

NOTES

SHELL HOUSE, HEDGERLEY: A DENDROCHRONOLOGICAL POSTSCRIPT

When I wrote about Shell House in Hedgerley in *Records* 53,¹ samples had been taken from the roof timbers of the building to see whether a dendrochronological analysis of the tree rings in the timbers might date the construction of the house. Seventeen core samples were taken. However at the time the known tree-ring sequences for Buckinghamshire and surrounding areas did not provide a sufficient match for the Shell House samples to give a scientifically accurate date for construction.

Based on an analysis of the documentary record, particularly Edward Penn's own notes² and the Account Book of the Hedgerley Overseers of the Poor³, I suggested that building work had started on Shell House in 1682 and that its completion had been affected by the financial difficulties that beset its first owner, Edward Penn, in 1683.⁴

Since my article was published extended tree-ring sequences have enabled Dr Andy Moir to complete his dendrochronological analysis of the samples from Shell House. Eleven of the seventeen core samples were matched. Dr Moir's report concludes that 'Precise felling dates around AD 1682, in the winter of AD 1681/2, and six in the winter of AD 1682/3, together with three compatible felling-date ranges, identify that construction [of the roof

of Shell House] is likely to have occurred in AD 1683, or soon after.'⁵

This scientific evidence confirms the date deduced from the documents: that the 'half-house' we see today was completed in or soon after 1683, when Edward Penn's finances were affected by the 'seizure' of Chalfont House and the manor of Brudenells by King James II.

Peter J Marsden

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1. Peter John Marsden, 'Why did Edward Penn build only half a house? A historic building analysis of Shell House, Hedgerley', *Recs Buckinghamshire* 53 (2013), 201–231.
2. Bucks MS AR94/80/1122 in the Centre for Bucks Studies, Aylesbury.
3. Bucks MS PR99/11/3.
4. *Recs Buckinghamshire* 53, 224.
5. Dr Andy Moir, 'The Dendrochronological Analysis of Oak Timbers from Shell House, Hedgerley, Buckinghamshire, England', Tree-Ring Services Report: HDSH/12/13 (Hungerford, 2013).

A LOST MONUMENT AT HORTON CHURCH

A few years ago the scanty architectural remains of a monument were identified by Michael Farley as built into a doorway in the churchyard wall of the Parish Church of St Michael at Horton, near Colnbrook.¹ The moulded elements, arranged decoratively above the marble lintel block of the opening, consist of two identical moulded architectural fragments in white marble, and a long black marble gadrooned element. The jambs of the opening are also made from narrow marble ashlar blocks, possibly from the same source (Fig. 1). One of these blocks had incised lettering, although the wording could not be deciphered. A quick survey of the surrounding walls by this writer found no

further marble elements, although small fragments of moulded Portland stone were found lying loose within the churchyard. The identical white marble elements above the lintel are moulded plinths or bases of pedestals of the Corinthian order, with the modification of an added torus, approximately 0.605m wide, 0.14m high and at least 0.14m deep.² Based on contemporary principles of architecture the pedestals they supported would have been approximately 3ft 3in (98.1cm) high. The black marble gadrooned element is 1.2m long and at least 0.23m deep – the gadrooning wraps around the sides of the block – and has upper and lower mouldings (Fig. 2).



FIGURE 1 Doorway in the churchyard wall at St Michael's church, Horton, general view (Photo, author)



FIGURE 2 Doorway in the churchyard wall at St Michael's church, Horton, detailed view (*Photo, author*)

The only substantial monument recorded within the church, which these elements are likely to have been part of, was positioned against the north wall of the North Chapel between two blocked windows, as indicated on the architect John Oldrid Scott's plan of the church prior to his restoration in 1876 (Fig. 3).³ In this position it could be seen from the main body of the church across a large pew. During the restoration the monument was dismantled, the blocked windows reopened, and the slightly pointed plate glass-filled chapel east window replaced with gothic tracery.⁴ Scott's plan for the restored church, dated 22nd March 1876,⁵ indicates that the monument was to be repositioned under the tower against the south wall – a classic Victorian solution for unwanted but almost grudgingly retained monuments – although it is obvious this intention was not carried out.

The documentary evidence for this monument is not plentiful until the mid 19th century, and there are no illustrations of it to help the interested enquirer.

It is not recorded in the visitations of Buckinghamshire conducted by Bishops Wake and Gibson of Lincoln between 1706 and 1728, although it should be noted that these records are inconsistent, and only one for the year 1712 specifically asks for information on 'monuments of any note' within the churches.⁶ The North Chapel is first recorded in some detail during the late 1790s, when a visitor noted the boarded floor with its central opening revealing the vault of the Scawen family, Lords of the manor of Horton between 1658 and 1778 'but, from its present decayed and neglected state, we may infer that the family also is no more'.⁷ The Lyson brothers noted the 'heavy monument, without any inscription, intended for some of the Scawen family'⁸ but George Lipscomb, writing in the mid 19th century, gives a full if somewhat partly ambiguous description. He records;

a magnificent monument of statuary marble, consisting of a basement divided into three

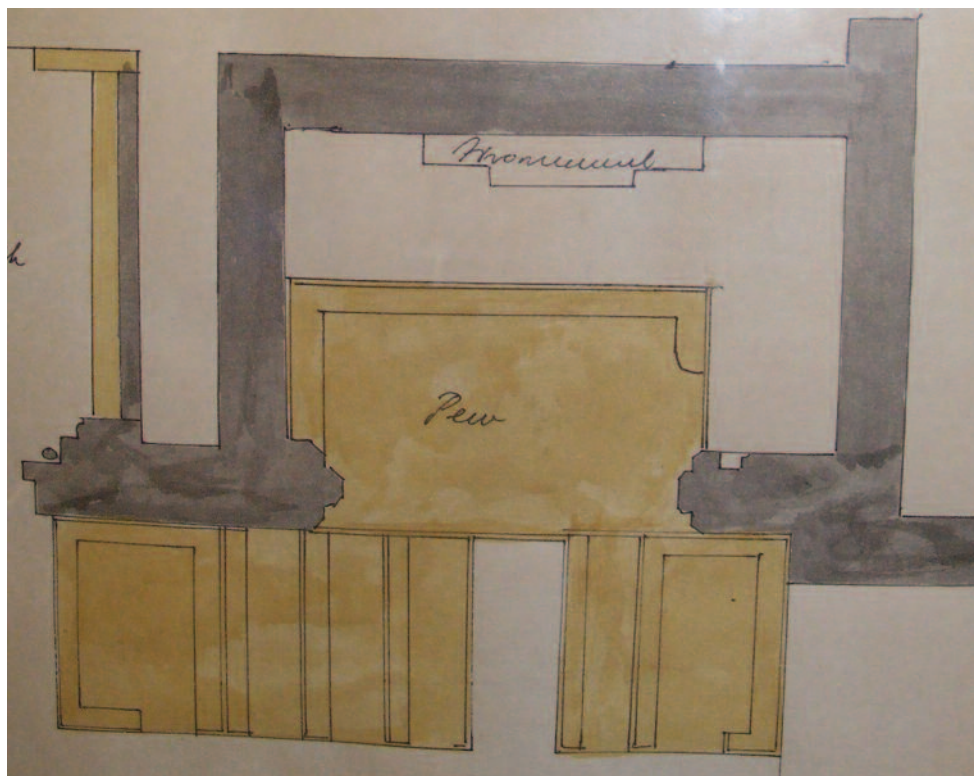


FIGURE 3 Plan of the North Chapel of St Michael's Church, Horton, before restoration in 1876, from a modern copy of J. Oldrid Scott's plan on display in the church (Photo, author, with permission of the Rector and Churchwardens of St Michael's Church, Horton).

compartments of veined marble, on which stands a large sarcophagus, with a pyramid of black and gold, surmounted by a white fluted urn, from whence issue gilt flames ... but from some cause not explained, neither inscription nor arms have been placed upon it.⁹

A later historian, Gordon Gyll, follows Lipscomb's description of 'the large black Scawen monument' almost to the letter but provides a positive interpretation for its anonymity;

As there are no single monuments to the members of this family in the church, it may have been intended to engrave thereon the principal names, as there were more than twenty members of this house buried here, including Mr Robert Scawen who purchased the Manor in 1658, with his son Sir Thomas Scawen, in 1730,

and Dame Martha Scawen in 1766. Martha, daughter of Louis Scawen closed the vault in 1798.¹⁰

A perusal of the parish registers actually indicates that over thirty members of the Scawen family and its connections, such as the Scotts and Nanneys, were buried at Horton during this period.¹¹

A tentative, partial reconstruction of the monument can be based on these descriptions and on Scott's pre-restoration plan, where the monument is shown as a structure approximately 2.65m (9½ft) wide and 0.30m (1ft) deep with its central section 1.35m (4½ft) wide and 0.45m (1½ft) deep. The division of the floor plan into three unequal parts equates to Lipscomb's 'basement divided into three compartments' which can be interpreted as a tomb-chest, no doubt panelled with decorative plinth and cornice. The measurements equate neatly with the

elements from the churchyard doorway: the two moulded Corinthian plinth/base elements may derive from the outer, recessed sections of the tomb-chest but might be happier as pilasters or column-bases above these sections, set against the wall to form part of an architectural backdrop enclosing the upper part of the monument. The gadrooned fragment is most likely to form either the base or part of the body of the sarcophagus which stood on top of the central part of the tomb-chest, a typical arrangement as seen in a number of designs, including those published by the architect James Gibbs in the late 1720s.¹² However, Lipscomb's description is ambiguous as to the relationship of the sarcophagus, urn and pyramid; the latter may have either sat on the sarcophagus as a narrower form of pedestal or needle supporting the flaming urn, or formed part of the reredos-type architectural backdrop behind the sarcophagus and urn – in which case it may well have been a wide-based 'triangular' element.¹³ Of these the former design is by far the rarer, a much embellished example being the monument to the exiled James II of England, erected in the Collège des Écossais in Paris in 1703, and to James 3rd Viscount Scudamore (d. 1716) at St Cuthbert's Parish Church, Holme Lacy (Herefordshire), the latter design is more common, being used with or without effigies and architectural surround. The colouring of the pyramid, of black and gold, suggests its surface was decoratively carved, and may support the second suggestion.

The silent severity of the monument does not help identify either the patron or sculptor, although the very absence of an inscription, if deliberate, would support the Lysons brothers' assertion that it commemorated the Scawen family, non-resident Lords of the manor from the later 17th century. The most important and influential member of the family was Sir William Scawen, Lord of the manor from at least 1712 to his death in 1722, who was a founder member of the Bank of England in 1694. To Scawen, the seventh of eleven sons who had seen his parents, many of his brothers and other relatives buried at Horton by 1711, the commissioning of such a cenotaph might be a reverential duty. At Carshalton (Surrey), which he had made his home from the late 17th century, Sir William paid Grinling Gibbons for a monument to his wife (carved 1700–1702), and he or his successors commissioned after c.1715 his effigy with

substantial architectural backdrop designed to incorporate the Gibbons. The resulting design bears no stylistic relationship to the monument at Horton. The chapel at Carshalton was re-fenestrated early in the 18th century with round-headed plate-glass windows similar to the east window in the North Chapel at Horton: unfortunately the re-fenestrations of both chapels, although likely to be contemporary with the erection of their monuments, are both undocumented. Both chapels had large family pews, swept away during restorations in the 19th century. Later contenders as patron from the monument at Horton are Sir William's brother and successor at Horton, Sir Thomas (at Horton 1722–1730) who was also a Carshalton resident but was buried at Horton with his widow and successor, Martha (1730–66). Their son, Thomas, who had inherited much of his Uncle William's wealth but not Horton, also considered Carshalton as his home, and was buried there in 1774.

The stylistic form of the monument would suggest a date from the beginning of the 18th century, ruling out Robert Scawen and his elder sons. That Robert's younger son Sir William was responsible cannot be dismissed lightly; his status and that of his family would find expression in a monument of this type.

Equally Sir William's nephew Thomas is also a candidate, as similar elements appear on the two known and one suspected monument at Westminster Abbey (London), Quainton (Buckinghamshire) and Flitton (Bedfordshire) designed by Thomas's architect at Carshalton, Giacomo or James Leoni¹⁴ in the 1720s and 1730s. Although not owner of Horton until the death of his mother in 1766, Thomas's artistic influence and patronage, in which he was celebrated, would have been influential in the monument's creation. More historical evidence is needed to allow a clearer understanding of this intriguing lost monument.

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1. M Farley 'Place House, Horton (formerly Buckinghamshire); The House and garden and its successor' *Recs Bucks* **46** (2005), 104–118, especially 115.
2. R. Chitham, *The Classical Orders of Architecture* (1985), 82–3.
3. J.O. Scott, Plan of St Michael's Church, Horton showing 'present fittings'. (c1875). Copy in St Michael's Church, Horton.
4. London, British Library, Add. MS, fol. 215. North East view of Horton church by J C Buckler, dated 26/11/1817, shows the blocked windows and plate tracery.
5. National Monuments Record, 1969/184. The words 'large monument here' are written in this area, without any indication of the plan of the monument.
6. J Broad (ed.), *Buckinghamshire Dissent and Parish Life 1669–1712*, Bucks Record Society vol. **28** (1993). The original returns for 1717 and 1722 were also checked (Lincolnshire Archives DIOC/Vj/37 and Vj/38). As an example of the inconsistency, the 1712 entry for Wing, which has one of the finest monuments of the 16th century in the country, records that 'there are some monuments in the parish church but of no great note or antiquity' (Wake page 398).
7. 'C.P' 'A Letter to Dr Urban, August 14th 1790', *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. **61.2** (1791), 713–16. 'C.P' was ten years out: the last male Scawen died in 1801 in India, from whose sister descended the Blunts of Crabbet Park in Sussex.
8. S & D Lysons (ed) *Britannica et Hibernia, Antiqua & Nova, or A New Survey of Great Britain collected and composed by an impartial hand* vol. I (1806), 582
9. G Lipscombe, *History and Antiquities of the County of Buckingham*, vol. **3** (1847), 512.
10. G W Gyll *History of Wraysbury and Datchet* (1867), 244–5.
11. There is, however, a small cartouche to Robert Nanney, Rector of Horton (d.1734) whose grandfather was Francis Scawen, disinherited eldest son of Robert Scawen, who died in 1669.
12. James Gibbs *A Book of Architecture* (1728), especially plates 114 and 137.
13. James Gibbs *A Book of Architecture* (1728). Examples of pyramids as backdrops are seen on plates 116, 118 and 122.
14. See A.C. Skelton 'Lord Harrold's monument at Flitton', *Georgian Group Journal XXII* (2014), forthcoming.