

THE VERNEY TOMB AT MIDDLE CLAYDON *

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ON 10th May, 1650, Lady Mary Verney died at Blois, after a long illness. Her husband, Sir Ralph Verney, was prostrate with grief, and it was not till nine days later that he could summon the courage to send the news to his friends in England. This shattering blow, coming on the top of so many other troubles of the past nine years, would have been enough to break the spirit of a man less brave and less strong-willed than Sir Ralph. As occurred in so many families, the Civil War had brought not mere financial loss, suffering and death, but also a breach in family ties. Sir Ralph's father, Sir Edmund, had been a servant of the Stuarts and a Courtier for over thirty years, and though he disapproved of the royal policy, loyalty compelled him to rally to Charles's side in 1642. Sir Ralph, however, like John Hampden and many other leading Buckinghamshire gentry, was determined to curb the arbitrary power of the Crown, was bitterly opposed to the Court and all its works, and had little use for the Episcopacy. As a result, 1642 saw the father as Royal Standard-bearer in the King's army and the son in Parliament at Westminster. Sir Edmund was offended by this open defiance of his son, and, to their mutual regret, relations became strained. A few months later Sir Edmund was dead, fighting at Edgehill to preserve the royal standard from capture, killed for a cause in which he did not believe. Next year Sir Ralph refused to take the Covenant, withdrew from Westminster, and eventually fled into exile at Blois. In 1644 his former friends and political associates formally expelled him from Parliament, and two years later the family estates were sequestered on the grounds of royalist delinquency. The year 1647 saw the death of two of his children, a baby boy and his beloved nine-year-old daughter Peg, to whom Sir Ralph was devoted, and 1649 the slaughter in cold blood of his brother Edmund at the massacre of Drogheda. Finally in 1650 came this last blow of the death of his wife.¹

In this terrible summer of 1650, in exile, alone, and threatened with financial ruin, Sir Ralph's methodical and resourceful nature soon reasserted itself. His chief correspondent in England was his uncle, Dr. William Denton, a successful London physician. Regularly, week after week, bulky letters would be dispatched to the doctor, discussing at length the most trivial details of the financial affairs of the Verney family and the administration of the estates. The whole burden of the family affairs was thrown on to the doctor's

* I am deeply grateful to Major Ralph Verney, both for permission to examine and publish material from his family papers and also for much kindness and hospitality.



PLATE 1. MIDDLE CLAYDON. The Verney Monument by Edward Marshall, 1653.

shoulders, and how he found time to deal with them all as well as with his busy practice is a mystery. The family fortunes were precarious indeed this year, with over £6,000 of debt and annuities and portions for Sir Ralph's brothers and sisters all charged upon a sequestered estate. At one stage Sir Ralph even talked of selling Claydon itself as a last resort.

It is with this financial and psychological background in mind that the evolution over the next three years of the scheme for a memorial in the family church at Claydon must be examined. Though the bundle of "Tombe papers", including all the drawings, has unfortunately not survived, Sir Ralph's meticulous habit of filing all his correspondence enables us to follow the history of this monument in greater detail than that of any other tomb of the seventeenth century.

Sir Ralph's first care after his wife's death was to have the body embalmed, preparatory to its return to England to be buried at Claydon. His father lay in a nameless mass grave in the fields of Edgehill, and he was determined that his wife should not rest in foreign soil.² It was not till 19th November that the body was at last interred at Claydon, and before that Sir Ralph was already thinking about a tomb. At this stage he was uncertain whether to devote the monument to Lady Mary alone, or whether to erect a composite memorial to his father and mother, his wife and his dead children. In either case, Dr. Denton was asked to get in touch with a London tomb-maker and to send over some designs.³ Dr. Denton had many other more urgent things on his mind, however, and it was not till February, 1651, that Sir Ralph got any answer. In view of the condition of the family fortunes, the doctor suggested a fairly simple wall monument, without an effigy, like the one to his grandfather, Alexander Denton, at Hillesden.⁴

One difficulty that immediately arose was the extreme narrowness of the Chancel at Claydon, which is only just over fourteen feet wide. When Sir Ralph set out his ideas in detail in September, this was a very important factor in guiding his choice. One idea with which he had been toying was for a recumbent effigy of his wife lying in her shroud on a black marble slab raised on pillars, like one he remembered to have been made by William Wright, a London sculptor.⁵ But Sir Ralph hoped to erect a monument to his parents also, and two great recumbent tombs on either side of the Chancel would take up too much space. So he fell back on a scheme for a standing effigy in white marble under a black marble arch, like Nicholas Stone's famous statue of John Donne at St. Paul's; or perhaps a double arch to leave room for another effigy of himself to be erected after his death by his son.⁶

Dr. Denton was too busy with other matters to act as Sir Ralph's artistic agent and adviser for what he clearly thought was a somewhat extravagant enterprise, and the arrival in London of a French friend of Sir Ralph allowed him to pass on the responsibility. The Frenchman, variously called Monsieur Duval or Dupont, was an elderly lawyer of antiquarian tastes, who came to London in the autumn of 1651 and took lodging with a young sculptor called Thomas Burman. Thanks to the wars, to the flight of the Court, and to the extreme puritan view that even funeral effigies smacked of Popery, these were hard times for artists.⁷ In London Burman and Lely were taking in

lodgers,⁸ while in Paris Hubert Le Sueur was accommodating Sir Ralph Verney's acquaintance Monsieur Remy, who acted as his postal address during his trip to Italy. This accident of Burman being Monsieur Duval's landlord made him an obvious choice for employment to design the tomb. Duval praised Burman's skill and honesty, and Sir Ralph seems to have raised no objection to his employment. Burman's recorded works make it clear that he was a fairly capable artist, though his personal qualities are less certain. Shortly before this he had seduced his maid and got her with child, and then tricked his apprentice, John Bushnell, into marrying her. On discovering the deceit, Bushnell had fled abroad, taking with him £15 which he had stolen from Burman.⁹ It is to be assumed that Duval knew nothing of this unsavoury story.

Burman's design reached Sir Ralph in February, 1652, when he was in Rome on his Italian tour. He was evidently not satisfied with it, and took advantage of his travels to get an Italian to make fresh drawings. The artist he employed is unfortunately never named, and the only clue to his identity is that he was kept busy by the Papal officers for several weeks in designing the pageantry for the Easter processions and ceremonies.¹⁰ It might be tempting to think that Sir Ralph went to Bernini, who was the sculptor of the Pope at this time, but Bernini was now much too important a man to execute tomb designs for a humble English squire, and it must have been some lesser artist in Papal employment.

Sir Ralph had now decided upon two wall monuments to stand on opposite sides of the Chancel, of which the architectural surrounds were to be identical, but the central figures different, and it was designs for these two tombs that were sent back to Burman. At least one of the designs seems to have included life-size statues, to judge from Sir Ralph's enquiries about their expense.

Meanwhile Sir Ralph was turning his careful mind to the problems of materials and their comparative costs. He had an idea of using, for the plainer architectural parts, marble from the quarry at Bletchington, Oxon, which had recently been so successfully employed on the Laudian quadrangle at St. John's.¹¹ Poor Dr. Denton was urged to get samples, with their prices, and to arrange for paintings of their veining to be sent to Italy for Sir Ralph's approval. Not surprisingly, this was the last straw, and the doctor hastened to hand all negotiations about the tomb over to Monsieur Duval.¹² With the Italian designs Sir Ralph sent a long list of queries to which Duval managed to get replies from another sculptor. It appeared that foreign marbles, which were imported by the Dutch, were very dear indeed, presumably owing to the cessation of shipments during the Anglo-Dutch War, and a life-size statue in white marble would cost £80, four times as much as one in English alabaster.¹³

The Italian drawings had been sent off from Rome in April, but Burman was very slow in producing a final design based upon them. Duval kept prodding him, but was fobbed off from week to week with empty promises. In the end he had to admit that Burman was careless, though a good craftsman.¹⁴ By the time Burman finally produced his designs, in mid-August, Sir Ralph was back in North France, and Duval reminded him that he could easily get them altered by a sculptor in Paris if he did not like them.¹⁵ However, Sir

Ralph was apparently satisfied, and in October Duval produced a rough description for Sir Ralph's approval. So far as one can judge from this document, Sir Ralph now had in mind a single tomb for both his parents and his wife and himself, the cost of two monuments being obviously prohibitive for one in his financial position. For this tomb with alabaster life-size figures—presumably busts, since it was too small to hold four full-length statues—Burman wanted £200.¹⁶ But Sir Ralph jibbed at the cost; Burman went away into the country to superintend the erection of a tomb for another customer, and when he came back he obstinately stuck to his price. Monsieur Duval advised Sir Ralph to get advice in Paris on certain questions from the sculptors of the tombs of the Dukes of Buckingham and Richmond in Westminster Abbey, with whom Monsieur Remy would put him in touch. This obviously means Le Sueur, Remy's host, who is known to have been the author of Buckingham's monument.¹⁷ The other artist referred to by Duval was perhaps Francesco Fanelli, the Florentine sculptor who was working in England at the Court in the 1630s, and who had retired to Paris in 1642.¹⁸ He is known to have co-operated with Le Sueur on the monument to Lord Cottington in Westminster Abbey, and it is more than likely that they also worked together on the great tomb of the Duke of Richmond. The effigies in both these monuments are of metal and one wonders whether Sir Ralph was enquiring—optimistically—about the comparative price of bronze.

Negotiations were in this delicate stage when Sir Ralph at last returned to England in January, 1653, after nine years of exile. One result of this return is that the flow of letters dries up and we can no longer follow what is happening. The next we know is that in April Sir Ralph signed a contract to make the tomb with another sculptor, Edward Marshall. Since Marshall undertook to execute a monument which appears to be either very similar to or identical with that of Burman for only £130 plus the cost of transport, it seems likely that he undercut his ex-apprentice. If this is so, it is some measure of Burman's sense of his own importance that he was asking a higher price than Marshall, a well-known and distinguished sculptor at the height of his profession, who was to be appointed Master Mason to the Crown nine years later.¹⁹

The contract, which described the monument in elaborate detail, stipulated that Sir Ralph was to provide the iron grille to surround the tomb and to arrange for transport of the carved stone from London to Claydon.²⁰ These problems engaged Sir Ralph's attention throughout the summer, and his steward at Claydon, William Roades, was bombarded with queries. He was asked to get an estimate for making the grille from the local blacksmith to compare with London prices, and was badgered to arrange for carts to pick up the stone. By June 30 cwt. of carved stone had been dispatched, so it is probable that Marshall had finished most of the carving by the agreed date of 20th October.²¹

But it is certain that the tomb had not been erected by this time. For among Sir Ralph's papers are a number of estimates of the size of Claydon church and the cost of dismantling it. Both Marshall himself and, on 1st November, "three Oxford Masons" made various calculations of the area of walling and the comparative cost of pulling the church down and re-erecting it

or of selling the materials and building a new church of brick. The reason for this last-minute uncertainty is clear enough to every visitor to Claydon House, for the church is most awkwardly situated on a raised knoll only a few feet from the windows. It both blocks the view and darkens the rooms, and Sir Ralph was not the last of the Verneys to wish to move it elsewhere. Before erecting the tomb on which he had lavished so much time and trouble, Sir Ralph seriously considered whether he should not shift the church in which it was to rest to a more convenient site. But in the end he abandoned the idea, no doubt because of the expense, which would have been well over £200. After three and a half years of argument, discussion, proposals and counter-proposals, the tomb was at last erected, probably before Christmas 1653.

There are two points to notice about the tomb as it stands. The first is that during the three and a half years of discussion the whole idea of the tomb had altered drastically. Not only is it far less ambitious in scope and less macabre in design than the earlier schemes, but the original plan to commemorate principally his late wife has given way to the idea of a family tomb in which the most prominent place is given to Sir Edmund Verney.²² It is a monument erected by a Parliamentarian to celebrate the death of a Royalist killed by the Parliamentary forces at Edgehill—a symbol of those divided loyalties and those cross-currents of friendship and family ties that made the English Civil War, horrible though it was, the least ferocious of any civil war of any age.

This change in purpose can be explained by the changes in Sir Ralph's political and personal attitudes. As time dulled the first passionate grief at his wife's death, he came to see how unsuitable it would be to provide her with a lavish memorial while his mother and father were still uncommemorated. Moreover, his sufferings at the hands of his late political allies, and his distaste for their extremist policies, led him to reconsider his political position. Though he never became a Royalist and always retained a healthy distrust of Kings and Courts, he became increasingly proud of his father's death, and increasingly regretted the breach between them in the summer and autumn of 1642. As late as 1677 he kept the anniversary of the battle as a day of personal mourning.²³

The second question is whether the existing tomb represents Burman's interpretation and modification of the original Italian designs for two opposed tombs with full-length statues, or whether it is a completely new design by Marshall. It is clear that the size of the monument and the arrangement of four life-size busts approximately correspond to the description of Burman's design. On the other hand, there is nothing whatsoever that recalls the Berninesque style of Rome in the 1650s. Nearly every detail, even the swelling urns below the pillars, can be found in the earlier work of Nicholas Stone, under whom Marshall had had his training.²⁴ We can only conclude that, perhaps because of the expense, Sir Ralph Verney jettisoned the whole idea of an Italian model modified by Burman, and that the tomb was designed afresh by Marshall in his accustomed manner.

Standing in the church at Middle Claydon and looking at the charming but insular family tomb on the south wall of the chancel, no one would suspect

that behind this modest monument there lay three and a half years of planning and arguing, of designs sent from the Rome of Bernini and advice perhaps taken from Le Sueur and Fanelli in Paris. It is one of the tragedies of English sculpture that financial necessity obliged Sir Ralph Verney to abandon these ambitious and exotic schemes.

NOTES

¹ For details of the story, see F. P. Verney, *Memoirs of the Verney Family*, II, 1892, *passim*.

² *Op. cit.*, pp. 122-3, 420.

³ Appendix I, no. 1.

⁴ Appendix I, nos. 4 and 6.

⁵ There are three documented works of Wright, at North Walsham, Norfolk, 1608 (Bodl. MS. Top. Norf., 6.3, ff. 24-5), Ecclesfield, Yorks., 1641, and Brocklesby, Lincs., 1630, and Mrs. Esdaile has suggested a number of other possibilities ("William Wright of Charing Cross, Sculptor", *Assoc. Arch. Soc. Rep.*, XLII, 1936-7, p. 221). Her suggestion that the monument referred to by Sir Ralph is that at Great Maplestead, Essex, is very plausible, even though it does not precisely tally with Sir Ralph's description.

⁶ Appendix I, no. 7.

⁷ Appendix I, no. 11.

⁸ Hugh May, the Duke of Buckingham's agent for selling his pictures, was lodging with Lely in Covent Garden in 1650 (Cottrell-Dormer MSS. at Rousham, Oxon). (I am grateful to Mr. T. Cottrell-Dormer for permission to examine these papers.)

⁹ *Vertue's Notebooks*, I (*Walpole Soc.*, XVIII, 1929-30), pp. 86, 90, 128.

¹⁰ Appendix I, nos. 16, 17, 18 and 19.

¹¹ Appendix I, no. 16; Robert Plot, *Natural History of Oxfordshire*, 1705, p. 79. The building accounts at St. John's confirm that some of the stone for the Laudian quadrangle came from Sir Thomas Coghill's pits at Bletchingham (I owe this information to Mr. H. M. Colvin).

¹² Appendix I, no. 22.

¹³ Appendix I, nos. 24 and 25; in the 1630s Nicholas Stone was getting all his marble from Dutch shippers (*Walpole Soc.*, VII, 1919, pp. 93, 104).

¹⁴ Appendix I, nos. 24 and 26.

¹⁵ Appendix I, no. 27.

¹⁶ Appendix I, no. 29.

¹⁷ Appendix I, nos. 30 and 31; E. Chamberlayne, *Angliae Notitia*, 1684, pt. ii, p. 303.

¹⁸ *Dictionary of National Biography*, sub Fanelli.

¹⁹ See R. Gunnis, *Dictionary of British Sculptors, 1660-1851*, 1953, sub Burman and Marshall.

²⁰ Appendix II.

²¹ Appendix I, nos. 32, 33, 34, 35 and 36.

²² Appendix III.

²³ *Memoirs of the Verney Family*, IV, 1899, p. 236.

²⁴ The swelling urns are to be found at the corners of Stone's tomb of the Earl of Middlesex in Westminster Abbey (*Walpole Soc.*, VII, 1919, pl. XXXIXb), while the broken pediment is the standard Stone formula. There are several likenesses in details between the Claydon monument and one at Sotterley, Suffolk, which is signed by Marshall.

APPENDIX I

These extracts from letters are taken from the sheets of a letter book containing copies of Sir Ralph Verney's letters to Dr. William Denton and *précis* of Dr. Denton's replies, and from originals of other letters to Sir Ralph, and occasional drafts of his replies. The letters have been arranged chronologically as they were received and dispatched by Sir Ralph. All dates are Old Style, the year being taken to begin on 1st January. Contractions have been expanded and punctuation modernised.

1. 1650, 25th August, Sir Ralph Verney to Dr. Denton, from Blois :

"Good Dr. see her layed in her Grave with all decency, but without Pompe, yet spare for nothing that is fit for her; measure the Breadth of ye chancell & marke the place where ye Body lies, and at your returne describe it to a Toombemaker & send me 2 or 3 draughts in paper drawne Black & White, or in Colours as it will bee, that I may see which Toombe I like best; & because my deare Mother & halfe my children are there, They, and if you thinke fit my selfe & 2 Boyes (not forgetting poore Pegg that went to Heaven from Hence), may bee added also, & if my Father could well bee brought in it would bee very well. As for ye price, if the designe please me, wee shall not easily differ for a little money. Set ye price upon every draught. Black & white Marble, or all Black, or all White Marble I thinke is better then colourd Marbles. Looke upon the Toombes about Londen & tell me what is best to bee donn; I meane whether to have soe many in the Tombe, or only a single statue of her alone whose memory is soe precious unto me, that I desire to consecrate it to posterity by all immaginable waies & meanes within the power off your most unfortunate friende and servant."

2. 1650, 1st December, Sir Ralph Verney to Dr. Denton, from Blois :

"I hope you have viewed the place for a Tombe & that I shall have draughts in paper according to what I writ to you about it."

3. 1651, 19th January, Sir Ralph Verney to Dr. Denton, from Blois :

"Let Mr. Ayloff bring Patternes of Tombes to shew ye Formes & colours."

4. 1651, 13th February, Dr. Denton to Sir Ralph Verney, from London, received 1st March (*précis*):

"The Dr. now sent me a Draught of ye Chancell but not of a Toombe, but hee thinks such best to have such a one as his Grandfather A.D. hath at Hilsdon,¹ with little Effigies about it & a bare narrative who lies there, not without a commemoration of Sir E. V.,² how hee died. Sir Charles hath his narrative in Brasse to bee nailed upon his lead coffin & soe bee buried with him."



5. 1651, 2nd March, Sir Ralph Verney to Dr. Denton, from Blois :

"By your Draught of the chancell I guesse it to bee 14 Foote broad & 12 Foote from ye stepp to ye Wall at ye east End. Shew ye Draught to a Toombmaker, & tell him where ye body lies, & think if there is roome enough to officiate when ye Table is set upp againe. I beleeve there is, being the north side will bee empty, & let him draw 2 or 3 such draughts as hee thinks fit for ye place, & set downe ye length, Breadth, & height, and ye colours. I have forgot your Grandfather A.D. Tombe at Hilsden but I thinke there is 2 White Marble greate Figures upon a Black marble stone."

6. 1651, 24th March, Dr. Denton to Sir Ralph Verney at La Rochelle, received 12th April:

"I meant my Grandfather A.D. not T.D. his Tombe;³ it stood on ye north side of ye chancell, & not that by the Communion Table. Though you give me time to advise with workemen, yett I will not promise to obey you."

7. 1651, 23rd September, Sir Ralph Verney to Dr. Denton, from Lyons :

"Now for a Tombe: ye chancell being little, I was thinking to make an Arch like this  of Touch or Black Marble; within the whole Arch shall bee black, & her statue in White Marble in a Winding sheet with her hands lift upp, set upon an Urne or Pedestall; upon which, or on ye edg of ye Arch, may bee what Armes or Inscriptions shall bee thought fit. I was thinking to make a Double Arch like this  and in it set upp her statue, & only leave a Pedestall for mine, for my sonn to set upp if hee thinke fit, but I doubt this would be thought vanity, being there is non for my Father & Mother; but if it please god to give me life & my estate, I will set up a tombe for them. I thinke to put my selfe and Wife on ye on side, & Father

and Mother on ye other side of ye chancell, I was also thinking to make Wifes Tombe thus: First a faire Touch stone, & then 4 pillars of the same, & upon them another Faire stone of Touch, & upon that her statue at length in a Winding sheete of White Marble. But being I intend on for Father and Mother on the other side, this would take upp too much Roome. I knowe Mr. Write about Charing crosse did make one in this manner, with a greate Childe of White Marble between 2 stones of Touch, & all Armes & Insriptions & ye Drapery of the 2 marble statues very well & artificially cut;⁴ hee had 80 L. for it, but then he carried it 80 or 100 miles, & set it upp there at his charge. Others have had it donn for 50 L., but perhappes not soe well cut. Speake with workemen, shew them ye measure of the Chancell & that I intend a Tombe on ye other side also. And let them draw such draughts in paper as you & they thinke fit, & send them to me by Post, & guesse at the price of each Draught, See Dr. Dunns⁵ & the other Tombes at Pauls or Westminster or elsewhere before you speake with the Workmen."

8. 1651, 6th November, Dr. Denton to Sir Ralph Verney, received 5th January, 1652, at Rome (*précis*):

"Monsieur Dupont . . . professest much to mee, & Dr. will employ him about about ye Tombe, being he lies in one of ye best stone cutters houses in London."

9. 1652, 19th January, Sir Ralph Verney to Dr. Denton, from Rome:

"Forget not the Tombe."

10. 1651, 29th December, Dr. Denton to Sir Ralph Verney, received 4th February, 1652 (*précis*):

"He hath seen a draught of ye Tombe single & ordred ye Workman to draw it double, I shall have it by ye next. 'Twill be very hansome but very deare if donn in Marble, but a 3rd part cheaper if donne in Alabaster. Ye man is ingenious, but poore & will gladly take reason; if I proceed not with him, I should give him some small piece; hee is Monsieur Du Vall's landlord."

11. 1652, 1st January, M. Duval to Sir Ralph Verney, from London, received 6th February:

"J'ay esté chargé par Mr. le docteur denton, d'une commission pour vostre service, envers mon hoste appellé Burman,⁶ touchant le dessein d'un tombeau que vous voulez faire faire. Je ne l'ay peu avoir plustost, à cause de beaucoup de besongne, dont il a esté pressé tout ce temps. Il est maintenant après quelque ouvrage, que mondit sieur denton luy a marchandé pour vous, auquel il travaille tous les jours, dont le succès vous fera juger de ce qu'il pourra faire en l'autre, s'il en a la charge. Pour ce que je puis juger de l'homme, il a la reputation d'estre bon artisan, je le trouve, pour sa condition, fort honneste homme, et pour ce qui regarde le nature de la besongne, nous sommes en un temps où les artisans sont necessités de faire pour la moitié de ce qu'ils auraient peu prétendre en une autre saison."

12. 1652, 6th February, note by Sir Ralph Verney:

"At this time in a paquet by it selfe came the Draught of ye Tombe, and ye Estimate of it."

13. 1652, February, Sir Ralph Verney to M. Duval, from Rome:

"I received yours dated 1 january, together with ye Designe of the Tombe, and humbly thanke you for your care of it. I have not now time to consider it, but I shall suddenly doe it, and returne it to the Dr. with such alterations as I thinke fit and then the dr. and your landlord can agree about the Price. I know you will use your endeavour to get it well & hansomly donn. In ye meane time I shall desire the dr. to let him know how carefull you were to send it me."

14. 1652, 9th February, Sir Ralph Verney to Dr. Denton, from Rome:

"Tell the Toombmaker Mr. Du Pont was carefull to send me ye designe of ye Tombe, & that you shall suddenly heare from me about it."

15. 1652, 25th February, M. Duval to Sir Ralph Verney, from London, received in April:

"En response à la vostre du 22 Janvier, Je me resiouis Infiniment de vostre heureux retour de Naples à Romé. Outre les deux miennes du 12 et 27 Novembre, que vous mentionnez, je vous en ay escrit deux autres, dans l'une ou avec l'une desquelles estoit une lettre pour Mr. Gee, et un dessein de mon hoste, par ordre du dr. denton, touchant certain tombeau à faire dont vous luy avez escrit."

16. 1652, 1st March, Sir Ralph Verney to Dr. Denton, from Rome:

"I now meant to write to you at large about ye Toombe, & to have sent you another draught which I have caused to bee made heere, but ye Hollydaies & Shewes have kept it from being yet finished, by ye next I hope 'twill bee donne. Informe your selfe about Sir Thomas Coghills Pitts;⁷ ye Pillars & other parts of ye new building at St. John College in Oxford came from thence. It pollishes like Marble & there is severall sorts and colours, some are more bewtiful & Lasting then others. 'Tis neare me & soe ye carriage will cost little, & ye stone being soft, 'twill bee wrought at an easy rate. 'Tis not fitt to pave a roome nor to stand wett, nor in ye Aire, least it loose its Pollishing, & scale in time. But if it bee employed within dores (as for a chimney peece or such like thing that is not trod uppon) it will last as long & keepe its Shining & Bewty as well as the Marble of Carara which is ye best in Italy. Ned Chamberlaine or some other may get you some peeces (as big as Brick batts) ready polished for patterns, of 2, 3, or 4 of ye best sorts, & the prizes of them, soe wrought & polished, You must pay for ye patterns, & if you finde them like to serve your Turne, make a painters Boy draw them in a sheete of paper that I may see their graines and colours. I have now writ to W. R.⁸ to goe to ye pitts and get such patterns & send them to you with their prizes & to tell you the faults & Vertues of those stones, & also of another sort of stone that my Father used for Hearths, but I am not sure hee will doe it in time, nor well. I have not told him I intend to make a Toombe, nor shall it bee known till 'tis begun. Let him thinke it for a Chimney peece, for I doubt he thinke I will not returne in hast or else he would carry himselfe much better then hee doth. I meane to make 2 Toombes, one for Father & Mother & the other for Wife, & being they must stand in ye same Chancell, over against one another, the Topps, Bottomes & sides shall bee a like, which will be uniforme & Hansome in that little Chancell, but ye inward parts of ye Tombes shall bee different. Tell me if it will not bee best soe, & whether ye Chancell was kept dry & Decent when you last saw it. The patternes above mentioned must bee plain, for I meane not to have any Figures of Men, Birds or Beasts on them, but that stone may well make the Pillars, Cornishes, & Chappiters & such like Matters."

17. 1652, 8th March, Sir Ralph Verney to Dr. Denton, from Rome:

"The man that should draw ye designe of ye Tombe as I directed is soe employed by ye Popes Officers about shews for Easter that I cannot get it donn yet, but I am promised it in few daies."

18. 1652, 15th March, Sir Ralph Verney to Dr. Denton, from Rome:

"I cannot yet get ye designe of ye Tombes, but I am promised them certainly by ye next, therefore haste W.R. or any other you have set to informe you about Sir Thomas Coghills Pitts."

19. 1652, 8th April, Sir Ralph Verney to Dr. Denton, from Rome:

"I have now sent you the Draughts of ye Tombes etc, and writ to you at large about them in a paper by it selfe, which you may keepe together with those draughts, to resort unto on any occation, without troubling your selfe to looke amounst my letters heerafter."

"Memorandum: with this I sent another sheete of paper with Full directions

about the 2 Tombes, and with 2 Draughts of ye Architecture that is to goe round them and with 6 Designes (of which the 2 first are best) for those two Tombes. Also I returned ye designe of yo Tomb that Dr. sent over to me. The paper of Directions is dated 22 March 1652, & copy of it lies either heere or with ye rest of ye Papers that concern those Tombes."

20. 1652, 13th May, Sir Ralph Verney to M. Duval, from Venice:

"I doubt not but Dr. hath received my letters about the Tombe, and acquainted your selfe and the Workeman with my intentions about it, soe that if the man will bee reasonable I hope they are in a fayre way of agreement."

21. 1652, 25th March, M. Duval to Sir Ralph Verney, from London, received at Amsterdam, 16th June:

"En response à la vostre du 1 febvrier, Je n'ay pas manqué d'asseurer mon hoste que vous avez receu son projet. Il est sur le point de rendre la besongne que Mr. le dr denton luy a fait faire pour vous. Selon la satisfaction qu'il en recevra, il ne manquera de vous aviser, si vous devez ou non traiter avec luy de plus grande chose."

22. 1652, 22nd April, Dr. Denton to Sir Ralph Verney, received at Amsterdam, 16th June:

"The business of ye tombe is Pauls worke, which I cannot attend to; therefore have committed it to Monsieur du Vall who will give you an account in folio of it."

23. 1652, 25th June, Sir Ralph Verney to M. Duval, from Amsterdam:

"My Uncle Dr. tells me he hath committed the papers & designes about ye Monument into your hands, of which I doubt not but to receive a full account ere long. And I have rather, & 'tis much better, to receive it fully & all together, though a stay longer for it, then to have it in Bitts & peeces; for in this Way I shall understand it better, & 'twill bee farre lesse trouble both to you & ye Workman. Therefore I can expect with very greate patience, not doubting but when it doth come, your care & ye workman's skill will render it in a good measure perfect."

24. 1652, 8th July, M. Duval to Sir Ralph Verney, from London, received 13th July:

"Il est vray, comme Je vous ay cydevant escrit, que je me suis très volontiers chargé du soin de vous faire respondre par mon hoste, sur les desseins d'un tombeau que je luy ay mis en main de la part de Mr. Denton; mais toute la diligence que j'y ai apportée depuis deux mois qu'il les a, n'a jusques à présent peu le porter à me donner la satisfaction que j'en desire. Il m'a toujours remis de quinzaine à autre, comme il me vient encores de faire. J'en ay dit mon sentiment à Mr. Denton, je ne laisserai pourtant de solliciter jusques à vostre réponse à la présente, mais s'il ne l'a fait vers ce temps là, mon avis seroit de retirer vos desseins, afin de les communiquer à quelque autre. L'homme est habile et entend son mestier, mais il est par trop negligent. Cependant Je vous envoie pour vostre Instruction la resolution d'un homme du mestier sur certains points, dont par la vostre qui accompagnoit l'envoye de vos desseins vous desiriez estre esclaircy. J'en ay retenu l'original par devers moy en cas de besoin. Il y a apparence que le marbre et autres materiaux qui venoient icy d'outre mer par l'entremise des hollandais se tiendra icy fort cher; mon hoste m'a dit en avoir acheté la semaine passée pour 100 ll. st. S'il tient sa parole, outre ce qu'il vous en escrira, je m'en informeray de vive voix, en sorte que vous y pourrez faire fondement"

25. (enclosed) "A Satisfactorie answer of the price as well of the materialls as of the workemanship, either for Carving or architecture, viz.

"1. Demaund: In primis concerning the first demaund, whither blacke, white and coloured marble bee all of a price;

"Reply: Blacke and coloured marble is of one price, that is tenn shillings the foote, butt the white is sixteene shillings a foote.

"2. The second, which is the dearest, black marble or touch, and which of them is hardest to worke, will last longest, and hold its polishing best.

"They are both of a price and hardnesse, both will last, and take a very good glace on, as well as the other, provided that they bee of the best. One onely difference is betweene them, that is, blacke marble is of a bigger scantling for grave stones, and touch is in blocks bigger or thicker, beeing for pillers and other sorts of worke.

"3. The third is, the price of alablaster and howe long it will last within doores.

"The best is seaven shillings the foot, and will last within doore as well as marble.

"4. The fourth, what is the difference in the price of a figure of alablaster, and of the same figure in marble.

"A figure of allablaster well wrought soe bigge as the life, stone and workmanship is worth twentie pounds, butt the same in white marble, well wrought, polished and glazed, will bee worth fourescore pounds.

"5. The fift, whether allablaster can bee found to make a full figure of one peece, and is not very brickle.

"Wee can have blocks of sufficient scantlings or bignesse to make a figure, and it is tuff and not brickle.

"These are answers to the demaunds containyd in the last part of your letter from rome, bearing date the 1 aprill last."

26. 1652, 31st July, Sir Ralph Verney to M. Duval, from Antwerp:

"I received yours dated 8 July with an answer to those 4 queries I made about the price & materials of ye Tombe, which were full & satisfactory, & I thanke you for them. It seems ye Workman is full of imployment, & still delayes you. If you finde hee wilfully neglects it, take back ye designes I sent over; but if hee bee really full of businesse, let him keepe them somewhat longer, doe in it as you see cause. But in case you quitt your London habitation, I desire before you goe you would take them of him and give them to the Dr."

27. 1652, 20th August, M. Duval to Sir Ralph Verney, from London, received 26th August, at Brussels:

"Je vous envoye doncq le dessein de mon hoste, formé sur ceux que je luy ay laisser de vostre part, et avec iceluy une coppie de ce qu'il a creu estre necessaire que vous sceussiez. Je voy bien qu'il ne vous satisfait pas plainment touchant les sortes de marbres dont les figures se doivent faire. Vous estes en lieu où vous pouvez Caire reformer ledit dessein, s'il ne vous agree, et consulter avec les experts sur le tout et ses parties; et si vous jugez que dans Paris vous puissiez mieux vous satisfaire, vous pouvez differer jusques en ce temps là, et ainsi renvoyer vostre dessein parfait, avec vostre sentiment de ce qu'il pourra couster; sur quoy l'on procedera avec l'ouvrier, lequel a retenu pardeversoy la coppie dudit dessein. J'ay remis entre les mains de Mr. Denton vos desseins, lettre, et l'original du billet cy inclus de la main de l'ouvrier."

28. 1652, 28th August, Sir Ralph Verney to Dr. Denton from Brussels:

"Monsieur Du Vall tells me he left you ye designes I sent over of the Tombes; lay them upp carefully."

29. 1652, 15th October, M. Duval to Sir Ralph Verney, from London, received 21st October:

"Vous avez de l'autre costé un mémoire concludant pour vostre tombe, J'en ay retenu l'original par devers moy, pour vous en servir. . . ."

"This tumber being made that every figure maye bee as bigg as the life, must bee about eleeven foot broad, and eightene foot high from the ground to the top. The substance of it thus: from the ground to the pedestal of the pillars, three foot, or maye bee well more, made neate and handsome of free stone. The pictures, and all which is white in the draught, to bee of pure allabaster, and all the blacke to bee of polished blacke marble, onely the colombes which shall bee of black and white polished marble and glazed, to cause more varietie, and the frise redd and white marble, according to the draught. The coat of armes with mantle, helmet, and creast carved, painted and gilt, and soe the ornaments about the worke neatly gilt as occasion shall require, together with the Inscriptions and verses to bee first cutt in the blacke marbles and then gilt. The work being thus performed and cast into chests, maye bee conveyed either by water or land to the appointed place. All this being performed att the workemans charges, maye bee very well worth two hundred pounds sterling, butt if you will have the figures butt halfe bigge to the life, it may be done for halfe the price."

30. 1652, 5th November, M. Duval to Sir Ralph Verney, from London, received 11th November:

"En response à la vostre du 23 Octobre. Je vous aurois envoyé la dernière resolution de nostre hoste touchant vostre tombe, s'il eust esté de retour de la Campagne, où il est depuis près de trois semaine, occupé à rendre un ouvrage qu'il y avoit entrepris. Aussitost qu'il en sera de retour Je ne manqueray de la vous faire scavoir. Cependant vous aurez agreable de recevoir la satisfaction que J'essaye de vous donner dans le billet attaché à la presente, touchant ce qu'en particulier vous avez désiré. Cela m'a esté confirmé par trois contremaistres; et en passant à Paris, Mr. remy connoist des personnes qui ont fait à Westminster les Tombeaux des ducs de Rishemond et de Buckingham,⁹ par le moyen dequoy vous en pourrez estre plainement informé et sur ce prendre vostre dernière resolution."

31. 1652, 26th November, M. Duval to Sir Ralph Verney, from London, received 17th December:

"Je suis bien marry de ne vous avoir peu satisfaire plustost touchant vostre tombe. L'ouvrier n'estoit arrivé qu'un jour devant la datte de son billet, dont vous avez la coppie de l'autre costé. Il vous plaira le considerer et me commander tout ce dont vous me jugerez capable pour vostre service. Il n'a pas voulu diminuer son prix, mais lorsque l'on viendra à traiter avec luy on taschera de le reduire à une somme raisonnable."

32. 1653, 9th May, Sir Ralph Verney to William Roades,¹⁰ from London:

"I have now sent you a patterne of ye Grate which is to bee about 17 Foot long, & 3 Foote & halfe high, and every Barre about halfe an inche, or halfe an Inche & halfe a quarter square, and ye Pillars about one Inch & 3 quarters square, which being cut downe ye middle on every side, & wreathed about with another Iron, will looke like 4 Barrs together. I hope to have it under 6^a a pound, therefore agree not with Spooner but tell me his lowest price."

33. 1653, 12th May, Sir Ralph Verney to William Roades, from London:

"I will hast Mr. Marshall to get ready ye Toombe stones."

34. 1653, 18th May, Sir Ralph Verney to William Roades, from London:

Mr. Marshall assures me I shall have a load of Stones ready to carry downe within 3 daies; but your sonn Miller tells me ye carts cannot yet come upp; but I will hast to get the stones ready, for though they stay for the carts they will eate nothing."

35. 1653, 18th May, Sir Ralph Verney to William Roades, from London:

"I forgot to bid you aske Spooner his lowest rate hee can take for the grate;

for the Smith heere offers to make it at Six pence a pound and I am told a Smith in ye country may afford to make it much cheaper then any Smith can doe in this Towne, where house Rent and all other things are soe very deare. And I know some have beene bought at 4 pence halfe penny, & I hope he may doe this at that rate. And yet I expect to have it well & truly wrought, and very fast, soe as noe Barre shall shake or move in its place. And I intend not to have any Iron at the Bottome, but to make ye Barrs with a Neck, and fasten them with lead into the Stone at the Bottome; and that there not bee more then about one ownce difference in the Weight of any of the Barrs. For if one Barre bee much heavier then another, it must needes appeare to the sight & bee very unhansome."

36. 1653, 30th June, Sir Ralph Verney to William Roades, from London :

"I doe not yet heare any thing of any cart that goes from hence to Claydon that wants loading, soe I can say nothing about the stones for the Toombe, but that I can send downe a load at a very short Warning. I hope you have payed for the last 2 Loades that were carried downe; for Mr. Marshall tells me, though they were not weighed (Weighing not being usuall in such cases, where the loading is soe cumbersome), yet hee agreed with them by the Lumpe for Thirty hundred; and in his conscience 'twas not one hundred under or over, for hee is much used to make estimates in that way, because his Marchandize canot bee well weighed."

APPENDIX II

This is a paper draft of the final agreement. It is signed and witnessed by Sir Ralph Verney but not by Marshall. The document is torn in places, but, where possible, the missing words and letters have been conjecturally restored within square brackets. The italicised words are in Sir Ralph's own hands, the remainder being a lawyer's draft.

ARTICLES of agreement indented made the second day of A[pri]l the yeare of our Lord God according to the computation used in England 1653 Betweene Sir Raph Verney of Middle Cleydon in the countie of Bucks knight of the one part and Edward Marshall of the parrish of St Dunstans London of the other part, In manner and forme followeing (vizt)

IMPRIMIS the said Edward Marshall for himselfe his heires executors and a[dmin]istrators doth covenant and agree to and with the said Sir Raph Verney his heires executors and administrators For [the] consideration hereafter mentioned To make [a T]ombe of Portland stone, Alabaster, Blacke Marble or Touch and [Italian] Raunce, Contening betweene Sixteene [and] Seaventeene foote in height and betweene Nine and Tenne foote [in brea]dth from outside to outside. That is to saye the first stepp or Course of Worke of Portland stone two foote and[. . .] high to sett the grate of Iron; The next course of Worke with the Urnes of Alabaster and returnes of Italian [Raun]ce. The table for inscription of Black Marble; on that course of work a Ledge of Alabaster; On either side [of t]his worke shall be placed a *halfe* Corinthian Colombe of Italian Raunce Five foote and three or Four inches high [. . .]he Base and Capitall which shall be made of Alabaster. In the middle of this worke shall be made a swelling [p]edistall of Portland stone and on that shall be carved a Cloth or Draperie wherein shall be neatly ingraven such in[script]ions as shall be thought fitt[ing] by the said Sir Ralph Verney or his heires, and this the Cloth or Draperie [bru]nsed or Copper Colour and the letters [filled] with blacke. On either side of this Pedistall shall be carved two he[. . .] breast pictures in Alabaster with Pedistalls all of a piece; These Foure heads to stand in Neeces of Black M[arble] with a molding of Alabaster compassing them

where they joint. The Corona or Upper part of the Middle P[edis]tall whereon the Cloth or sheet [ha]ngeth to be made of Alabaster, the armes with Mantle helmett and [cres]t carved with heads on either side of that M[a]rke alsoe neatly carved in Alabaster. Also the compassing or winding [Cor]nish under that Course of worke of Alabaster, The Architriue over the Colombes and Marble neeces to be made of Alabaster, The Frise of Black Marble or Touch, the swelling Vases or returnes of the Frise of Italian Raunce, The shields fixed on them to be carved in Alabaster, The Cornish to be made with Italian Raunce faire polished. The [Fro]ntispiece alsoe to be made of Italian Raunce suitable Eighteene inches high and Three foote and Eight or Nine inches long; to them shall be fixed a Festoone or Fruitage carved in Alabaster; Under them on each side a Death's [head br]unsed or guilt; Between them a Pedistall of Alabaster, on that an Urne or swelling Vase of Italian Raunce highly polished; On that Urne a course of Portland stone with two boyes carved sitting holding a Serpent as an Embleme of Eternitie with the taile and head Closed Circular, the Boyes and the Serpent brunsed or Copper Colour. On the Winding Frontispiece of Ita[lian Rau]nce shall be fixed two Figures carved in Alabaster representinge [Faithe] and Hope; The Armes fairely laid in [colours] and the Worke in places fitting for ornament fairely gilded st[ron]gly sett up and fixed according to the Mo[dell or] designe drawne in Colours and subscribed by the said Sir Raph Verney and Edward Marshall. And the Grate [that is]intended by the said Sir Raph Verney for the said Tombe to be [made] at the Costs of the said Sir [Raph Verney or] his [assignes]and to be set up and fixed to the said tombe by the said Edward Marshall for the co[nsideration] hereafter expressed. All which shall be done and fully finished by the Twentieth day of October next e[nsu]ing the date hereof. The carriage of the Worke by land and water to be done at the Charge of Sir Raph Verney his assignes, And alsoe the Bricke lime sand and scaffolding to [fin]ish the worke in the Countrie to be p[ro]vided at the said Sir Raph Verney's charge.

IN CONSIDERATION w[herof] and performing well and suffic[iently eve]rie particular herein before mentioned, the said Sir Raph Verney for [hims]elfe his heires executors and admi[nistra]tors doth Covenant with the said Edward Marshall his executors administrators and assignes, Upon the finishing and setting up of the said Tombe in the Chancell aforesaid At or before the One and Twentieth day of October next ensuing the date hereof, to pay unto him the said Edward Marshall or his assignes The full and suf[ficient] some of *One hundred and Thirtye pounds* of [curren]t lawfull money of England (vizt: At the ensealing hereof The some of *twenty pownds* and *ten pownds* more On the First day of July next and the other *thundred pownds* upon the finall finishing of the said Tombe, the said Edward Marshall then cancelling his covenant and giving an acquittance under his hand and seale [at] the receipt of the said moneyes in full satisfaction of the said some of *one hundred and thirtye pownds*.

LASTLY It is agreed by and betweene all the said parties, and the said Edward Marshall doth for himselfe his executors and administrators covenant and grante to and with the said Sir Raph Verney his executors and administrators and everie of them, that if the said Sir Raph Verney his heires executors or administrators shall be minded to cause any person other than the said Edward Marshall to paint guild or Brunse the said Tombe[. . .], then he the said Edward Marshall his executors or administrators shall and will abate and deduct out of the last payment to be made unto him the said Edward Marshall or his assignes according to the purport of these presents the some of *fiueteene powndes* of lawfull money of England, Any-thing in these presents cont[ained] to the contrarie thereof in any wise notwithstanding.



PLATE 2a. Sir Edmund Verney.



PLATE 2b. Lady Margaret Verney.

ERRATA: VOLUME XVI, PART 2

The captions to Plates 2b and 3b should read:
Margaret Lady Verney and Mary Lady Verney
respectively.



PLATE 3a. Sir Ralph Verney.



PLATE 3b. Lady Mary Verney.

IN WITNESSE whereof the said parties to these present articles interchangeably
sett their hands and seales the day and yeare first abouewritten 1653.

Raph Verney.

Sealed and deliuered in ye presence

of Robert Lloyd

J. Besly

John Laughton.

APPENDIX III

The Inscriptions on the tomb :

SACRED

To the Memory of the

Euer Honored

S^r EDMVND VERNEY who was

K^t Marshall 18 yeares

And Standard Bearer to Charles y^e first

In that memorable Battayle

of Edge Hill,

where he was Slayne

on the 23^d of October

1642,

Beinge then in the two and

Fifteth yeare of his Age.

AND

in Honour of

Dame MARGARET his wife

Eldest Daughter of S^r Thomas

Denton of Hellesdon K^t.

by whome Hee had

Six sonnes and Six Daughters,

She dyed at London

on y^e 5th and was buried here on y^e 7th

of Aprill 1641.

In the 47 yeare of

Her Age.

ALSO TO THE PERPETVALL HONOV^R AND MEMORY OF THAT MOST
EXCELLENT AND INCOMPARABLE PERSON DAME MARY SOLE
DAUGHTER & HEIRE OF IOHN BLACKNALL OF ABINGDON IN Y^E COVNTY
OF BERKES ESQ^R AND WIFE OF S^R RAPHE VERNEY (ELDEST SONN OF
THE SAID S^R EDMVND AND DAME MARGARETT) BY WHOME SHE HAD
THREE SONNES AND THREE DAUGHTERS WHEROF ONLY EDMVND AND
IOHN ARE LIVEING. SHE DECEASED AT BLOIS IN FRANCE ON THE 10TH
DAY OF MAY 1650 BEING ABOVE THE AGE OF 34 YEARES AND WAS HERE
INTERRED ON THE 19TH OF NOVEM^{BER} FOLLOWING WHERE HER SAID
HVS^{BAND} (AT WHOS^E CHARGE AND BY WHOSE APPOINTMENT THIS
MONVMENT WAS ERECTED) INTENDS TO BEE BVRIED

S^r RAPHE VERNEY KN^T & Baronett dyed 24 Sept j696 Aged 83 IOHN VERNEY
VISC^T FERMANAGH BARON VERNEY OF BALTVRBET, IN IRELAND & BART
OB IVNE 23^D AN. DOM. 1717 AET 76.

NOTES

- ¹ Alexander Denton (d. 1576), at Hillesden, Bucks.
- ² Sir Edmund Verney.
- ³ Thomas Denton (d. 1560), at Hillesden, Bucks.
- ⁴ See K. A. Esdaile, "William Wright of Charing Cross, sculptor", *Assoc. Arch. Soc. Rep.*, XLII, 1936-7.
- ⁵ Tomb of Dr. John Donne, by Nicholas Stone, illustrated in *Walpole Soc.*, VII, 1919, pl. XXII.
- ⁶ Thomas Burman, 1618-74, see R. Gunnis, *Dictionary of British Sculptors, 1660-1851*, p. 71.
- ⁷ At Bletchingdon, Oxon; see *supra*, p. 69.
- ⁸ William Roades, the steward at Claydon.
- ⁹ For illustrations of these tombs, see R.C.H.M., *London*, I, pl, 120, 196.
- ¹⁰ The steward at Claydon,