

THE REPARATION OF BLETCHLEY CHURCH
IN 1710

The MSS. now printed, is preserved at Bletchley Rectory with other church and parish documents in a fire-proof safe. It is in Browne Willis, his handwriting; copies of it are to be found in the Willis MSS. Bodleian Library, and in the Cole MSS. British Museum Library. It is noticeable that he spells the name of the parish in three ways, viz., Blechelegh, Blechley and Bletchley. However much we may commend his liberality, filial piety and religious zeal, we deplore at the same time the destruction of much that we should now carefully preserve, *e.g.*, the new font he supplied probably supplanted a 12th cent. font.

The mention of the communion table standing in a dinner posture in the middle of the chancel is interesting. This was a survival of the Puritan influence of the Commonwealth time. It is a little surprising, as the rector, the Rev. Matthew Disney, was a good, probably a high churchman, and might have been expected to have placed it against the east wall.

In the RECORDS, Vol. IX., p. 370, is a description of the church plate, which includes the silver gilt flagon and almsdish given by Browne Willis.

The account given of the bells, though full, is not exhaustive, and can be amplified from notes scattered about in both the Willis and Cole MSS. The tenor bell appears to have been re-cast twice and changed for an entirely new bell once. Willis records: "the 'tenor not pleasing me, a new one was prepared at 'Gloucester, the old one taken out of the tower on 'Monday morning, Feb. 8 and taken to Gloucester 'Feb. 12, the new tenor loaded that day and hung in 'Bletchley tower Feb. 14, and rung the next day to 'church, the Parish being surprised at it" (as well it

might). This second tenor not pleasing, it was a third time taken down in July, 1715, and returned re-cast in September. Mr. Rudhall must have found Browne Willis to be a profitable patron.

The two handsome Common-Prayer Books are described in a " Tarriar " of 1724 as two Common-Prayer Books printed by Bill in the old English black letter and neatly bound in leather. On the outside of each cover, back and front, is inscribed, *Liber Parochialis Ecclesiae B.V.M. De Blecheley in Comitatu Buckingham.*

The folio Bible, said to have been the property of King Charles I., is 16¼ inches high, 10½ inches wide and 2½ inches thick. It contains the whole Bible and Apocrypha, Sternhold and Hopkins's versified Psalms, and prayers for use in private houses, and the Book of Common Prayer, and when re-bound, was added as a frontispiece a fine engraved portrait of King Charles in half-armour, and at the end of the book an allegorical picture of the king kneeling amid various emblems, with Latin and English verse and a Greek epigram. The volume was printed by Buck and Daniel, of Cambridge in 1638.

It is bound in crimson velvet, with two silver clasps, four silver corners, and a silver plate in the middle of each cover; the corners are engraved with cherubs and scroll work, and the plates bears the same words as the prayer books. In the *Gents. Mag.*, 1828, is mentioned the " oaken case made skilfully to fit it," now gone.

COPY OF A MSS. BOOK OF VELLUM PRESERVED IN THE CHURCH CHEST OF BLETCHLEY

This book after my time may, if my successors so please, be put into and remain in Bletchley Parish

Church chest; the writing being drawn over anew with better ink to render it more legible.

Deposited this MS. account of the Reparations of Blecheley Church in the Parish Church Chest of the same by the desire of Thomas Willis, Esq., this 30th of November, 1760.

WM. COLE.

An Account of what hath been disbursed from June the 23^d, 1704 to Dec. 26, 1709 towards the Repairing and adorning the Parish Church and Chancel of Blechelegh and the Reasons thereunto moving.

It having pleased God to take to himself Thomas Willis, Esq., Lord of this Manor of Blechelegh on the 11th of Nov., 1699, his body was conveyed down from his Dwelling House in London and (in Pursuance of a Desire he was said to have expressed in his Life time), buried in the chancel of this Church of Blechelegh—Which severe Dispensation was born by his Relict Mrs. Alice Willis with no less a Resignation than that of herself to the like decree of heaven, nor was she able to survive her indulgent and beloved Husband longer than the 9th of January following, and having in this intervall of separation given the highest instance of conjugal love as her last Test of it she begged to be (and accordingly was), buried next her husband.

Now these two Persons having fulfilled the measure of Life and run their Race, He in 41 and she in 36 years, which others hardly finish in 80 years, being early ripe for Immortality needed no Mausoleums or such Pious helps from Posterity to preserve their Memory. Yet could not he who had been the constant object of their Affections, viz., their son and Heir, who owed not only his birth, but a liberal and Religious Education to them, together with his Estate at Bletchley in a great measure free from several incum-

brances they themselves receiv'd it charged with. In short he on whom lay the united obligations of Duty, Gratitude, and Love could not discharge himself to the memory of such a Father and Mother without paying them at least the customary respect of a Monument: and yet what Monument could he erect worthy of such Parents? or farther what Assurance could he have that the finest Monument would not be defaced thro' Malice or Envy, Profaneness or Libertinism, a Fanatical zeal or open Sacrilege, or be neglected and so far buried in filth and dust as in another age (proving too true an emblem of Mortality), to want even a Memorial of itself?

Considering this therefore and with all observing how Incongruous it would be for him to cover the Remains of his Parents with Marble Statues or fine Embellishments whilst the other parts of God's House in which they lay wanted both a requisite Decency and Convenience for his Worship. He determined in the first place to provide for God's honour and to do justice to the Memory of his earthly Parents by an immediate Act of Duty towards his Father which is in Heaven, and thus having laid only two plain black Marble Stones over their graves and on one of them intimated his Piety towards God's House as an instance also of his Piety towards them, with a free will and devout Heart he thus repaired the Church and Chancel.

To begin with the Chancel which had a very bad roof and levell floor, the one extreemly ill leaded, and the other as indifferently paved, the Communion Table standing (in a dinner posture), in the middle thereof. The Seats inconvenient and irregular, the Windows stopt up with Brick and Mortar, the *Monions*¹ and

¹ Monion. Munnion is probably the more correct spelling of mullion; the word being equivalent to Fr. moignon; Sp. munon, a stump.

Jambs therein shattered and broken. This he thus repaired: The Roof he new leaded, the Floor he new raised with two steps at the East End. He paved it with black and white stone except over the graves of his Father and Mother which were covered with black Marble Stones as is above mentioned. The other part of the Floor he new paved with good stone and gave a new Communion Table inlay'd which he afterwards adorned with two well bound Books of Common Prayer and a large Bible bound in red velvet and plaited with Silver, and railed the Communion Table in, wainscoting the sides of the Chancel and erecting two new large Pews at that end of the Chancel next the Church, one for the Rectors and the other for himself and family, all being of Norway oak, and whereas the Door leading into the Chancel was very narrow and low he made a new door together with a door case of stone ashler work and Mouldings belonging to the same, and divided the Chancel from the Church by a very neat Screen of the aforesaid wood Embellished with Pilasters, Urns, etc. and separated it likewise from a place called the North Chancel with Balisters of the same. But what added most of all to its lustre he affixed at the East End a carved Altar peice of Norway oak and in Pannells properly prepared for that purpose curiously wrote the Creed, Lord's Prayer and Ten Commandments, and covered the inside at Top with Wainscot of Deal, and painted thereon a Glory with the twelve Apostles in full length and other Ornamental Representations. The Walls especially about the Altar Peice he further beautified with painted Pillars and Curtains, and round all the Windows and all the Walls not otherwise painted he laid over with Oyle and put up Sentences of Scripture in eight lackered frames. He new glazed the Windows throughout and made two casements to those on the south side and rebuilt the

least of them, the other having been almost rebuilt by the Rector² who supplied the shatter'd parts of them with New Monions and *Stoles*³ and he had afore done the Roof where it was decayed with new lath and Timber.

Adjoining to the Chancel on the North Side there stands an antient Chapel commonly known by the name of the North Chancel which since the Reformation was annexed to the Church as part thereof and crowded at pleasure, on any pretence of the Inhabitants who wanted seats, with some few old ones built in Quire Fassion which had been removed out of the Chancel and diverse other places, which were placed inconveniently both as to the hearing and seeing the Minister. This he new covered with- new Lath and Lead and separated from the Chancel above with Battlements, and below with wainscott of Norway oak and plaister'd the Walls all over, new glased the Windows and painted them all round about, and paved its floor with broad stones and there being under an Arch between that and the Chancel an old broken Tomb of one of the Lord Greys to whose family this was used as a Burial Place. This Tomb he repaired anew; moreover, he adorned it with the Arms of such as have been Lords of the Manor and Patrons of the Church since the Conquest and having obtained a Licence from the Official of the Archdeaconry of Buckingham set it apart from the Church for the burial of his Family, allowing nevertheless the Parish to have Liberty to meet in it as a Vestry at his pleasure.

As to the Church which was very much decay'd in its flooring and otherwise for its undecency obnoxious

² The Rector was the Rev. Matthew Disney. He was one of Browne Willis, his guardians. He died in 1715 and was buried in the chancel.

³ *Stoles*. May refer to the window-sills, or be *Stele*? Gr. *stèle*, an upright stone not used to support anything.

to the censure of the Ordinary, there being nothing in repair about it save the Roof of the Middle Isle, which was beautifully built and leaded A° 1629 by the Duke of Buckingham. In this he sett up in several parts of it Pews of Norway Oak and of other woods painted in imitation thereof, most of them of new materials and all placed in a Regular Order, at the West End he erected a large Gallery fronted with Norway oak, and a pulpit and Reading Desk of the same wood. He plaistered and painted the Walls and Pillars around the Windows the hands of skillfull Artists and put up 16 Tables with lacker'd frames filled with Sentences of Scripture. He made a new Font and Covering thereunto, and four new great doors of Norway Oak, paving it throughout with a new floor of good stone, and in diverse other particulars too tedious to be inserted, he added something to the Beauty and strength of the Church.

On the Tower which stands at the West End of the Church He erected four large pinacles with Balls and *Flamms*⁴ and would have built a cupilo which should have supported a Spire continued by a great master had not the Exaction deterr'd him by demanding an extravagant price. He gave also a Clock and Chimes to the Belfrey and a pair of new Hatchments to the Porch.

These things are here inserted not out of Ambition of being recommended to posterity or the least vain Glory, but as a Testification of his Devotion to God and Duty to his worthy Parents whose remains of Mortality are deposited within these Walls.

And 't is to be hoped that what is yet wanting towards the Perfecting of that good work here begun the Benefactor that has hitherto carried it on may live

⁴ Flamms. The flam is the horizontal or mobile limb of the vane, O.E. fane, a banner. G. flammern, to glitter.

to see finished, viz: the Communion Table decked with an Embroidered covering, the Pulpit with a cushion and cloth of the same kind.

But that what has already been done may be distinguisht it is conceived proper to sett down an estimate of the charge thereof, which will be seen by the following Bills, Contracts &c. with diverse Workmen, of which in their Order.

MASONS, STONE CUTTERS, &c.	£
Paid from June the 24 to 11 Novr. 1704 to John and Joshua Wigson for building the 4 Corner Pinacles on the Tower as agreed	60 0 0
Paid to them for Augmentations as gilding and enlarging the Balls &c. ...	12 —
Paid to them for paving the Chancel and N. Chancel, making the Chancel Door Case, Monions, Jambs to the same and of the Windows &c. as appears by their Receipts and Bills &c. in 1705 ...	34 7 6
	<hr/> 106 7 6 <hr/>
Paid Weston the carver for new cutting over the Lord Grey's monument	3 —
Paid him for two Black Marble Stones laid over the Bodys of Tho: Willis Esq & Alice his wife & cutting the Arms and Inscription	22 —
Paid to John Smith for paving the Church & plaistering & to Tho: Tatnall for building the outward Wall between the Church & Chancel & Battlements of it & to Dadford the plaisterer of Buckingham &c	36 —
Paid to John Bayly, Brickmaker. For carriage, Lime and Sand &c.—At least	20 —

JOYNERS

Paid April the 2^d 1706 to Tho: Ellis Joyner for Wainscoting the Chancel round the sides, making the screen and altar peice, & also the Screen and folding doors into the North Chancel by agreement 110 —

Paid him for erecting a Gallery at the West end of the Church & for the Pulpit & Reading Desk 58 —

249 —

Paid him for Wainscoting the top of the Chancel, making the Church doors and pewing the Church 125 —

Paid him for Wainscoting against the Bellfry, making the Font cover and other things 17 —

Paid Anthony Forfeit, Jonathan Jenkins, Richard Smith, and other country carpenters for several days work—
About 20 —

Paid Ellis for a pair of Hatchments to the Porch and Wainscott over the Doors entring the N. Chancel 10 —

PLUMMERS, GLASIERS.

Paid Francis Bradford of Stony Stratford for new leading the Chancel and North Chancel by agreement 20 —

Paid him for other Plumbing work at least 4 —

Paid John Bradford of Fenny Stratford for Plumbing work 3 —

Paid John Bradford for glasing the Chancel and North Chancel &c throughout 15 —

£214 —

SMITHS

Paid Grace the Smith of Blechely for Iron Work & paid Boller of Eaton & other Smiths and to Ironmongers for latches, Hinges, Casements & Locks for the Chancel Doors	15 —
Paid Mr. Ball of Newport Pagnell for a clock & chimes	20 —

PAINTERS

Paid Mr. Will. Wace of London A ^o 1708 for painting the Chancel top and about the Altar, the Pillars, Pews, &c. in the Church & Chancel, the Sen- tences, Coats of Arms for the Frames &c. in all as appears by his bill	140 —
Carriage of Materials, painted sen- tences &c. in Frames from London	15 0

Other Extraordinary Expences of a
different kind which were occa-
sioned by the aforesaid

Paid Mr. Edwards 1704 for diverse Draughts of the Church in order to alter it, viz. Drawings for an Altar peice and screen &c	5 7 6
Paid Mr. Bell, Fees at the Officials Office for Inclosing the North Chancel—May 1705	2 12 4
Paid 1709 for two handsome Common Prayer Books	4 10—

£188 4 10

Paid for a Bible of the best Print which belonged to King Charles the first and for binding it in Crimson Velvet & doing it with Plates of Silver	6 5 0
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Paid for a handsome silver flaggon gilt & large Dish to receive the offerings in to Mr. Sterling of Fleet Street, London, & engraving them & cutting letters, with covers to put them in &c	27 15 0
	<hr/>
	£ 34 —
	106 7 6
	249 —
	214 —
	188 4 10
	<hr/>
	£791 12 4

Besides which occur'd several particular things which are forgotten & abundance of unforeseen expences which, being in little sums, no account was taken thereof as here is likewise no computation made of the carriage of upwards of fifty load of free-stone from Helmden in Northamptonshire (which is near twenty miles distant), & other places, nor for several Materials given to the Workmen by the aforesaid Benefactor, or bringing down from London his Father & Mother's tomb Stones, which cost him near ten pounds &c., the whole whereof must amount to upwards of £100 with the charge of the tombstones £891 12 4

An account of other Disbursements which have been made since this first account, as the casting the Bells which were intended & designed to be alter'd when the Church was first sett about to be beautified, tho' those were lett alone till the last and not: attempted till the year 1712, in which year on St. John: Baptist Day, viz^t. 24 June, the five old Bells being now very untunable which had hung in the Tower ever since the year 1629 (when they were cast out of four large Bells), were taken down and with 18cwt. of additional metal (which cost with the carriage of it

from Arlesey in Bedfordshire to Blechely with other expences in buying it £65—16—), were deliver'd to Mr. Abraham Rudhall of Gloucester 2^d July following in order to be recast into six, at which time the Weight of the said five bells was as follows

	cwt	qr	lbs	
Of the first or Treble	5	2	24	Total of y ^e weight
Of the second	6	2	8	
Of the third	8	1		cwt qr lbs 43 0 7
Of the fourth	10	1	1	
Of the fifth or Tener	12	1	2	

And the charge of recasting them and adding two Trebles as here mentioned on the following Page.

Expences in the Casting of the 5 Bells and making a Peal of Eight.

	£	s.	d.
Paid as before mentioned for Metal bought and brought from Arlesey, C ^o . Bedf	65	16	—
Carriage of the said five Bells & Mettal bought at Arlesey to Gloucester & bringing them back when cast into six	22	15	—
Paid to John & Richard William of Kings Sutton C ^o . Northton for taking down the old five Bells and making frames for eight & hanging the said eight Bells	35	7	6
Paid to Will. Grace, smith of Blechely for Iron Work &c about the Frames & bells	9	13	—
Paid for timber bought at Beauchampton and given to make the frames & carriage thereof and for screws bought at London, brasses, &c. at least	25	—	—
Paid to Mr. Rudhall for Mettal of his own added to make the Trebles weighing about 10 ¹ 00 ^{cwt} at £6-10 per cwt as appears by his Bill	64	10	—
Gave Mr. Rudhall for casting the Bells—50 guineas	53	15	—

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Paid for carriage of the two trebles from
 Gloucester and of a new Tener from thence
 & y^e Tener y^t was first cast to be chang'd 15 10—

£292 6 6

N.B. To the Expence of the Bells the Parish rais'd
 & paid £40 but £20 thereof being assessed upon
 the Benefactor's Tenants he was forc'd to make
 severall abatements to them, & great part also being
 spent by the Churchwardens in Junquetting and
 great allowances being made by them to the Parish
 Clerk for Oyl and finding Bell Ropes &c. Scarce
 half thereof was regularly applied to the uses men-
 tioned in the foregoing page.

£ s d

Paid to Haines of Ailesbury's Executrix
 for making chimes to go on the said 8
 Bells to the 113 Psalm tune, and gave to
 the man that put them up & for brasses
 for the two trebles, & carriage of them to
 & from Ailesbury 10 10—

Paid to Edw. Forfeit of Stony Stratford
 for painting over anew the figures of Time
 & Death &c 5 5—

Paid to John Ellis for making Scaffolds for
 him & mending the wainscott & work in
 the Steeple 3 4 6

To Rich. Smith, Mason, & his Labourer
 for stopping holes about the Church &
 Steeple & several reparations, &c 3 10—

22 9 6

891 12 4

292 6 6

Total £1206 8 4

Gave to Kitchener of Olney for tuning the Bells £2 — Since the above was drawn up the Toner has been new cast &c done at above £20 expence of Mr. B. Willis.

Memorandum. April 15. 1717. One Mr. Paul Collins and Frances his wife gave a large silver chalice doubly gilt, weighing, both chalice & cover, 18 ounces.

NOTE.—Mr. Collins had the old chalice worth about 40^s. towards his charges for the new one wch. cost £10, as is supposed including the old chalice; round the new chalice & cover is this engraven:—

Donum Paulli Collins arm & Franciscæ uxoris decimo quinto Aprilis Anno 1717—to which Mr. Willis has added on the cover—Ecclesiæ B.M.V. de Blechely, Bucks, & also caused to be put on the chalice this: Calix Eccl. B.M.V. de Blechely, Bucks. This with the number of ounces was added by Mr. Cole of. Oxf^d., Oct. 15, 1717.

		BLECHLEY Hundreds	BELLS quarters	WEIGHT. pounds
A ^o 1713	1	5	00	12
	2	5	00	17
	3	5	03	17
	4	6	3	18
	5	7	3	20
	6	8	3	26
	7	11	00	26
	8	17	00	12
	Total	69	1	18

[should be 68 1 8]

The old bells weighed only 43 hundred and seven pounds, so they are about 26 hundred and a half heavier, and the present tenor is within a few pounds heavier than the old tenor and treble both added together.

THE REPARATION OF BLETCHLEY CHURCH 253

Inscriptions on the first and second bells cast after the six biggest, only the Bellfounders' &c. names, but on the six biggest these verses:—

- 3 Quod sit sacra dies primo denuncio mane.
- 4 Ad templum per me populus properare
monetur.
- 5 Pulsa voco plebem tractare negotia villæ.
- 6 Est campanarum sine me symphonia nulla.
- 7 Conjugium, Partus, Mysteria Festa decoro.
- 8 Me resonare jubent, Hominum mors concio
Funus.

Painting work done for Browne Willis Esq^{re} at
Bletchley Church May 5, 1708 per Will. Wace.

	£	s.	d.
For 3 times painting 179 yards of red marble in the Pillars and Arches in the Church at 1 ^s 2 ^d p. yard	10	8	10
For 3 times painting 677½ yards of Wains- cott, Colour grain'd & branched in the Pews & Doors at 7 ^d p. yard	19	5	2½
For painting & gilding the Font	15	—	
For 12 burnished fframes & writing the Pannels for the same 4 foot 4 by 3 foot 4 at 13 ^s each	7	16	0
For painting 11 large curtains rounds 11 Windows in the Church at 7 ^s 6 ^d , done in Distemper	4	2	6
For colouring the Beam in the North Isle in size	7	6	
For stone colour for the back Chancel	5	—	
For 12 burnished fframes & writing on the Pannels made of Canvas 12 Sen- tences at 8 ^s each	4	16	0
For painting the great Wall over the screen a large blew curtain, Time & Death on two Pedestals & a large Frame shaddow'd & 3 Sentences written	8	—	

For painting the Chancel, painting & gilding the Glory & 37 Cherubs' heads, the 12 Apostles as big as the life, 17 Pannels done with Ornament, 84 foot of cornish, three Members enriched, 56 foot 4 inch astical inriched, 26 of 5 Inch hollow round the Window inriched, gilding all the mouldings round the 39 Pannels, painting two Columns, five large Curtains & painting all the wall 3 times in Oyl	50 —
For painting 8 coats of Arms near as big as atchievements with ornaments neatly painted & strained on Pannels, 6 of the frames gilded and two burnished at £2-10- each	20 —
For a large case for the coats of Arms	6 -
For portorage & carmen to carry things to the carriers Inn at several times 17 ^{cwt}	10 —
For carriage of a box to Fenny Stratford	4
For alterations & scaffolding & additions since the bill given in	12 10
	<hr/>
Total (as per MS.)	£140 —
	[s/be: 127 5 2½.]

Articles of Agreement Had Made Concluded and Agreed upon this 23 June 1704 Between John Wigggeston and Joshua Wigggeston Freemasons of the Parish of Helmdon in the County of Northampton of the one part and Browne Willis of Whaddon Hall in the County of Buckingham Esq^r on the other part as follows—Imprimis. It is agreed by and between the said parties That the said John & Joshua Wigggeston shall & will for the consideration hereafter mentioned Erect or cause to be erected and built upon the four corner Battlements of the Steeple of the C hurch of

Blecheley in the county of Bucks four Pinacles of the same Dimensions at the bottom from whence they arise with the Battlements on which they stand which Dimensions are to be kept entire for four feet and a half above the present height of the Battlements endenting the top of the said Pinacles in manner of a certain Draught now remaining with us and subscribed by the said parties hereunto agreeing specifies; after which they are to contract by degrees for seven foot and a half more according to the said Draught. It is also agreed that upon each of these Pinacles so to be erected shall be fixed a Ball of stone in which shall be fastened a Weathercock of Iron with a cross on the top to arise from the bottom of the Ball to the top of the cross four foot in height. The Ball to be eight Inches in Diameter at least and the Flamms of the Weathercocks four foot in length all to be Gilt over with Gold from the bottom of the ball to the top of the cross. It is further agreed that these four Pinacles shall be made of Ashler Stone and well and workmanly performed and finished at or before Nov. 1st next ensuing according to the forementioned draught. And also that the said John & Joshua Wiggeston shall pull down the said corner Battlements as low at least as the leads of the roof of the Steeple and rebuild them of new Ashler Work to serve as a foundation for the four Pinacles herein contracted for. And that the said John and Joshua Wiggeston shall erect the Pinacles all of Helmdon Stone from the line of contraction to the top, and from the battlements to the line of contraction it may be lawfull for them to use Tattenhall Stone In order to which the said Browne Willis shall supply the said John & Joshua with as much of the Tattenhall stone which he has lying in the yard at Whaddon as they shall judge to be for their use & convey it at his own proper cost & charges to the Church yard of

Blecheley. Furthermore the said Browne Willis shall grant unto the said John & Joshua Wiggeston forty *spires*⁵ out of his Wood at *Rickley* towards making Scaffolds for the aforesaid Pinacles and give also to them one hundred pound weight of old iron towards cramping their said work that it may not in the least be found defective in any particular of that sort. It is moreover agreed that these Pinacles shall be erected at the sole costs & charges of the said John & Joshua Wiggeston except only those things which have already been excepted in the Articles. It is also agreed that the said Browne Willis his heirs Executors Administrators and Assigns shall pay or cause to be paid unto them the said John & Joshua Wiggeston their Executors Adm^{rs} or Afsigns the sum of three-score pounds of Lawfull money of England in manner & form following that is to say twenty pounds in part hereof when they have provided and conveyed in part of their Bargain ten load of freestone from Helmdon to the use of the said Brown Willis to Blechely Church and £20 more in further part when they have executed half these Convenants & the remaining £20 when they have compleated their above specified Undertaking. To the true performance thereof the said Parties bind themselves each to the other in the Penal sum of £120. In Witness whereof the said parties have hereunto set their hands and seals the Day & year aforementioned on the other side at the beginning of the Agreement.

Sealed & Deliv^d in y^e presence of us

WM. WOTTON
L THOMPSON

JOHN WIGSON
JOSHUA WIGSON

⁵ Spires from Rickley Wood. That is spars; Rickley Wood was finally cleared away about 60 or 70 years ago. It was situated on Watlmg Street just north of Denbigh Hall.



BLETCHLEY CHURCH, BUCKS. S.E.

A COPY OF THE FACULTY GRANTED FOR
ALTERING THE CHURCH

Thomas Ayloffé Doctor of Laws commissary & official in and thro' the whole Archdeaconry of Bucks lawfully constituted Sendeth Greeting Whereas it hath been alledged before us on the part and behalf of Browne Willis Esq^r of Whaddon in the Archdeaconry of Bucks that there is a certain place or Isle situated on the north side of and adjoining to the chancel of the Parish Church of Bletchley in the Archdeaconry of Bucks aforesaid containing by estimation twenty three foot and six inches in length and about sixteen foot in bredth, very convenient for a burial place or Vault (and whereas the said Browne Willis hath been & intends to be a great Benefactor to the said Church of Bletchley in repairing, adorning & beautifying the same), and that by & with the consent of the Minister Church Wardens and Inhabitants of the said Parish of Bletchley the said Isle is designed by the said Browne Willis Esq^r for a burial place for himself and family, and whereas we have caused a citation with Intimation to be sent out on the behalf of the said Browne Willis Esq^r to all Persons whatsoever that have or pretend to have any right title or interest of, in, or to the said Isle, or of in or to any seat or seats in the said Isle to appear before us or our lawfull Surrogate or other Judge competent in that behalf upon a certain day hours & place to them prefixed to shew a lawfull & sufficient cause if they had any why the aforesaid Isle should not be by us & our authority appropriated & confirmed to the said Browne Willis Esq^r for a burial place for himself & family, and also why the seats in the said Isle should not be removed out thereof, and neither the Churchwardens nor any other Parishioner or Claimer making objection to it upon the Publication the Citation or Intimation now appearing on the day

hours & place to them prefixed to shew any lawfull or sufficient cause why the aforesaid Isle should not be appropriated & continued to the said Browne Willis for a burial place for himself & family, nor to shew any cause why the seats in the said Isle should not be removed out thereof Wee therefore the Commissary & Official aforesaid upon the petition of the said Browne Willis Esq^r in penalty of all persons whatsoever not appearing, have granted assigned & confirmed & by these presents do grant assign & confirm the said place or Isle situated on the North side of and adjoining to the chancel of the said Parish Church of Bletchley containing by estimation twenty-three foot and six inches in length & about sixteen foot in breadth unto the said Browne Willis Esq^r for a burial place for himself and family and have also licensed & authorized and by these presents do License & authorize the said Browne Willis to take away & remove the seats in the said Isle out thereof (always saving the right of any Person whatsoever) in Testimony whereof we have caused the seal which we use in this behalf to be put to these presents. Dated the ninth day of November in the year of our Lord God one thousand seven hundred and four.

JOSEPH BELL

Deputy REGISTRAR

THE REPARATION IN 1867.

A century and a half after the Browne Willis restoration the church being very dilapidated, required extensive repairs. The architect employed, Mr. William White, F.S.A., embodied in his exhaustive report observations, recommendations and estimates. He stated that the only parts of the original church traceable were the south door (late 12th cent.), one sedile (late 13th cent.). The roof timbers of the nave and porch were tolerably sound; of the north aisle somewhat defective; of the south aisle much

decayed. The lead work of the roofs required re-laying and re-casting, the oak boarding beneath was much decayed, the oak and lead tending to destroy each other.

The modernised north and south windows in the aisles required the sills to be raised and the tracery restored; the windows throughout required renewal of the stone jambs and sills, and the glazing to be re-leaded with diamond panes.

All the painted marbling and curtains to be cleared off the interior stone work.

The chancel was almost re-built, as the windows were re-modelled and the tracery is all new. The west gallery, the panelling and all the oak woodwork abolished. The excellence of the woodwork was commended by Mr. White, though he calls the chancel screen 'cumbrous.' The Royal Arms, which was over the screen, is now over the north door.

Mr. White called the oak reredos 'massive and handsome, ' to be destroyed only if replaced with something good. This was done. A description of this 'something good' can be read in the RECORDS, Vol. III., p. 281, an estimate which is not shared by modern taste. The loss of the oak reredos is to be deplored. Fortunately, the twelve apostles (one wears spectacles) on the chancel ceiling were not destroyed; tradition attributes them to Sir James Thornhill. This is not impossible as Browne Willis liked association with the best. The whole church seems to have been almost ruinous, mullions, jambs and stonework being repaired with cement and plaster, the tower walls and windows were very bad, and the top stage was almost re-built. The pinnacles were abolished and stair turret carried up and finished with a weathered top. The contract accepted for the work was £1,677, but as the stonework was found to

require far greater replacement than the architect first thought, the ultimate cost was £1,931.

The north aisle of the chancel, or De Wilton chantry aisle which Browne Willis appropriated as his family burial place, though only 31 by 14 feet was especially expensive, costing about £250 to repair. This aisle was used for a school before the restoration, as the writer was told by the late Mr. Charles Crane.

The architect allowed £40 for a new pulpit if required. It was not, as the Rector, the Rev. William Bennit acquired (tradition says for one shilling, though this is questioned) the discarded pulpit of St. Andrew's, Linslade. This pulpit is of stone, octagonal, resting on a shaft, with moulded capital and base. The panels contain figures of our Lord and the four evangelists. A Linslade parishioner influenced the building committee of St. Andrew's to reject the pulpit as 'popish' in its tendency: so it came to Bletchley. After this restoration the church was re-opened 19 May, 1868.

In the *Gent's Mag.*, 1849, a writer states, " that at 'Bletchley the only new thing of interest is a barrel-organ of decent but not imposing appearance. The work of Browne Willis is rich though faded; the chancel, altar, and gallery screens, ionic and corinthian, and pewing of excellent wainscot, may see centuries yet, the careful marbled painting of the pillars and arches is in surprising preservation. Of the pulpit and chancel hangings the velvet is decidedly changed, but the gold fringe is as fresh as yesterday. The bells amount to eight, the chimes, which play every third hour, a rare concomitant of a country village, are amongst the best in England." This account was written only 15 years before Mr. White's devastating report.

WILLIAM BRADBROOKE.