St Laurence parish, Reading, Berkshire
Liturgical Celebrations for Easter*
Edited by Alexandra F. Johnston

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(posted 24 April 2018)

* Easter Celebrations at Reading St Laurence have now been published on REED Online. It is REED policy not to publish records of liturgical ceremony. However, since it seems apparent that St Laurence had a complex series of mimetic and non mimetic activities from Palm Sunday until the Tuesday after Easter (see the Performance Traditions part of the Introduction to Berkshire Online) I have provided here the regular payments for the liturgical ceremonies from Palm Sunday to Easter as a supplement to the dramatic records in Berkshire Online for those interested in seeing the relationship between liturgy and drama in a large and important parish church.

1498-9

St Laurence’s Churchwarden’s Accounts BRO: D/P 97 5/2

p 3 (25 March 1498 to 24 March 1499) (Expenses)

In Prīmis payed for the wakyng of the sepulchre viij d
Item payed for a li of encens xij d
Item payed for colys I d
...

Note: The price for the sepulchre indicates that it must have been made of wood. The ceremony at the sepulchre was part of the resurrection play first specified in the accounts for 1505-6 along with the item for nails for the sepulchre (BRO D/P 97 5/2 p 29). The occasional expence in other years for nails for the sepulchre probably represents the replacement of a perishable part of the stage machinery. As years go on the nails to the sepulcre are less clearly attached to the Easter-tide ceremony and are not noted.
There are no accounts entered for 1498-9 or 1499-1500.
1501-2

**St Laurence’s Churchwarden’s Accounts** BRO: D/P 97 5/2

p 7 (25 March 1501 to 24 March 1502) *(Expenses)*

In prīmis payd for wachyng of the sepulcre viij d
Item for I li. of Sens aȝenst Ester viij d
Item for colys & nayles to the sepulcre ij d

...

1502-3

**St Laurence’s Churchwarden’s Accounts** BRO: D/P 97 5/2

p 11 (25 March 1502 to 24 March 1503) *(Expenses)*

...
In prīmis payed for wachyng of the Sepulcre viij d
Item payed for nayles to the Sepulchre I d
Item for colys ij d
...
Item payed for a li of encens viijd
...

1503-4

**St Laurence’s Churchwarden’s Accounts** BRO: D/P 97 5/2

p 14 (25 March 1503 to 24 March 1504) *(Receipts)*

...
Item receyued at Alhalow tyde of the gadering of the parissh xiiij s
...

Note: The word ‘Gathering’ is written in a nineteenth century hand against the entry for the All Hallows gathering.

pp 16-17 *(Expenses)*

In prīmis payed for the nayles to the Sepulchre l d
Item payed for colys on Ester evyn ij d
Item payed for I li. of frankensence viij d
Item payed for wacchyng of þe sepulcre viijd
...
1504-5

*St Laurence’s Churchwarden’s Accounts* BRO: D/P 97 5/2
p 21 (25 March 1504 to 24 March 1505) (Expenses)

In *prīmis* payed for naylīs to the sepulchre ob.  
Item for Colys on ester even to be halowyd ij d  
Item for I li. of ffrankensence the same tyme viij d  
Item for wacchyng of the sepulcre viij d

...  
p 23  
...  
Item payed to the Clerkes for syngyng of the passion in palme sonda in Ale  l d  
...

1505-6

*St Laurence’s Churchwarden’s Accounts* BRO: D/P 97 5/2
p 25 (25 March 1505 to 24 March 1506)

In *prīmis* payed for naylīs for the sepulchre l d ob.  
Item payed for colys to be halowed on esterevyn ij d  
Item payed for a li. of ffrankensenc xij d  
Item payed for wacchyng of the sepulcre viij d

...

1506-7

*St Laurence’s Churchwardens’s Accounts* BRO: D/P 97 5/2
p 29 (25 March 1506 to 24 March 1507) (Expenses)

Item paied to the Sexton for thred for the sepulchre l d  
Item for Colys to be halowed on Estur Evyn ij d  
Item paied for a li. off frankensenc xij d  
Item paied for wacching of the sepulcre iiiij d

...
1507-8

*St Laurence’s Churchwardens’s Accounts* BRO:D/P 97 5/2
p 34 (25 March 1507 to 24 March 1508) (Expenses)

... 
Item payed for I li. frankensens on Estur eve  

... 

p 35  
... 
Item payed to the same William for waccyng of the sepulcre  

... 

Note: ‘The same William’ is William Poo, under-s Sexton. That year he was allowed by the vicar to sell nettles from the churchyard and keep the profits (BRO D/P 97 5/2 p 35) and was paid 14 d for cleaning the churchyard at Easter. He also rang the bells for the Corpus Christi procession that year.

p 37  
... 
Item payed for making clere of the same gutter & beryng forth of therth  

fro the seid graves ’ & ’ [for] in bred & Ale to the synging of the passion  
on palme ’ sonyday ’  

... 

Note: The singing of the passion on Palm Sunday could be the simple recitation of the Easter story but it could also have more elaborate mimetic implications. See Eamon Duffy *The Stripping of the Altars* (New Haven, 1993) 23. From this year, there is a regular amount usually for wine for the clerks who sang the passion. Because the accounts were made up on Good Friday until 1516, this payment usually comes at the end of the expenses rather than at the beginning with the rest of the Easter-tide expenses and represents the payment for Palm Sunday in the second year of the double year while all the other expenses are for the first year. After 1516-7 all the Easter events recorded are for the same year – the second year of the double year.

1508-9

*St Laurence’s Churchwardens’s Accounts* BRO:D/P 97 5/2
p 74 (25 March 1508 to 24 March 1509) (Expenses)

In primis payed ffor the wacheyng off the Sepulkyr  

Item ffor I li. of ynsence  

Item payed ffor Colys on Estyr evyn to be halewed  

Item payed ffor iiii baner pollis  

... 

Item payed ffor CC lyveres & C pynns ayenst may daye  

...
Note: Seventeen folios (34 pages) of inventories of church goods intervene between one part of this account and the next (pp 41-73). The inventories are full and detailed and were taken in the years 1517 and 1523-4. Some misbinding has confused the lists. The inventories emphasize the wealth of the parish during the early years of the sixteenth century. They include listings of such things as relics (a piece of the True Cross and a bone of St Laurence) and liturgical silver and plate as well as vestments, altar cloths, service books (many with the incipits noted) and pricksong books. The only entries relevant to mimetic activities are the vestments for the Good Friday event (see the entries for 1523-4).

p 76
...
Item payed ffor a quart of Bastard ffor þe Synggers of the passhyon
on palme sondaye
   iiiij d

1509-10

St Laurence’s Churchwardens’s Accounts BRO:D/P 97 5/2

p 79 (25 March 1509 to 24 March 1510) (Expenses)
...
... In primis payed to William lesshame ffor Wascheyng of the gere
  vpon good ffrydaye
  iij s iiiij d
Item payed ffor Nayles to mend the sepulchre
   ob.
...
Item ffor a li. of sence agenst Estyr
   xij d
Item ffor Wacheyng of þe Sepulcre
   viij d
...

Note: William Lassham had served as churchwarden 1507-9

p 81
...
Item payed for a quarter of weyn for the syngers on palme sondaye
that songe þe paschesyon
   iiiij d
...

1510-11

St Laurence’s Churchwardens’s Accounts BRO:D/P 97 5/2
p 85 (25 March 1510 to 24 March 1511) (Expenses)
...
Item payd for watchyng of the Sepulcre
   viij d
Item payd for a li. of Sence
   x d
Item payd for takkes for the Sepulcre . ij boushels of coles & for ale
   iiiij d
Item payd for an awbe for A Chylde
   xiiij d
It e'm payd for tapys ’for ’ Childernes amys  

...  

Item payd for Caryage of bourdes from the chirche on ester Monday  

...  

Note: This is the first year that the small nails or tacks for the sepulchre that seem to have something to do with the Easter dramatic events is conflated with another regular entry for coals. The liturgical ceremony of sepulchre watching was also part of the Easter events and coals appear quite regularly. It is possible that they were for a brazier to keep the watchers warm.

1511-12

St Laurence’s Churchwardens’s Accounts BRO:D/P 97 5/2  
p 89 (25 March 1511 to 24 March 1512) (Expenses)

Item payed for ijº busshelles of colys . drynke . & nayles to the sepulcre  

Item payed for wachchyng of the sepulcre  

Item payed for a li. of frankensens  

...  

Item payed to Water Barton to the new Sepulchre  

...  

Note: Walter Barton was one of the most important men in early sixteenth century Reading. He was a mercer but also a lawyer admitted to the Middle Temple 5 February 1515 (Martin, ‘The People of Reading’, 91). He served as a royal servant and was an associate of Thomas Vachell. Although conservative in religion he was trusted by Vachell and Thomas Cromwell and served the town well in the uneasy period around the dissolution. His piety is attested by this gift of the elaborate Easter sepulcre that became the centre of the Easter ceremonies. Kerry remarks (St Lawrence 42) ‘it must have been an object of unusual magnificence.’ It was only one of many gifts to the fabric of the church. He was part of the group of parishioners that ensured that the valuable silver gilt chalice left to the church by Margaret Hyde, widow of Nicholas Hyde (see below note to 1513-4), did not fall into the hands of the Commissioners. They drew up an order specifying that the chalice was to be kept in the possession of the mayor if he was a member of the parish. If the mayor was not a member of St Laurence’s then the most recent mayor who was was to have possession (Kerry, St Lawrence, 119). His will (Kerry, St Lawrence, 179-184) probated 16 May, 1538 bequeaths his soul ‘to Almighty God, and to the suffrage of his blissed mother our lady saint Mary, and to the suffrages of all the holy company of hevyn’ and wills that 1,000 masses be said for his soul ‘at my burying and at my monethes mynde and before’. He left £6 13 s 4 d to the ‘mayntenaunce of the Masse of Jesus’ in St Laurence’s and £3 6 s 8 d to the Mass of Our Lady. He is buried in the church. His monument remains to be seen today (Pevsner, Berkshire, 200). His nephew William Berington was one of the jurors who convicted Abbot Hugh.
1512-13

St Laurence’s Churchwardens’s Accounts BRO:D/P 97 5/2
p 93 (25 March 1512 to 24 March 1513) (Expenses)

... In prímis payed for the nayles to the ffont & to the Sepulcre [ij d] [ij d]
Item payed for ij busshelles of colys on ester eve to make the halowed fyre [ij d]
Item payed for wachyng of the Sepulcre [vij d]
...

p 95
...
Item payed for wyne to the clarkes on palme sonday [iiij d]
...

1513-14

St Laurence’s Churchwardens’s Accounts BRO:D/P 97 5/2
p 97 (25 March 1513 to 24 March 1514) (Expenses)

... In Primis payd ffor nayles to the Sepulcre & to the ffont [ij d]
...
Item payd to Nicholas hyde for ij busshelles off Colys to make the halowyd fyre on Ester yeve [ii d]
Item payd for watchyng off the Sepulcre [vij d]
Item payd for a li off Encence [xij d]
...

Note: Nicholas Hyde had been churchwarden in 1498-9 and became warden of the Jesus altar in this year (Kerry, St Lawrence, 32). He served one term as mayor in 1522-3 (Guilding, i, xl) and that same year was the town’s member of parliament (History of Parliament: the Commons 1509-1558, ii, 430. He died in 1527-8 and is buried in the church (Kerry, St Lawrence, 188). His wife Margaret whose valuable chalice was so impotant to the parish (see note to Walter Barton 1511-12 above) died five years later in 1532-3 and is also buried in the church.

p 98
...

p 99
...
Item payd for a quart of basterd for the Clarkes on palme sonday [iiij d]
...
1514-15

*St Laurence’s Churchwarden’s Accounts* BRO:D/P 97 5/2
p 101 (25 March 1514 to 24 March 1515) (Expenses)

... 

Item payd for li of frankencence x d

... 

Item paid for watchyng of the sepulcre viij d
Item payd for ij *bushells* of Colis & for ale iiiij d

p 102 

... 

Item payde for a quart of basterd for the clarkes on palme Sunday iiij d & ale ob.

...

1515-16

*St Laurence’s Churchwarden’s Accounts* BRO:D/P 97 5/2
p 105 (25 March 1515 to 24 March 1516) (Expenses)

... 

Item payd for Coles & Ale iiiij d
Item payd for takkes & Racke nayles ij d
Item payd for grete nayles I d
Item payd for franckencens I li x d
Item payd for watchyng of the Sepulcre viij d

...

p 107 

... 

Item payd for a quarte of bastard for the Clarkes iiiij d

...

1516

*St Laurence’s Churchwarden’s Accounts* BRO:D/P 97 5/2
p 111 (25 March 1516 to 29 September, 1516) (Expenses)

... 

Payd for ij *bushells* of colis ij d
Payd for a li of frankencens xij d
Payd for watchyng of the sepulcre viij d
Note: This year the accounting year changes from 25 March-24 March to 29 September to 28 September. This account is for six months from 25 March to 28 September 1516. The antiquarian who wrote the years in the margin by each heading (Kerry?) missed this detail and has caused some confusion among researchers who have used the book.

1516-17

*St Laurence’s Churchwarden’s Accounts* [BRO:D/P 97 5/2]

p 115 (29 September to 28 September) (Expenses)

... Item paid for a quarte of bastarde for the clarkes vppon palme sonday iiij d

... p 116

... Item paid for watchyng of the Sepulcre viij d

Item paid for colis ij d

...  

1517-18

*St Laurence’s Churchwarden’s Accounts* [BRO:D/P 97 5/2]

p 121 (29 September to 28 September) (Expenses)

... Item for a li of ffrankencence x d

... Item for nayles & coles ij d

... Item for watchyng of the sepulcre viij d

...  

1518-19

*St Laurence’s Churchwarden’s Accounts* [BRO:D/P 97 5/2]

p 127 (29 September to 28 September) (Expenses)

... Item for a li of frankencence xij d
Item for colis
Item for watchyng of the sepulcre
...

Textual Note: ‘sepulcre ‘: for sepulcre

1519-20

*St Laurence’s Churchwarden’s Accounts* BRO:D/P 97 5/2
p 129 (29 September to 28 September) (Expenses)

... 
Item paid for watchyng of the Sepulcre  viij d
Item paid for Colis I d
...

1520-1

There are no specific expenses for the sepulchre this year.

1521-2

*St Laurence’s Churchwarden’s Accounts* BRO:D/P 97 5/2
p 142 (29 September to 28 September) (Expenses)

... 
Item payd for I li of ffrankencens xij d
...
Item payd for a bushell of Colis & takkys  I d ob
...
Item payd for watchyng of the sepulcre  viij d
...

1522-3

*St Laurence’s Churchwarden’s Accounts* BRO:D/P 97 5/2
p 149 (29 September to 28 September) (Expenses)

... 
Item payd to Iohn paynter for makeyng of geyr for the play iij s iiiij d
Item payd for watchyng the sepulcre  viij d
...
Note: See note on the Peynters above (note to 1506-7 p 29). The payments for the building of costumes comes in the list of expenses for Easter suggesting the play in question was the parish Easter play.

(Inventory)

... + Item a Red Chysable with a narrow Cross & all thapparelles for good ffryday
... + Item a Cotte for Mary Magdeleyn of Cloth of gold

Note: The items for Good Friday appear in the inventory for this year (see above note to 1508-9) in a list of vestments. The two "+" marks in the left margin indicate that the two entries go together. The fact that only these "costumes" were considered valuable enough to list in the inventory possibly indicates the greater importance put upon the annual Easter event than upon the more ephemeral dramatic events that appear in the annual accounts. Both these items also appear in the 1503 inventory (BRO D/P 97 5/2 pp 53-4).

1523-7
St Laurence’s Churchwarden’s Accounts BRO:D/P 97 5/2

Note: There are no specific sepulchre watch expenses this year or for the years 1524-5, 1525-6 or 1526-7.

1524-5
St Laurence’s Churchwarden’s Accounts BRO:D/P 97 5/2
P 157 (29 Sept 1527 to 28 Sept 1528) (Expenses)

... Item for drynk in the roode lost vppon palme sonday j d

1527-8

St Laurence’s Churchwarden’s Accounts BRO:D/P 97 5/2
p 169 (29 Sept 1527 to 28 Sept 1528) (Expenses)

... Item for watchyng the sepulchre viij d
... Item for j li of frankinsens xiiiij d

1528-9

St Laurence’s Churchwarden’s Accounts BRO:D/P 97 5/2
p 173 (29 Sept 1528 to 28 Sept 1529) (Common Expenses)

... Item for watchyng the sepulcre viij d
... Item for a quarte of malmesey apon palme Sunday iiij d ...

1529-30

St Laurence’s Churchwarden’s Accounts BRO:D/P 97 5/2
p 177 (29 Sept 1529 to 28 Sept 1530) (Common Expenses)
... Item for watchyng the sepulcre viij d
Item for j li of ffrankensens xij d ...
Item for a quart of bastard apon palme sonday iiij d ...

1530-1

St Laurence’s Churchwarden’s Accounts BRO:D/P 97 5/2
p 180 (29 Sept 1530 to 28 Sept 1531) (Common Expenses)
... Item for watching the sepucre viij d
Item for ffrankensence xij d ...
... Item for a quart of basterd [for] vpon palme sonday iiij d ...

1531-2

St Laurence’s Churchwarden’s Accounts BRO:D/P 97 5/2
p 184 (29 Sept 1531 to 28 Sept 1532) (Common Expenses)
... payd for watchyng the sepulcre viij d
payd for j li ffrankensence xij d ...
... p 185 ...
... payd for a quart of Basterd vpon palme sonday iiij d ...
1532-3

*St Laurence’s Churchwarden’s Accounts* BRO:D/P 97 5/2
p 189 (29 Sept 1532 to 28 Sept 1533) (Expenses)

... payd for watchyng the Sepulcre this yere viij d
payd for j li & a half of [sycces] ffrankensence xviij d

... Item for a quart of basterd apon palme sonday iij d

... Item for ij° busshells of colles for fyre on easter Eve ij d

1533-4

*St Laurence’s Churchwarden’s Accounts* BRO:D/P 97 5/2
p 193 (29 Sept 1533 to 28 Sept 1534) (Common Expenses)

... payd for watchyng the sepulcre viij d
payd for a pownd of ffrankensence xij d

... payd for a quarte of basterd ‘for’ the passion apon palme sonday iij d
payd for ij° busshels of colles for fyre on easter Eve ij d

1534-5

*St Laurence’s Churchwarden’s Accounts* BRO:D/P 97 5/2
p 197 (29 Sept 1534 to 28 Sept 1535) (Common Expenses)

... payd for watchyng to sepulcre this yere viij d
payd for j li [qu] & dimidium of ffrankensense ij s

... payd for a quarte of Basterd for syngyng the passion apon palme sonday iiiij d
payd for ij@so bushells of Cooles for ffyre on easter Eve ij d
1535-6

*St Laurence’s Churchwarden’s Accounts* BRO:D/P 97 5/2
p 201 (29 Sept 1535 to 28 Sept 1536) (Common Expenses)

... payd for watchyng the sepulcre this yere viij d
payd for j ’li’ of ffrakensense xvj d

... payd for a quarte of basterd for the passion on palme sonyday iij d
payd for iij° bushells cooles for fyre on easter eve ij d

1536-7

*St Laurence’s Churchwarden’s Accounts* BRO:D/P 97 5/2
p 206 (29 Sept 1536 to 28 Sept 1537) (Expenses)

... payd for watchyng the sepulcre this yere viij d
payd for a pound & a quartur of ffrakensense xvij d

... payd for a quarte of basterd apon palme sonyday for the passion iiij d
payd for iij° bushells of Cooles for ffyre on easter eve ij d

... 

1537-8

*St Laurence’s Churchwarden’s Accounts* BRO:D/P 97 5/2
p 210 (29 Sept 1537 to 28 Sept 1538) (Expenses)

... payd for watching to sepulcre & for Coles for ffyre on easter eve x d
payd for iij° of ffrankensense ij s viij d

... payd for a quarte of Basterd apon palme sonyday iiij d

... 

1538-9

*St Laurence’s Churchwarden’s Accounts* BRO:D/P 97 5/2
p 213 (29 Sept 1538 to 28 Sept 1539) (Expenses)

... payd for watchyng the sepulcre & for coles on easter eve x d
payd for j 'li ` ffrankensense xvj d
...
payd for a quarte of basterd apon palme sonday iiij d
...

1539-40

*St Laurence’s Churchwarden’s Accounts* BRO:D/P 97 5/2
p 217 (29 Sept 1539 to 28 Sept 1540) (Expenses)
...
payd for ffrankensence this yere & the last yere ij s viij d
payd for watchyng the seulpcre & for Coles x d
...
payd for a quarte of malmesey apon palme sonday for Singers iiij d
...

1540-1

*St Laurence’s Churchwarden’s Accounts* BRO:D/P 97 5/2
p 222 (29 Sept 1540 to 28 Sept 1541) (Expenses)
...
payd for watchyng the sepulcre & ij bushells Cooles of easter eve & pentecost eve x d
...
payd for a quarte of Malmesey for the Clerkes vppon palme sonday liij d
...
payd to loreman for playng the prophett on palme sonday ij d
...
Note: ‘loreman’ is probably ‘Loryman’ the under-sextant who appears in later records

1541-2

*St Laurence’s Churchwarden’s Accounts* BRO:D/P 97 5/2
p 226 col a (29 Sept 1541 to 28 Sept 1542) (Expenses)
...
payd for watchyng the seulpcre & for ij° bushells Colles for fyre on easter eve xj d
...
Payd for bred ale & beare apon palme sonday for syngyng the passion iiij d
... payd to loreman for playyng the prophet on palme sunday & for wafers then iiij d ...

1542-3

St Laurence’s Churchwarden’s Accounts BRO:D/P 97 5/2
p 230 (29 Sept 1542 to 28 Sept 1543) (Expenses)

... paid for ffrankencence ij s
paid for watchyng of the Sepulcre & for Cole xj d
... paid for A quarte of Basterd on palme Sonday iiij d

Note: This account is fragmentary at the end and the 1543-4 account is fragmentary at the beginning.

1543-4

St Laurence’s Churchwarden’s Accounts BRO:D/P 97 5/2
p 233 (29 Sept 1543 to 28 Sept 1544) (Expenses)

... paid for wachyng of the sepulcre x d
paid for Coles ij d
paid for A quarte of wyne on palme Sonday iiij d
...

1544-5

St Laurence’s Churchwarden’s Accounts BRO:D/P 97 5/2
p 238 (29 Sept 1544 to 28 Sept 1545) (Expenses)

... paid for wyne for the Clerkes on palme Sonday vj d
paid to hym that plaied the prophett that day iiij d
...
paid for Sylk poyntes for the Sepulcre ij d
paid for a busshell of Coles I d
paid for wachyng the sepulcre viij d
...
paid for Syngyng bread on palme Sunday I d

1545-6

St Laurence’s Churchwarden’s Accounts BRO:D/P 97 5/2
p 242 (29 Sept 1545 to 28 Sept 1546) (Expenses)
...

p 242 (Expenses)
...
paid to loryman for playng the prophete on palme Sunday viij d
paid for wyne gyven to the Clerkes on palme Sunday vj d
...
paid for syngyngbrede on palme Sunday ij d
paid for a li & a quarter of ffrankencence at ij° tymes xv d
paid for Coles I d
paid for watchyng of the Sepulcre viij d
...

1546-7

St Laurence’s Churchwarden’s Accounts BRO:D/P 97 5/2
p 248 (29 Sept 1546 to 28 Sept 1547) (Expenses)
...
paid to hym that plaied the prophet on palme Sunday viij d
paid for wyne & brede on palme Sunday vj d
paid for Syngyng brede & pynnes ij d
paid for drynck for them that bere the Canapie ij d
paid for ij busselles of Coles ij d
paid for tack nailes for the sepulcre I d
paid for drynk for them that watched the sepulcre ij d
...
1549-50

St Laurence’s Churchwarden’s Accounts BRO:D/P 97 5/2
p 261 (29 Sept 1549 to 28 Sept 1550) (Expenses)

... paid for a quarte of wyne on palme Sunday at Redyng the passion iiiij d
...

Note: The altars were taken down this year although there is the interesting attempt to keep something from the old liturgy as the passion story is read rather than sung on Palm Sunday. In 1550-1 they sell vestments. There are no more expenses for a sepulchre watch.

Document Descriptions

Reading; Berkshire Record Office D/P 97 5/2; 1499-1626; English; paper; 0+250+0; 330mm x 225mm; modern pagination; some display capitals; gatherings irregular; bound in boards covered in parchment; pages 1-2, 490-3 are separated from the book but have been repaired and put separately in a brown paper wrapper; title on front cover 'The Book of the Church-Wardens Accounts of the Parish of St Laurence.'