



Bletchingley Conservation and Historical Society

Thomas Herring

Thomas Herring was rector at Bletchingley from 1731 for six years when he left for the bishopric of Bangor (in Wales); later he became Archbishop of York in 1745 and of Canterbury in 1747.

He was recommended as the local rector here by his old college friend, Matthew Kenrick (brother-in-law to William Clayton, local Lord of the Manor). He was already Chaplain to the King and Dean of Rochester.

As Archbishop of Canterbury he disliked any controversy in theological matters but his own character brought about stridently differing views - as noted by Uvedale Lambert:

“...piety without superstition, moderation without meanness, an open and liberal way of thinking...” so said a Dr Jortin at the time, Swift described him somewhat differently as “so stupid, so injudicious and so prostitute a divine”. Even Uvedale Lambert describes him as having “secured a sufficiency of loaves and fishes in the rich living of Bletchingley and the deanery of Rochester”.

As Archbishop of York, Herring raised a large sum of money to help the English (when the German born George II was on the throne) fight against the Jacobite Rebellion in 1745 (Bonnie Prince Charlie et al); he, Herring, also gave very generous speeches in support of the Duke of Cumberland (whose bloody put down of the Scots after the Battle of Culloden had given him the soubriquet “Butcher” Cumberland).

It may have been Herring’s on-going influence on the village, that in the same year as the failed Jacobite Rebellion the Churchwarden Accounts show the addition of the 11th June as a commemoration of the “Hanoverian King’s Coronation” as a special day for celebration with the ringing of the church bells and, a year later, the ringers were paid an extra five shillings for their efforts at a “rejoicing for the victory over the (Jacobite) rebels”.