

Hawkins 1877 E. Hawkins, 'Notes on some monuments in Rochester Cathedral', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, 11 (1877), 1–9.

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NOTES ON SOME MONUMENTS IN
ROCHESTER CATHEDRAL.

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My Merton College friends, I regret to say, have not been able to find the Memorandum which I sent to the College, when they made some alterations of their Founder's tomb, in 1849; but my recollection of what I then observed is so distinct, that I gladly comply with Mr. Scott Robertson's wish, that I should record what we then learned, respecting the remains of Bishop Walter de Merton.

There was a tradition that not only had the tomb been defaced and injured, at the time of the Great Rebellion, but that the Bishop's bones had been taken out of his coffin, and thrown about the church. This, however, was certainly not the fact. It is probably true that a Limoges effigy, which had originally been placed upon the stone coffin, was destroyed at that period; and that, instead of it, an alabaster recumbent figure, representing Bishop Walter de Merton, was prepared and laid upon his tomb, after the Restoration. This figure the authorities of Merton College did not value, and in 1849 they determined to remove it, and to place upon the tomb a new stone slab, engraved according to the style of the thirteenth

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century, in which Bishop de Merton lived and died. They likewise re-opened a window which had thrown light upon the original effigy, and repaired the exterior of the tomb, placing in front of it a new ornamental railing. The alabaster figure, however, was not destroyed. At my suggestion it was laid in a recess of the wall, adjoining the Bishop's tomb, and was protected by the original railing.

Bishop Hobhouse, who was a Fellow of Merton College, tells me that the tomb had been opened, at a former period, when a chalice taken out of it was carried to Oxford, to be preserved at the College. This agrees with what was observed, when the slab

was removed in 1849.

The bones of the right arm, on which the chalice may have been deposited, had certainly been taken out, and incorrectly replaced. The elbow-joint was attached to the shoulder, and vice versa; the bones of the fore-arm were laid across the pelvis, though the finger-bones were under the right hip. All the bones of the arm were bleached, but the rest of the bones of the body lay in a natural posture in the coffin, not bleached, but covered with a kind of integument which I cannot well describe. On the legs there was a black mass, without shape, which had probably been the boots. There were fragments of wood and of cloth in the coffin, the remains probably of the dress and of the pastoral staff.

It is well known that the Bishop, Walter de Merton, was a great man in his day, but the appearance of his remains would not exactly accord with this idea. They certainly shewed that he had been tall, more than six feet in height, but his forehead was low, and his eyes were very close together. He

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was great, however, not only in Church and State, as Lord High Chancellor and Bishop of Rochester, but in largeness of heart and in wisdom, as may be inferred, not only from his foundation of Merton College, but also from the statutes which he gave to it. They were the first statutes ever given to any College in England, and were copied in the statutes of Peter House, the earliest foundation at Cambridge, as well as in those of Oriel College, Oxford. Short and simple, they stated principles, but did not enter much into detail, and liberally granted a power of change under proper safeguards. In these respects they may be favourably contrasted not only with those of William de Wykeham, which gave a tone to succeeding statutes, but also with the most recent statutes of modern times.

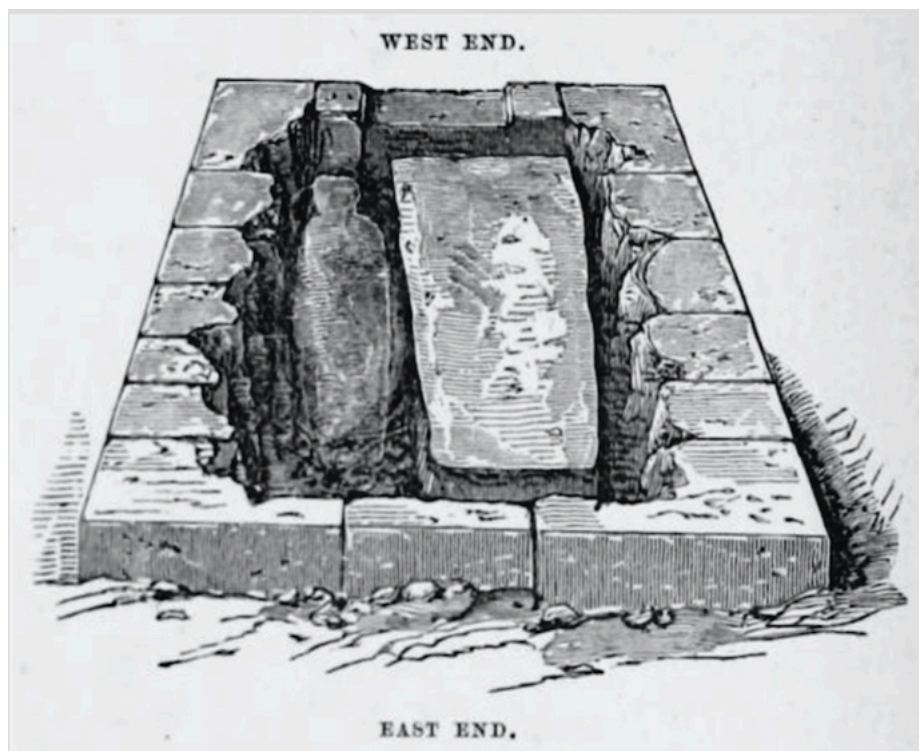
During the late alterations in the Bishop's tomb, the inscribed brasses, put up by Sir Henry Saville, Warden of Merton, in 1598, and by Sir Thomas Clayton, Warden in 1662, were removed. All the inscriptions, formerly on the tomb, are recorded at full length in Rawlinson's History of the Cathedral of Rochester (1717), pp. 1, 2, 3, and in Thorpe's Registrum Roffense (1769), pp. 701, 702. At present, there are only two short Latin inscriptions on the wall, on either side;

one records the Bishop's offices, and his death on the vigil of St. Simon and St. Jude, 1277; the other mentions the restoration of his tomb in 1849. In the crypt is preserved the stone inscribed by Sir T. Clayton.

It may be well that I should add a note respecting another tomb in the Cathedral which excited much curiosity two or three years ago. Immediately behind the present (new) reredos, there is a very large slab 9ft. 4in. in length, and 5ft. 8in. in breadth, from

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which the brasses have been torn away. The matrix clearly shews the figures of a knight in armour hold- the hand of a lady by his side. They are generally supposed to have lived during the fifteenth century. In the course of the re-seating and decoration of the choir, and the erection of the present reredos (which we owe to the munificence of the Rev. Dr. Griffith and his wife) it became necessary to remove, for a short time, the slab from this tomb. Beneath it, we found a leaden coffin under the figure of the knight, and under that of his lady there was the body of a woman closely wrapped in lead, not in a coffin. The appearance of the open tomb is represented in the accompanying woodcut.



No record, nor trace, nor tradition has yet been discovered by which we may identify the remains of

this knight and his lady. Their names have been utterly lost; although, from the position of the monument, we must suppose that it commemorates one who was a considerable benefactor of the Church. Probably some investigator may yet discover who he

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was, from the terms of some will in the Diocesan Registry. The crest of the knight seems to have a demi-bird, displayed, issuing from a coronet.

There were formerly two other monuments in the church, respecting which I would add a few words. Mr. Scott Robertson informs me that the earlier of the two is mentioned in the diary of John Manningham, of Bradbourne, published by the Camden Society. Under date 24th February, 1601-2, he says –

“In the Cathedrall church at Rochester.”

“Monuments: Of Jo: Somer of Newland, clerke of the Privy Signet, and Martin his wife, daughter to Ed. Ridge, late widdowe of Th. Colepepper. They had 6 sonnes, but all deade, and 2 daughters: whereof the one called Frances was married to James Cromer, by whom one daughter called Frances. Versus.”

“Sunt nisi praemissi quos periisse putas.”

It appears that the eldest daughter of John Somer was named Mary, and that she married twice. Her first husband was Thomas Peniston, and her second was Sir Alexander Temple. Thorpe in his *Antiquities of Rochester* appended to the *Custumale Roffense* (p. 244) after mentioning that William Camden has preserved the epitaph (formerly in the Cathedral) on Thomas Peniston, one of the Clerks of the Council to Queen Elizabeth, adds that it was on one of the pillars where the monuments of the Barrells now are, and that it was destroyed in the great Rebellion. Thorpe then proceeds to speak of the tomb mentioned by John Manningham. He says, the stately table tomb, belonging to the family of Somer, near the above columns, was at the same time battered to pieces; some of its alabaster shields were afterwards fixed to the wall, under the monument of Richard Somer, Esq., who died in 1682. That monument is

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in the south aisle of the nave. In his *Registrum Roffense*, p. 710, Thorpe says that there were six such shields or coats of arms thus affixed to the wall,

west of Richard Somers' monument. All traces of those shields, and of the tomb to which they belonged, have disappeared from the Cathedral nave, but it may be well here to record the fact that five of the shields are still preserved in the crypt. These shields/* are accurately described by Thorpe (Reg. Roff., 710) in his account of the table tomb of John Somer, which was seen by Manningham in 1602.

Another tomb which has vanished was also closely connected with the family of Somer. In the year 1635, a Norwich officer visiting Rochester Cathedral noticed particularly seven monuments. He says: –

“Her monuments are but few, yet are they very ancient. First 2 Bishops in blew marble in their pontificall postures lye flanking either side of the High Alter, so ancient as without name or inscription; yet one of them is supposed to be B/p Gundulphus who built a great part of the Castle, and that Tower yet standing there The monuments of B/p Merton Two old monuments, the one in Freestone, and the other in blew marble. The monument of one M/r Stritton, who had been 9 times commaunder of the silver ore [mayor] there. Sir Alexander Temple's monument with his lady; aad some few other of churchmen and citizens of later yeeres which I

/* They bear coats which represent the marriages of Martin Ridge, an heiress, first to Th: Colepeper and then to John Somer, and likewise the marriages of the two coheiresses of John Somer, one to Tho/s Peniston, and the other to Sir James Cromer.

1. Ridge (argent a gryphon segreant vert).
2. Somer (vert, a fess indented ermine) impaling Ridge.
3. Colepeper impaling Ridge.
4. Peniston (argent 5 Cornish choughs sable) quartered with 8 other coats, impaling Somer and Ridge quarterly.
5. Cromer and Squerry quarterly, impaling Somer and Ridge quarterly.

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will heere omit, and diverse others also of antiquity, so dismembred, defac'd and abused as I was forc'd to leave them to some better discovery than I was able to render of them; as also the venerable shrine of S/t William.” (Lansd. MS. 213; Arch. Cant. vi. 63.)

We may notice, in passing, that this “dismembred, defac'd and abused” condition of the monuments, was prior to the great Rebellion, and that in this description “the stately table tomb” of the Somer family, which had attracted Manningham's attention thirty-three years before, is entirely overlooked. Was it, in 1635, already “dismembred?” Mr. Scott Robertson thinks, that from the military observer's notes, we may trace his progress through

the church. He supposes that the officer commenced his notes at the east end of the choir, passed into the north-east transept to see Bishop Merton's tomb, proceeded along the north aisle of the choir until he came to the tomb of Mr. Streaton, nine times mayor, and issued into the north-west transept, where he noticed the tomb of Sir Alexander Temple and his lady. Yet St. William's shrine, which he mentions last, is on the east side of the north-east transept.

With respect to the burial of Sir A. Temple, there are some interesting facts. I have not found any registers of burials in the Cathedral of so early a date, but Dr. Denne, Archdeacon and Canon of Rochester, who transcribed from the registers before him the entries of burials for above 100 years, added also a list of burials not entered in the registers of the Cathedral, which he obtained from the books of Wharton, Godwin, and other authorities. In this list appears the name of "Sir Alexander Temple, Knight" buried in the Cathedral in 1629, with a reference to the register of the adjoining parish of St. Nicholas.

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This parish, which at one time had only a parochial altar within the Cathedral nave, was permitted to erect a church within the Cathedral grave-yard. The Church thus built, between the Cathedral and the street, was consecrated (in the absence of the Bishop of Rochester) by the Bishop of Dromore in 1423. (Regist. Roffense, p. 570.) In the register of St. Nicholas parish, I find an entry which records that the body of Sir Alexander Temple, Knt., was carried through the church of St. Nicholas to be buried in the Cathedral in December, 1629. This is one of several instances of bodies being carried through St. Nicholas church, to be buried in the Cathedral church or grave-yard. Perhaps they were laid in the church at first, when brought from a distance. Just three months before, in the same year, occurs an entry which states that a knight of the Kentish family of Sandys was carried through St. Nicholas church, to be buried in Canterbury Cathedral, the fee being 16s. 8d. The entry respecting Sir A. Temple records that in his case the fee was paid by Mr. Somer.

I have been unable to find the records of Lady Temple's marriage or burial. The registers of St. Margaret's, next Rochester, where her father's family resided, do not go back far enough to give us any

information. In all probability, Mary Somer was married at St. Margaret's, or at St. Mary's in Hoo, to her first husband, Thomas Peniston, eldest son of Thomas Peniston of Beaconsfield; but he died young, during the lifetime of his father, and was buried in Rochester Cathedral. By him she had an only son, who in 1612 was created a baronet, as Sir Thomas Peniston of Leigh, in Sussex. He inherited his mother's property. She married as her second

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husband Sir Alexander Temple, but when or where I cannot say. Her burial, no doubt, took place in Rochester Cathedral, but no record of it remains, save that the Norwich officer says he saw, in 1635, the tomb of Sir Alexander Temple with his lady. Sir Alexander was a younger brother of Sir Thomas Temple, first baronet, of Stow, whose son Sir Peter married Christian Leveson, the great-great-granddaughter of William Brooke Lord Cobham. Sir Alexander's great-grand-nephew Sir Richard Temple, a lieutenant-general in Marlborough's army, was consequently created Viscount Cobham, in 1718, with remainder to his sisters Hester and Christian, from the former of whom the Dukes of Buckingham have descended. The connection of Mary Somer with the Temples became doubled when her son Sir Thomas Peniston, of Leigh in Sussex, married, as his second wife, Martha, fourth daughter of Sir Thomas Temple, first baronet of Stow, by whom he had no issue.

Lady Temple's sister Frances, wife of Sir James Cromer, died in 1597, leaving but one child, Frances, who married Sir Matthew Carew.

Manningham's Diary records the inscriptions upon two other tombs, which have disappeared from Rochester Cathedral (Harl. MS. 5353 fol. 16b, and printed edition, p. 25.)

"In Naui Ecclesiae.

"Thomas Willowbee, Decanus 3/s, obiit anno 25 Reg. Elizab.,
"76 aetatis suae, et 10/o decanatus.

"Gualterus Phillips, nouissimus prior et primus decanus,
"obiit 23/o Nouemb. 1570, aetatis 70, decanatus 30/o."

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Aug. 26, 1876.