

THE PLAGUE OF 1625 AND THE STORY OF JOHN BOSTON, PARISH CLERK OF ST. SAVIOUR'S, SOUTHWARK

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Among the many misfortunes of the House of Stuart must be counted the fact that the accessions of James I in 1603 and of Charles I in 1625 were both accompanied by severe outbreaks of the plague. The plague of 1625, indeed, might well have become known as "the Great Plague" had not its horrors been surpassed by the even more terrible "visitation" of 1665. The year had opened with floods and storms, and in the late, cold spring the dreaded disease was already showing itself in the cities of London and Westminster and in the suburbs.¹ On 25th March, two days before King James died, the Privy Council had rebuked the Lord Mayor of London and the aldermen for neglecting to enforce the Plague Orders; the infection had already been spreading for some weeks, for the first case of a death from the plague had been reported in January. As the Privy Council followed up their rebuke to the City authorities on 5th April with warnings to the Justices of the Peace for Middlesex, Surrey and Westminster, the Plague Orders were presumably then put into effect. These Orders, the outcome of the bitter experience of earlier plague years, were sent to all aldermen to be publicly displayed in the City's wards. They are summarised in Chapter II of F. P. Wilson's *The Plague in Shakespeare's London*. According to these Orders, every house where a case of plague had been reported was to be closed for forty days, the house was to be marked with a cross and the inscription "Lord, have mercy upon us". Watchers were appointed to view the bodies of persons dying in their parish, to search for signs of the infection, and to report all deaths to the constable, who in turn reported to the aldermen. Bills of Mortality were drawn up by the City authorities. According to the Yearly Bill of Mortality for 1625, by the end of December 54,265 deaths had been recorded in the cities of London and Westminster and neighbouring parishes, of which 35,417 were believed to be "of the plague". Only one parish was recorded as "cleane" of infection.

The alarm of the Privy Council, during April and May, was intensified by the fear of infection spreading amongst the crowds which were expected to assemble to see the new King and to celebrate Charles I's coronation and his marriage to the French king's daughter. London welcomed Charles and his bride, who arrived by water from Dover on 13th June, with bonfires, incessant bell-ringing and other signs of rejoicing. But when Parliament met on 18th June, it was against a gloomy background of infection spreading rapidly, of houses closing and trade declining, scenes of mourning and of horror, and general fear of contagion. Parliament sat for only three weeks, before being adjourned to meet again at Oxford; and meanwhile the Court had left Whitehall. A proclamation of 30th June forbade persons from London, Westminster and other infected places to approach such Royal houses as Hampton Court, Windsor, Richmond and Nonsuch, "for the more safety of his Majestie and the queenes Majestie and such lords and ladyes that necessarily are to attend at Court . . . upon pane of his Majesties heavy indignation."²

The Privy Council had issued instructions to Londoners to stay in their homes and not carry infection into the country. Nevertheless, the exodus proved uncontrollable, and large numbers left the city, though they were far from welcome in the towns and villages in

which they sought refuge. In July, the Privy Council urged aldermen and other officials to stay and carry out their duties. Nevertheless, some aldermen, as well as clergymen, churchwardens, constables and others had fled with their families to country districts. Indeed, the City seemed desolate, owing to the closing of the shops and houses of those who had fled to the country, as well as the compulsory shutting up for forty days of sufferers from the plague and their families. Shopkeepers perished, with their servants and apprentices. Markets for the sale of foodstuffs were relegated to districts beyond the City's outskirts, such as Tothill Fields, St. James's Fields, and St. George's Fields. Theatres were closed; bear-baiting, dancing and even football were prohibited.

The lack of employment and the virtual cessation of normal buying and selling must have left many penniless and added hunger and hardship to the terrifying circumstances in which they lived. Some of the City parishes petitioned for relief, and in June the Lord Mayor pointed out to parish clergy and churchwardens the need for relief of the poor, and ordered a collection to be made each Wednesday for that purpose. The City Companies were commanded to forego their usual feasts and to send the money saved for poor relief. On 7th July, the Lord Mayor made a stronger appeal to certain City companies for contributions for the relief of "poor people whose houses are visited."³ In August, the poor rate was doubled; a Brief was issued ordering a collection to be made throughout the kingdom for the relief of the poor in London and Westminster, and payments were made to provide food for the unfortunate prisoners starving in the London jails.

As the City authorities put it: "the hand of God lyeth heavy upon the City by reason of the greate visitation of the plague which now increaseth." By August, the number of deaths from the plague was rising to a peak, as is shown by the monthly Bills of Mortality, which were published, rather belatedly, from 21st July onwards.

<i>Week ending</i>		<i>Buried in all</i>	<i>Of the Plague</i>	<i>Parishes infected</i>
July	7	1222	593	57
	14	1741	1004	82
	21	2850	1819	96
	28	3583	2471	103
Aug.	4	4517	3659	114
	11	4855	4115	112
	18	5205	4463	114
	25	4841	4218	114
Sept.	1	3897	3344	117
	8	3157	2550	116
	15	2148	1672	107
	22	1994	1561	111
	29	1236	852	103

Much of the heaviest mortality was in the parishes without the walls.

No doubt citizens fleeing from the "infected" parishes into Middlesex, Kent and Surrey carried the infection into the districts on the outskirts of the City. Only three London parishes, in this year of disaster, recorded more deaths than did two adjacent Southwark parishes: St. Saviour's and St. Olave's. In St. Saviour's parish, south of London Bridge in Bridge Ward Without, the mortality rose throughout the spring and summer, as shown in the Parish Clerk's Monthly Bills, preserved in the Greater London Record Office.⁴ From the fairly normal rate of burials of 40 in February and 43 in March, the number of persons buried in St. Saviour's parish reached 65 in April and 101 in May. In June, in spite of hopes

that the unseasonably cold weather would check the spread of infection, the number of deaths rose to about 180. In July, there were buried in the parish 539 named persons "and many unknowne", as the harassed parish clerk wrote. In August, in this one parish at least 800 perished, probably over 900; in September, 570. Even in October 90 persons were buried; in November, 58; not till December did the monthly total drop to the more normal figure of 37. The records show multiple deaths in some families; for instance:

25th August John Gloster and his wife Rebecca buried in the South Quire
 28th August John Gloster a youth buried in the South Quire
 6th August Edmund Ashton a victler buried in the South Quire
 Martha Ashton in Childbedd and Chrisam. (5)

Large numbers of those who died were poor persons from "the divers streets, ways and winding lanes all full of buildings inhabited" described by Stow in his "Survey of London". Especially was the mortality high in the congested area of Bankside. These narrow, crowded and insanitary alleys and "rents" (such as Pepper Alley, Angell Yard, Normans Rents, Frying Pan Alley, Fowle Lane)⁶ must have provided a perfect habitation for the spreaders of the plague, the house rat and its parasite. Entries in the Monthly Bills and other parish records afford ample evidence of the heavy mortality among the poor, some of whom could not be identified; several entries end "and many poor persons unknowne." One entry, on 18th August, gives a string of seven names, adding "all poore boys and girls." On 16th August, "John Bassett, a boy, and divers others poore unknowne." It is clear that many apprentices and servants were among the dead, as the following examples illustrate:⁷

John Wall and Richard Weaver, two guilding apprentices.
 Edward Turner shoemaker and Edward Mason his servant.
 Henry, a servant, a porpentyne, buried in the pitt.
 Anthony, a poor blackamore.
 Cissly Lewes, a prentice girl.

It was alleged, subsequently, when the plague had abated, that "the best and most sufficientest men of the said parish of St. Saviour's did leave the said parish and betake themselves to severall partes in the countrey."⁸ Nevertheless, the burial records include examples of Southwark citizens of substance who perished in this plague summer:

7th August John Marshall, a vestry man, buried in the church.
 24th August Robart Harvy, a vestryman (father of John Harvard, founder of Harvard University).
 25th August George Payne (formerly a churchwarden) and his wife in the South Quire.

Other victims who cannot be described as poor or insignificant include:

29th August Thomas Thaire, a phisition
 28th August John Fletcher, a poet in the church⁹

The minister, Mr. Archer, seems to have visited the parish from time to time, but to have left the burial of the dead, among other duties, to the parish clerk, who remained in Southwark. The usually vigorous parish life of St. Saviour's seems to have come to a standstill; the Vestry Minute Book records no meeting of the churchwardens between 28th June and 7th October, in contrast to the customary frequent meetings. At the meeting held on 7th October the members appointed four new vestrymen, presumably to take the places of men who had died. They also had to appoint other new parish officials, including a sexton, and they "made choice of" a new parish clerk.¹⁰

One of the victims of the plague was John Boston, parish clerk of St. Saviour's from 1604 to 1625.¹¹ Before dying of the plague himself, he steadfastly performed his duty in peculiarly horrifying circumstances. Boston lived in a house "in the churchyard, within Cheynegate", next door to the parson, Mr. Archer.¹² He was married and had a family, the youngest an infant in arms in the summer of 1625.¹³ An inventory of his possessions, made shortly after his death, shows that his house was well, though not lavishly, furnished, and indicates that he was a man of some culture. Books are mentioned to the value of several pounds, pictures and a wide assortment of musical instruments.¹⁴ We know that he supplemented his earnings by private teaching and by letting a room.¹⁵

John Boston's main duty as parish clerk was to assist the parson in saying and singing services.¹⁶ He was a deacon and, as such, was authorised to perform, when necessary, christening, wedding, churching and burial services.¹⁷ He had also to keep the parish register. In St. Saviour's parish we know, from the records, that it was the custom for the clerk to prepare "monthly bills." In these he set down the names of all those who were married, christened, churched or buried during the month, and, except in the case of christenings,¹⁸ beside each entry he wrote the amount of the fee or duty due to the parish for the service provided, and collected by him to be handed over to the churchwarden in charge of parish accounts (known in this parish as "Keeper of the Great Account.") The lists of names in the monthly bills were then copied into the parish register.¹⁹ On his appointment as parish clerk Boston had to provide a bond as security against failing to hand over the fees which he collected.²⁰

John Boston's burial took place on 22nd September, 1625. At a vestry meeting held on 7th October it was recorded: "It is ordered that some course of lawe be taken to call Mrs. Boston to an account for the money which Mr. Boston received this last summer for the use of the churchwardens" (*i.e.* the church and parish of St. Saviour). The result of this resolution was a suit in Chancery, heard on 10th February, 1627, between the churchwardens, headed by Thomas Wicherley, then Keeper of the Great Account, and Robert and Sarah White (Boston's widow, Sarah, having, by this time, remarried).

Two lengthy documents²¹ dealing with the case remain in the archives of the Corporation of Wardens of St. Saviour, oddly enough both concerned with the defence. They are:

1. The Answer to the Bill of Complaint, prepared by a lawyer named Edward Dennell, which includes a list of questions to be put to witnesses.
2. An account of the statements of witnesses called by the defence.

The Bill of Complaint and statements of witnesses called by the prosecution are missing. But it is possible to reconstruct the prosecution's case, to some extent, from the rebuttal of charges at the conclusion of the Answer to the Bill of Complaint, and also from the answers of the prosecution's main witness, Richard Wright, to the defence's questions. The court's decision on the case is to be found in the Chancery records.²²

The vestry of St. Saviour, represented by Thomas Wicherley and the five other churchwardens holding office at the time, charged Sarah, Boston's widow, and her new husband, Robert White, with failing to hand over money which had been collected by John Boston for burial fees during August and the first half of September, 1625, to the amount of £100. In support of their case they referred to a "notebook" kept by Boston, containing the names of all who died during that period, amounting to 1318 people, and claimed that Boston, during the time of his sickness, confessed to having received the burial fees for all these people, except those due for the burial of a certain George Payne and his wife. They further

claimed that Boston had admitted that he held £100 which was due to the parish, and that Sarah had later admitted this also, the figure of £100 being arrived at by "the casting up of the said notebook."

The Answer to the Bill of Complaint is in the names of Robert and Sarah White, but it is, of course, based almost entirely on Sarah's statements as wife, and later as widow, of John Boston. The story it tells is certainly a moving one. It begins by claiming that Boston "did well and honestly demean and carry himself in the said place and office of parish clerke," and points out that this is agreed by the prosecution. It then draws attention to the fact that those who "were indigent and not able to paie" the dues for burials were excused from payment and the clerk, by consent of the parish, was allowed a fee in respect of each person so excused. The Answer to the Bill of Complaint then goes on to describe the outbreak of plague in July. When "the contagion was lamentably spread almost through all the said parish" the minister,²³ most of the churchwardens and the richer inhabitants of Southwark went into the country "and desired the said John Boston, being a deacon, to celebrate divine service and performe the rites of burials . . . which said charge and care the said John Boston was enforced to undertake." Boston then sent his wife and two of his young children into the country²⁴ "to his greate grieffe." He was thus left without the support of his wife, besides having to cope single-handed with the harrowing task of conducting the funerals of ever-increasing numbers of the dead. Often he did not know the names of the people who had died — "This defendant Sarah saith that she hath crediblie heard that sometimes, in one day, there hath been twenty or thirty corpses left at the place of buriall, and the said John Boston knew not who brought them thither . . . but after buried them, and then took greate paynes in inquiring and doing his best for knowing their names, so that he might make Certificat accordingly for discharge of his Dutie." (*i.e.* that he might know what fees were due for each to the parish). The Answer to the Bill of Complaint tells of "the unspeakable wattchings, labour and travell, both daie and night" which Boston had to endure. Robert White was one of his acquaintances and Boston "being weary and fayntinge under this, his great burden and charge," offered him his place as parish clerk.²⁵ White, not unnaturally, refused. During September, Sarah Boston heard that her husband was "dangerously sick," and returned as quickly as she could to Southwark. Before she could get there, he had died. She found that he had made no Will, so took out letters of administration, and proceeded to make enquiries "from those who were present with the said John Boston during the time of his sickness" what amounts he had paid in for parish dues. She was told that he had paid the dues for July, but had not managed to do this until the beginning of September (the inference being that, as Boston was taken ill in mid-September when the plague was still raging, he could not possibly have had time to collect the dues for August and the first half of September). As Sarah put it: "the Infeccion was so great and dangerous, and the ymployment of the said John Boston so full of continual labour, that he could not have convenient tyme and leisure to gather up the said fees." She also made the point that as it was only the better off people who could afford to travel away from the plague-stricken parish, a great number of those who died were poor and therefore exempt from burial dues — she estimated that this applied to "a third part of those who died." Further, she stated, her husband had not received the fees allowed him by the parish for the burials of these poor people. Nor had he been refunded the 30/- which he had had to spend on a new burial cloth.

The Answer to the Bill of Complaint then gives Sarah's account of a visit to her home in Southwark "in or about the month of October"²⁶ by Richard Wright, churchwarden,

and, as Keeper of the Great Account, responsible for the recovery of debts to the parish. He asked what money she had in the house. She answered that "she knew not, but afterwards opened a presse within the house . . . where her late husband had used to . . . putt up money which he had received for the use of the parish, and there she found, in two gloves, the some of thirty seaven poundes, eighteen shillings, or thereabouts, which she paid to the said Richard Wright." When Wright had taken the money from her, he asked for John Boston's "notebook wherein he kept the names and numbers of the dead."²⁷ He went off with this, and since that day had refused to let Sarah or Robert White (after he became her husband) even have a look at what was written in it. Sarah maintained that this book was one in which Boston "did keepe a noate or memoriall of the names of persons buried, married etc. . . . and the severall fees accustomed to be paid on every such occasion . . . to the end that he might have recourse to the persons which had not paid." (This statement of Sarah's thus challenged the prosecution's view of the notebook as being a record of the money collected by Boston).

We come now to the statements of witnesses summoned by the defence. The person of most standing among these was Richard Wright. He is described as "citizen and Grocer of London, of the parish of St. Saviour in Southwark, of the age of forty-eight yeares or thereabouts." Wright agreed that Boston had performed his duties faithfully during the plague period, and also accepted the suggestion that, because of the pressure of these duties, he had scarcely any time left to collect parish dues. Nevertheless, said Wright, "about the 18th or 19th daye of September, 1625, when he was speaking with John Boston after he was stricken with the plague, the said John Boston, out of the window, told him that he had collected . . . all the payments due to the said parishe . . . saving for the burial of one, Mr. Payne, and his wiffe." Wright confirmed that the parish had undertaken to give Boston "a stipend" for his work in burying poor people, and said that "thirty and odd shillings" were due to the clerk for this stipend and his ordinary wage for the quarter in which he died. His widow had not claimed this. If Boston had paid 30/- for a burial cloth, the parish would refund this to the defendants on condition that they produced the money owing for burial fees. Wright agreed that, after Boston's death, he had received £37.18 from Sarah Boston in the presence of Thomas Wicherley, a churchwarden, and a certain Lambert Daggett. He gave no acquittance to Sarah Boston, nor, as far as he could remember, had she asked for one. Wright agreed that Sarah gave John Boston's notebook to him on that occasion, and he described it as a book "in which is sett downe the money which John Boston had received which is due to the said parishe." The book showed that "there is yett a greate some of money due to the said parishe," and he intended to keep it until the defendants had paid in full.

Another witness was Lambert Daggett, "of the parishe of St. Saviour in Southwark . . . Cordwayner, of the age of 50 yeares or thereabouts." The same ten questions were put to him as were put to Richard Wright. Daggett gave full answers to only three of the questions; to four questions he gave partial answers; to the remaining three questions he replied that "of his own knowledge or hearsaye he can say nothing at all." He gives the impression of being an uneasy witness. However, Daggett testified that John Boston had "wholly applied himself" to his duties at the time of the plague, and said that he had therefore had "very littal or noe tyme at all to collect duties." Daggett had himself, at Boston's request, given him some help with the collection of burial fees. He believed that, at the time of Boston's death, there were many fees uncollected. He agreed that he was present when Sarah Boston

handed over the sum of £37.18s. to "some of the churchwardens", mentioning two by name, "Mr. Whicherley and Mr. Watts." (It is perhaps significant that he did not mention Richard Wright). He also saw the handing over of the notebook by Mrs. Boston, which, he said she did "at the earnest intreaty of the said churchwardens or some of them." He followed Wright in describing the notebook as one which Boston "kept for his own Remembrance concerning the burials in the said parishe and the duties due to the said parish which he had received."

Finally, two women were called by the defence, Elizabeth Harbert, "wiffe of George Harbert, cittizen and Cuttler of London, of the parishe of Sainte Brides . . . near Fleete Street, of the age of three score yeares or thereabouts", and Jane Wyatt, "wiffe of Richard Wyatt, of the parishe of St. Saviour in Southwarke . . . shoemaker, of the age of fortye yeares or thereabout." Both these women had been with Boston at the time of his sickness, and Jane Wyatt had "kept" (*i.e.* cared for) him at that time. They were examined only on what he had said to them during his last illness. Elizabeth Harbert described how she had endeavoured to persuade him to send for his wife. He had refused, saying that he did not wish "to endanger her or her children." She then tried to get him to make a will. Boston replied "that he would not make any will, for that he should not leave his wife indebted if God did take him." This matter of a will was evidently connected in his mind with his parish accounts, for he went on to say that "his wife was to accompte with the churchwardens . . . for a monthe's bill or thereaboute which was not summed up nor gathered in" and "uppon a juste and due accompte to be made between the parish and himself, there would be more founde due from the said parishe to him than he was to pay the parishe." Jane Wyatt's evidence agreed exactly with Elizabeth Harbert's, except for one small addition to Boston's reported words. He said to her that "*nothing troubled his mynde but his monthes' bill, which was not summed up nor gathered in.*" Even in his last illness, Boston was worrying about his work.

The court was thus faced with conflicting evidence on the question as to whether or not Boston had collected all the burial dues for August and the first half of September before his death. On the one hand, Richard Wright quoted him as saying, just before his death, that he had collected all the burial fees save two; on the other hand, both the women witnesses maintained that he had told them, on his sickbed, that he had failed to collect about a month's fees. An explanation of this conflicting evidence may, perhaps, be found in the characters of Richard Wright and John Boston as they appear to emerge from the records. Everything points to Wright being a competent, unimaginative and overbearing man of business. This is apparent in the forthright way in which he gave evidence, and especially in his treatment of Sarah Boston when he called at her house immediately following her husband's death,²⁸ and demanded money and the notebook. He seems to have assumed at once that she was withholding money, without considering that the extreme difficulty of the circumstances in which Boston had been working might have made it impossible for him to collect all the burial fees. He appears to have had no sympathy for the bereaved woman whose husband had served the parish faithfully for years, or any thought for her welfare. The outstanding impression one gains about John Boston's character is his extreme conscientiousness. The monthly bills which he kept are carefully written throughout. The bills for July and August, written at a time of tremendous stress, are still clear and legible, though blotted in places and with some crossings out. Even the notebook entries for the plague months are legible. In both bills and notebook the fees are carefully entered — in

the case of burials, so much for ground, so much for bell, coffin and burying cloth when used. The amounts varied, in accordance with the age of the dead person, and the place of burial, ranging from 2d. to 26s. 8d. To read the cramped pages of the monthly bills and the notebook for the plague period causes amazement at the man who could give care to such details at a time when he was run off his feet by duties of a most distressing nature. Boston's action in sending his wife and young children into the country and his refusal to send for his wife when the plague struck him, show him to have been unselfish and affectionate. A man like this, facing Richard Wright "out of the window" when he was near death, and perhaps confused in mind, might well have been frightened into saying that he had collected all the burial fees save two, when, in fact, he had not.

Another question arising from the evidence was the nature of Boston's notebook. Was it a record of all the dues actually received by him, as the prosecution maintained, or was it, as the defence held, an *aide-mémoire* in which Boston entered each person who died and the correct amount of the fee for burial, as it occurred, and later hoped to collect? The notebook was produced in Court by the prosecution. The burial fees entered in it for August, and the first half of September, were not totalled — this would have been difficult, in any case, owing to the fact that Boston wrote so closely to the edges of the pages. However, there exists what appears to be a fair copy of the burials entered in the notebook for the period in question.²⁹ It is carefully written and neatly set out (as though by a professional scribe) and though the fees are not totalled, one may assume that a calculation was made from it and used by the churchwardens to justify their claim of £100.³⁰

The Court must have decided that the defence was right in describing the notebook as a record, not of money actually received by Boston, but as a book of memoranda to help in preparing the monthly bills and the collection of fees. It must also have been convinced that, in the appalling pressure of his time and energy, Boston could not possibly have collected burial fees for all who died. The entry in the Chancery records reads:

"Upon a full hearing of the matter in question this present daie in the presence of the Councill, learned in both parts, for and touching the duties and profitts belonging to the Rectorie of St. Saviour's, for which the plaintiffs by this bill pray reliefe, this Cort saw noe cause at all to give the plaintiffs any reliefe touching the same. Tis therefore ordered that the matter of the plaintiff's bill be from henceforth clerely and absolutely dismissed out of this Cort."

APPENDIX I

JOHN BOSTON'S NOTEBOOK

The cover of this book is of vellum over board, measuring 13 inches by $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches, so that it has long, narrow pages. It has a worn appearance and the corners of the pages have been rubbed away. The paper is so thin that the writing on one side of a page shows through on the other, producing a smudged effect. The notebook is chiefly devoted to a record of christenings, churchings, weddings and burials for the period 1st March, 1619–15th September, 1625. In the case of burials the fees are carefully entered beside each name and are totalled monthly. No fees are entered for christenings and, in the case of churchings and weddings, it is the exception for fees to be entered. The July and August lists for 1625 show signs of stress on the writer's part—the entries are very close together, so as to cram as many names as possible on to a page, and there are some erasures and smudges due to a bad pen. The record ends with the last entry for 15th September: "Geo. Garrod an apothecarie in the chapel xxvi, j.s. 8d.". Boston often put an X against a name—possibly a way of reminding himself that a fee was outstanding.

Among other entries in the notebook are various memoranda; some concerning the parish, *e.g.*, names of preachers, and food provided at a feast on 5th November, 1621, with costs; some personal, *e.g.*, "Mr. Gabriel Bolte began to take my chamber the 26th Feb. 1623", and "William Trigg began to learne, August 16th 1624."

The final entry is signed R. Chettle: "This book was shewed unto R. Wright and L. Daggett at the tyme of their examynacions taken in Chancery, *ex parte* Thom. Witcherley *et al.* v. R. White *et uxorem suam defend.*"

APPENDIX II

RICHARD WRIGHT'S CALCULATIONS

Richard Wright's handwriting first appears in the records when he signed his name at the end of the monthly bill for March, 1625: "£7.3.8 rec. 2nd Aprill, 1625. Rich. Wright." His writing is clear and firm and he always used Arabic numerals. (Boston used a mixture of Roman and Arabic which must have made addition difficult). After his interview with Sarah Boston, which he records as taking place on 19th September, Wright had to take quick action. Boston had not begun the September bill and people were still dying of the plague in great numbers. Wright therefore copied the entries in Boston's notebook for the period 1st to 15th September, to form the beginning of the September bill. (It is an interesting comment on the stress produced in even the most business-like people by the prevailing circumstances that he omitted 17 burials entered in the notebook for 1st September). After entering the last burial on 15th September, Wright wrote: "Thus far is Mr. Boston's account before he sickened. Som totall for buryalls I finde to be 32.3.4." (The entries in the bill after 15th September are in another hand which we know to be Lambert Daggett's because, at the end of the bill, is written: "Sum. tot. £16.2.0 Rec. of daggott. R.W."). Having found out the total for the first half of September and totalled the entries in Boston's August bill (which Boston had not managed to do), Wright made the following calculation on the back of the August bill (his arrangement has been simplified):

Total of August bill	70	18	0	
„ „ bill for 1st – 15th Sept.	32	3	4	
	103	I	4	
From this he deducted:				
Amount rec. from Sarah Boston after Boston's death	37	18	4	
Amount rec. for the burials of Mr. and Mrs. Payne	2	15	–	
	40	13	4	
	62	8	0	

As Wright put it: "Rest still in Mrs. Boston's hands which I could not receive – 62.8.6." (He seems to have added a sixpence). "But there is some allowance to be made to hir" — presumably for Boston's unpaid wage and "stipend" and for the cost of the burial cloth. These items, we have seen, would add up to about £3. If, therefore, the churchwardens had based their claim on the monthly bills, they could only have demanded about £60 from the defendants. They chose instead to use the notebook figures which they found to amount to £100.

REFERENCES

- ¹ A full account of the plague of 1625 is given in F. P. Wilson's *The Plague in Shakespeare's London* (Oxford University Press, 1927), chap. V. The Bills of Mortality for 1625 are printed on p. 174.
- ² Journal recording Proceedings of the London Court of Common Council, 30th June, 1625, in Guildhall Library Record Office.
- ³ Journal, P.L.C.C.C., 7th July, 1625.
- ⁴ Greater London Record Office, P.92/SAV/384.
- ⁵ G.L.R.O., P.92/SAV/405.
- ⁶ " P.92/SAV/214
- ⁷ " P.92/SAV/405.
- ⁸ " P.92/SAV/799.
- ⁹ " P.92/SAV/405.
- ¹⁰ " P.92/SAV/450.
- ¹¹ " P.92/SAV/450.
- ¹² " P.92/SAV/214.
- ¹³ " P.92/SAV/384.
- ¹⁴ " P.92/SAV/1960.
- ¹⁵ " P.92/SAV/406.
- ¹⁶ " P.92/SAV/450. V.M.B. for 7th October, 1625, records the appointment of Boston's successor, John Ryce after he had "read a chapter openly in the church and tuned a psalm, both now well liked of . . ."
- ¹⁷ G.L.R.O., P.92/SAV/800. Richard Wright in evidence.
- ¹⁸ These fees were probably the parson's perquisite.
- ¹⁹ Other parishes may have used this method, but, if so, their monthly bills have not survived.
- ²⁰ G.L.R.O., P.92/SAV/450, 5th March and 23rd April, 1604.
- ²¹ G.L.R.O., P.92/SAV/799 and 800.
- ²² P.R.O., C.33/152, *Wicherley v. White*.
- ²³ In St. Saviour's records, the incumbent was always referred to as the minister.
- ²⁴ G.L.R.O., P.92/SAV/406: "My wife went to Rootham, the 19th Julie, 1925".
- ²⁵ This appears to confirm the allegation that most, if not all, the churchwardens had left the parish; normally the parish clerk was appointed by the vestry.
- ²⁶ But see *infra*(p.92) for this date.
- ²⁷ See Appendix I for description of notebook.
- ²⁸ This occurred on 19th September, not "in or about the month of October". See Appendix II.
- ²⁹ G.L.R.O., P.92/SAV/405.
- ³⁰ See Appendix II for Richard Wright's calculations.

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