

## **Renovation of the Church Steeple 1577**

From the proceedings of the *Heiligendeputation*  
*Bestand HstAS A 284/85 Bii 152*

The Konrad Church in Geradstetten was not yet 100 years old when it was struck by heavy weather. The proceedings of the “*Heiligendeputation*” (we would today say the construction authority of the church administration) describe a steeple and roof repair in the year 1577. What had happened? During a storm a “cold gust” of wind toppled the steeple and unroofed the church. In a report to Duke Ludwig the Geradstetten townspeople described their misfortune in moving terms and plead for assistance with the high repair costs:

*Eternal, Noble Prince, your Princely Grace, we your poor humble subjects wish you to hear of our dire circumstances.*

*Nobel Prince and Lord, Just...days ago our church steeple, not only the steeple but also the dome roof, lathes, tiles, and other fittings were destroyed, so that the weather hit the bells and the church interior, raining strongly upon it. As we are in dire need to restore the church steeple and roof. As we wish to guard against further damage to the belfry and the church. And as we document in an enclosure in this envelope, the cost will amount to one hundred sixty nine pounds 12 schilling, 6 Heller. Now our poor box here is in such a state that throughout the year...it is difficult to donate enough and collect enough...So we ask your Noble Prince humbly and submissively and in our need...to help. As such a necessary construction is to be done, in order that more serious mishap and damage are to be avoided. This we shall and must earn humbly and submissively.*

*Your noble Prince, from your humble subject, mayor, townspeople, and town council of Geradstetten, Schorndorf District.*

The Schorndorf assistant overseer Sixt Weselin confirmed the difficult financial circumstances of the town of Geradstetten as a result of costs incurred from the construction of a new wine press installation. Moreover, he commissioned the carpenter and master craftsman Simon Miller to perform a work estimate:

*Noble Prince and Lord, it is true as the supplicants indicate, one day last month, in the evening at vesper time, a cold gust of wind struck the church steeple and tore the roof work off, over 100 Schuch long, roof tiles tossed up and badly destroyed, the rafters and lathing destroyed by water.*

*Had Simon Miller here, carpenter and master craftsman, to inspect the steeple, and he believes that one cannot repair the damage for less.*

*9 August Anno [15]77*

*Your humble subject*

*Assistant Overseer of Schorndorf  
Sixt Wesselin*

In closing he attached the *Inliegende Verzeichnis*, we would say today enclosed estimate for work. It is an itemized cost accounting, and here are a few items:

*Destruction of the Church Roof of Geradstetten  
Anno 77*

*Item 300 roof tiles of which 100 need to be made*

*Item Roof tiles to be glazed by the potter*

*Item 12 scoops mortar to be applied by the roofer, 4 schilling per scoop*

*Item To the roofer for covering the church steeple, including equipment...requiring a strong will and nerve*

*Item To the dome carpenter to build the new rafters, krist, and lathing*

*Item 200 long spikes to go through the upper roof, 10 inches [Zoll] in length*

*Item For 22 boards for the krist, each 1 batzen*

*Item For the rope maker for the krist 16 batzen*

*Item 300 nails for the krist and lathing, 100 for each*

*Total 169 Pfund 12 Schilling*

The author of these lines [Hans Rilling] who had much to do with building estimates in his professional career is amazed how the form of such a building estimate has hardly changed in over four centuries. Moreover, we can learn from the estimate that the steeple and the sanctuary were covered with glazed roof tiles for the next centuries. The slate tiles of the steeple dome stem only from the year 1843.

The cost estimate is interesting from another point of view. The carpenter S. Miller used the old roman numerals in German cursive script, also known as "*teusch Zal*." One still finds them in old registers and account books (i sometimes j=1, v=5, x=10, L=50, C=100). He probably was not fluent with the customary Arabic numerals of today as the well-known arithmetic text of Adam Riese that brought these numbers into common usage had not appeared until only a few years earlier.

And the closing remark of the carpenter we will certainly repeat:

*Item The roofer should also bring with him a strong will and nerve [zwen xellen], it is not easy to stand so high, you must have a strong will and nerve to take it.*