

West Gallery Music in Silverton

Churchwardens' accounts now in the care of the Devon Heritage Centre indicate expenditure to support West Gallery choirs in the Silverton area. At Silverton, a regular 'singers salary' of £4 4s annually was paid in the period 1815-1824, rising to £6 6s from 1825 and continuing at least until 1854. Within this time, additional payments were made, including 16s for an 'Anthem Book' in 1817, £1 11s 6d for a 'New flute for the Church' in 1819, and sums for repairing instruments, clarinet reeds, and strings for a 'bass viol' ('cello) and double bass.

At Bickleigh, £8 was paid 'for New Bass Viol' in 1812-13, along with 12s for its strings and 1s 6d for its carriage. Regular payments of 9s 'singing money' and 12s for strings for the 'bass viol' annually were made throughout the period 1812-1827. A 'new flute' was bought for £1 10s in 1821-22, and a 'claironet' for £2 5s in 1826-27. A violin was bought for 10s in 1829-30, and strings were subsequently provided for this as well as the 'bass viol'. Expenditure on the clarinet includes reeds, a mouthpiece and joint in 1844-45, and repairs in 1845-6, and a new clarinet was bought for £3 11s in 1850-51. Payments for 'bass strings' continued until 1875-76, when they ceased, but the 'singers' salary of £2 per year continued into the twentieth century.

At Bradninch, 8s was paid for 'Ruled Paper for Singers' in 1807, and 13s 2½d for 'Strings, reeds, Candles, &c. for the use of Singers' later the same year. Similar entries continue in subsequent years, and payments in 1819 and 1820 include 'repairs of Bass'. Mr. Hedgeland was paid 12s 6d 'for Musick Books' in 1822, and there were further repairs to the 'Bass Viol' or 'Bass Violin' in 1822 and 1833. In 1834, 1835 and 1836, a regular sum of £1 10s per year was paid 'as per Agreement', to cover singers' expenses including 'Bass Strings, Claranete Reeds &c.'. A major refurbishment of Bradninch church took place around 1840, and the choir of Silverton seem to have taken part in the re-opening, as £3 12s 8d was paid to 'Mr. Govier for Silverton Singers opening Church' in 1842: payments to the Bradninch singers become sparse after this date.

At Rewe, the choir's activities begin as early as 1766, when £6 was paid to 'Mr. Bennett' for 'Instructing y^e Singers'. Strings and a case for a 'vile' were bought in 1769, and a new 'Base Viol' in 1782. A flute was bought in 1816-17, and repaired the following year. James Coles was paid £1 12s 'for attendance to Instruct the Singers' in 1817-18, for 32 weeks at a rate of 1s per week: he received a further £1 4s 3d 'for attendance and Bass Strings' in 1818-19, and William Staddon was paid £2 2s for the same in 1819-20. Musical payments, mainly for strings for the 'bass viol', continue at least until 1837-38.

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