

ART. XI.—*Two Provosts of Oriel College, Oxford.* By
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Read at Kendal, April 21st, 1960.

SOME years ago Mr R. Sharpe France, F.R.Hist.S., Archivist to Lancashire County Council, kindly drew my attention to the fact that the Lowick Hall, Lancs., muniments had been deposited in the County Record Office, Preston, and that they contained much interesting material relating to Cumberland.

It was not until the summer of 1959 that I was able to go to Preston to see for myself some of the documents in the collection, which proved to be even more important and interesting than I had hoped.

I was particularly interested in a small collection of Blencowe family papers whose presence in the collection is due to the second marriage of the eventual heiress of the Latus family — who inherited Lowick from the Ambrose family — Elizabeth, daughter of Ferdinando Latus.

Elizabeth Latus, baptised at Cockermouth on 30 March 1708, married at Bridekirk on 12 August 1734 Thomas Fletcher of Hutton-in-the-Forest. Widowed and childless, she married secondly at Lowther on 7 March 1735/6 William Blencowe, son of Henry Blencowe of Blencowe (1676-1721), and carried the Lowick estate to him. Thus the presence of Blencowe papers among the Lowick muniments is explained.

For the purposes of this paper it is unnecessary for me to mention details of the pedigree before the time of Anthony Blencowe, who married (settlement dated 27 December 1538) Winifred Dudley and died 31 January 1579/80. Anthony's children included 1. Richard, who died v.p. 20 May 1561, having married Appoline, who

married secondly William Allanby of Allanby Esq. 2. George, of London and Chichester, who was living in 1586, and 3. Anthony, Provost of Oriel College, Oxford. His career is described at pp. 72-73 of *The Provosts and Fellows of Oriel College, Oxford*, by G. C. Richards, B.D., F.S.A., and C. L. Shadwell, D.C.L. (Blackwell, 1922).

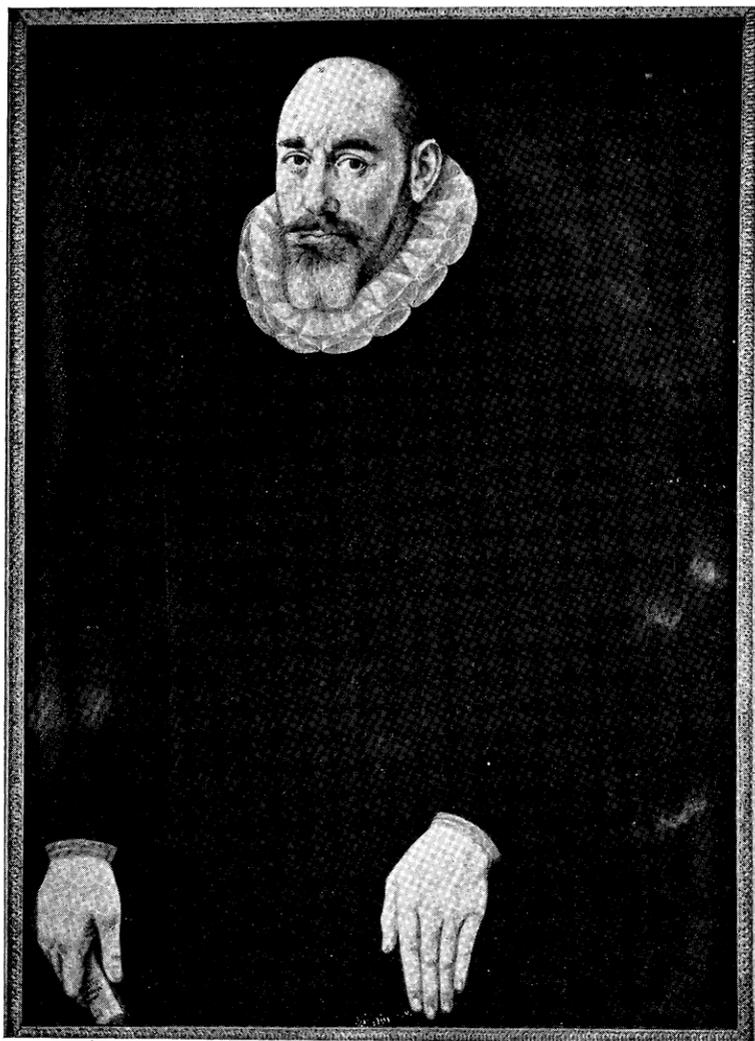
On 6 April 1560 he was awarded one of the Dudley exhibitions founded in 1529 by his kinsman Dr Richard Dudley (*The Flemings In Oxford* i 342). He graduated on 20 February 1563, was admitted a probationer fellow on 28 July following, and a perpetual fellow on 19 July 1564. He proceeded M.A. on 8 July 1566, and was praelector of dialectics in 1567. On 11 April of that year he was permitted to intermit his public lecture, because he was called away by his father's illness and the death of his brother. He was Dean in 1571-2, and senior proctor in 1571 and 1572. On 4 February 1574 he was elected Provost. He became B.C.L. in 1586, and D.C.L. on 4 July of that year. Foster (*Alumni Oxon.* I i 138) says he became Canon of Wells in 1566. He died on 15 January 1617/18 and was buried in St. Mary's, Oxford, on 29 January, as he desired in his will dated 14 September 1613. He asked to be buried in the North Chapel or rather in the chancel of St. Mary.

An abstract of his will is in the appendix to this paper, and here it is sufficient to say that he left the residue of his estate to the Provost and Fellows of Oriel, the money to be used, if possible, towards the new building of some part of the ruinous buildings of the college — i.e. the west side of the college.

During the time that Anthony Blencowe was Provost his great-nephew John Blencowe matriculated on 27 November 1607 at the age of 15. The young man was the son of the Provost's nephew, Sir Henry Blencowe, who was son of the Provost's brother Richard, mentioned above.



PROVOST TOLSON.



PROVOST BLENCOWE.

John Blencowe was, it is clear from a letter in the Lowick muniments, not altogether a satisfactory young man. In 1616 he was called to the Bar at Gray's Inn.

To his chambers in Gray's Inn Sir Henry wrote to him a letter of reproach. It is undated, but the date must lie between 1616 and 1632. The letter, which is sealed with the Blencowe arms — on a bend three chaplets — is addressed "To his lovinge sonne M^r John Blencow at his Chamber in Grais Inne give these wth speede." The letter is as follows:

"Althoughe I have writt moe by my cosine Josephe Hudlestone then I meant to have writte till I had herd more fro thee to content me yet this berer one whome I knowe well is importunate wth me to write somewhat by him. As I have directed thee for the halrigge to follow the advise of my cosine John Dudley so must thou also use therein the advise of M^r John Vauxe one whome in that busines I have muche used and trusted and he best knowethe bothe my mynd therein and how to proceed, for he is discreete. For thy Brother Anthony I can say noe more tho I have writt onely thus muche I utterly mislyke his idle carriage since his com̄ge thether w^{ch} makes me more carelesse of him yet if there were hope of his well beinge or painefull care I would give a llⁱ to have him well placed wth a Turkye marchant, so I myght not be charged wth a bond for him but I do referr all to my former letters and he that will not doe when he may hereafter canott thoe with much repentions he would and therefore use tyme upon tyme is for God knowethe thou hast bene a costly sonne to me and farr above my worth and thou . . . I ofer this for Anthony, if it were so or could so be done yet I protest I should bothe borroe and sell my goods for it and now should you of yourselves devise and cast, how to be able to live in this worlde for vaine is my helpe except there be in yourselves a forwardnes w^{ch} if I see not shortly I protest I will clearly cease. When I was of thy yeares I had this the little estat w^{ch} now maintanethe me my wife and children onely to myself to have wasted if I would and yet had I that care to the maine that I never durst play the xxth p^t of that vanitye whereinto thou hast rune headlonge without understandinge nor spend my time so Idly without paines in that place Well I pray God give thee grace and understandinge and so I rest this xiiijth of January

Thy lovinge father

Henry Blencowe

“If I were in thy case I protest I should labore day and nyght wth a full hole and resolute intentio and wholly bent mynd in the profession thou has undertake — if it were but onely to win that thou hast lost vid my ac[counts] of the . . . or the severall estimates of others.

“Tho I had noe care how to [live?] but except thou labore I know not how thou meanest to live. I have much marvailled to remember thee thoe painfull in thy childhood and now so Idle Aut Satis aut nunq̄ satis.”

John Blencowe had borrowed £40 of his great-uncle the Provost, and the amount was not repaid. After John's death the Provost and Fellows of Oriel wrote to his father, asking him to pay his son's debt.

Anthony Blencowe had been succeeded as Provost by William Lewis, though his election was not unanimous, and four of the Fellows left the chapel in protest. Among the four was Anthony Blencowe's nephew John Tolson, who three years later, on 30 June 1621, was elected Provost. The letter to Sir Henry Blencowe was therefore written by Tolson, who was his cousin, and the Fellows.

The letter, sealed with the arms of the College — three lions passant — is addressed: “To the Right Wor^l Sir Henry Blencowe knight at Blencowe in Cumberland theise.” Dated “Oriell Coll. this 14 of August 1632,” the letter is as follows:

“Right Wor^l

“All due respects promised. You maybe pleased to remember that there was a debt of your sonnes M^r John Blencowes of 40^l unto our late [paper torn] provost D^r Blencowe, both now with God, which Colledge by right of executorship demanded longe since: but he being not so well able at that time to pay it by reason of his small livelihood, and other debts made meanes unto us both by himself and freinds to have it wholly remitted which the Colledge out of respect unto a principall branch of that family, to which we had so much obligations, had certainly yeilded on to: but that being ingaged in extraordinary charges of building and suites of lawe not yet ended, and considering that it was a parcell of an estate, which that Reverend Provost had left unto us by his will for a particular purpos; we could not safely doe it without iniury on to the pious intention of our

Benefactor. But yet to show our readines to yeeld him all the favour possible we could It was agged upon in a Chapter meeting amongst us all to forbear farther demand of it, untill he came to a better Estate to pay it. Wth which answer he then rested well satisfied; and we doubt not yf God had lent him longer life he would with all willingnes have paid it but n[torn] . . . t having pleased God to call him unto him, and no other . . . [torn] we can hear) for the discharge of it; we are necessitated though . . . against o^r will, to have recourse unto the suerty, unless you wilbe pleased to take it into your worthy consideration which to avoyd farther charge and misinterpretation of o^r act, we hartily desire, it being otherwise like to light upon him, that deserves not to bear the burthen which hoping and desiring may seem reasonable unto you, we cease to trouble you farther and rest

Yours in all due
 respectivnes to be
 commanded
 The provost and fellows
 of Oriell Colledge''

John Tolson's career is recorded by Richards and Shadwell at pp. 85-86 of their book. Born in 1576, he was son of Henry Tolson, of Bridekirk, who, it is to be presumed, married Anthony Blencowe's sister. He entered Oriel College on 30 January 1589/90, aged 14, and was admitted to a Dudley exhibition on 12 November 1590. On 6 December 1593 he graduated, and he was admitted a probationer fellow on 17 February 1596, and a perpetual fellow on 17 February 1597. He proceeded M.A. on 23 February 1598/9, became junior treasurer in 1599, dean in 1606, senior treasurer in 1603, 1610 and 1614, and junior proctor in 1607. On 25 June 1611 he was admitted B.D. and in 1612 he became dean.

Provost Blencowe, his uncle, left him £100 in his will of 14 September 1613, of which will he was joint executor, proving it in London 28 February 1617/18. As we have seen, the election of William Lewis to succeed his uncle as Provost was not to Tolson's liking, and he was among the Fellows who left the Chapel in protest.

On 12 October 1620 he was elected catechist, and on

30 June 1621 the Bishop of Lincoln by mandatory letter commanded his election as Provost, and he was installed on 5 July. On 21 March 1621/2 he became D.D. During his reign as Provost the north and east sides of the College quadrangle were completed, and also the Chapel, which was consecrated in June 1642, Tolson preaching on that occasion.

He became Pro-Vice-Chancellor in September 1642, retaining office until the following February, when he was chosen Vice-Chancellor.

He held other preferment outside the University: he was vicar of Nottingham St. Mary from 1616, rector of Hampton Poyle, Oxford, from 1619, prebendary of St. Paul's 12 June 1632,¹ and rector of Marston Sicca, Gloucestershire, from 1634.

He died on 16 December 1644,² and was buried in St. Mary's, Oxford, on 17 December. His will, dated 27 July 1638, with a codicil of 13 December 1644, is full of interest, and I am indebted to Mr A. R. Birley of Magdalen College, Oxford, for the copy of it which he has

¹ See Le Neve: *Fasti* ii 405, 431. His stall was Reculverland, whence he removed on 15 February 1638/9 to Kentish Town.

² For an interesting sidelight on Tolson see a letter of 16 September 1639, written from The Queen's College, Oxford, by Gerard Langbaine to Christopher Dudley of Yanwath Hall, and printed in *The Flemings in Oxford* i 341-344. Asking Christopher to send him a description of the arms of Dr Richard Dudley, founder of the Dudley Exhibitions at Oriel College, Langbaine, says: "The reason of my request is this: "Oriel College is of late much enlarged with a faire stately new building now almost finished, much of it at the charges, all at the sollicitation of your couzen and countreyman Dr Tolson provost. It is a purpose of his & the Colledge to adorne the gates, Hall & other eminent places in the Colledge with the Armes (cutt in stone) of their principall Benefactors, in which number they doe gratefully acknowledge your predecessour Dr Dudley for one & therefore spoke to me to procure this favour from you, which I doubt not but you will freely afford, beeing a thing that tends to the honour of your family . . . Your Cozen Dr Tolson remembers his love to you, but has bin sometimes complaining to me of the harsh style of some of your letters for your Exhibitioners which he thought was too dictatorial and commanding. He did honestly professe that as he knew your right to be good so he did wish you might long enjoy it & for his part, for the love which he bears to you his cozen & those his countreymen upon whom you are pleased usually to conferre those places, he does not intend to doe anything which may redound to the least prejudice of either; but is affrayd withall that other men & at other times will not stand to putt you to some trouble especially if they be any way irritated by harsher terms."

been good enough to make. This will is printed as Appendix II to this paper.

Portraits of Provost Blencowe and Provost Tolson are preserved at Oriel College, and by the kindness of the Provost and Fellows of the College I am able to reproduce them here. That of Blencowe was painted in 1601, and that of his nephew in 1637, "aetatis suae 67."³

APPENDIX I.

Will of Provost Blencowe. P.C.C. 19 Meade.

Anthony Blencowe, doctor of law & Provost of Oriel College, Oxford. I desire to be buried in the North chapel or rather in the chancel of St Mary's Church, Oxford.

To the Provost and Fellows of Queen's College, Oxford "where I had some part of my bringing up." £20 for plate with my arms upon it.⁴

To my niece Dorothy Towlson £20. To my servant Thomas Forward £10 above what he owes me. To my servants William, Thomas and John Walter and Edward Simons £20 each. To my poor neighbour Jo: Figgethere 45/- to my friend Ashworth⁵ £20 to Mary Cox, late servant to my friend M^r Snowe⁶ dec^d £10. Rings of gold with a death's head on them to my lord Bishop of Oxford, M^r Sergeant Hutton, Sir Michael Dormer, M^r Edward Sheldon & M^r Thomas Flexney, Register of the diocese of Oxford.

To the children of my late brother George Blincowe dec^d at 21 years £40 apiece and to George Blincowe, one of my said late brother's children £60 over and above the £40, to be delivered to their mother, my sister-in-law, for their use.

³ This would make the date of his birth 1570, which is at variance with his age at matriculation, which makes the year 1576. Possibly the "67" was originally "61," and the one converted into a seven by a restorer.

⁴ The history of this bequest has been kindly communicated to me by Mr A. A. Williams, Bursar of The Queen's College, Oxford. He writes "I am afraid Dr Blencowe's gift did not survive the Civil War. In January 1643 King Charles asked the College to lend him all plate belonging to the College with a promise to see it justly repaid, and the College handed over a large quantity of plate which included the following item:

Another fair Bowle with Cover. Antonius Blencow L.L. Dr. et Collegii Orielensis praepositus hoc amoris pignus legavit Collegio Reginae olim eius Collegii Communarius 1619.

I have taken the item from Appendix I of the Catalogue of the Plate of the Queen's College, Oxford, by E. Alfred Jones. See pp. 259-260 of J. R. McGrath's first volume on Queen's College. Needless to say the plate did not return to the College."

⁵ Probably Henry Ashworth, Fellow of Oriel (Richards and Shadwell 76).

⁶ Perhaps John Snowe, Fellow of Oriel 1575-81 (*Ibid.* 77).

I forgive my said brother what he owes me on condition my executors be not molested about a bond with my brother of 1,000 marks, which is now cancelled.

Whereas certain lands in co Warwick were devised unto me by the will of my late uncle Thomas Dudley of London, deceased, to be sold to pay his debts etc. I desire the residue of the said money to pay the remainder of his debts as noted in a little black coffer in my chambers in London. Residue to the Provost and fellows of Oriel College — if possible towards the new building of some part of the ruinous buildings of the said college — i.e. the west side of the said college.

Books to the College library.

Executors my nephew John Tolson, fellow of Oriel and M^r Thomas Allen of Gloucester Hall and to each of them £40 apiece and £60 more to my aforesaid nephew. Overseers, M^r Isaac Bartholomew, Alderman of Oxford and my successor here as Provost, and to each of them a gold ring as before described.

My lady Dormer of Askett to the trust of my executors.

14 September 1613.

Witnesses: Thos Sandford, Thos Burton.

Proved London "ultimo" day of February 1617 English style, by John Tolson, aforesaid, and proved at Oxford 27 March 1618 by Thomas Allen aforesaid.

APPENDIX II.

Will of Provost Tolson.

In the name of God Amen I John Tolson of the hous of the Blessed Virgin Marie commonly called Oriel Coll in Oxon being sound & perfect in mind (the Lord be evermore praised) and not subject to many infirmities of bodie at this present, yet weighing & considering to myself the frailty of man & to so many casualities we are daylie & houerlie subject, do make my last will & testament in manner & forme as following. And first I commend my soule & spirit into the hands of my Lord my Creator most humblie beseeching him for his dear Sonn's sake our Lord & Saviour Jesus Christ (who has payed the ransom for my sinnes) that he will have mercie on my sinfull soule . . .

My will is to have . . . [my bodie] decentlie interred without anie pompe or too much solemnitie at the discretion of my friends who shalbe present at the time of my departure out of this life. Yet my desire is that if it please God I die here in

Oxon to be buried in the Chancell of S^t Maries near to the Corps of D^r Blencow my Praedecessor & my reverend deceased uncle. And for that small portion of goods now left unto me after my disbursimence for & towards the new building of our Coll. or what may accrue to me hereafter I do dispose thereof as following: Inprimis I give & bequeath to Oriel Coll. in Oxon to the use of the Provost of the above named Coll my successor for the time to come & so successivelie for ever, my cabinet together with the frame or pegs upon which it stands, which did belong to D^r Blencow & is now in my studie, & give to remaine or to be set elsewhere in some parte of my lodging as it may seem good to my successor afforesaid.

Itm. to the same the bed, the same roome as afforesaid, I give to my said successor 2 great chaires in the great dining room & olde crosse chaire together with an old window cussion made of an old cope & a little old stoole, all wch did belong to the said D^r Blencow & also 3 of my best cussions for those chaires to be delivered to those abovenamed by the executors of this my will hereafter mentioned. Itm. I give to the librarie of the said college 30 of my best books which shalbe in my studie at the time of my death, all which shalbe taken thence at the electiō or choice of the Deane & Treasurer of the Coll. for the time being. And if it be so that the Librarie be allreadie furnished with these books so chosen or anie of them, then my desire & will is that those books of mine so unusefull & superfluous should be sold by the Treasurer of the Coll. & others bought with that monie which shalbe received for them & so to remaine in one or more of the desks of the said Librarie.

Itm. I give to my brother Richard Tolson of Bridekirk in the countie of Cumberland Esq. the summe of ten pounds. Itm. I give to my nephew Lancelot Tolson Citizen of London & woollen Draper the sum of five pounds. Itm. I give to my servant Peter Yates if he shall continue to serve me during my life the sum of ten pounds: if not so long, yet for the service he has done me the some of five pounds. Itm. I give to the poor of S^t Maries parish in Oxon the sum of five pounds to be distributed by the Treasurer of the Coll. for the time being, if they be willing to performe this work of charitie according to the true intentio of the Don. or otherwise the said sum of five pounds to be delivered to the churchwardens of the said parish to go for the said use before mentioned & expressed. Itm. I give to the Almesmen of S^t Bartholomew neere Oxon the sum of fower pounds which is to be divided amongst them by the Treasurer of the Coll. for the time being by even and equall portions. And I doe hereby

constitute & ordaine my nephew Henrie Tolson, the sonne & heir of Richard Tolson before named executor of this my last will & testament. To whom the said Henrie I fully & freele bequeath the residue of my goods, cattells & chattells whatsoever not given or bequeathed.

In witness whereof [paper torn] of all other the premisses I have hereunto se . . . [paper torn] hand & seale upon 27th of this instant J [paper torn, but the date is 27 July 1638] in the 14th yeare of the raigene of our [paper torn] Lord King Charles . .

Jo. Tolson.

Upon perusall of my last will & testament beareinge daite the twenty seventh of July 1638 I doe ratify & confirme the same with these legacyes & additions followeing which are to be added as a codicell & to be part of my last will & testament.

Imprimis I give & bequeath unto Philipp Bouche⁷ 10^{ls}. Itm. my part of wheate in the library which comes to forty shillings I give unto Philipp Bouche. Itm. I give unto Philipp Bouch all my weareinge clothes with reference unto my Lord Bankes⁸ his discretion herein together with all my formallities. Itm. I give unto Willm Jennings 5^{ls}. Itm. I have a greene velvet bagge with some olde gold somewhat above 20^{ls} which I give as a token unto the Lord Bankes. Itm. I give my watch unto the Lord Bankes because he often referrs unto it. Itm. I give unto the Lady Bankes⁹ the Lord Bankes his picture. Itm. I give unto M^r Brookes my greate Bible which longe agoe I had of him. Itm. I give unto M^r Brookes my litle Meare. Itm. there is oweing unto me att this present 87^{ls} att London from M^{rs} Kinge wch if it can be gotten I give it to the Almesmen of Bartholemewes for & towards the Augmentation of their stipends. Itm. I give & bequeath my lease of Locke Meade made to the use of John Rouse by way of trust to Oriell College in Oxon. Itm. I give unto John Lewis the beaver hatt which his father D^r Lewis M^r of S^t Crosse gave unto mee. Itm. my little Diamond ringe I give unto my kinswoman M^{rs} Elizabeth Trott. Itm. I give unto my physitians S^r Maurice Williams,¹⁰ & D^r Saunders 3^{ls} apiece. Itm. I give unto George Murthwaites widdowe for the use of George Murthwaites child 3^{ls}. Itm. I give unto Robert

⁷ For Philip Bouch, Fellow of Oriel, see Richards and Shadwell 105-106. He was son of Robert Bouch of Cockermonth.

⁸ i.e. Sir John Bankes (1589-1644), Chief Justice of the Common Pleas (*D.N.B.*).

⁹ Wife of Sir John, and well known as the heroine of Corfe Castle (*D.N.B.*).

¹⁰ He was Fellow of Oriel (Richards and Shadwell 96).

Jennings sometymes my servant a paire of black laced bucke-
skin gloves

In witness whereof I have hereunto putt my hande & seale the
13th day of December Anno Dni 1644

Jo Tolson

In the presence of

Henr. Eccleston Cler
Wills Harford

Seal: On a chief three martlets all within a bordure, a crescent
for difference.

On 24 December 1644 Henry Tolson, of Bridekirk,
the executor appointed his "trustie and well beloved
freind and brother in lawe Edward Briscoe gent" his
true and lawful attorney, "to make probate of the said
will, to paie those legacies as are thereby dew to be paid,
to reteine for me those sommes of monie or other goods &
chattells are are, or maid thereby, so dew unto me."
This appointment was witnessed by Lancelot Tolson and
others.