accompt			
	Item Received of thold Wardens of an old note		iijs	viijd
	Item Received of Peeter Henwoode for an allinacō or farlive for parte of the churchland			xviijd
	Item Received for standinge in the Churchyard	vi	js	xjd
	Item Rec. of Peeter Henwoode for a fyne in pte for the Church House and meadowe	xl	vs	xd
	Sum vijlb xviiijs vjd.			
Goods sold	ffirste Received of Stephen Sweete for a lambe in gifte to the Church sould for		ijs	xjd

¹ Read at the Monthly Meeting of the Institute, December 4th, 1890.
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Itm Received of John Tubbe gent for three ox heades		xviij ^d
Itm Rec of William Hatton for a pound of pouder		xd
Itm of Thomas Sweet for a somer p.ple	vs	j ^d
Sum xs viij ^d		
Pit monye ^A		
Imprimis Received for the buriall of Marye the wife of John Crappe in the body of the Church	vs	
Itm for the buryall of Thomas Taprell in the bodye of the Church	vs	
Itm for George Taprell in y ^e bodye of y ^e Church	iijs	4 ^d
Itm for Nicholas Rundell in the bodye of y ^e Church	iijs	4 ^d
Sum xvjs viij ^d		
Rent Received from Peeter Henwoode for the Church land	viijs	
Itm rec ^d of Roger Younge for the Church land	viijs	
Sum xvjs		
Tythe corne Imprimis Received of Robarte Kraft for his tyth corne in Tremadcke	viijs	
(there follow three others)		
Itm rec ^d of John Laundry for his tith corne in Hilhouse	xxvs	
Itm rec ^d of William Hobbs for his tith corne in Hamett	xviijs	
Itm rec ^d of Peter Henwoode for his tith corne in Church land		vij ^d
Itm rec ^d of John Cowling for his tith corne in Miltourne	vs	
Itm rec ^d of John Clappe for his tithe corne in Gornicke meadowe	ijs	vj ^d
Itm rec ^d of William John for his tith corne in St Nyott	vjs	
Itm rec ^d of John Pomerye for his tith corne in Tremo Ringe meadowes	vjs	xd
sum vj ^{lb} iijs iiij ^d		
sum total xv ^{lb} js ij ^d		
Allowance Imprimis paid Robert Bawden the sumner at the daye of accoamt		vij ^d
Itm paide William John at the daye account for kepinge y ^e belles (two words illegible)	xs	
Itm pd for bread and wine against whitsuntide ^E		xx ^d
Itm pd nicholas Russell for coming to set the clocke		xxij ^d
Itm pd for a new locke for the chest		v ^d
Itm pd for breade and wine for a communion the third daye of Julye ^E		xx ^d
Itm pd to Margerie Crappe because she had not the toppes of two ashes		vij ^d
Itm pd for twelve hundred of hayling stones and a dozen of Ragge	iijs	vj ^d
Itm pd for fetchinge the same stone and rags		xx ^d

Itm pd for eight hundred of lathes	vijs	vijd
Itm pd for eight thousand of pins and two thousand and halfe of nayles	vijs	vd vijd
Itm pd for fetching of lathes nayles and sand		
Itm pd for ten bushells of Lime and fetching y ^e same	vs	
Itm pd the healyer for one weekes work	xvs	
Itm pd the hellyear for foure dayes and a halfe	xjs	
Itm pd for nayles for the hellyer (thatcher)	iijs	
Itm pd for attendinge the hellyers for iiij dayes	ijs	
Itm pd for our dynners at the Bishop's visitation	iijs	vjd
Itm pd for Articles	iijs	
Itm pd for making of a byll		vjd
Itm pd for layinge in of the same byll		iiijd
Itm pd for writing of a Rate Booke, and certayne Reede for the hellyers		vjd
Itm pd for three girdles for the corslets ^B		xd
Itm pd for one swords trimynge an a scabrish for the same ^B		xxjd
Itm pd to Collinge for carryinge y ^e byll of presentments		vijd
Itm pd to Collinge for a briefe	ijs	
Itm pd Phillip for makinge cleane of the church armour ^B	vjs	viijd jd
Itm pd for Oyle for the Armour ^B		
Itm pd S ^r e Renold Mouhons for the Purvayers clarke	iijs	
Item pd to the Chapter Courte for the p.ishe business	ijs	vijd viijd viijd
Itm pd for my dynner and for my laboure		
Itm pd for carryinge the Armour at the moustere ^B		
Itm pd John Pomerye for carryinge his armour which he left with the Kerpeth for the Parishe ^B		ijd vjd
Itm pd for bread and wyne against Allsaynts ^E	iijs	
Itm pd for bread and wyne against John Cowlinge's weddinge		vd
Itm pd Rise ffisher for carryinge a poore woman at St. Mabyn		vijd
Itm pd Simon George's Clarke for returne of a precept		iiijd
Itm pd Roger Laundrye for y ^e Cutler at Liskerd about the Church Clocke	xs	
Itm pd more the Cutler at Liskerd about some bus	vjs	
Itm paid John Taprell y ^e constable for p.rishe bus	xxvjs	
Itm pd to the Chapter court for p.rishe bus	ijs	vjd vd vijd viijd xijd
Itm pd for my dynner at y ^e same time		
Itm pd for a Coramnomna		
Itm paid the Summer for siting John Mitchell		
Itm pd William John for sinkinge of burials		
Item pd Stephen Lampen Constable for an acquittance		viijd

Itm pd for a locke for the cheast		vd
Itm pd John Tapnell constable for a mouster booke	4s (sic) vs	vd
Itm pd Roger Laundrye for the countye stocke		vd
Itm pd Roger Laundrye for a size for the bread		xd
Itm pd John Tapnell y ^e constable for the countye stocke	vs	ixd
Itm pd Hugh Wills for a corumnomyna		xijd
Itm pd to the waywardens		xviij ^d
Itm pd for bread and wyne against Christide	iijs	
Itm pd the plumer for mending the ledde		iiij ^d
Itm pd the plumer for helpe weare (sic) his charge		xijd
Itm pd for attendinge the plumer and for woode to heate his tooles		vjd
Itm pd the foxe catcher for taking two foxes ^c	viijs	
Itm pd the Glazer for mendinge the church windows and for woode	iijs	
Itm pd for attending the Glazer		viiij ^d
Itm pd for a bell rope	iijs	4d
Itm pd the Cupper for hoopes and settinge them upon the powder barrell		* vid
Itm pd Robart Werant for three dayes and halfe about the church yeard		xxij ^d
Itm pd Robert Jenkinge for a Fox heade ^c		xiiid
Itm pd the Constables for carryinge a Prisoner to the gayle	vs	
Itm pd for Articles at the Archdeacons visitation	ijs	iiij ^d
Itm pd for Peters farthings ^d		vij ^d
Itm pd the sumner for warning us to the visitation		iiij ^d
Itm pd for our dynners at the visitation	vs	
Itm pd for bread and wyne against Easter ^E	xxxs	vjd
Itm pd for fetchinge the same wyne		vjd
Itm pd to the Countye stock and mehemed souldyers (mained soldiers) for halfe years paye	xjs	xd
Itm paid for an acquittance		iiij ^d
Itm pd for washinge the Church cloathes		viiij ^d
Itm pd for keepinge our accompte and writinge the same into the coumpte booke	iijs	iiij ^d
Itm pd for nayles for the church dore locke and a staple for the ringe		iiij ^d
Itm pd for carrying a coppye of the Register at booke at Exor.		vid
Sume total	xij ^{lb}	xiiijs vd
Sir Remanet	x ^{lb}	ixs

Parishe goods
brought in and
deliued on to
the new war-
dens

Imprimis. One communion cuppe of silver with a cover to the same,^F two surpiises, fower whit cloathes for the Comunion Table, one for the deske, a carpet for the comunion table, and another for the pulpit of the same stuffe.

Bookes^G

Itm one fayre byble, two books of comon prayer. three register bookes one of parchment and two of paper two paraphrases of Erasmus, the apolligye of the Church of England one little booke of comon prayer one booke of constitutions and canons. two homilye books, three bookes of accompt and fower statute bookes.

Armor^B

Two payer of corslets with their swords and daggers. two payer of Almon Rivets, one lackinge a head peece one musket with his bandalire moulde bullet bagge and headpeece and one picke with George Pomerye and one other with Jo Smyth.

Writings

Itm. One boxe and writings therein viz Sixe evidences and one exemplification eschequer seale. One bond from Thomas Dobbe with a memorand concerning the same three other bonds, one from Martyn, another from John Bunste another from John Skinnard with dyvers acquittances and writings concerning the prishe. and one bond from Robert Skinnarde.

Stuffe

Itm three glass bottles, one puter pott, one pickaxe, two shoules five formes moveable, powder in a barrell contayninge in weight (*blank*)^{II} two ladders, and also led in weight (*blank*) and Iron contayninge in weight (*blank*) and borde and planks in number ten.

Septimo die Maij 1609.

Ma^d That John Smythe and John Isacke church wardens for the prishe for the yere past have accomptted the daye and yere above written and ov^r and besydes their former allowances haue yelden in clere to the use of the whole prishe the some of xl vjs ix^d which saide some of xl vjs ix^d presently deliuered our vnto John Hayle and John Patchcott wardens for the yer to come and are so arne for the same and the olde wardens are chargeable wth billes of arrerages left uncollected the yere past, amounting in all vnto xxvijs vij^d Receaved more for arrerages of the Rate the church for the yere past ijs iij^d and have receaved a bill of arrerage concernynge the same Rate amounting vnto xijs iij^d and the olde wardens are respeted for finishinge of their accompt and bringinge in the saide arrerages before named conteyninge xxvijs vij^d vntil the feaste daye of the Nativite of S^t Jo Baptiste next cominge. Itm receaved more of the olde wardens for the Rate made for the lease taken out of the Prishe coumpt books—xixs 4^d with a bill of arrerage concernynge the same Rate amountinge vnto 7s 8^d (*sic*). Itm receaved more of the olde wardens in pte of the arrerage of the said xxvijs vij^d and the saide olde wardens have yelden in their billes of all the rest of the same arrerages in the afternoone of the daye and yere above written, and so they are quyte of all their former accompts.

The foregoing represents very fairly the accounts of every other year. I proceed to offer a few observations on some of the items.

Pit money.^A Under this head are entered the sums received as fees for burial within the walls of the Church

usually charged 3s. 4*d*. or 5s. for a grave in the Body—according to situation; and 6s. 8*d*. for one in the chancel, but the last was latterly charged as high as 10s. The extraordinary thing is the number of these intramural interments, which reached a total of 548 in little over a century, that is, from 1606 to 1708. The internal area of the church is 85 by 52ft., part of which is occupied by the footings of six pillars on each side of the nave. After 1677 there are few in the body of the church, not above one or two in any years, in several years none; but room continued to be found in the chancel, so that if the practice in the sixteenth century and the latter half of the fifteenth was the same, it is not too much to affirm that much over a thousand interments must have been made in that limited area, assuming the date usually assigned for the present structure (1480). The modern “sanitary authority” may well stand aghast at such defiance of sanitary laws. The greatest number I find in any one year is 14 in 1644. I am told that the soil under the church is deep, but the area was some years ago sealed with concrete, and is now tiled, details are therefore forgotten. There are no vaults.

The vestry took alarm in 1677, and passed the following resolution, 11 May.

Wee the ministers and twelve men of the said P^{ish} whose names are subscribed taking into consideration the pr^{esent} condicon of the P^{ish} Church and that most of the Allyes within the same, as well of the church as chancell have been of late broken vpp by the buriel of many more p^{ersons} therein than hath beene heretofore att any tyme practiced, to the great annoyance and pr^{judice} of the p^{ishe} church and the inhabitants of the p^{rishe} by breaking vpp of newe graues, which said practice hath beene occasioned by the smallness of the sum which hath beene heretofore paid for breaking upp of the ground within the sd church Doe therefore thinke fitt, and vnanimously consent agree and (as much as in vs lyeth) order direct and appoint, that for time to come the Church wardens for the time being shall not p^{mitt} or suffer any p^{erson} or p^{ersons} whatsoever to breake the grounde in order to make any grave for the buriall of any p^{erson} or p^{ersons} whatsoever in either of the three chancells of the sd p^{ishe}

church vnless such p.son or p.sons doe first pay downe in money to the sd Church wardens for the time being the sum of ten shillings for each grave, and that the sd Church wardens for the time being of the sd p.rish shall not p.mitt or suffer any p.son or p.sons whatsoever to breake the ground for the making of any graue within the body of the sd p.rish church vnless these be first paid downe to the sd Church wardens for the time being the sum of seaven shillings for such graue for the buriall of every married p.son or widdow and fve shillings for the buriall of euery p.son vnmarried

Signed Tho. Philpe Vicar
and eight others.

Parish Armour, or Church Armour.^B The custody of the requisite equipment for two or three foot soldiers, was one of the duties of the churchwardens down to 1639 involving several contingent expenses which are charged in the parish accounts, one of the chief of these is sending it annually to *muster*, and a very pretty subject for a painter is suggested by the thought of the stout pack-horse with its picturesque burden, guided by a half-armed peasant, wending its way by one of the many deep lanes of the neighbourhood, to the appointed rendezvous in a neighbouring parish. The articles mentioned under different dates are :—

Two payer of corsletts with their swords, daggers, and pikes. Two payer of almon rivets, one of them wanting the head peece, one muskett with his bandoleere molde and bullet bagge and head peece in custodye of Nicholas Wharton (1602), one paire of corsletts furnished in the keeping of George Pomeroy. One Curatt and ij paire of Almond Rivets remaining in the church, one musquett in the vestry, and j pike in the keeping of John Smith the younger (1612).

Two pare of corsletts, ij pare of almond rivets and iij pikes now in the church, fflower swords and two daggers in the keeping of Phillip Combe and one muskett furnished (1615).

Almon or Almayne rivets were a device of German armourers to give flexibility to the protection of the thigh joints, and gave their name to one species of body armour which carried protection halfway down the

thigh. These were old suits, as they belong to a period earlier than the reign of James I. The Curatt on the contrary protected nothing but the trunk, but was made as long as possible in front. Illustrations of both are given in the admirable treatise on Ancient Armour by the late Mr. John Hewitt, vol. iii. (1860). The corslett is nearly represented by the modern cuirass, and covered little more than the chest to the waist. This armour is not borne on the parish books after 1620, but there are occasional entries of small sums paid for cleaning it and sending to muster down to 1639.

Distraction of vermin.^c The year 1609, given above, only presents two entries of disbursement on their account; but the fox-catcher appears as a recognised personage, like the mole-catcher of the present day. In other years they are numerous. The animals paid for were badgers, fitches, fitchets, or fitchews (pole cats,) foxes, wild cats, occasionally rats, kites, vautors (vultures), once or twice an otter, and very rarely "a graye." This last animal is defined by Johnson as a badger, but such does not appear to be the case in these examples. Both badgers and grayes appear in the same years, and whereas 4*d.* is the tariff for a badger's head, one shilling was paid for "a graye;" it is possible, however, that a tough patriarchial, much-respected badger, might be honoured by a distinctive name. They are paid for in 1629, 1630, 1640, 1658, 1666, 1682, 1690. I subjoin a statement of the total quantities of vermin paid for in certain years, which are fairly representative.

Paid for by the churchwardens of St. Neots, Cornwall.

Year.	Fitches.	Foxes.	Cats.	Badgers.	Grays.	Rats.	Kites.
1616	5	...	...	1	...	...	...
1620	3	2	...	...	...	...	...
1621	36	2	1	...	...	...	...
1630	7	...	...	4	1	...	...
1640	28	4	...	2	1	...	...
1650	17	...	...	...	...	...	...
1658	33	9	...	4	2	...	...
1660	32	2	...	6	...	...	15
1663	36	2	2	...	1	...	5
1670	37	9	...	...	...	...	6
1680	53	11	2	...	...	...	...
1682	44	6	5	...	1	...	...
1687	35	9	22	1	...	28	18
1690	34	...	2	...	...	...	...
1700	56	...	5	...	...	...	6

Rats to the number of 52 were paid for 1677.

Peter's farthings^D or *Peters Pence* were paid to 1642, they usually amounted to xij*d*, and went to Exeter Cathedral.

Provision of Sacred Elements.^E The large sums paid for a provision of bread and wine for the Holy Communion on Church festivals, especially at Easter, are very noticeable. Ten gallons of sacke are mentioned at 6*d*. the quart, £2 13*s*. 4*d*. in 1664, a quantity so much in excess of what could be consumed in any devout or decent celebration, that there can be no doubt that it was put to other purposes, probably used for dinner, or other social meeting of the Select Vestry, even this sum however was exceeded on some occasions. Thus in 1618 the charge is xxxiii*s*., and in 1619 xxx*v*s. vi*d*. the quantity not stated, but the usual price in the first half of the century seems to have been 6*d*. a quart. In one instance we have a protest against its bad quality, "we have examined this account, but finding that the 23 quarts of wine which was provided for the communion at Easter to be soe exceedingly bad and that the church wardens have charged 2*s*. 4*d*. for each quart of it, whereas the wine was not really worth 12*d*. a quart. However wee are contented to deduct out of the supfluous charge only 13*s*. 9*d*. for the whole" (3 May 1695).

Communion Plate.^F "One communion cupp of silver with a cover to the same" was the provision for sacred ministrations down to 1612, in which, and succeeding years, we find "one fayre communion cupp of silver, guilt with a cover for the same, and a lether boxe for the keeping of it. One lesser communion cupp of silver with a cover to the same."

The silver gilt cup bearing the Hall-mark for 1609 is still in use, and is a handsome piece of Church plate, standing 10½ inches high. It is not known what has become of the earlier silver cup. The object I had the pleasure of exhibiting to this Society some months ago, in the mistaken belief that it was a leathern-cartridge case, is in all probability the Pyx or "lether box for the keeping" of one or other of these cups; most likely the silver one, as it is not deep enough by some inches to take the other. As Mr. St. John Hope pointed out, it very closely resembles one exhibited a few years ago by

the late Mr. Burt, which also came from this neighbourhood.

Church Books.^G The Paraphrases of Erasmus and Jewell's Apology for the Church of England were apparently required by law to be in possession of the vestry, in as much as other Parishes also specify them. In Liskeard a note of admiration follows the former, on account of its costliness. "Cost three pounds!" No time was lost after the Savoy conference in providing the new Book of Common Prayer, which we find charged in the accounts of 1662-3, 12s. Speaking generally, I observe no evidence of the Puritan reign between 1648 and 1660, having interfered at all in St Neots with the ministrations of the episcopal church. It is otherwise at Fowey where the marriages entered into the Parish Register from 9 September 1653 to 6 March 1655-6, are expressly stated to have been by the Magistrate.

Gunpowder.^H A small quantity of this explosive is mentioned every year as "Gunpowder in a Bagge," "Gunpowder in a Barrell," down to 1617; but I do not find the weight stated. It was apparently obsolete parochial property, and was occasionally sold to the credit of the account at xij*d.* a pound *e.g.*, in 1610. Received for three pounds of Gunpowder iijs.

"Match in bundles" was also kept in the vestry.

Collections by Briefe or Royal letter begin to be a conspicuous feature in the Parish accounts in 1661, but are occasionally found as early as 1620, and it is remarkable how varied, and in some instances how remote, the objects were to which the inhabitants of this Cornish parish were asked to contribute, and how liberal their contributions frequently were

The following are examples:—

1632	Given by consent to the redemption of Captives	ij <i>s</i>		
1661	Towards the releife of the distressed Protestants of Lithuanie	00	6	0
	Towards the repairinge of Ripon Church in York-shire	00	4	6
1665	Collected for London in the time of the Plague	3	13	10
1666	Collected for London for the fire	2	10	0
1669	For the redemption of Captives from Turkish slavery	6	6	6
1680	Collected for the redemption of Captives from Turkie	2	8	8
1681	Collected for the French Protestants	2	2	4
1686	Collected for the French Protestants	3	3	9

1688	Collected for the ffrench Protestants	1	8	0
1689	Collected for the Irish Protestants	2	9	6
1691	Coll. a second brief for Irish Protestants	00	13	0
1692	Coll. for Captives in Turkey	1	15	1½
1694	Collect ^s for the ffrench Protestants	00	18	6
1700	Collected for the captives in ffess and Marocco	0	18	4

Beside these evidences of the sympathy which united countries of the Reformed Religion, and of the impunity still allowed to the subjects of Turkey to prey upon Christian commerce and consign Christian men to a hopeless captivity, there was scarcely a year in which collections were not also taken for the relief of parishes in England suffering under some calamity. It is, perhaps, to be noted that they all took place in the incumbency of the Rev. Thomas Philpe, vicar from 1660 to 1704, who may have been a man of exceptional zeal and sympathy. It is difficult to imagine such appeals to have been responded to all over the kingdom.

	1635	Collected within our Parish Church at St. Neots towards the reparation of the Church of St Paul's London	2	7	10
9 June	1661	Towards the reliefe of inhabitants of Ilminster in Somerset	00	9	3
28 July		<i>id</i> Fakenham Norfolk	00	5	4½
4 August		<i>id</i> Pontefract Yorkshire	00	6	8½
1 Septem		<i>id</i> Oxford	00	4	8
8 Septem		<i>id</i> Drayton in Salop	00	4	4
15 Septem		Ripon Church in Yorkshire	00	4	6
26 January	1662	<i>id</i> Anwalters? Surry	00	2	6
	1663	for a beefe (<i>sic</i>) for Nuberry	00	5	5
		for Sawyerby in York	00	4	10
Joseph Rowe		for the fishing craft	00	14	8
signs as		for Hexham in Northumberland		8	2
Vicar 1706		for Harwitch in Essex	00	5	0
		for East Hendred in Berks	00	2	4
		for great Grymsby in Lincolne		1	6
	1664	for Grantham in Lincolne	00	8	6
		for Witheham in Sussex	00	5	0
		for Sandwitch in Kent	00	4	0
	1667	for Newport in Salop	00	9	0
	1669	ffor Shellford in Norfolk	00	7	2
	1670	ffor Will ^m Massy John Jessup etc	00	5	0
		ffor Isleham in Cambridgeshire	00	8	6
		ffor Somershem in Huntingdon	00	6	4½
		ffor Michael ffowler of in Kent	00	2	6
		ffor Riplie in Surry	00	2	0
	1671	ffor Meere in Wiltshaire burnt	00	7	9

August 10	1673	for ffording bridge burnt withting the county of Southampton	00	15	7½
	1681	for Colomton in Devon (for the same place in 1622 viijs)	00	13	1
		for St Albans church	00	11	10
		for Newmarket burnt	00	13	0
		for Wapping burnt	00	12	2
	1686	for Stepney and white chappell	00	10	6
Aprill	1688	for Leonard Stanley in Gloucestersh	00	7	8
Aprill		for Kettlewell in Yorkshire	00	9	6
	1689	for Crues morchard church in Devon (The church was struck by lightning in 1689, when the steeple was shattered and the bells melted.)	10	13	0
May 11	1690	for Bungay in Suffolk	00	15	8
		for St Iues (St Ives) in Hunts	00	9	6
August	1690	for East Smithfield	00	5	2
		for Bishops Lavington Wilts	00	4	10
Sept 28		for the sufferers by fire in the Parish of St. George, Southwark	00	7	6
Nov		for Cruismorchard Church in Devon, (see above)	00	13	0
	1691	for Tinmouth in Devon	00	6	6
		for Bealt in Wales	00	7	0
	1692	for Chagford in Devon	00	8	2
	1700	for St. Mary Magdalen Edmondsey	00	10	6
		for Beccles in Suffolk	00	5	9¼

There are no more of these entries down to May 1708, when the book ends.

In 1632 we have several entries of relief to soldiers—

Thus,—Given to a soldier by consent	iiij ^d
again	ij ^d
To a maymed soldier	ij ^d
To two maymed soldiers	iiiij ^d