

MAUSOLUS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE MAUSOLEA & MONUMENTS TRUST

WINTER 2012



M.S.
PRAENOBILIS DOMINI THOMAE
COMITIS COVENTRIAE, VICECOMITIS DEERHURST,
BARONIS COVENTRIE DE ALLESBOROUGH,
HURUS COMITATUS CUSTODIE ROTULORUM,
NECNON DECANI ET CAPITULI ECCLESIAE VICORNIEN
ET BURGI DE EVESHAM PRIMARI SENESCALLI.
THO. BARONIS COVENTRIE FILIUS FUIT NATU SECUNDI
GEORGI BARONIS FRATER, IOHANNIS PATRIUS,
ET ERISEM, SINE PROLE DECEDENTIS,
IN AMITA DIGNITATE SUCCESSOR.
VARIA REIPUBLICAE MUNIA
TUM MILITARIA TUM CIVILIA PERSTITIT.
FAMILIAM CENSU IAM CELEBREM, PLURIBUS FUNDIS
ET COMITIS ET VICECOMITIS TITULIS,
REGNANTE WILHELMO III ORNAVIT ET AUXIT.
E PRIORI COMITIS WINTERIDA PIERCEI EDGECOMBE
DE MOENT-EDGECOMBE IN COM. DEVON. ARM. FILIA
LIBEROS SUPERSTITES RELIQUIT THOMAM
HONORUM HAEREDEM DIGNISSIMUM ET GILBERTUM
PIETATEM, IUSTITIAM, LIBERALITATEM,
ANIMO CONSTANTIAM SEMPER ET ENIXE COLUIT.
DIERUM TANDEM ET GLORIE SATUR
SESE A SECCULO QUIASI SUBDUXIT,
LUTUS CETERIS CURIS DEO AC SIBI VACARET.
SIC COELOS ANHELANS,
IMMORTALITATI MA-
TURAM EFFLAVIT
ANIMAM
XV IULII M.
MDCCXC.
ET. LXX.

ELIZABETHA COMITISSA EIUS DOCTARIA
E NOBILI GRAHAMORUM FAMILIA PROGNATA
RICARDI FILII RICARDI GRAHAM DE COMPTON
ANNI 1713 PRIMUM CAPITO PRIMO
STRENUE TANTICANTIS CAHILANET FILIAE
HOC AMORIS SINCERE SUPP. A. OBSERVANTIAE
GRATIA DEMUM ANIMI FIGNUS
PRO TEMPERINO DANET MANTU ERGA SE AFFECTU
NULLA DICERE BEATA PROLE MDESTISSIMA PONDIT
ET PROSE ORITUM CORPUS TUUM
CIBI DILECTISSIMO ANIMAE HOC RECOND. MO DIT
ORIT DIE 17 AN. DNI MDCC

The monument to the first Earl of Coventry in the church at Elmley Castle, Worcestershire, which has been restored as part of an exemplary conservation project

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The best get better: two stone monuments at St Mary's Ch

Sally Strachey

The Church of St Mary at Elmley Castle nestles on the northern slopes of the Bredon Hills, close to Pershore in Worcestershire. It contains two remarkable monuments in the north transept which Pevsner considered to be, 'amongst the best of their date in the county.'

To the west is the large chest supporting three effigies - Sir William Savage (d.1616), Sir Giles, his son (d.1631) and Lady Catherine, his son's wife (d.1674). Lady Catherine, who is not buried here but at Malvern Priory Church, carries an infant. At the feet of the effigies are four exquisite kneelers, a unicorn's head and a lion. The monument is composed primarily of alabaster with polished limestones for the chest lid and inscription panels. There is gold trimming on the robes, re-painted in the 1960s. The Savage monument is a fine example of the carver Samuel Baldwin's workshop, which was responsible for some sixty monuments within a forty mile radius of Gloucester. The Savage monument was executed in the period when Baldwin was at the height of his powers. It is thought that the effigies were carved by Baldwin himself.

On the east wall is the imposing monument to the first Earl of Coventry, died 1699, with a reclining Earl beneath a substantial canopy supported by Ionic columns surrounded by Graces and Cherubs with gilded wings and two large inscription panels. The monument is from the renowned London workshop of William Stanton and is primarily composed of statuary marble, statuary vein marble, a Nero marble and a Salterworth limestone. The inscription panels are inlaid with a lead alloy. The memorial was commissioned by the second wife of the first Earl and was intended for the nearby church of Croome d'Abitot, next to the Coventry family estate. A bitter feud between the second Earl of Coventry and his stepmother resulted in the refusal of permission to erect the

monument, however, even though the first Earl is buried at Croome D'Abitot. The monument was finally erected at Elmley Castle by Mr Thomas Savage, whom the now-notorious Countess-dowager had married in 1700.

A condition and recommendation report was prepared by Strachey Conservation for Bartosch and Stokes Architects in February 2006, in response to growing concerns over the structural stability of both monuments. The chief culprit was the system of iron cramps used to construct the monuments. The iron had suffered extreme corrosion because of exposure to both moisture and air. The volumetric increase of the fixings caused by the corrosion had exerted pressure on the numerous sections of stones resulting in dramatic movement through the joints, cracking and buckling of the stone and an overall loss of structural integrity. The monuments were also extremely dirty with evidence of surface deterioration including extensive corrosion and lamination of the lead lettering on the inscription panels of the Coventry monument.

During a two-year monitoring programme, both monuments displayed acceleration in the opening of the joints. In the case of the Coventry, the expansion of the iron cramps had exerted an upward pressure on the columns causing the massive canopy to lean towards the nave. The community of St Mary's church swung into action and secured a HLF grant to carry out the dismantling, rebuilding and conservation of the Coventry and Savage monuments in 2010 and 2011.

The technical challenges of dismantling two structurally unstable monuments in a confined space were complex. The sheer size of the Coventry monument and the 160-plus stones used to construct this grandiose statement necessitated careful pre-contract planning and recording. The

Coventry monument was tackled first with the Savage monument being put under belt-and-braces protections. Scaffolding was erected around the Coventry, designed to facilitate the safe and efficient lifting of the numerous elements using a beam-and-trolley system. The design incorporated two loading bays on the first and second lifts so that minimal movement of the larger elements was possible. The platforms were extended as far as possible to distribute the weight on the loading bays as well as those sections being lowered through the scaffolding to ground level. A bespoke shelving system was installed to safely store the numerous smaller sections of marble and stone during the conservation programme.

During the dismantling of the Savage monument the original family crypt was discovered containing the mortal remains of the Savage family. Following an archaeological investigation by Dr George Nash, the crypt was left intact with the new core rebuilt to the existing profile of the arch. When the rebuilding of the core had reached 250mm below the finished height, a lead tray was inserted with the corners bossed with three sheets of lead so that there were no joints. The Savage monument has suffered considerable decay through damp on the north wall and it was essential to isolate the alabaster from any residual moisture in the surrounding fabric during the rebuild. In the case of the Coventry we were able to isolate the structure from moisture by inserting a lead tray at ground level and rebuilding the monument with an air gap at the rear of the monument.

The system of fixings for the rebuilding of the monuments was carried out in stainless steel. The cramps fixed into the wall and designed to take the downward loads of the monument were secured with resin. All the lateral cramps, which needed to be reversible, were secured with plaster.

