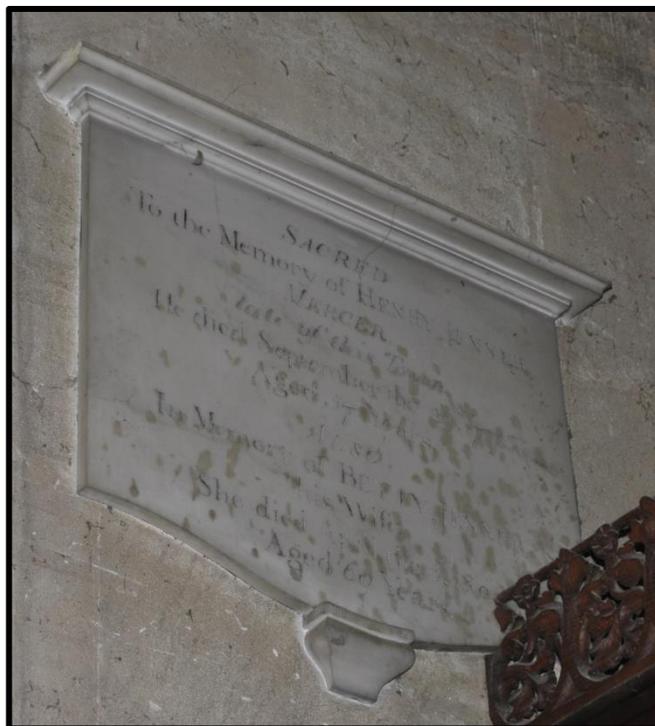


THE MONUMENTS OF St MARY'S CHURCH, FAIRFORD - 14

HENRY JENNER (1717-1775)

BETTY JENNER (1734-1803)



Partly obscured by a section of the 16th Century wooden screen that separates the Corpus Christi chapel from the south aisle is the monument to Henry and Betty Jenner. Henry was a mercer and was a long-serving churchwarden at St Mary's which probably accounts for his privileged burial place.

Henry was baptised in St Mary's on 4 November 1717 and was the youngest son and the last but one of Robert and Susanna Jenner's ten children. In Robert Jenner's will written in 1737 he describes himself as a shopkeeper of Fairford but in 1725 he is recorded as leasing a tuck mill in Quenington so it seems that his business interests were wider than just shopkeeping. When Robert died in 1741 he bequeathed £50 each to his sons Thomas, Robert and Henry and the same to his daughter Mary, however, this money was to be paid after the death of Robert's wife Susannah who did not die until 1765.

On 23 September 1754, at the age of 37, Henry married the 20 year-old Betty, daughter of Henry and Sarah Packer, in Kempsford's St Mary's church. By this time Henry would have been an established mercer in Fairford, probably having taken over his father's shop premises. As a mercer, Henry would have specialised in the sale of cloth but probably also stocked other goods as well. In the 18th Century most people would have made their own clothes from the material bought from a mercer so the business was most likely quite profitable. By 1753 Henry was also a churchwarden at St Mary's as his father Robert had been before him.

Henry and Betty had three children: Sarah born in 1755, Susannah in 1756 and Betty in 1762. It appears that the three girls were favourites of Henry's brother Robert who died unmarried in 1770 and who left them an equal share of £200 in his will.

Henry died on 29 September 1775 at the age of 57 and was buried in the church on 2 October. Small paving stones with just initials and years situated close to the monument indicate that Henry (and subsequently Betty) was buried in a vault in the Corpus Christi Chapel.

Henry wrote his will just two weeks before he died leaving his “messuage or tenement, garden, close, outhouses, buildings and appurtenances to the same belonging situate and being in the parish of Fairford now in my occupation” to his wife Betty and to be passed to his eldest daughter Sarah after Betty’s death. The household goods and furniture were to be equally divided between the three daughters after Betty’s death. An indication that Henry’s business had prospered is that he left £1,000 in trust for each of his daughters when they reached the age of 21, the trustees being his wife Betty and Mr John Keble, maltster, and his son the Reverend John Keble, the vicar of Coln St Aldwyns.



The grave markers of Henry and Betty Jenner in the Corpus Christi Chapel in St Mary’s, Fairford

Henry’s wife Betty remained a widow for nearly 28 years until her death on 3 April 1803 by which time she was living in Cirencester. Betty was buried in the vault in St Mary’s on 9 April. In her will she left only small amounts of money to her unmarried daughter Susannah and to her married daughters Sarah Humphris and Betty Gray, and her two grandchildren, the daughters of Sarah.

The wall monument to Henry and Betty was made by the firm of John and Richard Mills, stonemasons and builders of Cirencester, and is probably one of their earliest monumental products as it could have been erected after Henry’s death in 1775 with the inscription for Betty added after her death in 1803. The Jenner monument is more basic than most other products of the Mills family which are normally mounted on a black marble or slate backing stone.

The monument reads:

SACRED
To the Memory of HENRY JENNER,
MERCER,
late of this Town.
He died September the 29th. 1775,
Aged 57 Years.
ALSO
In Memory of BETTY JENNER,
his Wife.
She died April the 3rd. 1803.
Aged 69 Years.