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The Cottington and Bradshaw burials in Westminster Abbey

Susan Jenkins

The Cottingtons

Francis, Baron Cottington and his wife Anne were buried in Westminster Abbey, Anne before and Francis after the Civil War and Commonwealth. They share a monument (Figure 12.1), described in the 1924 inventory of the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments as:

a combined sarcophagus and wall-monument, ascribed to F. Fanelli, of black and white marble with bronze enrichments. The shaped sarcophagus stands on a high panelled pedestal and has in front a tablet and achievement-of-arms; on the sarcophagus is the reclining effigy of a man [Lord Cottington] on a rush mattress and having lace collar, knee-breeches and gown of office; the back-piece has an eared inscription-tablet, and is flanked by pilasters supporting an entablature; above the latter is an oval recess surrounded by a wreath and containing the bust of Lady Cottington; it is flanked by trusses supporting a pediment.¹

The erection of the monument was undertaken in two phases. The first phase saw the construction of Anne’s funeral monument, following her death on 22 February 1633/4, aged 33. This was commissioned by her husband, who probably also intended this as his future burial place.² On 18 July 1634, Cottington signed a contract with Hubert Le Sueur, Charles I’s court sculptor: ‘for the work of a great tomb, to be made and set up at the Abbey Church of Westminster’, for which he paid £400.³ The contract does not specify the materials used, but the monument has been described by Le Sueur scholar Charles Avery as ‘an elaborate affair … its architecture being carried out largely in black touchstone [sic], while a bronze bust of Lady Cottington was set in a roundel above and ensconced in an aedicula of mannerist design.’⁴
Fig. 12.1  The tomb of Lord Cottingham and his wife in its present state.
By courtesy of the Dean and Chapter of Westminster.
Recent inspection of the bust of Lady Cottington (Figure 12.2) reveals that it is made of bronze, although early sources seem confused about its material. John Dart, for instance, writing in 1723, describes it as ‘a Busto of white Marble in a circular Frame of gilt Brass; and on a Table of the same an Inscription, informing you, that it was erected to Anne Lady Cottington, Baroness of Hanworth, &c’. Nearly a century later, Ackermann recorded that, ‘In a circular frame of gilt brass, is the bust of this lady [Anne Cottington] in white marble’, although an illustration shows it looking decidedly dark in tone. A few years later, J. P. Neale asserted that the bust of Lady Cottington is ‘of gilt copper, but assuming the appearance of bronze from the effects of time’.

Shortly before the execution of Charles I, Francis Cottington left England (see Chapter 3). In 1650 he was in Spain with an embassy to raise money for Charles II, and died ‘piously and catholicly’ in Valladolid on 19 June 1652, where he was buried in the Jesuit English College. In his will he requested a burial ‘without any pomp or splendour’ and that his body ‘be placed in a sepulchre on deposit in the church of the English College of this city in the chapel or place my executors shall choose and remain deposited there until our Lord so disposes the affairs of the Kingdom of England that my body may be translated to it by my nephews and heirs…’. He also requested that up to 2,000 masses be said for his soul. As Cottington’s children predeceased him, he had left his goods and estates in England in the care of Lord Francis Seymour, to be divided between his ‘catholic orphan’ nephews, Francis and Charles, the sons of his elder brother Maurice.
Cottington’s estates passed to his nephew Francis, who died in 1665, then to his great-nephew Francis who died in 1666 and finally to Charles Cottington, another great-nephew. In 1676, in pursuance of his great-uncle’s wishes, Charles Cottington contacted the English College in Valladolid via an agent for the college, Father John Newport, requesting permission ‘to bring the bones of his uncle to England’. Father Newport’s letter to the Father Rector of the English College explained that ‘he assumes [the College] will have no objection because he [Lord Cottington] was only placed there on deposit’. It fell to Charles Cottington, therefore, to arrange for the repatriation and re-burial of his uncle in Westminster Abbey, together with the adapting of the existing funeral monument in St Paul’s Chapel at the north-east end of the ambulatory.

The second stage of the monument’s construction consequently took place following the retrieval of Cottington’s bones. According to the Abbey’s Burial Register, he was re-buried at Westminster Abbey on 24 June 1678, although the inscription on the monument records that ‘his [Lord Cottington’s] body was brought & here interr’d by Charles Cottington Esqr. his nephew & heire, An.Dni. 1679’.

Dart’s description and engraving of 1723 (Figure 12.3) show Lady Cottington’s monument with a section at the foot ‘raised like a Table, of black and white Marble, on which, resting on the Left Arm, is the Effigy of Francis Lord Cottington’. In an unpublished manuscript in Westminster Abbey Library, sculpture expert John Physick describes it as ‘a floor standing table monument supported by 6 Ionic columns’ (although illustrations suggest that they were plain pedestal columns). Physick also argues that the gilded bronze ornament surmounted by a grotesque masque, which is positioned beneath it, was probably lowered from Lady Cottington’s monument when the two were put together.

Cottington’s effigy depicts him reclining on a rush mattress, wearing a gown with a lace collar, knee breeches and large rosettes on his shoes. The style of dress and relative youthfulness of the sitter’s face are similar to portraits made of him in the 1630s, an anachronism perhaps suggestive of conservative clothing adopted during his residence in Spain.

The reclining effigy has previously been attributed to Florentine sculptor Francesco Fanelli (1577–after 1657?). Fanelli is known to have worked in England from around 1632–40 but experts now believe it is more likely that Charles Cottington commissioned the effigy in the 1670s based on a painting of Cottington dating from the 1630s, which would explain his wearing the earlier costume. The identity of the sculptor is unknown, although the effigy has been attributed to Cibber. One critic has suggested that ‘the marble effigy of his Lordship is an unfortunate later addition of no merit and disturbs the deliberate austerity of effect that artist and patron had originally contrived’. Whatever the quality of Lord Cottington’s effigy and whoever the sculptor, the monument as a whole, which was presumably designed by Hubert Le Sueur, has considerable architectural grandeur.
Fig. 12.3  Engraving of the Cottington tomb in the early eighteenth century.

Important alterations to Cottington’s monument took place in 1825, when the Dean and Chapter agreed to install a large monument to the engineer James Watt in St Paul’s Chapel. The Abbey’s Chapter Minutes for 6 April 1825 record the order that:

leave be given to erect a monument to the late James Watt by Mr Chantrey in the Chapel of St Paul and to alter the situation of the Monument of Sir Giles D’Aubegny and to place the recumbent figure of Lord Cottington’s monument on the Sarcophagus as proposed by C.H. Turner Esq. Chairman of the Committee for Erecting the Monument and that the fine required is one hundred and sixty guineas.\textsuperscript{21}

The table with columns and baroque swagged cherubs on which Cottington had hitherto reclined was thus removed and the monument assumed its current aspect.

Ultimately, the statue of James Watt was considered to be too large for St Paul’s Chapel and it was removed in 1960 and subsequently re-sited to the Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh. At the same time, the Surveyor of the Fabric, Stephen Dykes-Bower, instructed the repair and redecoration of Cottington’s monument. His report for 1962 records:

Beyond putting back missing ornaments, the existence of which was shown by Dart’s engraving and confirmed by faint marks discernible in the marble itself, this did not amount to much. But the engraving served to indicate how the black marble was relieved by gilding. It has been impossible to repeat the full scheme owing to an alteration, apparently unrecorded, in the form of the monument: Lord Cottington’s white marble effigy was originally lower down and rested on an arched table in front of the main structure. This at some time was removed and the figure lifted to its present level where it cannot properly be seen. The change accounts for the centre lower portion not being of black marble like the rest of the monument, but merely faced with plaster, painted to simulate marble.

Dykes-Bower went on to remark that: ‘When the two candlesticks on the top, of which only the triangular metal bases survived, have been recreated as Dart showed them, the monument will be complete.’\textsuperscript{22}

Two years later, his Surveyor’s Report recorded that: ‘the two gilded candlesticks on the top of the Cottington monument in St Paul’s chapel are new. When those shown in Dart’s illustration disappeared is not known, but Fanelli’s design was manifestly incomplete without these essential features.’\textsuperscript{23} It seems likely that Dykes-Bower commissioned the regilding of Lady Cottington’s portrait bust, consistent with his interventive redecoration of many of the monuments in the Abbey.
John Bradshaw

John Bradshaw lived in the Deanery at Westminster Abbey from January 1649 until his death aged 57 on 31 October 1659. During the Commonwealth, the Abbey was run by a 'Committee for the College of Westminster' which was set up on 18 November 1645. Bradshaw oversaw Abbey affairs in his role as Lord President of the High Court of Justice following the death of the Royalist Dean John Williams in 1644.

Daily services in the Abbey took on a different aspect during the Commonwealth, as soldiers were on duty in the church to suppress dissent at their more puritanical style.

One contemporary source celebrated:

Where as there was wont to be heard, nothing almost but Roaring-Boyes, tooting and squeaking Organ-Pipes, and the Cathedral Catches of Morley, and I know not what trash; now the Popish Altar is quite taken away, the bel- lowing Organs are demolisht, the treble or rather trouble and base Singers, Chanters, or inchanters, driven out; and instead thereof, there is now set up a most blessed Orthodox Preaching Ministry... and for the gaudy, gilded Crucifixes, and rotten rabble of dumbe Idols, Popish Saints, and Pictures where that sinfull singing was used, now a most sweet assembly, and thicke throng of Gods pious people... O our God! What a rich and rare alteration! What a strange change is this indeed!

Oliver Cromwell died in September 1658 and his funeral took place in the Abbey on 23 November 1658, with the ceremonials of royal burials. Contemporary diarist John Evelyn described the 'superb funeral of ye Protector. He was carried from Somerset House in a velvet bed of state drawn by six horses ... Oliver lying in Effigie in royal robes, and crown'd with a Crown, sceptre and globe, like a king.' His funeral bier was set up at the east end of the Henry VII (Lady) Chapel where it was visited by members of the public.

President John Bradshaw died the following year and on 22 November 1659 he was buried close to Cromwell in the same vault as his wife Mary, who had pre-deceased him. He was interred in what is now known as the Ormond vault in the Royal Air Force Chapel. The site is marked by a vault stone installed by Dean Stanley in 1866 (now covered by a carpet), which reads:

IN THIS VAULT WAS INTERRED
OLIVER CROMWELL  1658
AND IN OR NEAR IT
HENRY IRETON, HIS SON-IN-LAW  1651
ELIZABETH CROMWELL, HIS MOTHER  1654
JANE DESBOROUGH, HIS SISTER  1656
Charles II returned from exile in May 1660 and was crowned in Westminster Abbey on 23 April 1661. Some months earlier, on 4 December 1660, the House of Commons had voted that the bodies of Cromwell, Ireton and Bradshaw should be exhumed from the Abbey and hung at Tyburn to coincide with the 12th anniversary of the execution of Charles I (30 January; see also Chapter 3). Pepys recorded the parliamentary vote that the regicides ‘should be taken up out of their graves in the abby [sic] and drawn to the gallows and there hanged and buried under it’.28 The Lords approved the vote on 8 December and on 26 January 1661 the bodies of Ireton and Cromwell were removed from the Abbey and taken to the Red Lion Inn at Holborn.29 The Abbey’s Treasurers’ Accounts for 1661 record a payment of £10.15s. for ‘Removing the Reb[el] Corps[es]’.30 Bradshaw was exhumed a few days later, on 29 January, a delay apparently caused by the fact that he had not been embalmed and his body was ‘green and stank’.31 Another eye-witness, Samuel Sainthill, described in even more gruesome detail how:

The odious carcasses of O.C., Major General Ireton, and Bradshaw were drawn in sledges to Tyburn… C in a green-seare cloth, very fresh embalmed; Ireton having been buried long, hung like a dried rat, yet corrupted about the fundament. Bradshaw in his winding sheet, the finger of his right hand and nose perished having wet the sheet through; the rest very perfect, in so much that I know his face.32

John Evelyn’s diary entry for 30 January 1661 describes how:

This day (O the stupendious and inscrutable judgments of God!) were the carcasses of those arch rebells Cromwell, Bradshaw the Judge who condemn’d his Majestie, and Ireton, sonn-in-law to ye Usurper, dragg’d out of their superb tombs in Westminster among the Kings, to Tyburne, and hang’d on the gallows there from 9 in ye morning till 6 at night and then buried under that fatal and ignominious monument in a deepe pitt; thousands of people who had seene them in all their pride being spectators.33
The corpses were hung in chains on the gallows at Tyburn during the day, then beheaded at sunset. The heads were set on pikes at Westminster Hall, where Samuel Pepys saw them on 5 February 1661, ‘set up upon the further [south] end of’ Westminster Hall with Bradshaw’s in the middle, apparently ‘set above the part of the hall where he had presided in 1649 over the regicide court’ (see Chapter 3 Figure 3.7). The bodies were buried in a common pit, not in St Margaret’s Churchyard, which was consecrated ground, but in the garden of one of the houses on the north side of the Abbey. This may have been the prebendal house that adjoined the west side of the north transept, which had formerly been the Abbey’s sacristy. Bradshaw’s wife, who was also dug up, was given a decent burial in St. Margaret’s.

No further records survive to establish the location of the disinterred bodies and it is unlikely that they will ever be found. Sightings of their spirits have been detected however, if credit is given to rumours that Bradshaw’s ghost walks from his small room in the south-west triforium of the Abbey on the anniversary of Charles I’s execution.