

**Covering a century and a half, from the reign of Queen Mary to the reign of Queen Anne, these accounts of the churchwardens of the north Berkshire parish of Stanford in the Vale offer a rich source for the study of parish life during a period of immense religious and social change. Their value is enhanced by a rare and remarkable memorandum by the vicar and religious conservative, John Fawkener, in which he provides an invaluable account of the some of the administrative, financial and social customs practised in his parish on the eve of the English Reformation. Some would survive the changes of that Reformation, which he abhorred; most would not.**

The detailed accounts that follow this preface show how the churchwardens managed parish finances, meeting both routine expenses and occasional exceptional costs, such as those incurred in restoring the Catholic liturgy in the 1550s and repairs to the church (following the collapse of the steeple) in the 1630s. The accounts also reveal much about the farming regime in this open-field village, about building materials and techniques widespread in the Vale, and about local festivities.

An extended editorial introduction provides valuable context for the accounts, and offers a detailed discussion of the issues that they document.

Joan Dils is widely regarded as Berkshire's leading local historian. She taught history and local history for many years for Reading University's Extra-Mural Department and the Oxford University Department for Continuing Education, including on the latter's certificate and diploma courses. Her publications include the acclaimed *Historical Atlas of Berkshire* (1998), the revised (and enlarged) edition, co-edited with Margaret Yates (2012), both published by the Berkshire Record Society, as well as numerous other books and articles. She has a particular interest in churchwardens' accounts, and has previously edited *Reading St Laurence Churchwardens' Accounts, 1498-1570*, published by the Berkshire Record Society in 2013.

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