

THE MONUMENTS OF St MARY'S CHURCH, FAIRFORD - 8

WILLIAM BUTCHER (c.1650-1715)



It seems strange that the grave of a humble saddler is situated in one of the most prominent positions in St Mary's church, residing in splendid isolation before the altar steps. William Butcher was born in or about 1650 and died on 17 June 1715 and was buried the very next day. No other information is known about him except what is written in his will which is transcribed below. No other person with the surname of Butcher appears in the Fairford parish registers until 1822 so he most likely was born elsewhere and died unmarried or a widower.

William Butcher's will was written on 5 November 1714 and proved on 2 July 1715. The will reads exactly as written:

“In the name of God Amen

I William Butcher of ffairford Sadler doth ordain this my last Will and Testament on the 5 day of November in 1714 my will is as follows ffirst my Soul into the hands of Almighty God which through the Merits and Mediation of my blessed Saviour and Redeemer Jesus Christ I hopes to obtain with my Body to the dust from whence it was To the poor of ffairford fforty ⁴⁰ pounds the use to be in Bread weekly given and twenty ²⁰ pounds for a candlestick and my name sett on the round part of him with what I give to the poor the Trustees may add or diminish to the summe of ffive pounds but not to take from the poors Bread but rather save some to raise their forty pound I gives to John Pallin Senr in Weald in the Parish of Bampton Twenty Pound for he hath been a good Chapman to me I gives to my Kinsman John Winn three score 60 pounds To my Kinswoman Sarah Winn fforty ⁴⁰ pounds I gives to my Mistress Burchall Eight 8 pounds if she pays my Trustees without trouble and if she put them to trouble to have none I gives to Leonard ffaulkner my Landlord Six pounds I gives to Edmund Hinton ffour pounds and my clothes all I gives to my Aunt Alder at Ogburn if alive five pounds I gives to my Master Thomas C of six pounds I gives to Mary C. of one Guinea I gives to Zachary Hinton Two ² Pounds And

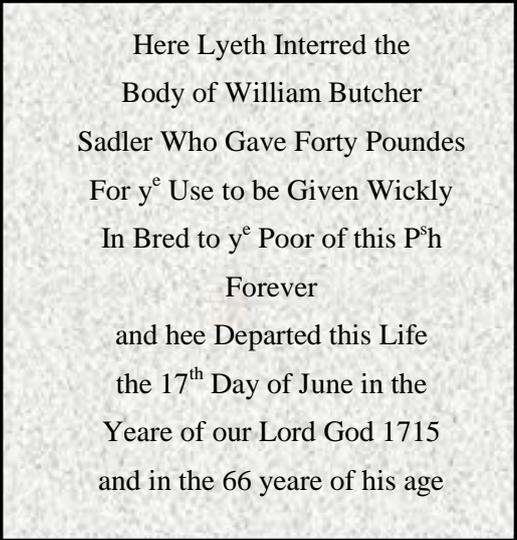
I gives all the rest of my Substance to my Sister Elizabeth Winn when all my Legacys be paid and I allow half a years warning to all my Chapmen to pay it I makes John Pallin the Elder in Weald in the parish of Bampton and Samuel Cassell a Glover of ffairford Trustees of this my last Will and Testament and to see it performed Samuel Cassell to have six pounds for his performance and John Pallin ffour pounds for his performance the necessary Charges to be paid In Witness hereof I setts my hand and seal. William Butcher sealed in the presence of Dennis Pope Sabina Comley... My Will is a small ffuneral not to exceed ffive pounds in all besides Rings I gives to John Pallin the younger my best Gunn and one pound three Rings to these three named Ten shillings apiece Gammer Cassell one to Jane Pallin one To her daughter Anne one Elizabeth Pope of ffairford Christopher Pope one Welford John Stockes Ten Shillings my Mistris where I was Apprenticed one and Arthur Turner his widow one in ffaringdon Mr Morse of Pindsor and his eldest Son one a piece.”

William’s legacy of £40 to provide bread to the poor of Fairford was very generous, being equivalent to around £18,000 in today’s money. This contrasts with his wish for a very modest funeral not to exceed £5. Mourning rings were a common feature during the 18th and 19th centuries and must have kept many local jewellers in business.

Several of the beneficiaries of the will can be found in the Fairford parish registers including Zachary Hinton and Samuel Cassell (Castle) both of whom were church wardens.

One of William’s executors was John Pallin of Weald near Bampton. It is possible that William Butcher came from Bampton as there was a family with that surname there in 1686 and 1721. It is equally possible that William came from Ogbourne St Andrew in Wiltshire as a Robert Butcher married Edith Morse there in 1682.

The surface of the tombstone is now quite worn due to it being in such a prominent, unprotected position. It reads:



Here Lyeth Interred the
Body of William Butcher
Sadler Who Gave Forty Poundes
For y^e Use to be Given Wickly
In Bred to y^e Poor of this P^h
Forever
and hee Departed this Life
the 17th Day of June in the
Yeare of our Lord God 1715
and in the 66 yeare of his age