

WM Harvey History + Antiquaries
of the Hundred of Willey 1878

BLETSOE OR BLETSHOE.

Blecheshou.—About six miles north-west of Bedford, on the road to Higham Ferrers. The parish boundaries are Riseley and Knotting on the north; Milton Ernest and Radwell on the south; Thurleigh on the east; and Sharnbrook and Felmersham on the west; the river Ouse separates it from the two latter parishes. It comprises the hamlet of Bourne End and part of Whitwick Green. Soil, clay; subsoil, gravel, clay, and limestone.

The area of the parish is probably between 2,100 and 2,200 acres.*

The village feast is kept on the first Sunday following September 19.

The lands of Bletsoe were nearly equally divided by the Conqueror between his niece, the Countess Judith,^b and Hugh de Beauchamp,^c but the descendants or representatives of the latter eventually acquired almost the entire parish.

* "About 2,000."—Lewis' *Top. Dict.* "2,220."—*Parl. Gazett.* "2,187."—Kelly's *Post Office Directory*, Beds, 1869, and Harrod's *Royal County Directory of Bedfordshire*, 1876.

^b *Manor. Judith Fee.* (The land of Countess Judith.) In Blecheshou, in the half hundred of Buchelai, Osbernus holds two hides and a-half of the Countess. There is land for four plough-teams. In demesne one plough-land; and six villans have three plough-lands. There are three bordars, and three servi, and half a mill rated at ten shillings; pasture for one plough-team; pannage for 100 hogs. Worth and hath been worth 1x shillings. Leuena, a man of King Edward, held this manor, and could sell or give it away.—*Domesday*, p. 217.

An interest in this fee passed, presumably, with other estates of the Countess, to the De Greys,² and was subsequently transferred to the St. Johns or their predecessors in title. Under the superiority of the former family the Harveys held their chief estate in the adjoining parish of Thurleigh. John Hervy, armiger, died seised *int. al.* of land in "Radeswell" and "Blottesho;"³ and on or about 14 June, 36 Elizabeth, John Hurvy died seised *int. al.* of a messuage and lands in Bletsoe, worth 10s. 4d. a year, holden of Lord St. John, as of his manor of Bletsoe.⁴

^c *Manor. Beauchamp Fee.* *Bedford Honor.* *Bletsoe Honor.* (The land of Hugh de Beauchamp.) In Blecheshou, in the half hundred of Bochelai, Osbertus de broilg holds two hides and a-half of Hugh. There is land for four plough-teams. In demesne, one plough-land; and seven villans have three plough-lands. There are two bordars and two servi; and half a mill rated at ten shillings. Pasture for one plough-team. Wood for 100 hogs. Worth and hath been worth about 1x shillings. Aschil held this manor, and three soemen had three virgates there which they could sell to whom they pleased.—*Domesday*, p. 213.

¹ *Vide* Harrold, Bromham, Stagsden, Felmersham, Radwell, and Sharnbrook.

² *Vide* Harrold. A messuage, with one acre, in Bletsoe was given to Harwold Priory, temp. K. John.—*Rot. Hund.*

³ *Esc.* 14 Edw. IV. nu. 11.

⁴ *Chanc. Inq.* p.m. 37 Eliz. *Vide* Thurleigh.

⁵ *Vide* Biddenham, Bromham, Stagsden, Turvey, Sharnbrook, and Thurleigh.

⁶ *Vide* Biddenham, Bromham, Carlton, Hinwick, &c.

Bletsoc was the head of a capital honor to which belonged several knight's fees, which are thus enumerated in the Book of Fees, temp. Henry III.:

"In Blechesho, Radwell, Hynewic, Bydeham, Broumham, Chernibroc, Karleton, Turvey, Stachesdon."
—Harl. 313, fo. 46.

In the same reign, Simon de Pateshull held this manor of the Barony of Bedford by the service of one knight's fee.^a This or another Simon is said to have married the daughter and heiress of Robert Bray or Broy, of Bletsoc^b (perhaps a descendant of the Domesday mesne lord).

John (? Simon) de Pateshull held this manor, advowson, &c., of the same barony, but immediately of Roger l'Estrange, and as parcel of Roger de Monchensi's portion thereof. It appears that he enjoyed a several fishery in the Ouse from Stoke to "Humberdale," and fishing rights from Pinch mill to Stoke and from Humberdale to Pavenham (pool).^c

Simon de Pateshull married Isabella de Steyngreve or Stangrave, a coheir of the Barony of Beauchamp, of Bedford,—see the pedigree under Biddenham,—and about the 23rd King Edward I. (1294-5) did homage for the lands which his wife brought him. His widow married, secondly, Sir Walter de Teye, summoned to Parliament 1299-1307, *jur. ux.*, as Walter de Teye, Lord of Stangrave, who died without issue of the said Isabella 1325,^d seised, in right of his wife, of an interest in Bromham, Wootton, Linslade, Houghton Conquest, and Keysoe,—parcel of the said Barony of Bedford,^e—to which Sir John de Pateshull, knt.,^f son of Simon and Isabella, was found to be heir.

Sir John, who, in 1327, obtained the King's licence for embattling his mansion at Bletsoc,^g had summons to Parliament as Baron Pateshull, 25 Feb. 1342, but not afterwards; he died in 1349, leaving a son and heir,

Sir William de Pateshull, who died seised of an interest in the Barony of Bedford,^h &c.; he was never summoned to Parliament, nor can he have been esteemed

^a Harl. MSS. 313, fo. 46. See also Burke's *Dormant and Extinct Peerages*.

About the same time Simon de Pateshull, Adam de Beauchamp, and others were feudatories of the Barony of William de Beauchamp, of Eaton, co. Beds.—*Vide* Wymington, p. 423, note (b).

A Lord Beauchamp, by his charter, gave the canons of Newenham leave to keep their wild swans on all his waters of Ouze, from the demesne of the barony of Eaton (Socon) to the demesne of the barony of Wabul.

According to the Lincoln Registers Walter de Pateshull and Margaret his wife presented to Bletsoc church between 1220 and 1235.

^b Harl. 1160, fo. 57.

^c Rot. Hund. 7 Edw. I. Lysons says "Mabel Patshull, lady of the manor (Bletsoc), founded the monastery of Grey Friars at Bedford, temp. Edward I."

^d Abbrev. Rot. Orig. 18 Edw. II. p. 282.

^e Cal. Rot. Chart. 25 Edw. I. Inq. p.m. temp. Edw. II.

^f Agnes, wife of John de Pateshull, held the manor of Bletsoc, as of the Barony of Bedford.—Inq. p.m. temp. Edw. II.

^g Lysons.

^h Inq. p.m. 33 & 40 Edw. III.

a baron, for his father had but one writ of summons, and there is no proof of sitting. "The Barony of Pateshull," adds Sir Bernard Burke, "must therefore be considered as extinct at the decease of John, Lord Pateshull. William died in 1360, when his estates devolved upon his sisters as coheirs, viz., Alice, married to Thomas Wake of Blisworth; Sybyl, married to Roger de Beauchamp; Mabel, married to Walter de Fauconberg; and Katherine, married to Sir Robert de Tudenham, knt."^a

Sybyl, the second-named sister, conveyed the manors of Bletsoe and Keysoe, &c., to her husband, Roger de Beauchamp, who made the former his chief seat, and bequeathed 100*l.* to the chantry at Bletsoe for maintenance of one priest to sing masses perpetually." In the *Dormant and Extinct Peerages*, before quoted, we find him described as "one of the eminent warriors of the reign of Edward III., younger son of Giles, and grandson of Walter de Beauchamp, of Alcester, summoned to Parliament as Roger de Bello Campo, Baron Beauchamp of Bletsoe, from 1 June, 1363, to 20 Oct. 1379."

This manor was subsequently transferred by Margaret, heiress of the Beauchamps, great grand-daughter of the above nobleman, to her first husband, Sir Oliver St. John.^c This lady married secondly John Beaufort, Duke of Somerset, K.G., by whom she was mother of Lady Margaret Beaufort, said to have been born at Bletsoe, foundress of St. John's and Christ's Colleges at Cambridge, whose son, by her husband, Edward Tudor, Earl of Richmond, ascended the throne as Henry VII. The Duchess of Somerset married thirdly John, Viscount Welles, K.G. The Duchess resided at Bletsoe in great state, as may be collected from the epitaph of Ralph Lancy formerly in this church.^d

The manor and castle of Bletsoe have descended to the present Lord St. John, as shown in the annexed pedigree.

Sir Oliver St. John, who married the heiress of Bletsoe, was a descendant of the ancient family of St. John, of Basing, who were already possessed of large estates in Beds, inherited by a female heir from the Pavelys.^e

On or about 6th July, 33 Henry VIII., Sir John St. John, knt.,^f obtained a

^a Burke gives the sisters of Sir William de Pateshull in the above order, but Lysons says Sybyl was the eldest.

^b MS. Tattam.

^c For extended notices of various distinguished or remarkable members of the ancient and illustrious family of St. John, see *Peerages* both extant and extinct; County histories relating to Wilts, Northants., and Worcestershire; Clarendon's *History of the Rebellion*; Dodsley's *Annual Register*, vol. 26, p. 229; vol. 29, p. 234; vol. 33, p. 62; Foss's *Judges of England*, vol. vi.

^d Lysons. See also p. 492, note (a) hereafter.

^e Lysons.

^f *Escheator's Inquisitions, counties Bedford and Bucks*, No. 25, *Peter Graye, Escheator*.

Inquisition taken at Bedford, 22 May, 1st Elizabeth, on the death of Sir John St. John, who possessed the following property in fee, viz.:

grant of the manor and advowson of Bolnhurst, parcel of the late monastery of Thorney, giving in exchange the manor of "Paulespury," and a consideration in money; he also acquired a close of pasture in Riseley, called Coldham, parcel of Chicksands priory, then lately dissolved.

Sir Oliver St. John, in 1559 created Lord St. John of Bletsoe, was one of the peers who sat in judgment, temp. Elizabeth, upon Thomas, Duke of Norfolk. His lordship's wife, a considerable heiress, was grand-daughter of Sir Michael Fisher.^a

Lordship, manor, and grange of Cayssho; Coldham pastures in Ryseley and Cayssho parishes; all manorial rights in Cayssho and Little Stoughton, belonging to the lordship, manor, and grange of Cayssho and Coldham aforesaid.

Seised in fee-tail of—

The manor of Blettesho; messuages, &c., in Blettesho, Sharnbroke, Bedford, Berford, Thyrlie, Eton, Radwell in Felmersham, Roxton, and Ryseley, belonging to Blettesho manor; chief manor of Caisscho; messuages, &c., in Caisscho and Little Stoughton, to the same chief manor of Caisscho belonging.

Seised in fee of—

Manor of Lawrence; except 600 acres in Ryseley; had 400 acres of the aforesaid 600 after the death of Anne, Lady St. John, widow, who held them for life; and had the remaining 200 acres after the death of Charles St. John, one of his sons, who held them for life.

The manor and grange of Cayssho, &c., which belonged to Chicksand priory, were held *in capite* by the twentieth part of a knight's fee; but the jurors do not know how the other property was held. The manor and grange of Cayssho, &c., with Coldham pastures, are valued at 12*l.* per annum; that of Blettesho, &c., are valued at 96*l.* 13*s.* 7*d.* per annum. The chief manor of Cayssho, &c., at 80*l.* per annum. The manor of Lawrence (except as before excepted) 4*l.* 15*s.* 4*d.* The 400 acres are worth after the death of Lady Anne St. John 20*l.* per annum, but before her death nothing. The other 200 acres are worth after the death of Charles St. John 13*l.* per annum, but during his life nothing.

John St. John died 19 December last past; Oliver St. John, of Blettscho, is son and next heir of John St. John, aged over 30 years at the time of the taking of this Inquisition. Lady Anne St. John, widow, and Charles St. John, aforesaid, are still surviving at Blettscho.

^a By the Inquisition¹ before referred to under Felmersham (p. 283), taken at Ampthill, 14th Jan. 3 Edward VI., it was found that Sir Michael Fisher, knt., was seised of the manors of Clophall Hall and Kempston, with appurtenances, called flishers; the manor of Eton called Goldyngton; two messuages, land, and rents, in Eton and Wyboldeston; the manor and advowson of Clyfton,² together with messuages, lands, and rents in Clyfton, Mepsale, Campton, Stanford, Southiewell, Caldecote, Wrastlyngworth, Hatley Port, Kempston, and Felmersham; lands, meadows, pastures and woods, late in the tenure of the said Michael Fisher, lying in the parish of Clyfton, parcel of the lately dissolved monastery of Chixsondes; the whole of that meadow called Orwell meade, late in the tenure or occupation of Robert Samwell, in Clyfton, parcel of the possessions of the monastery of Wardon, lately dissolved; other premises, woods, rents, and services in the several tenures or occupations of William Tylcock and Alice Nele, situate in Clyfton, also parcel of the said monastery of Wardon. The manor of Clophall Hall and the tenements in Campton were held of the barony of Caynow by fealty and suit, but by whom rendered was unknown, their value being ten marks clear by the year; the manor and premises in Kempston were held of John, Lord Bray, as of his manor of Kempston, by fealty and suit, but for what other service did not appear, and their clear annual value was ten pounds; the manor of Eton and the other premises in Eton and Wyboldeston were holden of Lady Anne Cheyny and Lord Harodon, as of the barony of Eton, but by what service was not known; their clear annual value was six pounds; the tenements, &c., in Felmersham were holden of the Master, Fellows, and Scholars, of the Holy Trinity in Cambridge as of their manor of Felmersham, by what service not known, and their clear annual value was nine pounds and five shillings; the premises in Caldecote were held of John Barnardiston as of his manor of Ikwelbury, but it was not known by what service, and their clear yearly value was thirty shillings; the manor and advowson of Clyfton, together with all the other lands and tenements in Clyfton and Mepsale, except those pertaining to the said late monasteries of Chixsondes and Wardon, were lately held of William, Bishop of Lincoln, as of his manor of Biggleswade, by fealty and suit, and for a certain rent, their net value 40 marks; the premises, parcel of the said dissolved monastery of Chixsondes, worth ten shillings a year, were held of the Crown in socage, of the honor of Ewe Elme, in the county of Oxford, by fealty only; the said meadow called Orwell meade and all the other premises in Clyfton, parcel of the late monastery of Wardon, worth 20*s.* per annum, were held of the Queen in free socage as of her manor of Exworth, co. Lincoln, and not *in capite*, and for a crown rent of 2*s.* paid annually into the Court of Augmentation at the feast of St. Michael; the messuage, &c.

¹ Chanc. Inq. p.m. 3 Edw. VI. nu. 7.

² In the time of Henry VI., Clyfton manor was part of the estate of Sir William Babyngton, knt.—Esc. 33 Henry VI. nu. 23.

From Thomas, their younger son, descended Sir Oliver St. John,^a Lord Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, temp. Charles I., and afterwards ambassador to Holland under the Commonwealth. A memoir of the Chief Justice will be found in vol. vi. of Foss's *Judges of England*, which also contains a short notice of the first Earl of Bolingbroke.

On or about 2 April, 28 Elizabeth, John, 2nd Lord St. John, obtained the Queen's licence to alienate the manors of Bolnhurst, Stanfurdury, Keysoe grange, and other hereditaments, to Sir Thomas Bromley, knt., Lord Chancellor of England, Henry, Earl of Kent, George, Earl of Cumberland, Lewis, Lord Mordaunt, Sir William Russell, knt., and others. This nobleman was one of the peers who sat on the trial of Mary, Queen of Scots. He died without male issue surviving, when the title passed to his lordship's brother,

Oliver, third Baron, who had, with other issue, Oliver, his successor, and Rowland, progenitor of the present Lord St. John.

Oliver, 4th Baron, was, in 1624, advanced to the title of Earl of Bolingbroke.^b His elder son, Oliver, Lord St. John, summoned to Parliament, by writ, in the Earl's lifetime, achieved an unenviable notoriety; his character is portrayed by Clarendon. The earldom became extinct in 1711, when the barony devolved to the posterity of Sir Rowland St. John, above mentioned, a younger son of Oliver, the 3rd Lord.^c

John, 10th Baron St. John, and his eldest son and heir, were parties to a deed of bargain and sale, dated 29 Nov. 1755,^d dealing with the manors and advow-

in Wrastlyngworth and Hatley Port (except 100 acres, holden of John Burgoyne, as of his manor of Sutton, by fealty, suit, and 5s. rent, and worth 30s. a year) were held of the Crown as of the manor of Wrastlyngworth, in socage, by fealty and suit and for a certain rent, and were worth 20l. a year; the tenements in Stamford and Southill, worth 40s. per annum, were held of the Crown as of the manor of Stamford, late parcel of the monastery of Warden, in socage, by fealty, suit, and a certain rent. The said Michael ffisher died the 18th June then last past, and Agnes, wife of Oliver Seynt John, armiger, was his next heir, viz., daughter and heiress of John ffisher, armiger, deceased, son and heir apparent whilst he lived of the said Sir Michael ffisher, knt., and she was then aged 22 years and upwards.

^a The following is found in Harl. MSS. 991, fo. 7: "The King had written a booke with his owne hand wherein were many things conce'ing gover^{mt}, and in it a model of gover^{mt} for this nation according to that of France, and to effect it here, y^e bringing in y^e German horse thereby to settle it. The old Earl of Bedford had seene or heard of this booke, and being familiar wth Oliver St. John, since Chief Justice, told him of it, who by all means wrought wth y^e E. of Bedford that he might see this booke, which he accomplished, and made use of it agst the King, w^{ch} y^e K p^{ce}ived, and found it to be Bedford, wth whome he was very angry. (Mr. Crisp. Jan. 1659.)"

^b In Trinity term, 16 Charles I., a fine was levied between Christiana Harvey, widow, and Sir William Fleetwood, knt., and Elizabeth, his wife, querents, and Oliver, Earl of Bolingbroke, and Elizabeth, his wife, deforciant, of the manor of Bolnhurst, and of premises, &c., with appurtenances in Bolnhurst, Pertenhall, and Husborne Crawley; also of the advowson of the church of Bolnhurst, and of two parts of all the tithes of corn and grain arising annually in Bolnhurst.

In Hilary term, 1649, a fine passed between Sir Beauchamp St. John, knt., and Oliver St. John, armiger, querents, and Anthony St. John, armiger, and Anne, his wife, deforciant, of the rectory of Thurlough alias Thurley, with appurtenances, in co. Bedford.

^c Lysons.

^d Between the Rt. Hon. John, Lord St. John, of Bletsoe, and the Hon. John St. John, eldest son, &c., of the first part, Elisha Biscoe, of the Inner Temple, London, esq., of the second part, and Sir John Hyne Cotton, of Madingley, in the county of Cambridge, Bart., of the third part.

sons of Bletsoe and Riseley, the rectory of the latter, premises in Melchbourne and Sharnbrook, Stoke Mill "in Bletsoe and Sharnbrook or one of them," &c.^a

St. Andrew, 13th Baron, grandfather and namesake of the present peer, born in August, 1759, was educated at Christ Church, Oxford, and became a D.C.L. 1795. He was also called to the Bar, and represented this county for 25 years, till 1805, when he succeeded to the title. He was firmly attached to the political opinions of Mr. Fox, with whom he passed much of his time, and who was a great friend of his. His lordship died in 1817, and was buried in the vault at Bletsoe.^b

The mansion house of Bletsoe Castle, built originally in form of a quadrangle, entered from the south, stands at a small distance from the church to the north. Only the north side remains, occupied by a farmer, but retaining no internal marks of ancient grandeur except at the east end, where there is an ascent by a spacious staircase to the upper rooms. This side was built of brick; and we may presume the whole house was built of the same material. The piers of the gate and bridge over the moat, now filled up, remain in front.^c Fisher gives a view of Bletsoe Castle, and of the old bridge over the moat.

The Lords of Bletsoe frequently entertained Royalty at this once hospitable mansion, as we learn from the following, taken from Nichols's *Royal Progresses*, &c. :

Queen Elizabeth, in 1578, returned from Suffolk by Cambridge. Her Majesty rested at the following noblemen's and gentlemen's seats:—Mr. Hyndes', *Madingley*,—The Bishop of Ely's, *Somersham*,—Sir Henry Cromwell's, *Ramsey Abbey*,—Justice Dyer's, probably at *Great Staughton*,—Lord St. John's, at "*Melchborne*" (? *Bletsoe*); and so through Bucks towards Windsor.—Vol. ii. p. 109.

King James I. visited Bletsoe Castle no less than six times, and his Queen once :

- 1605, July 26. To Dunstable, to Mr. Sandy's, for the King, and to Sir J. Rotheram's, near Luton, for the Queen, 1 night.
- „ July 27. To Ampthill, to Sir Richard Conquest's, for the King, and to Sir Robert Newdigate's, for the Queen, 5 nights—9 miles.
- „ Aug. 1. To Thurleigh, to Mr. Hervey's, for the King, and to Bletsoe, Lord St. John's, for the Queen, 2 nights—8 miles (?).
- „ Aug. 3. To Drayton, Lord Mordaunt's, for the King and Queen, 3 nights—12 miles.—Vol. i. p. 518.

^a In the Northampton District Registry Office for Wills are the following:—

1567, Dec. Will of John Burton, of "Stocke Myles" in the parish of "Bletteshoo." To be buried in the parish church. To his son Oliver, the lease of Stoke Mills with the lease of a close called Temple.

1584. Will of Thomas Adcocke, of Bletsoe, agent to the Right Hon. John, Lord St. John.

^b Add. MSS. 21,067, fo. 19 or 165.

^c *Gent. Mag.* Sept. 1799.

- 1608, Aug. 5. At Bletsoe, from Alderton and Holdenby.—Vol. ii. p. 203.
 1612, July 24. From Wrest to Bletsoe, for 3 nights. July 27, from Bletsoe to Castle Ashby.—Ib. p. 451.
 1616. From Hawnes to Bletsoe, and on to Castle Ashby.—Vol. iii. p. 185.
 1619. His Majesty was very nobly entertained at Bletsoe, and proceeded to Castle Ashby.
 —Ib. p. 557.
 1621. July 24. From Ampthill to Bletsoe, and on to Castle Ashby.—Vol. iv. p. 671.
 1624. From Houghton Lodge, Sir William Fleetwood's, and Cople Wood End, to Bletsoe, and,
 on July 23 to Castle Ashby.—Ib. p. 983.

In 1825, Sir Robert Inglis, Bart., purchased a farm at Bourne End, Bletsoe, of the annual value of between 200*l.* and 300*l.*, from the representatives of Mr. Gell. (MS. Marsh.)

CHARITIES.^a

From the abstract of Returns of Charitable Donations for Benefit of Poor Persons, printed 26 June, 1816, it appears that there were two small charities, rent of land, in this parish left by persons unknown. One, then producing 1*l.* per annum, vested in the Rector and Overseers, was given for the poor (1687). The other, vested in Vestrymen, and producing 3*l.* 10*s.* a year, was applied to the wants of poor persons not receiving parish relief.

The *Parliamentary Gazetteer*, 1847, gives the Charities as amounting to 12*l.* 10*s.* per annum. According to Lewis's *Topographical Dictionary*, 1848, a bequest of 8*l.* per annum was applied to the support of a Sunday school.

RECTORY^b AND ADVOWSON.

The advowson is appendant to the manor.

At the Taxation of Pope Nicholas, 1291, the rectory was rated at 8*l.* 13*s.* 4*d.* ;

^a As to the actual state of the charities of this parish in the year 1823, see vol. viii. *Charity Commissioners' Reports* for that year.

^b The following is from a Terrier, made in 1822: A true note and description of all the glebes, lands, meadows, tenements, and other rights belonging to the rectory and parish church of Bletsoe, in the county of Bedford and diocese of Lincoln, now in the use and possession of John Lecte, clerk, rector of the said church, taken and made, according to the old evidences of the antient inhabitants, this 1st day of July, in the year 1822, and exhibited at the Visitation of the Honourable and Right Reverend Father in God, George, Lord Bishop of Lincoln, at his Visitation, held at Bedford, in the said county and diocese aforesaid, the fifth day of July in the same year.

Imprints, one dwelling-house, part stone built and part mud and studd, part thatched and part tiled. In length about 68 feet, in breadth about 23 feet within the walls; attached thereto is a stone-built and thatched kitchen and dairy, in length about 47 feet, in breadth about 17 feet, within the walls; which said kitchen and dairy were formerly ruinous out offices, and have been converted to the convenient state they are now in by the present rector, who has also much improved the house and premises at considerable expense. One thatched building, in length about 70 feet, in breadth about 15 feet, within the walls, part stone-built and part studd and boarded, divided into a stable, barn, and other offices.

Item, the churchyard, containing three roods or thereabouts, surrounded by the common green, belonging to the Lord of the Manor, upon which green stand some cottages adjoining the churchyard on the south-west; the other parts of the churchyard is fenced with a stone wall, which, together with the gates, are kept in repair by the parish.

Item, the rectory gardens and homestead, together with an antient inclosure called the Upper Glebe, containing in the whole 5*a.* 2*r.* 26*r.* adjoining Lord St. John on the north and west, Lord St. John on the south, and the highways on the east.

Item, an antient enclosure called the Great Glebe, containing 28*a.* 3*n.* 0*r.*, adjoining the Upper Glebe on the east, to Lord Saint John on the north and north-east, to the turnpike road on the west, to Dr. and Mrs. Queen on the south.

its value in the King's Book is 17*l*. The tithes were commuted for 333*l*. 18*s*. 9*d*., and thirty-four acres glebe.^a The rectory house was built by the present Rector.

RECTORS.^b

Patrons.

1220—1235	- -	Nicholas de Eston.	Walter de Patteshill and Margaret his wife.
1235—1258	- -	Richard de Pateshulle.	Symon de Pateshull.
1258—1280	- -	{ Stephen de Grevile or Grovile. Thomas de Chelwinton. By death of last.	Sir Simon de Patishull, knt.

Item, four doles of meadow land lying dispersed in four several slips in town meadow, and containing together 1*l*. 2*s*. 3*d*.
The whole of which lands, containing together 36*l*. 0*s*. 20*d*., or thereabouts, are situate within the lordship and manor of Bletsoe, free from the payment of any fines, rents, or services to any chief lord, the royalty of which said lands are also in the rector.

Item, also belonging to the said rectory is an inclosure lying in the adjoining parish of Sharnbrook, 0*l*. 3*s*. 0*d*.
The glebe lands and profits of the rectory are worth (at the present) about 295*l*. per annum. The rector also considers himself entitled to the tythe of about four acres of land lying upon the border of the adjoining parish of Sharnbrook, near Stoke Mills, belonging to Mr. King, and called and known by the name of Crowland Meadow, which said land, not being awarded to the parish of Sharnbrook at the time of the inclosure, is supposed to belong to this parish, and which said tythe the rector is considered by antient and well-informed persons to be entitled to.

Belonging to the said rectory is an oblation of 6*d*. at every churching of women, for every marriage by banns, 3*s*. 6*d*., by licence, 5*s*., mortuaries, 10*s*. for every corpse brought into the parish to be interred, 6*s*. 8*d*.

There is also due to the parish clerk at every churching of women, two pence, for every marriage by banns, 2*s*., by licence, 2*s*. 6*d*., for every funeral in the churchyard, including tolling the bell and making the grave, 2*s*. 6*d*., for every funeral in the church, 5*s*., for every corpse brought into the parish for interment, 5*s*.

Belonging to the said parish are, first, the parish church, an antient building containing in length 54 feet, in breadth 25 feet, within the walls; the chancel, which is divided from the body of the church by the belfry, contains in breadth 16 feet, in length 40 feet, within the walls; the steeple about 13 feet square, in height about 54 feet.

Within and belonging to which are one communion table with a handsome covering of green cloth fringed with silk, one linen cloth, one napkin, one pewter flaggon, one silver chalice weighing about oz. One chest with four locks containing the parish accounts. One pulpit and reading desk. One pulpit cushion and hanging cloth. One hanging cloth for desk, each made of green cloth, and ornamented with silk tassels and fringe. One large Bible of the last translation. Three Common Prayer Books. The King's arms. The Apostles' Creed. The Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments. One bier. One hearse cloth. One surplice. One Church clock. Five bells with their frames, the first or least bell being 2 feet 7½ inches in diameter, with an inscription as follows: viz.

"I mean to make it understood,
Altho' I'm little, yet I'm good."

The second, 2 feet 9½ inches in diameter, with an inscription—

"While we do join in cheerful sound,
Let love and loyalty abound."

On each bell, "Jno. Coles, Nicholas King, Churchwardens, 1786."

The third, 2 feet 11½ inches, with an inscription—

"Ye people all that hear us ring,
Be faithful to your God and King."

The fourth, 3 feet 2 inches, with an inscription—

"I to the poor and needy am a friend,
For whose relief I call you to attend."

The fifth, or largest bell, 3 feet 6½ inches in diameter, with an inscription—

"I to the Church the living call,
And to the grave I summon all."

There are a few private pews in the church, but most of which, together with the common seats, are kept in repair at the expense of the parish.

To the said church belongs a cottage and garden, at present in the occupation of the parish clerk, at the yearly rent of 30*s*., in length 105 feet, in width 60 feet, adjoining the public highway. (Lord) Saint John on the east, north, and west. To the said church also belongs a sheep common, in the said parish, let at the yearly rent of ten shillings. There is also belonging to the said church an inclosure in the parish of Riseley, containing one acre or thereabouts, let on an average at about 3*l*. a year, the rents of which said cottage, common, and inclosure, amounting in the whole to about five pounds a year, are faithfully applied by the churchwardens towards keeping the said church in good and sufficient repair. There is also belonging to the said church a cottage adjoining the churchyard on the south-west, of the yearly value of about 20*s*., which is at present occupied by old and infirm people, who the churchwardens permit to live rent free.

^a Lewis.

^b Lib. Instit. apud Lincoln.

		Rectors.	Patrons.
1300—1320	-	Roger de Pateshull.	John de Pavenham.
		Thomas de Pateshull. By res. of last.	John de Pabekim.
		Roger de Pateshull. By res. of last.	
		William de W. By death of last.	Sir John Patyshull, knt.
1342—1361	-	Henry.	
		John de Braundeston. By death of last.	Sir Joh. de Pateshull, knt.
1363—1397	-	Will ^m Lee, fil. Joh. . de Bletchley, Pbr.	Sir Roger Beauchamp, knt. lord of Bletsoe.
1435—1449	-	Simon Ree.	
		Simon Hothem. By res. of last.	Ralph, lord of Cromwele, William Tresh'm, and Thomas Clarell, arm ^r .
1471—1480	-	John Rodley. By death of last.	Marg ^t ., Duchess of Somerset.
1495—1514	-	John Bradshawe. By death of last.	Sir Joh. St. John, knt.
		Edmund Ffenall. By death of last.	John St. John.
1521—1554	-	James Walker. By res. of last.	
1582—1595	-	John Orme.	John, Baron St. John of Bletsoe.
		Richard Dove.	
1671 Nov.	-	Richard Albon, minister, bur. 18 Apr. 1602. ^a	
		John Orme, minister, bur. 10 Mar. 1617. ^a	
		Nicholas Mason, rector, bur. 6 June, 1671. ^a	
		Thomas Becket, or Beckett, M.A., Trin. Coll. Camb. 1671. By death of last.	Earl of Bolingbroke.
1676 Apr.	-	Valentine Calton, M.A., St. Pet. Coll., Camb. 1671.	
1729 Nov.	-	Thomas Walker, M.A., St. Pet. Coll., Camb. 1727. By death of last.	Joh. Lord St. John of Bletsoe.
1771 Sept.	-	Ambrose St. John (Hon.). By death of last.	John, Bp. of Lincoln by lapse.
1775 Nov.	-	Henry Hinde, M.A., King's Coll. Camb. 1752. By death of last.	Henry, Lord St. John of Bletsoe.
1787 Sept.	-	William Fancourt, B.A., Clare Coll. Camb. 1759. By death of last.	
1818 Mar.	-	John Lect, B.A., St. Cath. Coll. Camb. 1798. By death of last.	St. Andrew Beauchamp, Lord St. John; an infant.
1832 Sept.	-	John Tomlinson Day, M.A., C. C. Coll. Camb. By death of last.	Lord St. John of Bletsoe.

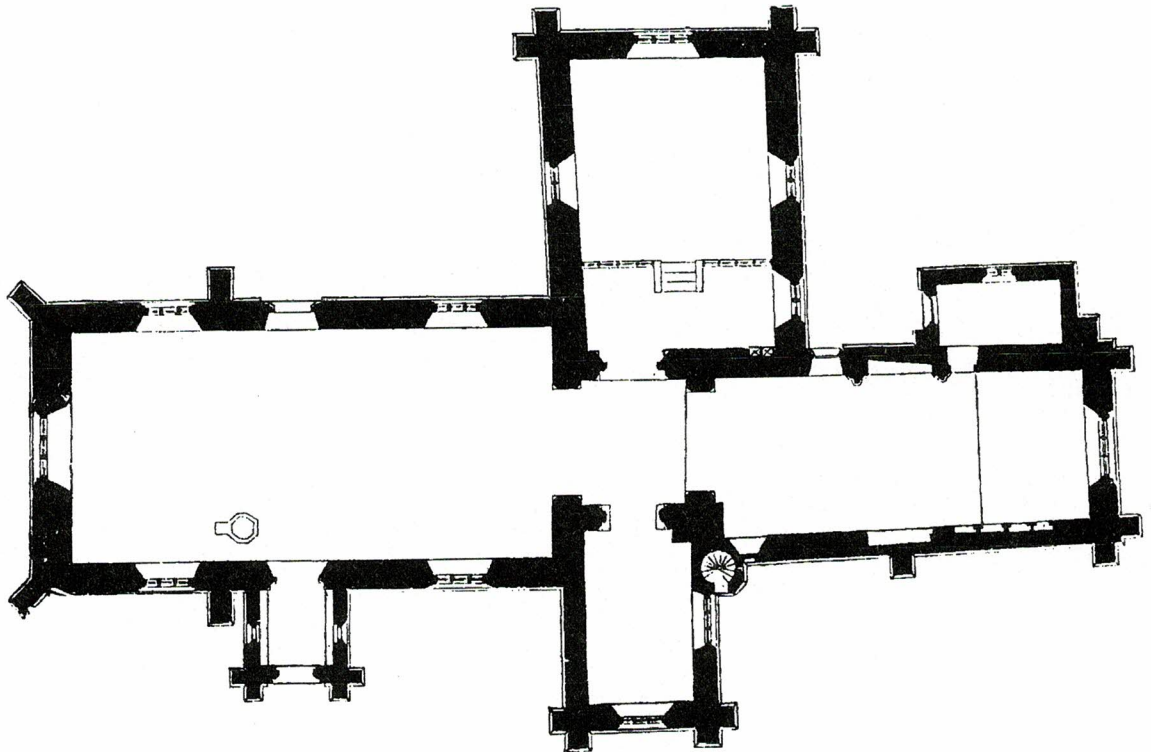
^a Parish Register.

With the exception of one or two minor features, the style of architecture of the parish church is mostly Decorated. It is a cruciform church, without aisles, a tower in the centre, a south porch, and is dedicated to St. Mary. Attached to the church is the vault of the St. John family, over which a former Baron erected the present north chapel,^a or transept, which contains the family monuments; half the vault is bricked up, being full.

The whole structure underwent restoration about the year 1868, at a cost of upwards of 1,700*l*.^b

The roofs are modern but good, particularly those over the north transept and chancel. The pulpit, lectern, and reading pew are also well carved; on the first are the words "Preach the Word, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine."

All the windows in the nave are pointed and of three lights each, with the exception of a small rose-light above the west window.



PLAN OF CHURCH.

^a About the year 1258, Nicholas de Sarnebroc was appointed chauntry priest in the chapel of St. Mary, Bletsoe, by Sir . . . de Pateshull, knt.—Lincoln Register.

^b Kelly.

Near the north door is a stoup, and remains of a fresco on the wall, in which a knight on horseback, on a field of battle, is represented. A pointed doorway which led to the rood-stairs has been blocked up;^a it is near the north-east angle of the nave. Above the western or nave tower-arch was a square-headed doorway; the same arch carries a dripstone on the west. The font, octagonal pannelled, stands on an octagon shaft. There was formerly a gallery at the west end of the church.

All the windows which light the north transept are pointed. Besides the monuments above-mentioned, this transept contains a double trefoiled piscina.

The eastern window of the south transept is square-headed, the southern pointed. The side windows of the chancel, which are all square-headed, and the east window, which is pointed, are filled with Decorated tracery.

The principals of the chancel-roof spring from eight corbels. A lancet-opening faces east from the ringing chamber. In the south wall is a low side window, now built up.

The chancel contains two low arched or pointed recesses, one in the north wall and one in the south; the former of these is plain, but having the outside mouldings crocketed; the latter, cinquefoiled, has a dripstone springing from two corbel-heads. There is also a pointed triple sedilia, with graduated seats, and a piscina, with a dripstone, embracing all, springing from two corbel heads.

BELLS.

(1) 32½ inches diameter—

I MEAN TO MAKE IT UNDERSTOOD
THAT THO' I'M LITTLE YET I'M GOOD.

R TAYLOR ST NEOTS FECIT 1786.

(2) 34½ inches diameter—

WHILST THUS WE JOIN IN CHEERFUL SOUND
LET LOVE AND LOYALTY ABOUND.

R TAYLOR ST NEOTS FECIT 1786.

(3) 35 inches diameter—

YE PEOPLE ALL THAT HEAR US RING
BE FAITHFUL TO YOUR GOD AND KING.

R TAYLOR ST NEOTS FECIT APRIL 4 1786.

(4) 38 inches diameter—

I TO THE POOR AND NEEDY AM A FRIEND
FOR WHOSE RELIEF I CALL YOU TO ATTEND.

J COLES & N KING C. WARDENS R TAYLOR FECIT 1786.

* The screen has disappeared.

(5) 42 inches diameter—

I TO THE CHURCH THE LIVING CALL
AND TO THE GRAVE DO SUMMON ALL.

JOHN COLES & NICHOLAS KING CHURCHWARDENS R TAYLOR ST NEOTS FECIT.

LAMP IN BLETSOE.

Valued in free rents of divers free tenements there, given for the sustentation of divers lamps, as appeareth by a particular rental thereof made, by year 1s. 11d.
(Augmentation office, chantry certificates, co. of Beds. Roll 1, No. 13. Dated 1 Edw. VI.)

PARTICULARS FOR GRANTS 3 EDWARD VI.

To William Smyth sen. and William Smyth jun.

“Memorand that we William Smyth thelder and William Smyth the youngr require to p'chase of the king's maiestie by vertue of his grace's comysion of sale of landes the lands rits and heredytaments conteyned and spified in the pticlers and rats hereunto annexed being of suche clere yerely value as in the same pticlers and rats is expressed. In witnes whereof to this bill subscribed wth our hands we have put our scales the xxiiijth of May in the third yere of the reigne of our souvereigne lorde Edwarde the Sixt by the grace of God king of England Ffraunce and Irelande defender of the faith and in earth of the Church of England and also of Ireland the supreme hede.

Valued in the free rents of the following in Bletsoe:—A messuage in the tenure of John Sayntjohn, given for a lamp, 2d. Tenements in the several tenures of Robert Smyth, John Grene, and William Cobbe, given for the same use, and rated respectively at 1s., 1½d., and 1d.

A messuage in the tenure of John Drawton, given to the same use, rated at 1½d.

MONUMENTS AND INSCRIPTIONS.*

North Transept.

Of the St. John monuments, the first on the south wall of the north transept is a beautiful well-preserved group of alabaster figures, representing an old man kneeling, bare headed, divided beard; five sons, one with a beard, whiskers, a cape, and armour; another in beard and ruff; two smaller in armour; a boy in a coat, with a scull at his feet. The lady is in a close cap and ruff, long sleeves

* In Bletsoe church was a Latin epitaph, now gone, for Ralph Launcy; he died 18 Aug. 1458, and is styled cofferer and keeper of the wardrobe to the most noble Margaret, Duchess of Somerset, then married to her third husband, Leo, Lord Welles.—Lysons.

Arms: Quarterly 1 and 4, A crescent between three 2 and 3, Three lions rampant.

The following arms were also formerly in a window, viz., Quarterly 1 and 4 (Ar. or Or), three chevrons gu. (? *Clare* or *Petevyn*); 2 and 3, Gu. on a bend arg. three trefoils slipped vert, *Harvey*.—Harl. MSS. 1386, fo. 43; 1531, fo. 30; and 6072, 15 b or 32 b.

BLETSOE OR BLETSHOE.

fastened with tapes, and gilt embroidered cuffs; four daughters behind her, one wringing her hands. This is the monument of Sir John St. John, who married firstly Margaret Waldegrave, and was father of Oliver, first Baron, whom he lived to see created a peer.

Arms:

I. Quarterly of twelve—1. *St. John*; 2. Erm. a lion ramp. (gu.), crowned or, *Pateshull* or *Broy*; 3. Arg. a fess between six cinquefoils gu. *Umfreville*; 4. Vert, a bend cottized between six martlets or (*Paveley*). 5. Vert, a lion pass. between six mullets and two cinquefoils or three crosses moline or (*Sturry*). 7. Gu. on a fess between six martlets or a mullet pierced sa. *Beauchamp of Bletsoe*. 8. Arg. a fess sa. between three crescents gu. *Pateshall* or *Pateshull*. 9. Arg. a cross between fifteen billets sa. (*Stangreve* or *Stangrave*). 10. Quarterly or and gu. a bend (sa.) *Beauchamp of Bedford*. 11. Pale of six sa. and arg. on a bend gu. three eagles displ. or, *Grandison*. 12. Or, two bars-gemel gu. in chief a lion pass. guard. of the second, *Tregoz*.

Surmounted by *St. John's* crest on a helmet.

II. *St. John* and eleven quarterings, as in number I., impaling *Waldegrave*, Quarterly; 1. Party per pale arg. and gu., *Waldegrave*. 2. Barry of ten arg. and sa. (? az.), *Montechensy of Edwardston*. 3. Gu. an eagle displ. erm., *Vauncey*. 4. Or, a fess vair arg. and sa. (or sa. and gu.), *Craike*. 5. Arg. two bars, in chief three mullets sa., *Moyne*. 6. Erm. a fess sa. between three fig frays or, *Fray*.

III. *St. John* and quarterings as before, impaling, Arg. two bends sa. *Bradshaigh*.

The word *matertera* in the epitaph must be understood to mean great aunt. The inscription cannot apply to the father of this Sir John, who was properly speaking nephew of Margaret, Countess of Richmond. It appears by the following inscription that the Countess of Richmond brought him up with her grandson Henry VIII., who made him guardian of his daughters, the Princesses Mary and Elizabeth, and that he died in the office of Chamberlain to the latter when Queen.^a

Infans, vir, senior semper clarissimus heros,
 Principibus puerum primis eduxit ab annis
 Richmunda comitissa, sui matertera alumni,
 Inde vir effectus, regis pervenit ad aulam
 Henrici octavi, geminas hoc tempore natus
 Rex habuit, quibus ambabus lectissimus heros,
 Huic datus est custos, datus est camerarius illi.
 O quoties illius opem bello Anglia sensit;
 Nunc vesana frenit Lincolnia, nunc fremit iugens
 Gallia, bis hujus notâ virtutê subacta;
 Mota sub Edwardo frendit Norfolkia sexto,
 Mittitur huc inter procures; quos inter et omnes,
 Vel fuit hic primus, vel nulli marte secundus.

^a Lysons.

Denique jam seris saturatus honoribus annis,
Reginæ electus camerarius Elizabethæ,
Occidit, et prolem similem virtute reliquit.

East wall :

Here lies The Lady Frances Cavendish yovingest davghter to his Excellency William late Duke of Newcastle wife to Oliver Earle of Bolingbrooke. And one of the very best fairest and most Beavtifvl of Women if the opinon of her Disconsolate Husband may be taken. Whose desire is conformable to that of hers that when God shall take him hence his body and his only may be laid in the Dormitory here vnderneath by her as those who come after vs and may be concerned to take notice hereof shall tender the will and repose of the Dead which has always in all ages bin held sacred. The said Lady Frances Cavendyshe Countess of Bolingbrooke died on the Assumption of our Lady the 15th of August 1678 having lived with her said Husband 23 years 8 months and one day to his great comfort.

Arms: *St. John* and *Cavendish*, singly, and impaled.

William Henry Beauchamp St John, son of Henry Beauchamp Lord St John and Emma Maria Elizabeth his wife, Daughter of Samuel Whitbread, Esq^r, Born March 23rd, 1784 Died March 25th, 1791.

"Death that doth Sin and Sorrow thus prevent,
Is the next Blessing to a Life well spent."

In memory of St Andrew Beauchamp 14th Lord St John, of Bletsoe, who died at Melchbourne January 27th, 1874, aged 62 years.

In this transept are four hatchments :

- (1.) *St. John* only with crest and helmet.
- (2.) *St. John*, impaling quarterly of four intended for *Rouse-Boughton*.
- (3.) *St. John*, bearing in pretence Azure a chev. or ; in chief two roses arg. leaved vert ; in base a cock of the third, combed, beaked, and legged gu. *Simond*.
- (4.) *St. John*, impaling Quarterly 1 and 4 or a cross azure, 3 and 4 gu. three lions pass. guard. or, in chief a roundel arg. charged with a knot, all within a bordure, *Hussey*.

Here also are interred the remains of—

The Hon^{ble} and Rev^d Ambrose St. John
Obijt 18th July
1775
Ætat 29 years.

The Right Hon^{ble}
John Lord St. John
Baron of Bletsoe
Died 27th April
1767
Aged 41.

Louisa Theodosia his Daughter
Died Decr. 11th
1766
Aged 14 months.

The Right Hon^{ble}
St. Andrew Lord St. John
Baron St. John
of Bletsoe
Born 22nd Augst 1759
Died 15th Oct^r 1817.

The Right Hon^{ble}
John Lord St. John
Baron of Bletsoe
And Baronet
Died June 24th
1757
In the 55 year
of his Age.

Susanna Louisa
Baroness St. John
Died 17th Nov^r 1805
Aged 80.

William St. John
the son of St. Andrew
Lord St. John of Bletsoe
& Louisa his Wife
Born 29th June 1813
Died 16th Jan^{ry}
1815.

The Hon^{ble} Ann Trefusis
Wife to Robert Cotton Trefusis Esq.
Died 7th March 1776
Aged 37 years.

The
Right
Honourable
Lady Dowager
St. John
Died ye 17th Nov^r
1769
Aged 66.

The Honble
W^m Hen^{ry} Beauchamp St. John
Born
25th March 1784
Died
25th March 1791.

Margaret Matilda St. John
Daughter of
Henry Beauchamp Lord St. John
And of
Emma Maria Elizth
his Wife
Born Oct^r. 31st
Died Mar. 2nd
1785.

Edward St. John
Vaughan
Son of the Right Hon^{ble}
Sir John Vaughan
and the Right Hon^{ble} Louisa
Baroness St. John his Wife
Died 14th Nov^r
1840
Aged 10 years.

Miss Susan Ann St. John
Daughter of
The Right Hon^{ble}
St. Andrew Lord St. John
of Bletsoe
Died 29th Jan^{ry}.
1806
Aged 16 years.

The Right Honourable
Lady Louisa
Dowager St. John
Died July 9th 1860
Aged 76 years.

The Right Honourable
St. Andrew Beauchamp
Lord St. John
Baron of Bletsoe
Died January 27th 1871
Aged 62 years.

Chancel.

Underneath Lies the Body of Ann, wife of Thomas Walker, Rector of this Parish, who died Feb. the 25th An: Dom: 1733-4, in the 33rd year of her Age. Also the Body of Thomas Walker, M.A. late Rector of the Parish, who died Sept^r. the 25th, 1770, in the 75th year of his Age.

Sacred to the Memory of Arabella, wife of Charles Crespigny Vivian, Esq^{re}, of Glynn, in the County of Cornwall, Major in the VIIth Regiment of Hussars. She was the daughter of the Rev^d John Middleton Scott, of Ballygannon, in the County of Wicklow, Ireland, and the Lady Arabella Brabazon his wife. She died at Bletsoe on the xxvith day of January m^{dc}c^{cc}xxxvii. Leaving an afflicted Husband and two infant children to bewail the loss of one of the best of Wives and most affectionate of Mothers.

Sacred to the Memory of John Bithrey, who departed this life on the xxviii Day of October, m^{dc}c^{cc}xlvi. Aged xcii years. Also of Susannah, Relict of the above John Bithrey, who died on the xii of December m^{dc}c^{cc}xlvi, aged lxxxiii years. And of Sarah Ann, Daughter of the above John and Susannah Bithrey, who died on the xxv of May, m^{dc}c^{cc}viii, aged xx years. And of Jane Elizabeth, daughter of John and Susannah Bithrey, who died on the ii of October, m^{dc}c^{cc}lxvii, aged lxxxii years.

Sacred to the Memory of the Rev^d. William (Fancourt). Thirty years Rector of this Parish and Forty-two years Vicar of Melchbourne in this County. He departed this life the 17th of February, 1818, aged Eighty-two years. "The wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Romans, ch. vi. verse 23. Here also Lies Mary, the beloved wife of the above, who died March 20th, 1833, aged 93 years.

Here Lieth y^e body of Robert Risley y^e son of John Risley & Barnardiston, his wife, y^e 5th & last son, who Dep. this Life y^e 8th of 172-, in the 37 year of His Age.

"1671 . . . Minister."*

Sacred to the Memory of the Rev^d. John Leete, A.B. fourteen years Rector of this Parish. He departed this life on the 27th day of May, Anno Domini 1832. Aetat. 36.

Nave.

Sacred to the Memory of John Bithrey, Esquire, who departed this life on the 28th of October, 1846. Aged 92 years.

* Nicholas Mason, rector, buried 6 June, 1671.—Parish Register