

THE MONUMENTS OF St MARY'S CHURCH, FAIRFORD - 6

WILLIAM OLDISWORTH (1672-1714)



The fourth monument to a member of the Oldisworth family in St Mary's commemorates William, the eldest son of the Reverend James Oldisworth, Rector of Kencot, Oxfordshire and his wife Ann. This monument, like two of the other Oldisworth memorials, has the curious shadow surrounding it but it also appears to have lost its decorative border leaving a roughened edge on which the border would have been cemented.

William was baptised by his father at Kencot on 19 December 1672, the third of James Oldisworth's seven children. Unlike his father and his younger brother James, William's career was in trade rather than the clergy.

In 1690 William was apprenticed to his uncle Austin Oldisworth, a woollen draper and merchant tailor of Candlewick Ward in Saint Martin Orgar parish of the City of London, an area that had been devastated by the Great Fire of London just 24 years earlier.

The trade of merchant tailor in London was controlled by the Company of Merchant Taylors, one of the original 12 livery companies, which received a royal charter in 1503. However, by the end of the 17th Century the company membership was largely composed of cloth merchants rather than tailors.

Several of the Oldisworth family became merchant tailors in London during the 17th and 18th centuries and five of them were educated at the Merchant Taylor School founded in 1561 in Suffolk Lane in the parish of St Lawrence Pountney, adjacent to St Martin Orgar. These included William's brother James who was admitted to the school in 1690 and was ordained in 1703 but there is no record of William himself in the register of the Merchant Taylors' School.

In his will written in 1708 William bequeathed £5 to William Mayo, his business partner, to purchase mourning clothes. This could be the William Mayo, a tailor of St Johns Wapping, who married Elizabeth Clark on 8 January 1706. Apart from some small bequests of money to some of his relations for mourning and to the poor of Fairford and Kencot, William left the rest of his estate to his father. He also requested in his will that he should be buried in St Mary's at Fairford.

William died a bachelor at the age of 41 on 22 December 1714 and was buried at Fairford on 5 January 1715. The Fairford parish register records Kencot as his place of residence so it is possible that during his last illness he had moved from London into the rectory there to be taken into the care of his family.



The Oldisworth arms which surmount William Oldisworth's monument

The other Oldisworth monuments in the church are those of William's father James (died 1722), his grandfather William (died 1680) and his sister Muriel Loggan (died 1754).

In Bigland's survey of church and churchyard monuments in Gloucestershire published in 1791/92 it was noted that the graves of William, his father, and his uncle Austin (who today has no memorial) were marked on flat stones "within the rails", i.e. close to the altar. It is presumed that these stones are now covered by the steps that lead up to the altar platform or were destroyed.