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**A plea for the better consideration of the 17th and 18th
century Monuments in our Churches**

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A PLEA FOR THE BETTER CONSIDERATION OF THE 17TH AND 18TH CENTURY MONUMENTS IN OUR CHURCHES

by R. HOLLAND-MARTIN, C.B., F.S.A., *President*

DESPITE the labours of Mrs Esdaile, our member Miss I. M. Roper, and others, nearly all who visit our churches pay scant attention to any monuments save those of cross-legged knights, whom they call 'crusaders', their ladies and the stately figures of medieval ecclesiastics.

This is partly, no doubt, due to the thrill which the age of chivalry has always given to old as well as young, and partly to the reaction of the Morris—Burne-Jones School after the classical Greek and Roman revival which came in at the latter end of the 18th century.

Yet from the point of view of art and technique, there is much to admire and learn from the work of the sculptors in England between the days of Queen Elizabeth and George III.

For the study of English Sculptors of this period our Society is particularly well situated, for besides the monuments to be found in the cathedrals and churches of the cities of Bristol, Gloucester, Worcester and Hereford, there are many parish churches in the three shires that have delightful monuments of the greatest historical and artistic value, whose study will arouse new interests of many kinds.

To some, the interest will lie in the study of costume. For these figures carved in the round show as no picture can ever do the ebb and flow of fashion, the exact manner in which the garments worn were fastened, how neck-gear grew large, contracted and grew loose again ; how

the hair, natural or artificial, was worn, and what the fashion in boots was. Others will find their interest in the portraiture—others in the heraldry and genealogy. But most interesting of all will be found the attempt to classify the sculptures under Schools and their Masters.

It is strange to find that only a few years ago very few names of English sculptors of our period were known, and still fewer examples of their work. Today, thanks in great measure to the untiring work of Mrs Esdaile, sculptor after sculptor has emerged from long oblivion and is now receiving well-merited credit for his work.

For instance, take the case of Epiphanius Evesham, who is referred to by Walpole as a sculptor of the time of Maximilian Colte (*i.e.*, *temp.* James I), of whom John Penkethman, the translator of John Owen's *Epigrams* which were printed in 1624, says 'give me leave to insert his (Owen's) epitaph, which is engraved on a plate of brass, and fixed under his monumental image, formed and erected by that most exquisite artist, Mr Epiphanius Evesham, in the Cathedral Church of St. Paul'.

Owen's monument perished with St. Paul's in the fire of London and nothing of Epiphanius Evesham's work was known.

But today, Mrs Esdaile's researches have given back to him the monuments of Lord and Lady Teynham (1634) at Lynsted in Kent; the charming Crewe monuments at the entrance to St. Erasmus' chapel in Westminster Abbey—to Juliana Crewe (1621) on the west side of the entrance to the chapel, and to Jane, wife of Sir Clippesby Crewe (1639) on the east side of the entrance to the chapel; the Brouncker monument (1645) at Christ Church, Oxford, and the Thomas Wood (1649) monument at Hackney, all of which are distinguished by the delicacy of the small figures upon them. In the language of today, we would style them small conversation pieces, and doubtless there are yet more monuments from his hand to be discovered elsewhere.

Epiphanius Evesham, it seems, was a member of a family who appear in the Heralds' Visitation of Herefordshire in 1569 as living at Wellington, some six miles north of Hereford. He was, possibly, a pupil of the Hereford sculptor, John Guildon, or Guldon, who, also, was unknown until recently, despite the fact that he signed several of his monuments. There are two Harford monuments of his at Bosbury, Herefordshire, where John Harford's monument is inscribed ' John Guldō of Hereford made this tombe with his own hande Ano Dni 1573 '. Richard Harford's monument there is certainly by Guldon, for since Richard commissioned Guldon to make his father's monument, his widow evidently gave the commission to Guldon to make her husband's monument in 1578, three years after his death.

At Madley, Herefordshire, there is an altar tomb to Richard Willison (1574) and his wife Anne Elton signed by Guldon; at Abergavenny the monument to Sir David Lewis, 1584, is signed ' John Gildon made this Towme ', and at Astley in Worcestershire are two signed Blount tombs—Walter Blount, d. 1561, and Robert Blount, d. 1575, dated 1577. In Gloucestershire, we have at Sapperton a Knight of the Poole family 1574, which is almost certainly his, and at St. Peter's, Bristol, the freestone monument (he always seems to have worked his monuments in freestone) to Mistress Antholin Newton about 1600 is most probably from his workshop.

Some people, possibly led by the name Guldo, have imagined him to be in all probability an Italian influenced by the Italian terracotta tradition, but I suggest it would seem more probable that he was of native stock—the name Guilding is well-known between Hereford and Tewkesbury today—accustomed to work in wood, and it is possible that his name may yet be found on some of the large carved mantelpieces that still exist in Herefordshire.

Guldon's workshop probably continued to turn out monuments from Hereford for many years, for there are several freestone monuments in the locality, which though not in the direct Guldon tradition would seem to belong to the Herefordshire school. For instance, the monument at Dumbleton to Sir Charles Percy 1628 and Dame Dorothy his wife, the daughter of Thomas Cocks of Bishops Cleeve.

There are in our district many monuments of most beautiful craftsmanship whose author has yet to be found. One is in Gloucester Cathedral to Abraham Blackleech 1639 and Gertrude his wife, one of the ten daughters of Ambrose Elton of Ledbury. This has been attributed by Dallaway, in his notes to Walpole, to Francesco Fanelli, to whom, also, he gave the fine monument of Mrs Elizabeth Delves 1654, at Horsham, Sussex, but there is no reason for such an attribution; both monuments are by an English hand and should be compared with the Unett monument at Castle Frome, Herefordshire, to a brother-in-law, William Unett (d. 1624), of Blackleech's, who also married an Elton daughter, and to the monument at Ross to John Rudhall 1636 and Mary Pett, his wife, who lie hand in hand.

It is curious how often the fine marble monuments of the 17th century are said to have been made in Italy and often given the impossible attribution of Bernini; witness the Kyrle monument at Much Marcle, where Sir John Kyrle (d. 1650) and his wife, Sybil, lie on a black marble and alabaster altar-tomb, or the monument to the third Sir Thomas Lucy (d. 1640) at Charlecote, Warwickshire, which is really by John Schoerman and Nicholas Stone.

There are other fine monuments in our neighbourhood that should have their sculptor found. Such, for instance, as the monument at Miserden to William Sandys 1640 and his wife, Margaret Culpepper (d. 1644), made for a family

who appreciated fine monuments. Witness the very fine double monument to his first cousin Samuel Sandys and the latter's son, Edwin, d. 1626, at Wickhamford, Worcestershire.

Those who become interested in tracing the authorship of monuments will find that their research will be much helped by a study of the deceased's pedigree, for often when a monument has been made for one of the family, other members wish to commemorate their dead in the same way and go to the same studio. Witness the Knotesford monument at Malvern Abbey, and the Savage monument at Elmley Castle. (The Knotesford daughter married a Savage). Or compare the figures of Sir Baptist Hicks, Lord Campden (d. 1629) and Lady Hicks, on the great monument at Campden with those on the monument to his son-in-law, Sir Charles Morrison (d. 1630) at Watford, Hertfordshire, which is known to have been made by Nicholas Stone.

Then there are the charming little bust monuments, such as William Ferrers 1625 at Ashchurch; John Jones, Mayor of Gloucester (d. 1630) in the cathedral with its delightful background of pigeon-holed papers, books, inkstand and quill pens; and at Tewkesbury, John Roberts (d. 1631) of Tiddington, Gen^t., 'careful he was to maintain Tillage, the maintenance of mankind'. These probably came by sea from the Southwark marblers' workshops.

But granted, some will say, that monuments such as you have mentioned are beautiful and works of art, what of the vast bewigged marble figures that began to come to life in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. Some, indeed, would add, can their existence even be justified in our churches today?

Well, even these have great human interest, for they show how differently succeeding generations have regarded death.

To the medieval mind, death came as a peaceful end to

a life of toil and risk. Fortified by the rites of the church, the lord and his lady, the knight and his dame, the bishop and parson, the abbot and abbess had passed on to another life and were laid out in calm state upon their monuments ; their eyes, for the most part, closed ; their hands, finger tip to finger tip, meeting on their breasts as in prayer, or sometimes, in the case of a monument erected to a loved wife or husband, as John and Mary Rudhall at Ross, clasped hand in hand. A kneeling figure, such as Lord Despencer's monument at Tewkesbury, is very rare in mediæval times. Men and women alike seem to have come to rest in the abbey or parish church which their, or their ancestors', wealth had been poured out to found or adorn, and in which masses to their memory would perpetually be sung.

But, after the dissolution of the monasteries, the old tradition gradually broke down and with the end of the chantries endowed for the benefit and quiet keeping of their souls, it gradually became the fashion to depict the dead, first as just awakening from their long sleep, and next, accompanied by their sorrowing relatives, who stand sobbing around them :—

Upon their Backs the ancient Statues lie,
 Devoutly fix'd with Hands up-lifted high,
 Intreating Pray'rs of all the Passers by.
 At length they chang'd the Posture by degrees,
 And plac'd the Marble Vot'ry on its Knees :
 Then Warriors rough devoutly Heav'n adore,
 And Statesmen kneel, who never kneel'd before :
 Then Ornaments superfluous were known,
 To spoil the native Beauty of the Stone :
 The rich-vein'd Porph'ry we, surpriz'd, behold,
 Vermilion painted, and inlay'd with Gold ;
 Where long Inscriptions at such Distance lie,
 Not to be read by the inspecting Eye.
 Next a less pious Posture they provide,
 On Cushions lolling, stretch'd with careless Pride ;
 With wringing Hands the little Cherubs moan,
 And Fun'ral Lamps appear to blaze in Stone,
 And Marble Urns with juster Beauty stand,

And rich Relievo shews the Master's Hand ;
 Or the neat Altar with a Busto grac'd,
 In *Roman* Pride, like that which *Shefflyd* plac'd.*

Dart's *Westminster Abbey*, 1723.

Bird's Fettiplace monuments (1657) at Swinbrook beyond Burford are one of the best examples of the change from Death to Life. Each Fettiplace has just turned over on to his elbow and, hand to chin, looks out into the church as out of a ship's bunk. Other monuments such as that to Lord Edward and Lady Noel (1664) at Chipping Campden by John Marshall represent them clothed in their shrouds re-entering the world from their tombs.

Gradually the figures became more and more lifelike and appear clad in every detail of the dress they wore. This was probably due to the custom (which has brought down to us the waxworks in Westminster Abbey) of carrying at all State funerals a wax figure, its face most often modelled from a death mask, wearing the complete clothes worn by the deceased. Indeed some of the Abbey waxworks when cleaned a few months ago were found to be clothed in every detail with the actual clothes worn by the deceased in life. It is the persistence of this custom that has made it possible for us to know how each garment was fastened.

The Coventry monument at Elmley Castle (1700), which is signed by Stanton of Holborn, was erected by his widow for the family church at Croome, but as she, meantime, had married a second husband, a Savage of Elmley, the Lord Coventry of the day refused to allow its erection at Croome, so it had to be sent on to Elmley as its inscription bitterly records.

John Deacle (d. 1709), a London alderman, who founded the Deacle school at Bengeworth, by Evesham, is represented as just sitting up in full aldermanic pomp.

* This alludes to the bust of Dryden, then recently erected in the Abbey.

At the same time as these over-elaborate monuments, there arose the custom of commemorating the dead by a more architectural monument bearing the bust of the deceased, the monument itself still bearing on its cornices lamps, urns and pyramids, often accompanied by the traditional figures of Death with his scythe, or putti armed with darts or hour-glasses. About such architectural monuments often hang great swags of flowers and fruit, some wrought by or after the manner of Grinling Gibbons (1648-1721), the famous woodcarver whom John Evelyn brought to the notice of the King. For many of those architects and decorators best known for their internal decorations of the great houses of the day turned their hands to designing monuments for their patrons—monuments which are often versions in stone of the mirrors and frames that gave such dignity to the panelled walls of the days of William III, Queen Anne and the early Georges. But the fashion was soon to change. By the middle of the 18th century, all who visited Rome, (and Rome was essential to those who made the 'Grand Tour') were influenced by the wonders that were being produced from the excavations at Herculaneum. Greek Art, or what the cognoscenti of the day believed to be Greek Art, became the fashion under the Brothers Adam and the new school of sculptors who followed in their wake. The huge statues of the dead man surrounded by his family gave way to low reliefs, and that there could be anything beautiful in any of the monuments wrought between the days of so-styled Gothic and of the new Hellenism was thought to be impossible, but today the tide of criticism seems on the turn.

I hope that in this short address, in which I have attempted to draw attention to the beauties and interest of the works chiselled by the sculptors of the 17th and 18th centuries, I shall have succeeded in making many more of our members regard with very different eyes

these monuments that are to be found in such numbers in our churches. I hope also that they will join with those who have already taken up the study in endeavouring if possible to find the signatures of the sculptors, which often yield themselves to a prolonged search aided by an electric torch—or failing that by learning from wills and other family documents what artists were employed, or by acquiring from a careful study of those monuments whose sculptors are definitely known the power to discern the distinct characteristics of this or that artist. I can assure them that they will find the puzzles they have to unravel as exciting as any crossword puzzle and of even greater permanent interest.