

***CHURCHWARDENS
of St John the Baptist,
WICKHAMFORD
1663 – 1790***



The position of Churchwarden dates back to the 12th century. They are responsible for the fabric of the church, its contents and the condition of the churchyard. The information presented in this article is derived from a number of sources. The earliest information is based on the annual ‘Presentations’ to the diocese of the condition of the church. These documents are held in the Worcestershire Record Office. The dates given below are documented references to the men serving as Churchwardens. The sequence is not complete, so the period of service of individual men is not known in most cases. Where known, background information on the Churchwardens is given, for example entries concerning them and their families in the baptism, marriage and burial registers of the church, references to them in the Manorial Court records and in Wills. There were usually two Churchwardens in a parish, one appointed by the vicar and one by the parishioners, but for some periods only one post existed.

Appointments were made in the Spring of each year, so where three or four men appear under that same date below, some would have been completing their term and others were starting theirs. Before 1752, the Julian Calendar was used in England, with the New Year starting on 25th March.

Thomas Curtis
1663, 1664

He acted as homage at the Manorial Courts four times between 1639 and 1643 and was mentioned in the court of 30th April 1650 regarding the clearing of a ditch, by the Smith's shop.

Three children of Thomas were baptised in Wickhamford - Anne, 10/12/1637 (who was buried on the following 3rd February), John, 3/12/1639 and another Anne, 2/12/1651.

Thomas was buried at Wickhamford on 4th November 1664. Probate was granted on 3rd October 1665 and his wife, Margaret, and son, Thomas, were executors. Daughters, Anne and Mary, were beneficiaries.

John Beard
1663, 1664

In the Manorial Court of 17th February 1643, a quarter of an acre of land was exchanged between John Beard and John Combe.

He was buried at Wickhamford 30th September 1666. Probate was granted on 6th January 1667. Beneficiaries were his wife, Margaret, and daughter, Elizabeth. His brother and sister, Robert and Katherine Beard, each received 30 shillings.

George Blissard
1669

A 'George Blissard' acted as Homage in the Manorial Courts of 1635, 1639, 1641, 1643, 1646, 1647, 1648, 1650, 1688 and 1689. There are probably three generations by the name George Blissard who acted as Homage between 1635 and 1689. Six children were baptised in Wickhamford between 1639 and 1651 – Humfrey, 11/04/1639, George, 22/10/1641, Penelope, 4/11/1643, Elizabeth, 6/03/1645, John, 30/05/1649 and Steven, 16/12/1651.

In the Manorial Court of 23/10/1632, George Blissard Snr and his son George were granted three areas of land called '*Wellen*', '*Gretton*' and '*Morris*' (see the article, '*Wickhamford Manorial Book*' for full details).

He was buried at Wickhamford on 24th March 1699.

William White
1669, 1675, 1676, 1677, 1678, 1684, 1690

William White came to Wickhamford around 1650 at the age of 13 when, together with his father Richard, he took over the land and messuages 'Yeate's and 'Julians'.

Five daughters and one son, William were baptised between 1664 and 1681 – Mary, 6/10/1664, Margaret, 20/03/1665, Anne, 29/03/1669, Elizabeth, 19/03/1673, Alice 15/11/1677 and William, 7/04/1681.

On the battlements on the south side of the church tower there is an inscription in an oval border 'William White, Richard Clarke Churchwardens 1678'.



He acted as Homage in the Manorial Courts of 1675, 1688 and 1689. A William White also acted as Homage on 18th October 1699, a month before his burial on 20th November 1699, but this may have been his son William.

His wife Elizabeth was buried on 7th October 1692.

(See the article '*The Will of William White*' for more details of William's life in the village.)

John Jones
1674

Probably the son of the Chaplain John Jones, he married Alice Wilson in Wickhamford on 2nd February 1665.

Three children were baptised in Wickhamford – John, 15/12/1666, Mary, 12/02/1671 and William, 30/09/1673.

He acted as Homage at the Manorial Court of 14th June 1675.

He was buried in Wickhamford on 30th March 1687.

**Robert Booker
1674**

Four children were baptised in Wickhamford – Mary, 25/01/1671, Robert, 23/03/1678, Anne, 1/03/1680 and William, 18/05/1682.

He was buried in Wickhamford on 17th March 1704.

**John Baylis
1674, 1678**

John Baylis married Mary Knight 22nd July 1672 and had six children baptised in Wickhamford – Mary, 6/05/1673, John, 26/01/1674, Ann, 22/07/1677 (buried 1/08/1677), Richard, 12/04/1680 also presumably died as another son Richard was baptised 02/04/1685 and, possibly, Ann, 2/12/1687 (If this is his daughter, she was baptised after her father's death).

He was buried 15th November 1687 and his wife Margaret was buried 5th April 1700.

**William Fisher
1674**

He had three children baptised in Wickhamford – Steven, 1/11/1648, Ann, 19/12/1650 (buried 27/01/1662) and Margaret, 20/06/1654. However, in William's Will he mentions two other children, his sons, William and Edward.

William was buried on 2nd July 1697; probate was granted on 13th May 1698 and his estate was valued at £256-6s-8d.

Margaret, his wife, was buried on 17th May 1699.

**Richard Clarke
1675, 1676, 1678**

He had four children baptised in Wickhamford – Richard, 10/10/1647, Elizabeth, 19/10/1649, William 7/12/1652 and Hannah, 3/01/1654.

As mentioned above, on the battlements on the south side of the church tower there is an inscription in an oval border '*William White, Richard Clarke Churchwardens 1678*'.

Thomas Oldacre
1677, 1678, 1679, 1684, 1688

There is no record of Thomas having been baptised in Wickhamford but he was probably the first born child of Richard Oldacre, who married Frances Mickleton in 1641.

Richard was granted land in the Manorial Court of 16th October 1641. Five children were baptised in Wickhamford – Richard, 23/08/1663, Mary, 2/09/1665, Anne, 12/11/1667, William, 10/02/1669 and Frances, 10/08/1673.

Thomas is known to have had a son named Thomas (see Thomas Oldacre, Churchwarden 1692-1702). He was buried in Wickhamford 24th October 1709.

William Greene
1679, 1692, 1696, 1707, 1708

William was baptised in Wickhamford on 2nd April 1646, the son of Ferdinand Greene. He was married to Phillis, but the date and place of the marriage is unknown.

Four children were baptised in Wickhamford - William, 9/09/1693, John, 14/03/1697 (buried 25/11/1699), Philip, 1/03/1701 and Mary, 13/01/1690. He was buried in Wickhamford on 19th July 1718.

An example of a Churchwarden's Presentation is shown below, dated 'Twenty Ninth day of August 1707', reporting an illegitimate birth to the widow, Elizabeth Marshall. A son, Edward Marshall, was baptised on 25th May 1707. The parish Burial Register for the period records the burial of Edward Marshall on 3rd October 1704, presumably Elizabeth's husband. (William Greene made his mark but the signature of the second Churchwarden on the paper has not been deciphered.)

A Presentment made by the Church-Wardens of Wickhamford in the County of Worcester, & given in at a Visitation held at Evesham the Twenty Ninth day of August 1707.

We present Elizabeth Marshall Widow for having a Bastard child.

There is nothing else presentable as we know of.

William X Greene
his mark
James is gator

**Thomas Akers
1686, 1693, 1696**

The bell that was cast by Matthew Bagley of Evesham and hung in the newly built tower of Wickhamford Church in 1686 bears the inscription '*Thomas Akers CW 1686*'. His surname on the bell is shown below.



Apart from the fact that he was also Churchwarden for the 1693 and 1696 Presentations, there is no other information on him. He does not appear in any of the Parish Registers. It is possible he may have been in the employment of Mrs Elizabeth Sandys who was living at The Manor during the years he was Churchwarden.

**Edward Grove
1688**

He was married to Anne, but there is no trace of their marriage in Wickhamford or Badsey parish records.

Three children were baptised in Wickhamford – Ann, 1/12/1672 (buried 25/12/1683), Edward, 6/01/1674, who presumably died young, as another child was baptised Edward on 8/07/1677. There is also a record of the burial of William Grove, son of Edward 5/08/1675.

Anne was buried in Wickhamford on 16th February 1697. There is no trace of Edward's burial.

Richard Oldacre
1690, 1714

He was baptised in Wickhamford on 23rd August 1663, the son of Thomas Oldacre.

He was probably married to Maria (Mary), as Letters of Administration for her were granted on 25th October 1716 to Frances and Elizabeth Oldacre. Value of her estate £82-10s-0d.

Five children were baptised in Wickhamford – Mary, 31/03/1689, Richard, 29/10/1690, Thomas, 12/02/1692, Frances, 31/12/1692 and Elizabeth, 18/08/1695.

He was buried in Wickhamford on 17th August 1716.

Thomas Oldacre
1692, 1699, 1702

The Churchwarden's report for 1692 actually put 'son' by his name so it is presumed that he was the son of Thomas, who acted as Churchwarden between 1677 and 1688.

Six children were baptised in Wickhamford - William, 22/10/1684, James, 30/09/1686, John, 15/12/1688, Elizabeth, 16/02/1690, Richard, 12/02/1692 and Mary, 30/01/1694.

There is no record of his burial in Wickhamford or Badsey.

John Baylis, Junior
1693

John married Mary White, the daughter of William White on 12th October 1690. She died on 5th April 1700.

Two children are recorded as having been baptised in Wickhamford - Hannah, 11/09/1692 and Charles, 24/09/1696. However, in his will of 1st October 1728, as well as the aforementioned, he refers to his other children, Richard, Mary, John and Ann, but there are no trace of their baptisms in Wickhamford and they may have been the offspring of a second marriage.

He acted as Homage at the Manorial Court eight times between 1691 and 1715.

He was an executor to his father-in-law William White's Will. He acted as appraiser to several inventories and also witnessed the Will of Penelope Washington.

Robert Mason, Senior
1699

Robert married Judith Eaden on 26th April 1673 at Idlicote, Warks. and between 1673 and 1684 six children were baptised at Alderminster, Warks.

Robert appears to have taken up residence in Wickhamford at the latter end of the 17th century. He was buried in Wickhamford on 25th January 1721. Probate shows his estate was valued at £18-14s-0d and the beneficiary was his wife, Judith, who was buried on 3rd October 1729.

William Turner
1700, 1705

William was married to Dorothy and ten children were baptised in Wickhamford between 1689 and 1706, four of whom died young - George, 20/03/1689, John, 20/08/1691, Thomas, 18/06/1693 (buried 12/09/1693), Anne, 31/03/1695, Thomas, 06/01/1696, Nathaniel, 15/06/1699 (buried 22/04/1700), Jane, 26/01/1700, Mary, 06/12/1702 (buried 20/03/1703), Nathaniel, 07/01/1704 and Dorothy, 5/12/1706 (buried 13/04/1711).

Another child William, son of William Turner was buried in November 1711.

He was an executor and beneficiary in the will of Ann Field. There is no trace of William or Dorothy's burial in the Wickhamford register, so they appear to have moved elsewhere after 1711.

William Collett
1700

He was married to Mary and the only information on him was the baptism of one son, John, in Wickhamford on 28/01/1699.

William White
1705, 1721, 1727, 1731

William was baptised in Wickhamford 7th April 1681, the only son of William and Elizabeth White. (See article on '*William White's Will*').

Seven children baptised in Wickhamford – William, 19/02/1718, Elizabeth, 28/04/1720, John, 9/09/1722, Anne, 27/06/1724, Thomas, 15/10/1725, Mary 10/02/1731 and Sarah, 29/10/1735.

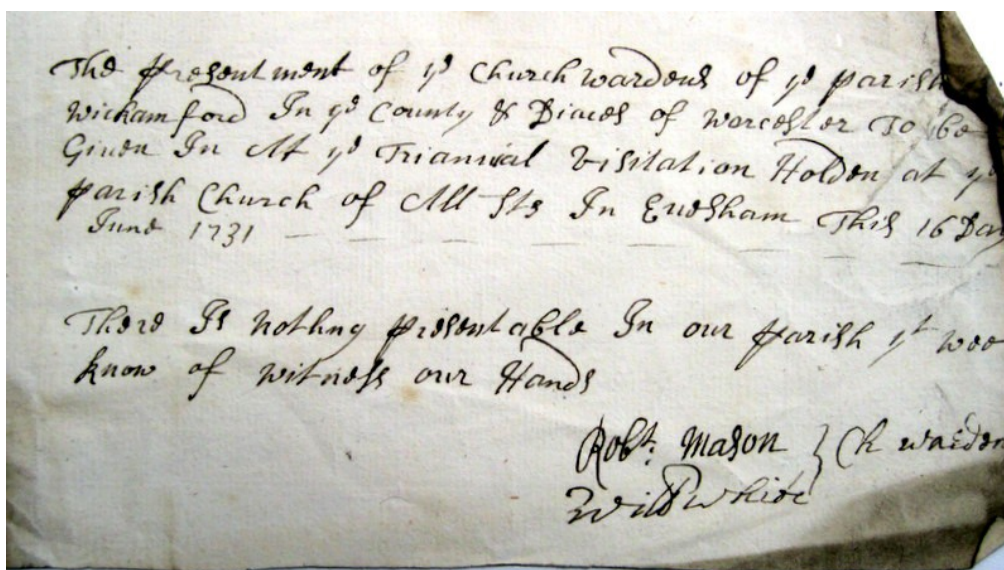
His wife Elizabeth was buried 14th December 1777. William was buried on 2nd November 1767 aged 86 and Probate was granted 5th December 1767. There is a memorial stone in Wickhamford Churchyard. (See article on '*Church of St John the Baptist: Monumental inscriptions and burial plots in the churchyard*')

Robert Mason

1705, 1714, 1719, 1721, 1722, 1727, 1731, 1733, 1734, 1738, 1744, 1746

He married Frances Oldacre on 10th July 1700. Four children were baptised in Wickhamford – Thomas, 19/06/1701 (buried 25/06/1701), Mary, 13/04/1703 (who married David Hide), Anne, 13/04/1705, (married John Wilson; tombstone in Wickhamford), Elizabeth, 9/1709, (married William Soudon; tombstone in Wickhamford).

Robert was named in several Wickhamford Wills between 1716 and 1727, acting variously as executor, witness and appraiser of Inventories. His name is on twelve surviving examples of Presentations; one for 16th June 1731 is shown below.



Frances was buried 10th October 1744; Robert was buried 6th June 1749 and his Will was proved on 7th April 1750.

John Baylis 1708

A 'John Baylis' was baptised in Wickhamford on 26th January 1674, a son of John. John Baylis married Mary White 12th October 1690, but he would have been only 16 and she was 26 and this seems a large age gap. She was buried on 5th April 1700.

Two children were baptised in Wickhamford – Hannah, 11/9/92 and Charles on 24/9/96, but four other children were named in his will (Richard, Mary, John and Ann) but there is no record of these four baptisms in Wickhamford.

He was a witness named in the Will of Penelope Washington; Probate 9th March 1697. He was a beneficiary in the Will of his father-in-law, William White (Probate 17th Dec. 1700) and an appraiser for the Will of Maria Oldacre (Probate 25th October 1716).

He was buried Wickhamford, 14th December 1727 and Probate was granted for his Will only on 1st October 1728.

William Fisher
1708

He was named as the executor and sole beneficiary in the Will of his brother, Stephen (Probate 17th December 1700).

He was named as an appraiser in the Will of Maria Oldacre (Probate, 25th October 1716).

William Fisher 'senior' was buried in November 1727 in Wickhamford and Probate was granted on 18th January 1728; his executors were his wife, Mary, and son, Ralph. The previous month there was a burial of William Fisher 'junior', on 13th October.

Richard Oldacre
1714

He was baptised in Wickhamford, son of Thomas, on 23rd August 1663.

He was named in the Will of Thomas Booker (Probate, 7th Sept. 1677) as an appraiser of inventory.

A number of his children were baptised in Wickhamford – Mary, 31/3/89, Richard, 29/10/90, Frances, 31/12/92 and Elizabeth, 18/8/95. His wife's name was not mentioned, but a Maria Oldacre died 2 weeks after Richard in 1716 and Frances and Elizabeth acted as Administrators of her estate.

Richard was buried in Wickhamford on 17th August 1716 and Maria was buried on 2nd September 1716.

Thomas Fairfax
1719, 1720

A Thomas Fairfax was baptised at Barford, Warks on 20th Feb. 1680, a son of William and Anna.

No other possible references to him have been found, so his residency in Wickhamford may have been short.

He was buried in Wickhamford on 1st February 1766.

George Blissard
1721

Two of his children were baptised in Wickhamford – Richard, 13/07/1718 and John, 8/3/1720. George's wife, Elizabeth, is named in the Baptism Register.

At the Manor Court of 18th October 1699, "George Blissard, son of George Blissard junior and nephew of George Blissard senior" was granted some land. (A George Blizzard was buried in Wickhamford, 28th Dec. 1728 but this may relate to his father or uncle as there seems to be no further trace of the family after 1721 and they may have moved away.)

Thomas Blissard
1722

Thomas Blissard married Mary Green at Wickhamford on 6th April 1719. They had a number of children baptised at the church – William, 3/1/19, Thomas, 24/6/21 (buried 1/2/24), Stephen, 25/11/22, Joseph, 31/10/24 and Elizabeth, 13/2/25.

He was named in the Probate for the Will of John Hows, dated 9th November 1727, as an appraiser of the inventory.

Ralph Fisher
1733

Ralph was described as the youngest son in the Will of his father, William Fisher, and acted as executor of his mother Mary's will of 20th March 1733.

He was buried in Wickhamford on 23rd March 1768 and was described as a bachelor in Letters of Administration of his estate dated 20th June 1768.

John Wright
1738

The only parish register entry in Wickhamford concerning this man is a baptism, on 12th June 1738, of Sarah Wright, recorded as the daughter of John and Mary,

William White
1744,1746,1747, 1749, 1752, 1757, 1759

William was baptised 19th February 1718, the son of William and Elizabeth. He was the third generation of the family to serve as a Churchwarden.

He predeceased his parents and was buried 2nd November 1760 and is described in the burial register as 'Mr'.

There is a headstone in Wickhamford. (See article on '*Church of St John the Baptist: Monumental inscriptions and burial plots in the churchyard*')

John Cormell
1749, 1762, 1764, 1765

There are 'Cormell' parish record entries at Wickhamford for earlier and later periods, but none for this period or for any named 'John'.

A record of the rental income for the Wickhamford Estate for 29th September 1762 shows that John Cormell was paying £28-8s-0d for a piece of land named '*Serjeants*'.

(A John Cormell was baptised in Church Honeybourne on 18th Nov. 1710, son of William and Mary and this may have been the future Wickhamford Churchwarden.)

John Wilson
1749

He was baptised in Badsey on 27th December 1723, the son of Thomas and Anne Wilson.

He married Anne Mason, the daughter of Robert and Frances Mason.

John died in Wickhamford on 19th Dec. 1753, aged 30 and was buried on the 22nd December 1753. (See article on '*Church of St John the Baptist: Monumental inscriptions and burial plots in the churchyard*')

Stephen Fisher
1754

As an Executor of his brother Ralph in Probate of 20th June 1760, Stephen was referred to as a 'Yeoman of Wickhamford'.

A record of the rental income for the Wickhamford Estate for 29th September 1762 shows Stephen Fisher renting a piece of land named '*Langet*' for £1-15s-0d.

He was buried in Wickhamford on 7th March 1769.

Benjamin Brook(e)
1754

There are four baptisms in Wickhamford of the children of Benjamin and Mary Brook – Elizabeth, 3rd Sept 1742, Mary, 2nd December 1744, John, 7th December 1746 and Ann, 11th November 1750.

Letters of Administration for the estate of Benjamin were granted on 27th Dec. 1808 to his daughter Elizabeth, the wife of William Huband.

Francis Holland
1765

Francis Holland was renting Manor Farm and other land from the Sandys family in 1762 at a rental income of £250 per annum. (See *Holland Family of Wickhamford Manor* article for more details on Francis Holland.)

A baptism of Francis Holland, son of Francis and Mary, took place on 29th Jan 1763 in Wickhamford.

A tomb in the churchyard at Cropthorne (below) refers to '*Francis Holland Esq, Late of Wickhamford in this County, who departed this life: July 29th 1782, aged 59 years*'.



The Will of Francis Holland, husband of Mary and father of Francis, was dated 19th April 1783 and for Probate, Mary, his daughter, was mentioned.

Daniel Hyde
1767, 1768, 1773

Daniel was the son of David and Mary Hyde (*nee* Mason) and the grandson of Robert Mason who served as Churchwarden from 1705 to 1746.

He was mentioned in the Will of John Wilson (Probate, 30th Dec. 1753) and in the Will of Ann Wilson (Probate, 14th Sept. 1776), his mother's sister.

**John Jones
1788**

John Jones married Mary Jones on 6th August 1793 in Wickhamford, but no other mentions of him are in the parish registers.

(There is a Will of a John Jones, husband of Mary, but this has a date of 12th July 1793 for Probate so the date of death here is prior to the date of the above marriage.)

**James Ashwin
1790**

A James Ashwin was baptised in Bretforton on 27th May 1760, son of William and Mary.

James' daughter, Ann, was baptised on 24th January 1788 in Wickhamford and her mother's name was entered in the register as 'Carlian'

A James Ashwin purchased Aldington Manor in 1808 for £12,000, but there is no definite proof that this is the same man as the Wickhamford churchwarden, but it is quite possible

(A John Ashwin married Elizabeth Timbril, on 6th Feb. 1717 in Wickhamford and this may have been a forebear of James.)

Acknowledgement

Thanks are due to Peter Stewart for the photograph of the inscription on the Church tower.

Val Harman and Tom Locke – June 2015