

◆ The construction of the tower at Bolney Church

By Gabriel Byng

The fabric accounts for the building of Bolney tower provide important insights into the patronage of church construction and the organisation of building work in the early 16th century. Although they have long been identified as churchwardens' accounts, this paper argues that they are in fact private building accounts kept by the main patron of the new building work, John Bolney. As a result of this identification, his role in its planning and organisation may be studied. Far from being a disconnected member of the gentry, John Bolney led both the fundraising and the management of the project, providing patronage for local labourers, and received support from the wider parish, including free labour and donations. By studying the accounts in detail, it is also possible to extend our knowledge of how parochial building campaigns could be organised, with master mason and a few leading craftsmen from an urban workshop contracted for the design, cutting and laying. The bulk of the workforce was made up of local labourers, with some wealthy locals motivated by piety to give their time for free. New light is also shed on the timing of the tower's construction, its organisation and materials.

INTRODUCTION

In 1853 *Sussex Archaeological Collections* included a series of extracts from a manuscript then in Bolney parish church, transcribed and edited by the Revd Joseph Dale. The manuscript is now kept in West Sussex Record Office (Par 252/9/1). It included accounts from c. 1535–40 relating to the construction of the church tower, along with extracts from other 16th-century documents (Figs 1, 2, 3, 4). Dale had discovered the manuscript in 1852, after it had been missing for several years, last seen in the Eight Bells pub 'of which the then parish clerk was the host' (1853). In the same year he found another manuscript in the church, a now famous collection of genealogical entries regarding the Pepys family (Pepys 1854, ix). Dale was vicar between 1849 and 1860, and was responsible for much of the restoration work carried out on the church (Ford 1978; Dale 1858).

The accounts have not been disregarded by scholars over the last century and a half – indeed they feature in most lists of churchwardens' accounts – but their significance has been overlooked. This paper will argue that they are not churchwardens' accounts at all, but rather the private building accounts of the tower's main patron, John Bolney. This identification provides the opportunity to assess his role in the planning,

organisation and financing of the building work. First, however, it is possible to extract important details from the accounts about the choice of mason, the origins of the workforce, the timing of the tower's erection and the practice of construction. It is only when a plausible outline of the tower's assembly has been established and the nature of the accounts investigated, that this paper will attempt to place the tower's construction in context as part of a concerted attempt by John Bolney to secure and promote his family's status in the village.

Today many of the entries Dale transcribed are decayed. In 1852 the manuscript was already: in a most dilapidated condition from the damp and former ill usage, some of the final leaves being reduced to a pulp – which on being dried turned to powder; and all the leaves of the volume are so tender that though turned over with the greatest care, they lose a portion of their substance each time the book is opened (Dale 1853, 244).

The accounts were bound at the British Museum in September 1909, but their original order was lost and the leaves appear to be placed almost at random. For the purposes of this paper it is assumed that Dale's transcription is accurate where it cannot be tested against the original document, although it should be noted that elsewhere he made small but significant errors.

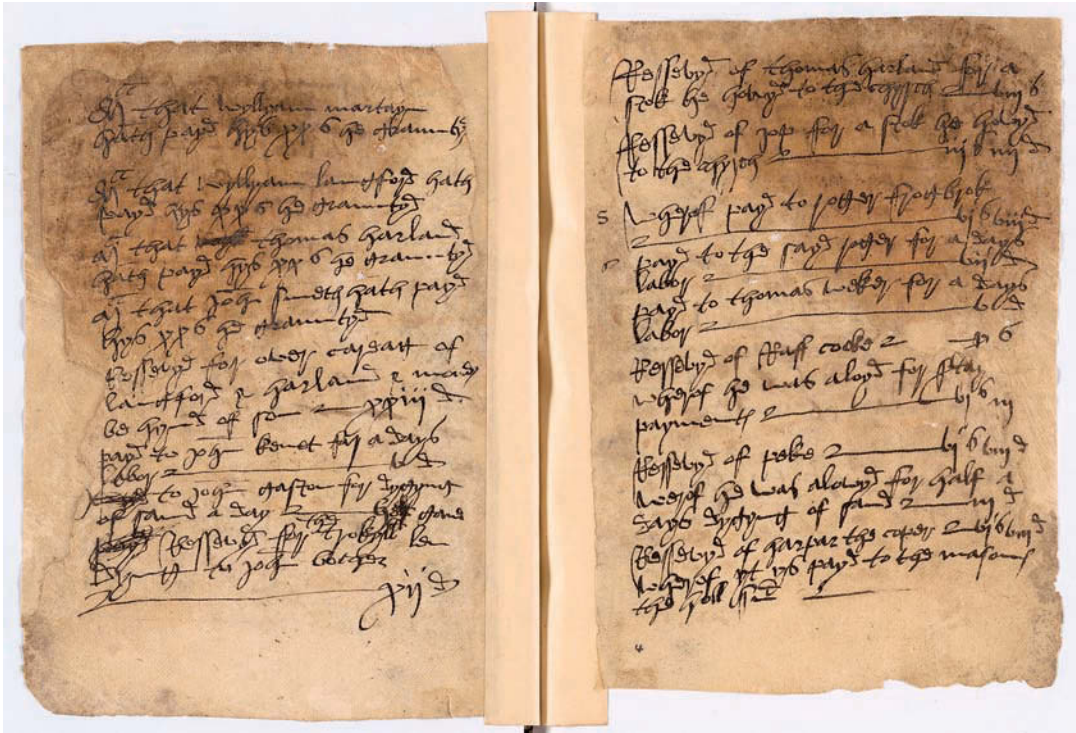


Fig. 1. A page from the fabric accounts (ff. 3v & 4r).

CHURCHWARDENS' ACCOUNTS OR PRIVATE ACCOUNTS?

Dale described these extracts as churchwardens' accounts in his transcription, and they have been recorded as such by Harvey (1948, 23) and *The Victoria County History* (Salzman 1940, 136–40). Cox and Hutton included them in their lists of churchwardens' accounts (Cox 1913, 45, 97; Hutton 1994, 289), and their author has been specifically identified as a churchwarden by Brandon (2006, 186). However, there are several indications that the accounts describing the construction of the tower were not kept by the churchwardens. Most persuasive is the inclusion of several references to transactions carried out by the author with the wardens: he pays money to them for wax on two occasions as well as for a month's board for two masons; he 'delivered to John Smith and Thomas Ridge, Church Wardens, iiii Nobles' and receives money from 'John Smith and John Harper churchwardens' after a church

ale. Otherwise the author writes of himself in the first person, identifying himself as 'I, John Bolney' or writing 'for my part, John Bolney', but refers to the wardens in the third person, noting, for example, that the churchwardens have money 'which they [not 'we'] gathered for the hoguel time'. Churchwardens did occasionally use the first person singular, as at Yatton (Hobhouse 1890), but in John Bolney's accounts, it is unlikely that the entries which refer to churchwardens are self-referential; not only are they in the third person, but the names of both wardens are given on several occasions and Bolney's is not among them.

There are further indications that the tower accounts were not written by the churchwardens. The parish followed usual late medieval practice in employing churchwardens in pairs, as can be seen from the transactions carried out with the wardens and from an undated fragment of the churchwardens' accounts which also survives in the collection Dale recovered. Moreover, John Bolney's accounts do not follow the same, strict format as the



Fig. 2. Bolney tower, south face.

wardens' accounts, which are fair copies made for the annual audit. The churchwardens' accounts are well laid out, neatly written on evenly spaced lines and conforming to usual practice in beginning with an introduction naming the two parishioners who were to act as churchwardens, followed by details of obit payments and other revenues (mostly from a church sale), their total, then by expenses, and their total (ff. 8r–12v). No headings survive in John Bolney's accounts, although he does sometimes make sub-totals, usually on a weekly basis, and on occasion he notes the total paid over several years to a particular individual. The text appears to be written in a single hand; occasionally the legibility and lay-out of the writing deteriorate so badly that it must be doubted a clerk was responsible, or even that they were to be examined at audit. Bolney also seems to have committed himself to a specific amount of funding ('my grant of the said steeple'), which would be curious practice if he was a warden channelling parish money into the tower's construction. Lastly, in the wardens' accounts items



Fig. 3. Bolney tower, west face.

of expenditure and income begin with 'It[em]' while Bolney's accounts also use the words 'paid' and 'received'.

The church's wardens seem to have been drawn from the middling ranks of village society, well below John Bolney, who was frequently also their employer on the building site. The names of three wardens survive in John Bolney's accounts: John Smith who was joined by Thomas Ridge and John Harper, all in 1537/8. That Smith had two fellows may be explained by the death of Harper, whose widow gave three shillings to the work. Raf Cooke may also have been a warden – he gave money gathered from an ale to John Bolney. While there are a number of men named John Harper in the local documents, all appear to be of low status and middling wealth. A John Harper was assessed for wages at £1 in the subsidies of 1524–5, amongst the lowest in the village (Cornwall 1957, 89–90) and a James Harper was able only to request burial 'in the church earth of Bolney' in 1550 (Rice 1935, 163). However, John Harper was



Fig. 4. Bolney tower, north face.

on the list of those liable for the clerk's wages (Dale 1853, 245). Similarly, several people with variants of the surname Smith held positions within the parish and contributed to building work. In 1524 and 1525 a John Smith was assessed for goods at £4 in the lay subsidy and appears as one of the witnesses to the accounts (Cornwall 1957, 89–90). 'John Smith otherwise Harper' worked as a labourer in 1536–7, and in the same year a John Harper is described as 'the carpenter'. Many members of the Smith family appear in the parish register, including a John Smith who was buried in 1546, and whose daughter had been baptised three years earlier. 'John Smith otherwise Harper' would witness John Bolney's will in 1557 (ESRO PBT 1/1/4/284). Thomas Ridge does not appear in the parish registers or tax returns, however (Huth 1912).

Given all the factors discussed above, it can be demonstrated that Dale's manuscript is not a churchwardens' account at all, but rather the

private building accounts kept each week by John Bolney, a member of the parish elite who was responsible for organising much of the work and who probably wrote the accounts himself. The existence of such private accounts has been proved by Burgess (2002, 326, 315), but the example at Bolney is a rare, if not unique, survivor. However, there are two occasions when Bolney appears to be recording transactions exclusively of interest to the churchwardens and unconnected with work on the tower. One reads 'William Langford and Thomas Garland hath delivered in to the hands of the parishioners' £4 6s. 0½d. The other notes money held by the churchwardens 'which they gathered for the hognel time'. Although the first does not mention the offices held by Langford and Garland, it has the form of the conclusion to a parish audit; the second would appear to be a simple record of fact, but whether to help, corroborate or disempower the wardens is unclear. Was Bolney simply noting these for his own interest, to know how much of a donation he could call upon the wardens for?

There is also a set of purchases which appear to be part of John Bolney's accounts and in his hand, despite being unrelated to the building work. These purchases would typically have been in the remit of the churchwardens, as they include a cord for the Lent cloth, tapers, wax and visitation payments (ff. 13r and 13v). Was Bolney aiding the wardens by including some items of expenditure on his account during a period of widespread fundraising? Perhaps the wardens had complained of funds being reduced as the tower sapped the parishioners' expendable wealth. Alternatively, Bolney may have been purchasing the necessary equipment for a liturgical celebration of the end of building work, which did, indeed, take place during Lent, thereby explaining the purchase of a new Lent cloth. The accounts show Bolney working closely with the parish and wardens, not only as their lord, patron and employer, but also in taking on their responsibilities and recording their activities.

DATING

As the accounts are not chronological, the dating of the tower must be calculated from those transactions which include dates: payments or gifts are recorded in 28, 29, 30 and 31 Henry VIII. The payment made on Mary Magdalene's day, 22

July 1536, is for 'bargaining to make the steeple of Bolney', a price is agreed (18s. per foot) and a sum paid as deposit ('in earnest'). Work appears to have begun at around the same time: money from Mary Magdalene's ale, perhaps held to celebrate the signing of the contract, is received in the accounts and a series of payments are made for labour in the quarry and work on a bridge. Indeed, a man named Parsons was paid 'for making a plat for the cran', presumably a design but possibly a platform. The tower was obviously being planned earlier, however. On 14 March 1536 John Bolney's brother James made his will, promising money to the tower's construction should his children die under age, although, as this condition did not come to pass, the bequest cannot have been critical to work commencing (TNA PROB 11/25 f. 580; Rice 1935, 163). The likely date of completion can be judged from a payment to the master mason of £4 on 17 March 1537. This seems to be the final payment of the 'full sum' of £9 which he was owed, presumably according to the contract of July 1536, indicating the end of his engagement with the work. Shortly before this, on 4 February 1537, payments were made for 'driving' of the tower, possibly the finishing of the stonework (Dale 1853, 250 n.23). Other entries can be dated later, however: an account of wax held by the wardens is on Candlemas, 2 February 1540. It may have been that another three years, or more, were required to fully fit out the tower after the masons had finished. The most demanding of these operations was hanging the bells, for which John had a 'trokyll', or pulley, made, and required bell-stocks to be constructed, labourers paid and ropes purchased.

If the payment of 17 March 1537 did indeed mark the completion of the fabric of the tower, then its construction would have taken almost exactly nine months, a surprisingly short period. Although work probably diminished or stopped during several of the winter months, the large sandstone ashlar blocks with which the tower is built could have been laid quickly. I counted 48 courses of stone excluding the pinnacles, which appear to be a later addition, requiring only 5 or 6 courses to be set a month between July and March. Some architectural units such as the window, bell openings, doorways, and even the labels, voussoirs and string courses, could be prefabricated by commercial masons and inserted quickly on site;

at Hardley, Norfolk, this allowed the chancel to be put up in a season (Woodman 1994). Possibly work on raising money and even cutting some of these units had begun some months earlier, even before March 1536, but work on erecting the tower did not begin until July.

THE WORKFORCE

Building accounts for parish churches are rare, and these records give valuable information about the organisation of labour and the means of construction. The chief craftsman was Thomas Puckle, who worked on other important commissions in Sussex in the 1530s. He was one of three masons who built an oven in the bakehouse of the Cluniac Priory of St Pancras in Southover near Lewes, as well as inserting windows in the malthouse and repairing the walls around the prior's garden, in the 1530s (Brent 2004, 284, based on TNA SC6/HVIII/3526–28). In 1539–40 he appears as 'master mason' at Camber Castle, Sussex, although termed 'upper warden', subordinate to the King's master mason (Harvey 1987, 8). It is likely that Puckle had a commercial workshop in Southover, where he was assessed at £6 in the lay subsidy of 1524 (Cornwall 1957, 96), and was a juror there in 1530 (Hunnisett 1985, para.76). That he was not an itinerant craftsman travelling from job to job, as has been proposed for late medieval builders (Lloyd 1961), is indicated by his local career and execution of local offices. He may have been related to a Kentish family. A will of John Pokyll, of Bearsted, listing a Thomas Pokyll, was made in 1513 (Duncan 1862, 39), while a William Pokyll witnessed a will of 1507 in Sittingbourne, (Hussey 1930, 49) and a John Pokyll was a recipient of a will in Faversham in 1507 (Hyde 1996). Harvey suggests that he may be related to Robert Puckell who was warden of the masons of Berwick-upon-Tweed in 1557. The payment made for 'bargaining to make the steeple of Bolney' was in fact to 'Pokyll and Gills', but the latter does not appear again in the surviving accounts. Harvey suggests he may be a 'sleeping' partner who was identical with the Richard Gelys contracted to build a farmhouse at Holywell, Oxford, in 1516, and master mason in charge of works at Warblington, Hants, in 1517–8 (Harvey 1987, 127, 209; Harvey 1948, 23). The Puckle family were still established in Southover in 1609 (ESRO PAR 413/12/1 f. 13v).

Bolney notes that Puckle received £9 for his work 'as it appears by parcels afore written'. The surviving accounts note four payments of 20s. on the feasts of Mary Magdalene, 22 July 1536, St Matthew, 21 September, St Thomas the Apostle, 21 December and on 4 February 1537. On the last occasion, 17 March 1537, he was paid £4, forming a total of £8. It would seem that Puckle was to receive £4 on completion of the tower and £5 in £1 instalments during construction, usually paid around the 21st of the month, every two or three months. The payment of 20s. missing from the accounts was probably in October or November 1536.

Other of Puckle's craftsmen can be identified. A mason named John Corkys, later Corker, was paid for setting and hewing on at least 12 separate occasions, once receiving £10 4s. 0d. He appears to have gone with Puckle to work at Camber Castle, where he is recorded 'throughout the surviving Camber accounts' (Colvin 1963, 423 n.1). Payments in the Bolney accounts are made to Puckle's 'servants', and perhaps Corker was one of them. Another entry records money paid to Corker and his 'fellows', suggesting Corker may have headed his own group of craftsmen (Dale 1853, 245). On one occasion, together with William Holmes, Corker was paid £8 for setting minus seven nobles for hewing, showing that both had already been involved in cutting the stone they were laying.

It is probable that a similar pattern was followed at Bolney as at Hardley, Norfolk, where a group of three masons travelled from a permanent workshop in Norwich to supervise the construction of the chancel with the stone blocks which they had cut, by an otherwise local workforce (Woodman 1994, 209). In Bolney it is possible to conceive of an urban workshop in Southover owned by Thomas Puckle and Richard Gills, who contracted for the erection of the new tower and sent at least two of their men, John Corker and Thomas Holmes, to oversee its construction and work on quarrying, cutting and setting the stone. They were probably to carry out the more skilled cutting work for the architectural details. Much of the labour was carried out by at least 30 locals, some of the wealthier doing such work as an act of charity. The tower is well built, with evenly laid ashlar courses, a good, now much restored, west window and doorway, tower arch, string courses

and plinth. Perhaps other men from the same workshop included John Iden and John Corvill, who worked with Puckle on the Cluniac Priory (Cooper 1853, 64; Hall 1901). It is even possible that the high-quality stonework for the west doorway, windows and other details had travelled through Lewes, where Puckle's men prepared it, then shipped it along the Ouse and overland, to Bolney, or overland via Hurstpierpoint, from where poles were fetched. Possibly the stone came from the Isle of Wight, as approved by John Frogbrook during construction, although Roger Frogbrook worked as a carpenter. Lead was transported from Lewes to Brighton, possibly for working before carriage north to Bolney. As timber work was outside the competence of the Lewes masons, the parishioners made a separate contract with the local carpenter, and possibly his brother, for work on the tower's ceilings, roof and doors.

Brandon writes that 'the tower was raised by a gang of itinerant masons' (2006, 183). However, aside from the master mason and two or more assistant setters, who were perhaps the men for whom the churchwardens had arranged lodgings at 10s. 8d. a month, many of the workers can be shown to be local. Of the 27 workers named in the accounts, 11 have surnames similar to those of individuals recorded in the lay subsidy returns for Wyndham, which included Bolney and Twineham, of 1524–5, and 24 can be found in nearby villis (Cornwall 1957). Twenty parishioners with the same surnames as those of workers in the accounts, and several with the same first names too, appear in the Bolney parish registers of 1541 onwards (Huth 1912). Of the donors noted in the accounts, half are in both the lay subsidy returns for Wyndham and the parish registers. It is highly likely that those workers not mentioned in the lay subsidy rolls or parish register were too poor to be recorded in the first, and did not make use of any of the services recorded in the second, possibly because they were no longer alive.

Some locals seem to have taken on more important work. Roger Frogbrook was contracted ('covanthyd') to work as carpenter, 'in earnest for making of the timber work of the steeple' and 'covering of the cock and wheel', presumably the weathercock, and John Frogbrook was paid for travelling to the Isle of Wight (Harvey incorrectly attributes this to Roger: Harvey 1987, 113). John Frogbrook was buried in the parish in 1566, a

year after Roger's son Thomas (Huth 1912, 66–7). John and Edward Smith, labourers, and John Harper, another carpenter, who may have been churchwardens, were probably local, and may have been related. Others were clearly carrying out their work as an act of charity. John Gaston appears frequently in the accounts as a labourer, digging stone, loading sand and scaffold poles, carting lime, and regularly gave all or part of his time for free. This must have been done as a good work – he appears in the 1524 subsidy rolls with goods assessed at £9, the eighth highest in the village, while Alyn Gaston had land assessed at £1 6s. 8d. and James Gaston at £2 (Cornwall 1957, 89–90). John Gratwick, who was recorded in the accounts for carrying stone, was also assessed on his land for one holy bread and 8d. to the clerk's wages, a sufficiently substantial sum to suggest he was not usually employed as a labourer (Dale 1853, 245). He is probably John Gratwick (d. 1558) of Jervis in Cowfold, the neighbouring parish (Comber 1931, 114–6).

REVENUE

Sources for funding the construction were various. They include the 'Hognel Warden', offerings to a cross, the sale of broken silver in London, a church ale, gifts from parishioners, debt repayments, money lending, equipment renting, and a collection. Of these, the greatest quantities were from the hognel warden, the church ale and the parish collection. Indeed, that the largest recorded contributions were made by communal fundraising initiatives may explain why the accounts were audited before witnesses; it presumably ensured that the gifts of the parish were being spent properly.

In total, records of only a little over £13 in revenue and £34 in expenditure survive in the accounts. It is not possible to estimate how much might be lost. Puckle was to make the tower at 18s. per foot and an inscription incised into the wall of the tower near the west door states: 'This Stepl: is 66 Foot high', which would cost £59 8s. 0d. to build, but it is likely this did not include various other payments: to local labourers, for materials and even for setting work by Puckle's men which are charged in the accounts. Swaffham tower cost some £350 in the early 16th century (Farnhill 2001, 109); the exceptionally tall tower at Louth of 1501–15 cost

£305 7s. 5d. (Bayley 1834, 146; Espin 1807, 12) but the tower of St Augustine, Hedon, c. 1427–7 may have cost only around £80 (Boyle 1895, 121).

JOHN BOLNEY

The Bolney family had held the parish's only manor continuously from the 13th century, although not the advowson of St Mary Magdalene, which was part of the endowment of a prebend at Chichester Cathedral. Little information survives as to their social position. Several had attended Winchester College, New College, Oxford, or the Inner Temple, and so may have become lawyers or administrators for a lord. In 1332 the only Bolney assessed was John, at 3s. 9½d., the seventh highest in the vill, not far off William Estouer, who had the highest assessment of 4s. 6d. (Hudson 1910, 282–97). A Ralph de Bolenye was assessed for 1s. 7¼d. Clough's study of Bartholemew Bolney (d. 1477), John's grandfather, has chronicled his achievements in numerous public offices, particularly as seneschal of Battle Abbey, and his acquisition of a small landed estate of sufficient complexity to require the compilation of 'The Book of Bartholemew Bolney'. It would mark the high point in the family's fortunes (Baker 2012, pt.1, 334). At the time of the tower's construction the family still had most of Bartholemew's estate, with the exception of land in West Firl which had been sold to the Gage family by John in 1530 and 1532, apparently with some urgency. The remainder would not be sold off until some years later, by John III (Clough's John IV) (Clough 1964, xxvii; Dunkin 1914a, 298, 419; Dunkin 1914b, 52–3; Holgate 1927, 61; Salzman 1904, 60). The 1524 and 1525 subsidy roll for Bolney, which was assessed with Twineham, is, sadly, in poor condition, and John Bolney does not feature among the surviving names.

John Bolney inherited the manor aged 15 years when Richard Bolney, the last of three brothers to hold the manor and the only one with an heir, died in 1500 (TNA E150/1064/2; Anon 1955, 568). John was Richard's son, as was stated on Richard's Inquisition Post Mortem (TNA E150/1064/2; Stowe MS. 632; *pace* Salzman 1940, 136–40, n.10). He was buried at Bolney in November 1557, three months after making his will (WSRO Par 252/1/1/1; Attree 1912, 30). His first marriage was to Alice, by 1527, who died in 1556/7 (Attree 1912, 30; Hussey 1939, 30); his second to Anne followed soon after. She

Bolney Pedigree

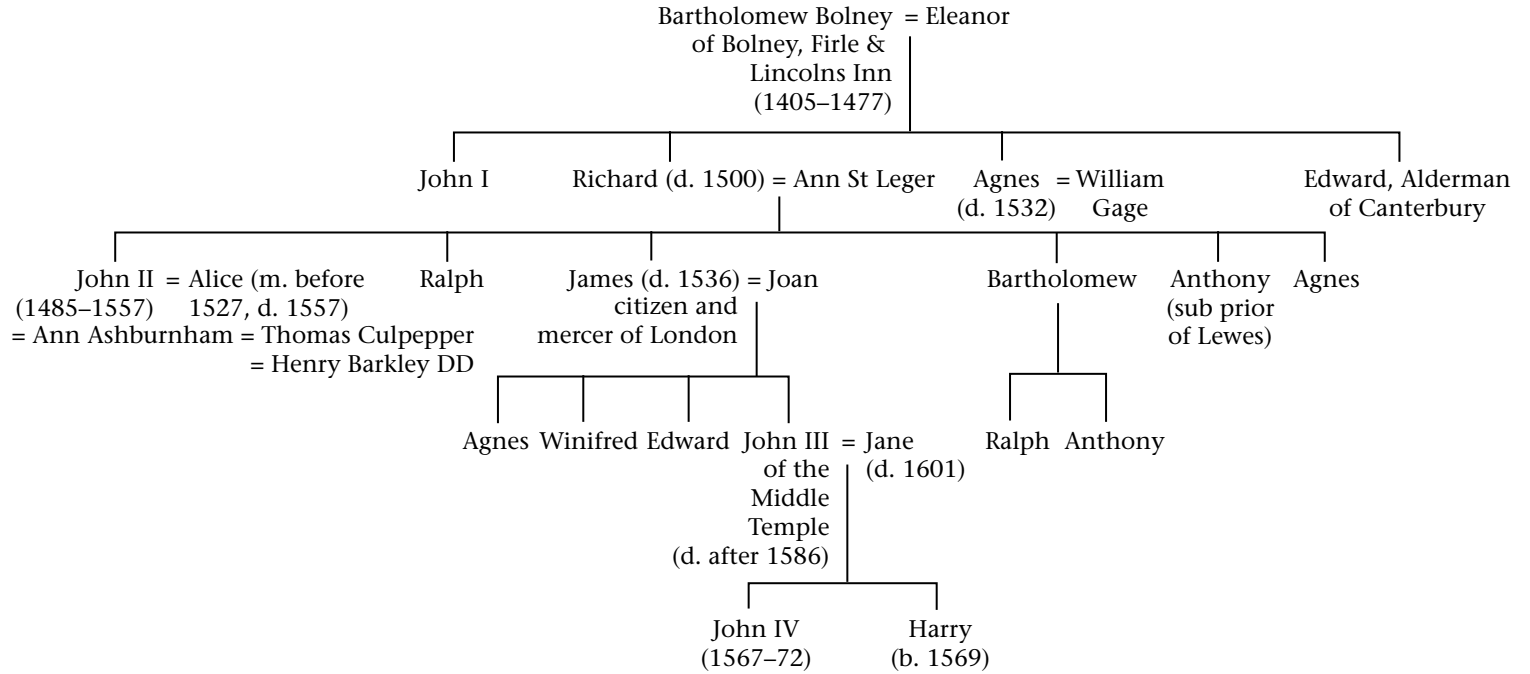


Fig. 5. Bolney pedigree. Source: Gabriel Byng and Chris Whittick.

must have been a young woman in 1557, as she did not die until 1600 after marrying twice more, while John would have been in his seventies (Feet of Fines, Sussex, Michaelmas 28, 24 Elizabeth 14). (Fig. 5).

Clough posits that John died in 1533, presumably on the basis of a sale of land in that year, and that it is his son, another John, who died in 1557, which would identify the latter as the builder of the tower (SAS/G 4/32; Clough 1964, xxxiii; Salzman 1940, 136–40 n.11). However, John was certainly still alive in 1536 when his brother James died (TNA PROB 11/25 f. 580), while a visitation of 1561 and a case in Chancery in 1587 found that John died without issue, his brother James' son John inheriting the manor (TNA C2/Eliz/A8/60; C3/26/90; Hervey 1882, 10–1).

JOHN BOLNEY AND HIS PATRONAGE OF THE TOWER

No gifts from John Bolney himself are recorded in the accounts, and it can be doubted on this evidence alone that Lower is right to affirm that the 'tower was built in 1536–8, principally at the cost of John Bolney, Esq.' (1870, 62). Indeed, Brandon allows only that 'the moving spirit was John Bolney, churchwarden and leading landowner, who inspired an effort of collective devotion of all sections of the community' (Brandon 2006, 186). However, John must have provided a significant proportion of the total funding, because his arms are carved in the west doorway of the tower (Figs 6 and 7). Quite possibly the only income recorded in the accounts was that from gifts made by the community, the difference being made up by John; or, more accurately, that John agreed to pay a certain sizeable sum to the building work and asked the parishioners to pay for whatever excess was required, including all the carpentry. It is probable that it was John who chose, or had the most control over, the design, perhaps choosing from standard plans Puckle offered according to the wealth of this patron (Woodman 1994, 206).

John's accounts explicitly record expenditure made only by him, indicating, of course, that he was paying only a part of the total cost: he pays a mason 'for my part', and writes of 'my grant of the said steeple' and 'my part of the steeple'. Indeed, John does not always appear to consider himself the main patron of the tower. He writes of



Fig. 6. West door and window.

the 'works made and covenanted between [Roger Frogbrook] and the parish', while writing also of 'the Parishioners' as donors. Other men, probably churchwardens, were occasionally involved, perhaps on Bolney's instruction or even his pay cheque. John Smith paid Corker from a gift from John Cook. Raf Cooke paid a mason directly. John Frogbrook travelled to the Isle of Wight for reasons unknown, but perhaps to procure stone for the finer details. A churchwarden organised the board for two masons, at 10s. 8d. a month, although another payment is made directly to Thomas Smith for board.

Those assessed at the highest levels in 1524 and 1525 are largely absent from John's building accounts. It may be that record of their contributions, parallel to and resembling his, has perished over time or that their donations to the fabric fund were not recorded in the accounts, which are largely concerned with expenditure, but it is possible that they refused to contribute to



Fig. 7. Bolney arms in left spandrel.

a project so explicitly led by John Bolney. Those parishioners mentioned in the accounts who were wealthy enough to be taxed were usually recorded at the lowest sums, and were more likely to have been employed in the accounts than to have contributed payment or free labour. Exceptions may include the Gratwicks, Gastons, Harpers, Smiths and Flusshers, who were wealthy enough to be taxed and important enough to work as wardens or witnesses, but they were not all amongst the wealthiest in the parish. Lay subsidy returns indicated that the Bolneys had several wealthy neighbours. Forty-eight parishioners were assessed in Bolney and Twineham in 1525, of whom seven were assessed at £20 or more (Cornwall 1957, 89–90) but only one, Ralph Coke, helped in constructing the church, being paid to carry lead from Lewes, and probably donating interest ('increase') on money he was lent. A relative, Richard Cooke, was churchwarden (Dale 1853, 245; Huth 1912, 3).

John's role as account-keeper would have required close engagement with the construction of the tower and indicates a readiness to be involved in the day-to-day affairs of the parish (Clough 1964, xxx). The workforce was made up almost entirely of local men, allowing John to exercise patronage and provide employment in his own community, reinforcing his position as an active member of the elite. It may be speculated that the survival of the accounts can be explained by the role played by so many local men; why bother to record gifts of free labour unless the document would also act, like churchwardens' accounts, as a commemoration of good works (Burgess 2002, 326, 315)? In choosing to construct a tower, Bolney was following in the footsteps of new lords who used such architecturally outlandish monuments 'to demonstrate to the local world that they had acquired lordship over acres and over the men who went with them' (Carpenter 1987, 66) but was also behaving as lords of the manor had always been expected to – bestowing patronage upon their lesser neighbours (Duffy 1992, 131–40). In Bolney at least, claims that the gentry were not involved in parish affairs would appear to be groundless (Richmond 1984). Indeed, John was rather improving on the example of his ancestors; the church fabric had barely been altered since c. 1100, before the earliest Bolney is recorded, albeit with some windows of the 13th and 15th centuries inserted. It may have been that the offer of £40 by John's brother James, although never made, spurred John to action in emulating his brother's munificence. The contract with Puckle and Gills was made just four months after James' will and a month before its probate. Possibly John diverted the large sums of £6 13s. 4d. and £5 bequeathed to him by James for charitable works in Bolney to the tower.

John finished off his grand act of architectural patronage by having his arms carved twice over the west doorway, once alone, and once quartering St Leger, the illustrious Kentish family to which his mother belonged (Fig. 8). Anne St Leger was the sister of Ralph (Hervey 1882, 127), lord of Ulcomb, Kent (Holinshed et al. 1808, 301), whose son Anthony was a close adviser of Henry VII and held several senior offices (Hasted 1798, 385–96). If Puckle was from a Kentish family, it would indicate that John had not only architectural sensibilities that ranged wider than his immediate

surroundings, but perhaps also a desire to emulate the example of his maternal family. Indeed, every record of a Puckle, in Bearsted, Sittingbourne and Faversham, is located just a few miles from Ulcomb, home of the St Legers. John even found space to mention a penny purchase of 'cart rope' from 'my mother' in his accounts.

Perhaps the grandest claim of the Bolney family was to kinship of William Wykeham, bishop of Winchester and founder of Winchester College, through John II's grandmother Joan, a great-granddaughter of Alice Longe, Wykeham's aunt (Burke 1858, x), which gave them a right to send their children to the college, as they did in 1461 and 1466 (Kirby 1892, 96 n.3, 116). The next records of family members, without first names, are to be found on the list of commoners in 1511 and 1520. It is likely that they were related to the Sussex Bolneys, rather than the branch of the family in Stoke Ash, Suffolk, since commoners were typically drawn from the surrounding counties, and might well have included John's nephew. If so, they would be the first to have attended the college in over 40 years and on tenuous grounds; their right was meant to have expired after 4 generations and would soon be called into dispute (Kirby 1892, 104, Appendix XIII; Squibb 1972, 40–1, 75). It may have been this experience that stimulated John Bolney's desire to cement his family's position and preserve Bartholomew's example with the building of the new tower.

Patronising a new tower was not the only way in which Bolney acted in keeping with a late medieval lord of the manor. In November 1541 Bolney was successful in his application for the addition of a crest to the family arms to Thomas Hawley, Clarenceux King of Arms, who described him as 'descended of an old and ancient house underfamed of long time bearing Arms' (Howard 1868, 304). Hawley reports, however, that Bolney sought approval from the King of Arms, 'being uncertain in what form his predecessors have borne their crest & timbre'. It was, in other words, to be not an innovation, but an affirmation, and he chose an elaborate helm beneath a crest of a corpse's head with a candle clutched in its mouth. At the same time he was also planning construction work on his own house. His brother gave a bequest, conditional on the death of his children, of 'C marks thereof to my brother John Bolney towards the edifying and building of Blasse Place where the



Fig. 8. Bolney quartering St Leger in right spandrel.

said John dwelleth' (Rice 1935, 164). The location of Blasse Place has been lost. In his will of 1557 John Bolney ordered his burial in the 'chancel of Bolney church, under the cofer [possibly the aumbry], on the north side thereof' (Rice 1935, 165; Lower 1850, 113). However, if the prebendary of Hova Villa in Chichester Cathedral, which owned the chancel, refused permission, he wished to be buried 'within the belfry of the same church'.

CONCLUSION

The fabric accounts for the tower of Bolney, however damaged, are a rare and useful survivor for the information they furnish as to the organisation of a late medieval building project. They were almost certainly kept by a member of the parish elite, the manorial lord John Bolney, not by the churchwardens. Nevertheless, the accounts were audited by the parish, probably because communal income formed part of the expenditure. Bolney

seems to have shared expenditure with persons or stores unknown, probably including the wardens, but was sufficiently generous to be able to scribe his arms by the west entrance. The building may have been part of a concerted effort by John to act in a manner behoving a manorial lord, and possibly to emulate the generosity of his brother James, who died around the time that the contract for the tower was made. He added a helm to the family arms, planned to carry out building work on his house and quartered his arms with those of his mother's illustrious family, the St Legers, over the tower's west doorway; perhaps he had attended Winchester College, or sent his nephew there. He contracted with a commercial mason from Lewes, who may even have had connections with the St Legers. The mason, Thomas Puckle, or at least two of his men, probably cut the more complex units

and supervised the tower's erection by a team made up largely of local labourers, some acting out of charity. The local carpenter was skilled enough to contract for the woodwork. The whole effort took only about nine months.

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