

Sheriff Hutton: Historic Doubts

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THE MONUMENT ACCEPTED as that of Edward, Prince of Wales, son of Richard III, who died in 1484 while still a child, lies in the church of St Helen and the Holy Cross at Sheriff Hutton in the North Riding of Yorkshire.

Many will be familiar with "Some notes on the Royal Monument in the North Chapel of Sheriff Hutton church" by Captain T. B. L. Churchill.¹ This has for long been accepted as an authoritative exposition of the subject, and P. W. Hammond adopted its conclusions in the section on the tomb in his *Edward of Middleham, Prince of Wales* in 1973.²

In 1950 the monument was rebuilt in the position indicated by the disposition of its component parts at that time, that is, against the wall in the north chapel. It has never been possible to establish its original position with absolute certainty.

Churchill based his identification of it on Roger Dodsworth's description of the tomb in 1623,³ corroborated by William Dugdale's tricking of the coats of arms in the same year.⁴ Churchill illustrates both sources,⁵ and his transcript of the relevant part of Dodsworth's notes reads as follows:

middle quyer window

quarty 1. ar 3 fusells in fesse g. 2 or an egle displd

second qur g. a x ar a m compone ar & b

3 as 2 4 as 1

The same on a neat monument of alabaster on ye topp whereof is ye portraiture of a child in his long coat having on his head a capp of maynetenance. France and England, a m er cantoned.

Quaty. 1. beauchamp erle of Warwick 2. qur chechqui or & b. a A er.

Reference to the actual manuscript however, produces this:

midle quyer window

quaty 1. ar 3 fusells in fesse g. 2. or an egle displd

second qur g. a x ar a m compone ar & b.

3 as 2. 4 as 1.

The same on a neat monument of alabaster on ye topp wherof is ye portraiture of a child in his long coat having on his head a capp of maynetenance. ffrance & England a m er cantoned.

quarty 1. beauchamp erle of Warwick 2 qur. chechqui or & b. a A er.

It may be thought that the two are exactly alike, allowing for the negligible differences in spelling, but not so. The difference lies, not in what is said, but in how it is arranged. The most important point of dissimilarity in this respect is hardly noticeable, but it is vital to the correct interpretation of what Dodsworth saw. The description of the effigy, Churchill follows *on the same line* with the arms of England, whereas in the manuscript the latter is on a new line.

It should be borne in mind that Dodsworth was describing the arms he saw in the "midle quyer window"—that is, the east window of the chancel. The probability is therefore, that having noted the first coat of arms, that of Montacute/Monthermer quartering Neville, he saw the same blazon on the tomb, and immediately noted the fact. Then he turned back to the window and recorded the shields of France/England and Beauchamp/Newburgh. Had these also been on the tomb he would surely have said so.

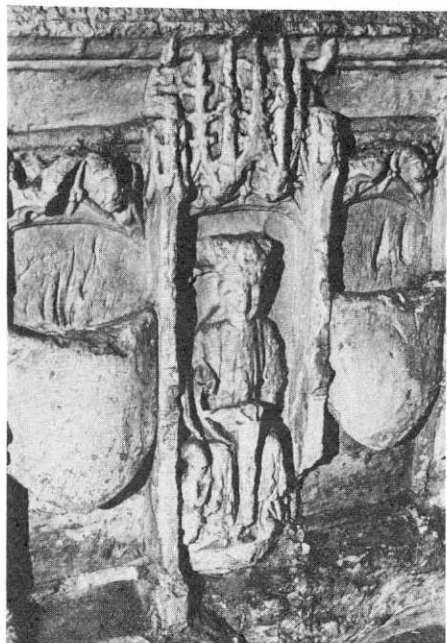
Later corroboration for the existence of at least one other of the shields in the window, can be found. We are told that in 1824 the east window "was large and of handsome branching tracery. A few fragments of stained glass are still preserved, but they are of trifling import, excepting one compartment which exhibits the bust or head of a Monk, bearing a Crosier on his shoulder; and another with part of the Royal Arms of England".⁶ These fragments were still in situ in 1852 when Thomas Gill, another Yorkshire antiquary, saw them there.⁷ Churchill quotes the latter and adds: "No trace of this shield remains, though the monk's head must have been moved to a window in the north chapel, where it can now be seen." A footnote comments: "It is strange that Dodsworth does not mention this."⁸

It would have been strange, agreed, had he not, but it seems obvious that he did, and that it was in the centre of the east window, flanked on the left by Montacute/Neville, and on the right by Beauchamp/Newburgh. This combination of arms in the glass, the Royal Arms with the label as used by Richard as Duke of Gloucester, and those of Neville and the Earldom of Warwick representing Anne Neville his wife, point to a date before there was any question of Richard's acceding to the throne. If the arms of the Duke of Gloucester were only in the glass, and there is no concrete evidence to prove otherwise, no reason need be sought for putting them on the monument at a time when Richard was king, and the label no longer relevant.

Whatever the shields on the tomb had borne originally, certain it is that in 1824 they were, says Todd "so much defaced and choaked up with numberless coats of whitewash, that it is impossible to distinguish what they represent. It would be highly desirable that some judicious hand should be appointed to remove these accumulated crusts."⁹ This shows an early and encouraging desire for conservation, but it may have been an injudicious hand which eventually did the work, perhaps to the detriment of the alabaster.

Gill, on the other hand in 1852 was of the opinion that representations of God such as is carved on the tombchest, were, or had been, incitements to idolatry, and had "rendered imperative" the Reformation of the sixteenth century, implying that if the monument had been entirely vandalised at that time, it would have been no bad thing.¹⁰

Dodsworth does not mention the large plain cross carved in relief which is the only coat of arms on the monument to survive until the present day, and is noted as being placed *above* the head of the effigy, which lay in the windowsill of the north chapel, by both Todd and Gill." It was still in that position when Churchill described it in 1934. It would seem therefore, that in Dodsworth's day, the shield could not be seen. If the supposition is correct that he was able to look at the glass of the east window and at the tomb from the same place, we can also suppose that the tomb was in or near the chancel, and that possibly at least one



Trinity panel with kneeling donor



Alabaster tomb at Sheriff Hutton: upper part of effigy

end was hidden, and bore the cross of St. George. It is not apparent from Dodsworth's account which shield on it bore the only arms he assigns to it.

We must now return to Dugdale's seeming corroboration of the shields seen by Dodsworth. These are beautifully drawn, first the one bearing Montacute/Monthermer quartering Neville; he then draws it again, followed by those of France quartering England, with the Duke of Gloucester's label, and Beauchamp quartering Newburgh. Above these three supposedly on the tomb he inscribes:

*Super tumulum Alablasterium ibidem
ubi cernitur effigies cujusdem pueri
cum vestimento longo
et pileo Ducali in capite
junt haec Insignia*

This is a Latin translation of Dodsworth's own description of the monument, and it is followed by the description, also in Latin, of the next memorial in the church given by Dodsworth. Dugdale does not draw the plain cross, nor does he note the arms of England in the glass, which we know must have been there. It is certain therefore, that Dugdale's account is not a corroboration of what was there, merely what he thought Dodsworth said was there. As Churchill says, as Norroy King of Arms, Dugdale is useful as a contemporary check on the correctness of the arms blazoned by Dodsworth, but established as copy-work only, his record seems to make Dugdale the first to misinterpret Dodsworth's positioning of the all-important arms at Sheriff Hutton, placing firmly on the monument what was certainly in the glass.¹² This misinterpretation was repeated by Churchill, and has been the basis of misunderstanding ever since.

It may be that it is an easy mistake to make. In 1904 the Yorkshire Archaeological Society transcribed and published this 160th volume of Dodsworth's Manuscripts in its Record Series, and the editor fell into the same error. The text was correctly set down in this case, but Dodsworth's *modus operandi* was again misunderstood, as a footnote says: "Can this be the monument of the infant son of Richard III, whose arms seem to be on it?"¹³

The mistake once made, hypothesis established as fact, the genealogists and historians could get to work and make identification fit the evidence as they saw it. So convincing were the results, that the Sheriff Hutton monument is now categorically stated to be that of Edward, Prince of Wales, son of Richard III.

We now come to a source of information hitherto untapped. In the Minster Library at York, are five large manuscript volumes, the painstaking work of James Torre, a late-seventeenth-century antiquary, who recorded details of endowments, chantry foundations, lists of patrons and incumbents and so forth for the parishes of the See of York "collected out of Public Records and Registers". He also recorded testamentary burials for each church, extracted from the wills proved at York. Occasionally he noted some details of monuments in churches he actually visited, and from the way these are incorporated, it would seem that he took notes at the church, then copied out his findings, sometimes accompanied by tiny sketches.

Part of the Sheriff Hutton entry is most unusual, if not unique, among his records.¹⁴ There are the usual pages listing incumbents, testamentary burials and so on in Torre's small neat hand, but between pages 478 and 479 an extra page

has been bound in. It is unnumbered, and at first glance is in such an illegible scrawl, that one might be forgiven for considering it to be a cuckoo in the nest. Close examination, however, reveals such similarities as confirm it to be Torre's writing; rough notes presumably indited while on a visit to the churches of Sheriff Hutton and Crayke. The sheet has originally been folded in four, and looks as if it might have lain in his pocket for some time before being inserted in its present position. Torre no doubt intended copying it out, but never did so. Wear on the page edges, and slight trimming, presumably when being bound up, has resulted in some details being lost, in one instance with unfortunate results. Right at the bottom of the page, after noting the memorials in the chancel, Torre says:

"In widow (sic) 2 old coats
1st. gu. 3 Lyons of Engd. or"

What the second "old coat" was, is missing, but here we have corroboration that part of the Duke of Gloucester's arms were there on July 19, 1690, the date Torre put at the head of the page on Sheriff Hutton. The "N. Quire" entry reads as follows: "... by the wall side on an old monument of a knt. in Armor crosslegged with a lyon at his feet & shield by his side charged with a fess betw. 3 martlets ...". This of course describes the stone knight of the Thweng family in the Witham chapel, and is followed by:

" at head of last by the wall side
short ? erected monu^t with

Thereon

? Escocheons supported by 2 Angels

in middle in a tabernacle a noble man sitting

Above a short Image of a man

in a round cap with hands conjoynd in prayer

or coronet

on either side 2 Escocheons in both

argt a Cross gu."

This description seems to say that between Dodsworth's visit in 1623 and Torre's in 1690, the tomb had been dismantled and the pieces removed to the north chapel. The fact that the "2 escocheons" were "on either side" of the effigy, points to their being in the window sill, with the side panel against the wall below, as Edward Blore sketched them in the early 1820s,¹⁵ and as they still were in Churchill's photographs in 1934.¹⁶ The most interesting fact to emerge, is that both the large shields appear to have borne the cross of St George, and as neither is mentioned by Dodsworth, it is perhaps a possibility that the monument in his day, stood under the arch between the chancel and the north chapel, where the organ is at present, and the ends therefore not immediately in evidence.

It might be thought that, the shields on the ends being accounted for, Torre's notes corroborate that the three coats of arms blazoned by Dodsworth could not have been on the monument, as there are only two shields to accommodate them, but this is not entirely a valid conclusion. A monument to nobility or royalty, if indeed it is such, would almost certainly be accorded a place of honour in the chancel, and be free-standing. It would therefore have another long side to match the surviving one, complete with two saints, two angels, two shields, and central

figure or figures, possibly a Virgin and Child. When the tomb was moved, for whatever reason—and the churches of seventeenth century England knew troublous times—it can hardly have been given the gentle treatment it would receive today, and probably sustained most of the damage it now shows, as well as the loss, whether accidental or deliberate, of its fourth side.

In spite of this damage, the monument can be viewed and judged with regard to artistic quality. Observation of other medieval royal funeral monuments, reveals that the one common feature is a high artistic quality, combined with a frequent use of original concepts in execution. It was in fact, royal patronage that pioneered the early use of alabaster for tomb monuments, initially in the effigy of Edward II, made in the early 1330s, and again with great success in the monument to his son, John of Eltham, who died in 1336.¹⁷ Perhaps more to our purpose is the effigy of William of Hatfield in York Minster.¹⁸ Here we have the effigy of a royal prince that exhibits carving of the highest quality, exemplifying a style of workmanship indicative of the London school that produced the tombs of Edward II and John of Eltham.

At Sheriff Hutton we find none of these traits of excellence. Close study shows that the effigy was carved from a form of alabaster containing harder, darker-coloured nodules, which can hardly have facilitated the carving of fine detail, and must have been a disadvantage obvious even when the material was first selected. The general style of carving can only be described as poor, with the drapery heavily treated, even allowing for the stiffness of material represented. If we attempt to date the effigy and tomb chest, we run into disparities which have never so far been explained satisfactorily in any of the published accounts of the tomb. The costume is of course difficult to date with precision, although there are alabaster panels documented which display similar costume and drapery treatment, dated c. 1430 and moreover, attributed tentatively to a York school.¹⁹ The hairstyle, with the hair cropped close over the ears, would also seem to indicate a date in the first half of the fifteenth century, and as a corollary to this it may here be pointed out that contemporary representations of Edward of Middleham show him with the longer hair fashionable later in the century.²⁰

Turning to the tomb chest, it has already been shewn that this follows the so-called "Yorkshire" pattern, with half-kneeling angels holding shields, flanking, in this case, a central Trinity.²¹ This design, as found at Harewood and Methley (West Riding), is firmly dated to the 1420s, with no direct comparison any later in the century. In point of fact, the angels at Sheriff Hutton vary in detail from the Harewood/Methley pattern. The closest parallel so far traced is to be found at Swine (East Riding), where pairs of semi-kneeling angels hold shields on the tomb-chest of a member of the Hilton family, which can be dated to 1420-30. The style of these angels, it must be admitted, also differs in detail from the Sheriff Hutton pair, and the latter seems almost to be an amalgam of the other types.²² The trinity incorporates a small kneeling supplicant, whose prayer ascends on a scroll to the ear of the Almighty. This figure is in armour, again has close-cropped hair, and can be compared to a charming representation of Thomas Montacute, Earl of Salisbury, receiving the poem *The Pilgrimage of the Life of Man* from the poet, Lydgate. This was written in 1426.²⁴

All these features lead us to the conclusion that the Sheriff Hutton monument fits better into the second quarter of the fifteenth century than into the

third or fourth, and this demands fresh consideration of whom it might commemorate, if not Edward of Middleham.

The genealogical evidence consists of first, the coats of arms established as being on the monument: two shields of the cross of St George, and one bearing:—

Grand-quarterly: 1. Quarterly, 1, Argent 3 fusils in fesse gules 2, Or an eagle displayed (vert) (3 as 2, 4 as 1); 2. Gules a saltire argent, a label compoⁿe argent and azure; 3 as 2, 4 as 1.

Second, the remains on either side of the effigy's head of heraldic creatures, distinctive, as have been noticed by previous researchers, of griffins.

The arms are those first used by Richard Neville, eldest son of the first Earl of Westmorland by his second wife, Joan Beaufort, when, after the death of Thomas Montacute, Earl of Salisbury, previously mentioned, in 1428, he became Earl of Salisbury, Lord Montacute and Lord Monthermer, *jure uxoris*. He had married Alice Montacute, Thomas's heiress in 1424. The identical arms appear on his Garter stall plate, dated c. 1436. They were also used by his eldest son Richard, Earl of Warwick, as we have seen in Dodsworth's notes on the Sheriff Hutton glass, being there along with the arms of his wife Anne, the Beauchamp heiress; the two shields in conjunction with that of Richard, Duke of Gloucester, representing the marriage of the latter to Anne Neville, their daughter.

Although the griffin as a badge, may possibly have been adopted by Edward of Middleham after he was created Earl of Salisbury in 1478, it is obviously more likely to appear on the monument of a Neville of the lineage of Richard, Earl of Salisbury, whose achievement on his Garter stall plate is crested with "A griffin with wings displayed sitting in a crown gold".²⁵ The Montacutes had used the griffin as supporter also,²⁶ and there is evidence that their Neville successors did likewise. The seal of John Neville, Marquess Montagu clearly shows not only the griffin crest above the shield of arms, but griffin supporters on either side as well.²⁷

Tradition has it that the latter's only son, George, Duke of Bedford died in 1482, while only a young man, at Sheriff Hutton, and was buried there, but the monument hardly qualifies as his, not only on the grounds of the likely period of its execution, but because the effigy is patently that of a child. Also, Marquess Montagu, as third son of Richard, Earl of Salisbury, differenced his arms with a gimmel ring, and the shield also bore an escutcheon of pretence for his wife, Isabel Ingoldsthorpe,²⁸ and these would have been the arms most likely to be displayed on any monument to his son, as they later were by one of his daughters, Lucy, on the Fitzwilliam monument at Tickhill in the West Riding.²⁹

There were fragments of a brass in the north aisle bearing the arms of Neville, at the beginning of this century,³⁰ and it is possible that the stone slab with the indents of shield and inscription surviving, is what remains of this, and that it might have been the tomb of young George Neville.

If it is accepted that the alabaster monument was erected between c. 1436, when Richard Neville became a Knight of the Garter, and the middle of the century, the evidence points to the possibility of one of the Earl of Salisbury's children being the original occupant of the tomb. Richard Neville had twelve children, six sons and six daughters, and the only ones not to survive childhood appear to have been the two youngest sons, Ralph and Robert.³¹ Here then we have two candidates. The period is right, the arms are right, and the two St George's crosses, while unusual, can be accounted for by the fact that, if the effigy

were one of the boys, his father and both grandfathers were Knights of the Garter and his paternal grandmother, a Lady of the Order.

In conclusion, while the precise ascription of the monument without further documentation must remain in doubt, on artistic and historic grounds, our submission is that it is not that of Edward of Middleham.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

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3. Bodleian Library. Dodsworth MS. 160, fo.210.
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5. Churchill *op.cit.* (note 1), plates IV, V, VI.
6. J. and G. Todd, *Some account of Sheriff Hutton castle with brief notices of the church of St. Helen* (York 1824), p.43.
7. T. Gill, *Vallis Eboracensis* (1852), p.428.
8. Churchill *op.cit.*, p.34.
9. Todd *op.cit.*, p.46.
10. Gill *op.cit.*, p.430.
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22. F. H. Crossley, *English church monuments, A.D. 1150-1550* (1933), p.21 and Routh *op.cit.*, p.108 no. 66.
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