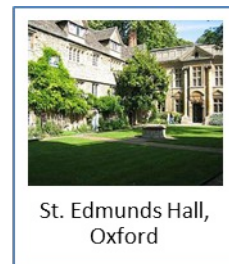


Sir Richard Blackmore

English Poet, Religious Writer and Physician

Richard Blackmore was born on the 22nd January 1654 in Corsham, Wiltshire the son of an eminent attorney. He was admitted to St. Edmund Hall, University of Oxford in 1669 where he gained a B.A. in 1674 and his M.A. two years later. He went on to become a tutor at the college for a while but after he received his inheritance from his father in 1682 he travelled to France, Switzerland and Italy. Eventually whilst at Padua in Italy he studied at the University for a doctorate in pure medicine which he gained in 1684. He returned to England travelling via Germany and Holland taking up practice as a physician.



St. Edmunds Hall,
Oxford

In 1685 Richard married Mary Adams whose family connections assisted Richard in gaining a place within the Royal College of Physicians in 1685. Soon he fell out of favour with the College after he was reprimanded for taking leave without permission. Around the same period he publicly objected to the setting up of a free dispensary for the poor of London to leading Sir Samuel Garth to satirise this opposition in his publication "The Dispensary" in 1699.

Richard developed a passion for writing epic poetry based on current events disguised with classical themes including Prince Arthur in 1695 gaining much derision from John Dennis, critic and dramatist of the time. None the less the poem earned Royal gratitude and William III made Blackmore physician-in-ordinary which he retained with Queen Anne when she took the throne in 1705 after the death of William III. He was knighted by King William in 1697.

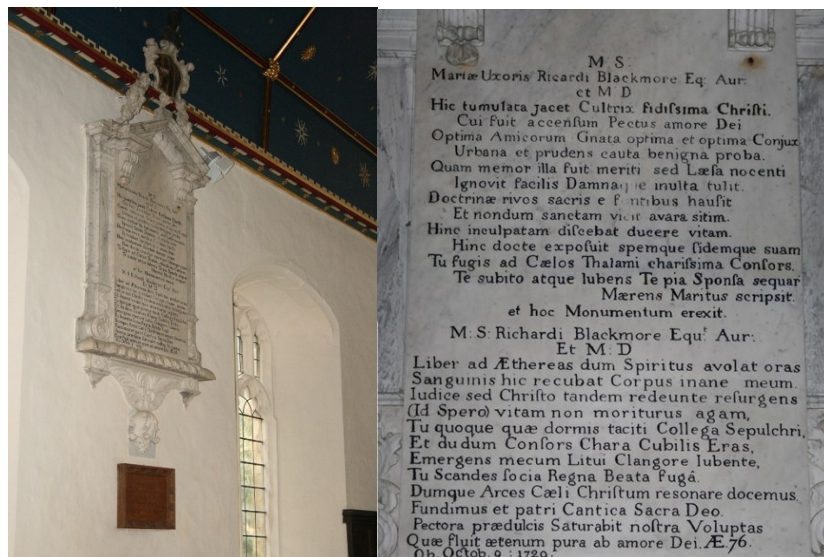
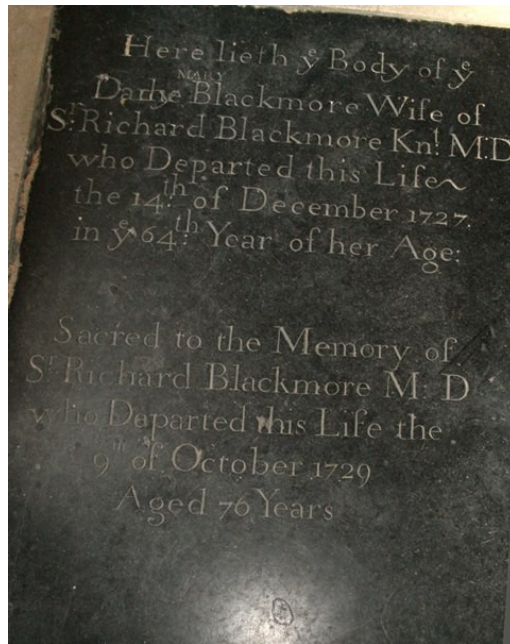
Other notable works by Sir Richard include:- A Satyr Against Wit (1700), Eliza (1705), An Advice to the Poets (1706), The Nature of Man (1711), The Creation (1712), Essays Upon Several Subjects (1716) and Alfred (1723). Many of his works provoked artistic scorn and ridicule from other writers of the period such as Alexander Pope, Tom Brown and John Dryden.

It is suggested that Sir Richard wrote much of his poetry whilst in hackney cabs on his way between treating his patients. Something that Dryden picked up on when he accused Blackmore of

plagiarizing the idea of an epic on Arthur from him and called him a "Pedant, Canting Preacher, and a Quack" whose poetry had the rhythm of wagon wheels.

By 1711 Sir Richard was writing more theological pieces but still centred around current events one of which, *Creation: A Philosophical Poem* in 1712, gained the praise of his former critic John Dennis, fellow Wiltshire man Joseph Addison and Samuel Johnson. Richard ceased writing epic poems for a while becoming censor and a director of the College of Physicians in 1716 and resigning in 1722 when he penned another epic "Redemption", an outburst against the Unitarians. Sir Richard continued his religious writing until his death his last work "The Accomplished Preacher" was published posthumously in 1731.

Sir Richard Blackmore died on 9th October 1729 in Boxted, Essex where he was buried in the local parish church.



Memorial Plaque to Sir Richard and Lady Blackmore in Boxted Parish Church

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