Sir William Dawes (1671-1724)

Sir William Dawes was born in Lyons, near Braintree in Essex in September 1671, the third son of Sir John Dawes. He went to school at Merchant Taylor’s School in London before being elected as a Scholar to St. John’s College Oxford. In 1689 he migrated from St. John’s to St. Catharine’s following the death of his two older brothers and his subsequent inheritance of the family baronetcy.

Sir William went on to be made a Fellow of the College in 1695 and received a Doctorate of Divinity by Royal mandate in 1696. The following year saw him elected to the Mastership of St. Catharine’s, a post he held until 1714. He was also elected as Vice-Chancellor of Cambridge University for 1698-9.

A record of the election of Sir William Dawes to the position of Master of St. Catharine’s College. The admission was witnessed by Samuel Lea, John Leng, John Bower and Thomas Tilson and required a letter of dispensation from King William III as Dawes was under the age of 30.

Reference: XL/33, page 18

In presentia nostrum.

Roth Peirson, de Thori,
Wm Hasellum,
John Howkner

William Dawes' letter of resignation from the Mastership. He went on be Archbishop of York.

Reference: M/5/Dawes/1
Sir William married Frances, eldest daughter of Sir Thomas D’Arcy in 1692 and they had 7 children, one of whom attended St. Catharine’s. Darcy Dawes was elected a Fellow-Commoner in 1720 and gained his MA in 1722. He went on to succeed his father as Baronet. Whilst at university his behaviour was sometimes deemed inappropriate as this extract of a letter sent to the Vice-Chancellor by his father on the 19th March 1721 indicates:

Reference: M/5/Dawes/2

Sir William died in 1724 and was buried in the East end of the Chapel at St. Catharine’s College with his wife who had died in 1705.

Further information about Sir William Dawes can be found in his entry in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography and at the Borthwick Institute for Archives which holds official correspondence and papers of the Archbishop of York (http://www.york.ac.uk/library/borthwick/catalogues/archival-holdings/).

The College Archivist is always happy to answer questions relating to the College Archives: archivist@caths.cam.ac.uk.