

THE MONUMENTS OF St MARY'S CHURCH, FAIRFORD - 12

SARAH READY (1691-1731)



A decorative and well-preserved monument in the Corpus Christi Chapel commemorates Sarah, the second wife of Alexander Ready, an attorney and one of Fairford's most prominent citizens of the 18th Century.

Sarah was baptised at Northleach on New Year's Eve 1691 the "daughter of Welthin Harman" according to the Northleach parish register with the father not named as he had died on 14 October of that year. Left with a new baby, Welthin renounced her right of Administration of her husband's will and authorised a friend to execute it. Richard Harman was a yeoman farmer of Cirencester whose inventory amounted to £43 3 shillings and 11 pence, less than about £4,000 in today's terms. Eight years later Welthin married Samuel Baldwin of Withington on 11 September 1699 in Cirencester.

Sarah Harman married Thomas Townsend at Rodmarton on 5 August 1713. It seems likely that Sarah was then living with her mother and stepfather at nearby Tarlton as a Samuel Baldwin from there was buried at Rodmarton on 15 November 1720. Thomas Townsend had been baptised at Hawling three miles southeast of Sudeley on 20 April 1686, the son of George and Ann Townsend. George died in 1693 and was buried at Hawling on 24 July. His will states that he left to his son Thomas "the ground which I lately purchased called Cleevly Ground".

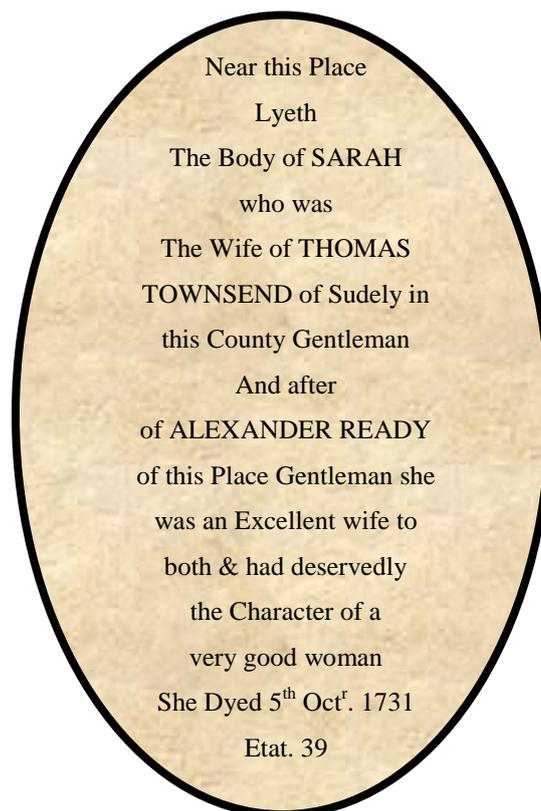
Sarah and Thomas had at least three children: George who was born in 1714; Richard born in 1715; and Sarah born in 1718. However, Thomas Townsend died on 31 May 1719 at the age of 33 and was buried in Hawling churchyard where Bigland recorded a tomb noting that Thomas was a "Gentleman of the Wadfield in the Manor of Sudeley". Wadfield Farm and its associated Cleevly Cottage is just south of Sudeley Castle on the land mentioned in George Townsend's will.

Sarah's mother Welthin Baldwin spent her remaining years in Cirencester where she died and was buried on 24 April 1729. By the time of her death she had become a very wealthy woman and although leaving most of her property to Sarah she also left in trust until they were 21 £1,000 to each of her grandchildren, George, Richard and Sarah Townsend. The attorney Alexander Ready was appointed one of the two trustees to her will.

On 2 September 1729 less than five months after her mother's death, Sarah Townsend married Alexander Ready by licence in the church at Quenington. Their only child, Robert, was born on 16 July 1730 and baptised in St Mary's Fairford ten days later. Sadly, their married life did not last long as Sarah died in Fairford on 5 October 1731 aged 39 and was buried, possibly in the church, three days later.

Sarah had been appointed executrix to her mother's will when it was written in 1726 however a marginal note in the copy held in The National Archives states that on 27 October 1731 Alexander Ready assumed the administration of the will as it had not been completed by the time of Sarah's death. Alexander continued to raise Sarah's children from her previous marriage and in 1734 signed a bond for the marriage of the 16-year old Sarah, his step-daughter, to Vyner Small of Eastleach who was 10 years her senior and was training to become an attorney. Sarah's brother Richard died in Fairford in 1737 and left property both to his brother George (including land in Sudeley) and his half-brother Robert Ready.

The inscription on Sarah's monument pays tribute to her as a "very good woman".



The monument has a lighter area surrounding its border, similar to some of the Oldisworth monuments. It also has traces of blue paint between the scrollwork. The coat of arms surmounting the monument is that of Alexander Ready.