

Blandford, Walter (1615/16–1675), *Bishop of Worcester*

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Blandford, Walter (1615/16–1675), bishop of Worcester, was the son of Walter Blandford, and was born at Melbury Abbas, Dorset. He became a servitor of Christ Church, Oxford, in 1635, aged nineteen, was admitted scholar of Wadham College in 1638, graduated BA on 10 December 1639, and proceeded MA on 28 June 1642. In 1644 he was admitted as a fellow of Wadham. He was recorded as having been expelled by the parliamentary visitors on 14 July 1648, but it seems that he remained in his fellowship none the less.

There is no proof that Blandford took the solemn league and covenant. What evidence there is demonstrates Blandford's royalist sympathies. About this time he was appointed chaplain to the cavalier Lord Lovelace of Hurley. During the interregnum Blandford was a member of John Wilkins's royalist circle at Wadham. His election as warden of the college in 1659 (a post he held until 1665) demonstrated growing royalist confidence within the university. At the Restoration he was created DD in 1660 and became chaplain to Sir Edward Hyde, later earl of Clarendon, who obtained for him a prebend in Gloucester Cathedral on 6 August, and a chaplainship-in-ordinary to the king. In the same year he was made rector of Remeneham in Berkshire. Between 1662 and 1664 he was vice-chancellor of Oxford University and in 1665 he was made rector of Witney in Oxfordshire. That year he was consecrated bishop of Oxford and soon afterwards he was nominated dean of the Chapel Royal. About this time he seems to have been given a grant of arms.

Blandford's connections with the Hyde family survived the fall and death of Clarendon. According to the memoirs of James II on 30 March 1671 he was brought to attend the deathbed of the earl's daughter, Anne, duchess of York, by her brother Laurence Hyde. The duchess had requested her husband, James, to tell any bishops who came to attend her of her secret conversion to Rome; if they still insisted on seeing her they might come in provided they did not attempt to shift her faith. When the situation was explained to Blandford by the duke, the bishop said to him, he made no doubt but that she would do well (that was his expression) since she was fully convinced, and did it not out of any worldly end; and afterwards went into the room to her, and made her a short Christian exhortation suitable to the condition she was in, and then departed. (Clarke, 1.453)

Three months later Blandford was translated to the see of Worcester, where he died at the bishop's house at Hartlebury, Worcestershire, on 9 or 16 July 1675. He was buried in the cathedral, where there is a memorial to him. In his will the bachelor Blandford left £100 towards the rebuilding of St Paul's Cathedral and £500 to renovate the house at Hartlebury. However, it

appears that there were legal disputes over this bequest and it is unclear whether the money was ever spent on the house (there was a clause in the will which stated that if work was not begun within six months after his successor had been installed the money should be given instead to charitable causes). Blandford published nothing, though Nicholas Lloyd, also of Wadham College, dedicated his edition of Charles Estienne's *Dictionarium historicum* (1670) to him. There is a portrait of Blandford in Wadham and a copy of the painting in the bishop's house at Hartlebury.

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Sources

[DNB](#) · [Foster. Alum. Oxon.](#) · M. Burrows, ed., *The register of the visitors of the University of Oxford, from AD 1647 to AD 1658*, [CS](#), new ser., 29 (1881), 162 · [Hist. U. Oxf. 4: 17th-cent. Oxf.](#), 766, 769, 809 · clauses from will and letter from Bishop Fell to Bishop Compton, Bodl. Oxf., MS Tanner 140, fols. 137, 148, 150 · Bishop Blandford to Bishop Ward, Bodl. Oxf., MS Tanner 42, fol. 123 · draft dedication to Walter Blandford prefixed by Nicholas Lloyd to *Dictionarium historicum*, Bodl. Oxf., MS Rawl. D. 32, fol. 10 · [Fasti Angl. 1541–1857](#), [Ely] · letter of Edward Walker to Sir Richard Browne, [BL](#), Add. MS 15858, fol. 186 · *The life of James the Second, king of England*, ed. J. S. Clarke, 1 (1816), vol. 1, pp. 452–3 · will, [PRO](#), PROB 11/352, sig. 135

Archives

[Wores. RO](#), letter-book

Likenesses

oils, Wadham College, Oxford; version, Hartlebury Castle, Worcester

Wealth at death

considerable; donated £600 in cash gifts: clauses from will and letter from Bishop Fell to Bishop Compton, Bodl. Oxf., MS Tanner 140, fols. 137, 148, 150

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Edward Vallance, ‘**Blandford, Walter** (1615/16–1675)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/2618, accessed 18 April 2007]

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