

SIR WILLIAM WESTON, LAST PRIOR OF THE ORDER OF ST JOHN OF JERUSALEM, d 1540 AND HIS MONUMENT

Philip Whittlemore

SUMMARY

Sir William Weston, the last Prior of the Order of St John of Jerusalem died in 1540 allegedly on hearing that his priory had been suppressed. He was buried under an elaborate monument in the nunnery of St Mary Clerkenwell (later the parish church of St James) where it stayed until that building was demolished in 1788. The tomb chest was lost, but the transi figure of Weston was returned to the new church of St James Clerkenwell before being placed in the chapel of the Order of St John of Jerusalem in 1931.

INTRODUCTION: THE HISTORY OF THE ORDER

The Order of St John of Jerusalem, also known as the Hospitallers, was initially a religious order founded in about 1170 by merchants from the Italian city of Amalfi to minister to poor and sick pilgrims in Jerusalem. Following its capture by crusaders in 1099 it became attached to the Holy Sepulchre and in 1113 the Order was recognised by Pope Paschal II who granted the hospital independence and the right to elect its own master (Nicholson 2001, 2; Riley-Smith 2012, 15–23). Shortly after this the Grand Master, Raymond du Pay (Master 1119–24) allowed the Order to undertake military activities and these soon came to take precedence over their charitable work (Riley-Smith 2012, 27–37). As a religious order they took vows of poverty, obedience

and chastity, and unusually a fourth vow, to ‘honour the Lord’s sick’ (Nicholson 2001, 81; Sloane & Malcolm 2004, 2). A Hospitaller brother’s attire consisted of a black undergarment, similar to a cassock, over which was worn a black mantle with an eight-pointed cross on the left breast, and a black skull-cap. On campaign a Hospitaller knight would have worn armour, over which was a red tunic emblazoned with a white cross (Nicholson 2001, 83–4).

The Order was overseen by a Grand Master who was appointed to the position for life. He was advised by a body of Counsellors who elected the Masters, Bailiffs, Commanders, Treasurers and other officers to each Commandery. As a number of different European nationalities had rallied to the Hospitaller calling, each was divided into groups by nationality called *langues* or tongues, with each *langue* being assigned a specific task. By 1300 the number had increased to seven. The English *langue* was responsible for the Turcopolier, or light cavalry, and had control of coastal defences (Barron & Davies 2007, 294).

With the surrender of Jerusalem to Saladin in 1187 the Order moved to Acre where they remained until 1291, until forced to move again following a bloody siege (Nicholson 2001, 36–9). They evacuated to Cyprus where Henry, the island’s Christian king, gave them the town of Limassol as their base (*ibid.*, 39, 43; Riley-Smith 2012, 210–13, 215).

They remained there until in 1310, when the Grand Master, Fulk de Villaret and a large force of knights stormed Rhodes and a number of surrounding islands. Rhodes was to be their base in the eastern Mediterranean until 1522 (Nicholson 2001, 46–7).

Having captured the island the knights set about fortifying Rhodes town against the Turks, building massive stone walls, deep moats and installing extensive firepower (Nicholson 2001, 50). Once settled on the island they were involved in military action, mainly against the Turks, but also at sea. In the 1440s Rhodes was besieged by Mamluk forces which were only finally repulsed in 1444. A peace of sorts ensued until 1480, when Sultan Mehmed II attacked Rhodes again, and was only repulsed with great difficulty (*ibid*, 61–2). Throughout the 1510s–20s the threat of invasion was imminent, when the new sultan, Suleiman the Grim, was determined to reverse the losses of his grandfather in the 1480s. In 1523 he attacked Rhodes and, following a siege lasting six months, the Hospitallers surrendered. Suleiman allowed them to leave the island taking with them their galleys, their archives, arms, religious icons and valuables (*ibid*, 65–7).

The Order was now homeless. They went first to Sicily and in 1530 to Malta and Gozo which was in the fief of Emperor Charles V, who allowed them a base. From here they continued the fight against Ottoman Turks. In May 1565 the Ottomans attacked the island with a large fleet and a force of some forty thousand men who were pitted against a force of some seven to eight hundred regular troops. Although the Turks could not capture or take either of the remaining forts, they retreated in the autumn, having lost many thousands of men (Nicholson 2001, 116, 122–3). Napoleon captured the island in 1798 and his army dispersed the Order, although it continued to exist in a much diminished form in many European countries (*ibid*, 136–7). Today the Order is devoted to the care of the sick throughout the world (Riley-Smith 1999, 144–51; Nicholson 2001, 144).

HOSPITALLERS IN ENGLAND

The origins of the English priory are unclear. Although early grants of land to the Order

were recorded, they are difficult to date. A number of well known names appear in the early lists of benefactors, including Adeliza de Clermont (d 1117), wife of Richard Fitz Gilbert, Robert Ferrers, Earl of Derby (d 1139), and Gilbert de Clare (d 1152). Their site at Clerkenwell is said to have been given to the Order by Jordan de Briset (d 1110) who also gave land for the foundation of the Priory of St Mary, Clerkenwell, just a short distance away (Sloane 2012, 17). A more likely date for Briset's grant for the priory's foundation has been suggested to be 1144–8 due to the redating of the Hospital's charter (Nicholson 2001, 9). In 1185 Heraclius, Patriarch of Jerusalem consecrated the church at Clerkenwell. The Hospitallers were not as popular as the Templars, who outstripped them in terms of grants, benefactions and donations. During the reign of Richard I the Hospitallers' fortunes improved as the king held them in high regard on account of their participation in the crusades, and granted them a charter in 1194 extending their privileges. By the turn of the 13th century the Hospitallers had 28 Commanderies in England and Wales, and at the suppression of the Templars in 1308 many of their properties were acquired by the Hospitallers (Read 1999, 288–91; Nicholson 2001, 226).

The priory at Clerkenwell was not a hospital but a hospice; any stranger could claim rest and recuperation for up to three days. It was also the administrative centre of the Order in England. Its proximity to London ensured that it received many guests, including royalty such as Prince Edward and his wife, Eleanor of Castile, in 1215. In 1399 Henry, Duke of Lancaster stayed for 15 days (Sloane & Malcolm 2004, 207). John Stow, writing in his *Survey of London* in 1598, claimed the priory was burnt during the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 but the archaeological evidence does not support this (Stow 1603, ii, 84; Sloane & Malcolm 2004, 204–5). Nevertheless, a rebuilding began in the late 14th century under the direction of John Redington (Prior 1382–1406). This was sufficiently advanced for Henry IV to stay at the priory prior to his coronation in 1399. The old church with its round nave was demolished, and a new rectangular one with north and south aisles built in its place. It also had a bell tower, described by Stow as 'the glory

of North West London' (Stow 1603, ii, 84). According to a survey of the buildings in 1544–5 the gatehouse had a lead roof with three gardens, an orchard and a fish pond (Clapham 1911–15, 44, 47–9). The sub-prior's house also had its own garden, as did the Turcopoliers. The priory had its own woodhouse, slaughterhouse, laundry and counting house. According to William Camden's description it 'resembled a palace, had a very faire church, and a toure steeple raised to a great height with so fine workmanship that it was a singular beauty and ornament in the City' (Weinreb *et al* 2008, 667). The site at Clerkenwell covered an area of approximately five acres (*c.*2 hectares), running from Cowcross Street northward to what is now Aylesbury Street, and from St John Street to Turnmill Street in the west. The house was valued at £588 6s 8d at its surrender in 1540 (Sloane & Malcolm 2004, 222).

In 1547 a warrant was issued for the demolition of the church, and stone, timber, metalwork and glass were used in the building of Somerset House in the Strand (Thurley 2009, 17). Three years later what remained of the church was blown up. King Philip and Queen Mary re-established the Order with a Prior, Sir Thomas Tresham, and a few brethren, but the Order was suppressed by Elizabeth I in the first year of her reign. By the 17th century the majority of the buildings had disappeared, falling victim to rebuilding in the area. Today all that remains of the original priory buildings are St John's Gate, the former entrance to the site dating from 1504, and the 12th-century crypt of the original church.

MONUMENTS IN THE PRIORY CHURCH

Like other monastic churches in the City of London, the priory church contained a number of monuments, many of which were recorded by Stow in his *Survey of London*, but by name only. Only high-status individuals seem to have been buried in the church, with others buried in the cemetery (Sloane & Malcolm 2004, 55, 91). When Stow came to write his account, the priory had been dissolved for over forty years, with monuments and brasses already removed and lost. Stow's

account was evidently based on early heraldic records, for instance British Library, Harley MS 6060.¹ In this manuscript the names of those buried in the house are divided into two lists: firstly, 13 burials of men described as 'brethren of the house' and secondly, 30 lay burials. All but four of the brethren can be identified. These are William Hulls, Prior, d 1433; William Tong, Preceptor of Beverley, d 1445; William Longstrother, d 1463, Bailiff of Eagle, Lincolnshire; John Longstrother, Prior and Lord High Treasurer, d 1471; John Mallore (Mallory) *c.*1515, whose position in the Order is unknown; John Wakeline, a conventual knight, deceased by September 1480; Thomas Launcelen (Lancleve), Turcopolier, Preceptor of Ansty, Dalby and Rothley; William Turney, Prior of England, whose date of death is unknown; and John Weston, Turcopolier, date of death is also unknown (Stow 1603, ii, 85; Sloane & Malcolm 2004, 91).

Of the 30 lay monuments, only two dates of death are recorded and no occupations. The majority of interments are for men styled as esquire or gentleman. Two had been knighted, Sir William Harpden (fl 1306) (Shaw 1971, i, 117) and Sir John Mortimer (fl 1317) and his unnamed wife (*ibid.*, 24), while William Babthorp (d 1442) was Baron of the Exchequer. Some burials were connected with the priory, such as Margaret and Isabel Tong, who were probably kinswomen of William Tong, Commander of Swingfield in the 1420s. The family was still leasing property in the precinct in the 1530s (Sloane & Malcolm 2004, 219–20). Also recorded are two Mallorys, Simon and William, possibly relatives of the John Mallory recorded in Stow's list of brethren. Only Walter Bellingham, alias Ireland, can be positively identified as Walter Bellingham, Ireland King of Arms, who died in 1487. The inscription forming part of his brass was discovered as a palimpsest behind the inscription to Roger Gyfford, esquire (d 1542), at Middle Claydon, Buckinghamshire. Bellingham's wife Elizabeth is also recorded (Page-Phillips 1980, i, 43).

There are a number of additions which can be made to Stow's list. When the house was dissolved in 1540, a number of brasses were removed from the church and returned to the engraver's workshop for reuse. The most

notable example is a series of palimpsests for the lower part of an ecclesiastic c.1430 with girdle and pendant device of the Order of St John. These reverses are now behind brasses at Ellesborough, Buckinghamshire, Harlington, Middlesex, and Lambourne, Essex (Page-Phillips 1980, i, 47). A further palimpsest brass, also at Harlington, behind the brass to Gregory Lovell esquire, engraved c.1546, commemorated George Barlee, 1513, who 'whyle he lyved vowed hymself to ... John Jer(usa)l(e)m in England.' Quite possibly further pieces of brass, such as a figure or shields accompanied the inscription (*ibid*). The brass at Islington to Henry Savill esquire, 1546, has on the reverse of the male effigy, part of the figure of a chaplain of St John of Jerusalem of about 1510, in cassock, surplice with large full sleeves and plain mantle, distinguished by the addition of a hanging cord from which hangs a further cord terminating in a cross of the Order of St John (*ibid*, 48). This evidence shows the popularity of brasses as memorials to Hospitallers.

SIR WILLIAM WESTON, PRIOR OF THE ENGLISH ORDER (d 1540)

Sir William Weston was born about 1470 at Rozel Manor, Jersey, the second son of Sir Edmund Weston of Boston, Lincolnshire, and his wife Katherine Lempriere (Balleine 1948, i, 614). Little is known of his early life but on reaching adulthood he followed the family tradition by joining the Order of St John of Jerusalem. His great-uncle William Dawney was also a member of the Order, while his uncle Sir John Weston was 31st Prior of the English Order, who died in 1485.

The earliest reference to William Weston within the Order is in September 1498 when he was granted the Preceptory of Ansty, Wiltshire. Nine years later he was promoted to Preceptor of Baddesley, Hampshire (O'Malley 2005, 358). In 1510 he was at the headquarters of the Order in Rhodes. He saw fighting against the Turks at the Siege of Rhodes in 1522, where he lost a finger: 'shot off by an arquebusier' (Anon 1524, 28; *L & P Hen VIII*, 3, ii, 2841), distinguishing himself in the fight against the forces of Suleiman the Magnificent. When the Order left the island for Crete the following year he resumed duty

there and was elected Turcopolier (Porter 1858, ii, 322). He also captured the Order's ship, the *Grand Carrack*, which had been captured from the Turks during one of her voyages from Egypt along the North African coast (Mifsud 1914, 145).

In August 1524 Weston was employed as an undercover agent, using the alias 'Christopher Barber', to transfer 50,000 crowns to Henry's agent in Rome. The money was kept to transfer to Charles, Duke of Bourbon, Constable of France (Wegg 1932, 245–7). The duke, together with Emperor Charles V and Henry VIII were involved in a plan to partition France but the duke was killed in battle before any plans could be finalised (*L & P Hen VIII*, 4, i, 590; O'Malley 2005, 177). Weston went to the Order's convent at Viterbo, staying until June 1527. While there news reached the convent that the English prior, Sir Thomas Docwra, had died. Weston was elected prior in his place, allegedly through the influence that his brother Richard held over Thomas Wolsey (Balleine 1948, i, 614).

Much of Weston's early years as prior were spent in litigation, reclaiming former land and possessions of the Order from members of Thomas Docwra's relations and servants. He claimed that they had received cash, goods and jewellery from Docwra during his final illness. Legal proceedings were instituted against William Stockhill, the former prior's factor in the Mediterranean, Thomas Chicheley, a relative of Docwra by marriage, and John Docwra, the prior's nephew, for withholding goods and Martin Docwra for detaining possession of the prioral *camera* of Balsall. All involved large sums of money (O'Malley 2005, 188–9). Evidence survives for the case involving Stockhill, and he counterclaimed, stating he had been retained by Docwra to be his factor, dispatching goods to the Levant for up to nine years before the prior's death. The case appears to have been settled by mutual agreement when Stockhill paid a sum of money by way of restitution (*ibid*, 189).

Weston's time as prior was relatively short, and he made little impact on life in the English Order. He sat in the Lords, being ranked first of the lay barons in the Roll of Peers, often aligning himself with government policy. He supported the Letters Patent in 1538

whereby all English members of the Order were subject to royal control. Weston was responsible for transferring a number of the Order's estates to the newly established Cardinal College, Oxford, founded by Thomas Wolsey following the suppression of St Frideswide, Oxford, using lands from the dissolved Priory of Wallingford, and other minor priories in 1528. Among those estates received were the manors of Sampford, Horsepath, Littlemore and Temple Cowley in the counties of Oxfordshire and Berkshire (*L & P Hen VIII*, 4, i, 5057).

Weston was appointed Commissioner for the Peace on numerous occasions for Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Essex, Kent, Middlesex and Surrey (*L & P Hen VIII*, 5, 1694). He was one of the signatories to a letter written to Pope Clement VII pointing out the delay in Henry VIII's divorce from Catherine of Aragon (*L & P Hen VIII*, 4, ii, 6513). He was present at Parliament in March 1534 to hear the proclamation concerning the divorce and Henry's proposal to marry Anne Boleyn (*L & P Hen VIII*, vii, 391).²

Weston was still an important person in the 1530s, being mentioned in an Act of 1533 when it was made lawful for viscounts, the Prior of St John of Jerusalem, and barons to wear 'clothe of golde, sylver or tynsel' in their doublets (Porter 1858, ii, 323).

Many of the Order's smaller Commanderies had been overlooked during Cromwell's suppression of 1535–6, even though many had been valued at less than £200. The survival of the Order relied to some extent on 'bribes' of one sort or another: cash, carpets and cloth were all sent by the Order to Cromwell and the king (O'Malley 2005, 213). Because of this the Crown tolerated the Order, helped no doubt when the prior exchanged the manor of Parish Gardens for lands of the suppressed Priory of Kilburn, Middlesex, which were granted to the queen (Statutes 1817, iii, 676–7, 695–7). The manor of Hampton Court was exchanged for the prebendry of Blewbery in Salisbury Cathedral, land at Stangate, Essex, and a messuage in Chancery Lane, London, in 1531 (*VCH Middlesex*, ii, 325–6).

Weston was now less trusted than before and no longer chosen to sit on Commissions of the Peace. Following the Pilgrimage of Grace uprising in Yorkshire in autumn 1536,

Weston was ordered to stay in London and to guard the queen. His beliefs may have been seen as dangerous at this time but the Order was still recruiting new members as late as 1537, when Henry VIII gave them a grant for the purpose (*L & P Hen VIII*, 12, ii, g 411 (25)).

In July 1539, Henry VIII reminded the knights of the Order that the *Coventus et Religio* of the Order made him their protector, *nos generalem constituerunt eiusdem Ordinis protectorem*, and as such the guarantor of positions within the English section of the Order. This meant the authority of the Pope was to be ignored. New members would swear allegiance to the king, and any person nominated by the Grand Prior to take up position in England was to obtain confirmation from Henry, with the first year's revenue from the Commandery being paid to the exchequer. Other conditions were imposed, which all favoured the king (Galea 1949, 59–69). In the same month the king's authority over the Order was demonstrated with the execution of Weston's nephew, Sir Thomas Dingley, Commander of Baddisley, who was beheaded on Tower Hill for his loyalty to the Pope. Within a year measures were underway to suppress the Order with legislation introduced before Parliament on 22 April 1540 for the Order's closure. The Act had its second reading four days later and its third on 29 April. It was not only St John's that was suppressed, but its sister house at Kilmainham in Ireland, together with all the Order's Commanderies (Burnet 1730, i, iii, 206; Eagle 1826, iv, 56–8). Wearing of the habit was forbidden and members could no longer meet. Those overseas had to return within one year to receive a pension, and avoid Henry VIII's displeasure. Weston received a yearly pension of £1,000, with considerably lesser amounts going to other members of the Order (Statutes 1817, iii, 779).

A contemporary writer mentions Weston's failing health and subsequent death. In a letter to Thomas Cromwell in November 1539, Sir Clement West, a former member of the Order writes that 'the [pryor is] sor syke, and be lyk ded' (*L & P Hen VIII*, 14, ii, 579). Clearly Weston, then in his late sixties, was not a well man. In a letter to Cromwell Sir Clement mentions a conversation he had

had with Weston a few months before his death. It appeared that Weston was clearly unhappy that Henry had taken away the Order's houses and privileges, saying to West:

[one thing] ye Schall do for me, leve your Kyng with [all hys yll] workes. I seyde, Jesus, why sey ye thus to m[e more] than to otheyr? What hurt hath hath (*sic*) h[[e done] yow? He seyde, He takyth my pryvylege a[an my] commaundrys. I seyde No, the Lawys gyfyth [him] all that a treytor hath yn possessyon (*L & P Hen VIII*, 14, i, 579).

Weston, on hearing news of the priory's suppression is said to have collapsed and died on 7 May (Weever 1631, 430; Hatton 1708, i, 289).

If circumstances had been different Weston would have been buried in the Order's own church but as it had been closed his final resting place was in the church nearest to where he died, St James Clerkenwell. The funeral was paid for by the government, although its cost was not itemised in the records (*L & P Hen VIII*, 15, 646). Although an attempt was made to revive the Order during the reign of Queen Mary, Sir William Weston was the last Prior of the Order of St John of Jerusalem.

WESTON'S MONUMENT

Members of the Order were not permitted to own property, therefore the need to make a will did not arise and there are no testamentary instructions for Weston's monument. It was an elaborate composition with brass-work and a sculpted figure. The inscription, for example, recorded his devotion to the Virgin Mary and referred to his hospitality as prior.

The monument had originally comprised of two parts: the upper portion with a canopy had a shield bearing the arms of Weston quarterly, first and fourth, *ermine on a chief azure five besants*; second and third *argent three camels sable*. Above was a crest, a Saracen's head *affrontée* filleted *or* and *vert*. Below, was the motto 'Any boro'. Above the canopy, running along the top were five stone shields bearing a cross. On either side were two arches with blank shields at the base. The entablature was supported by two carved

pillars resting on the plain cover. Under this, and held up by five short pillars, was a recumbent skeleton partially wrapped in a shroud pulled back to reveal an emaciated corpse lying on a rush mat. On the reverse of the upper part of the tomb were three panels in which were formerly a number of brass plates. The majority were lost by 1788, but from their shape and with the help of John Weever's description and Carter's drawing (Fig 1) it is possible to reconstruct this part of the monument.

In his account of the monument in 1631, Weever recorded that the brass plates had been stolen, with the exception of a few pieces of the inscription. What remained was probably from the chamfer inscription around the edge of the cover-stone. Both Weever and William Pinks recorded this, Pinks adding:

... *hospitalitate inclytus, genere praeclarus ...*
/ *Hanc Vnnam Officii causa ...* ([He was] famous for hospitality, distinguished by descent ... [somebody made] this tomb for the sake of the position he held) (Weever 1631, 430; Pinks 1865, 39).

Weever added a further four lines of verse that were presumably on the surviving mouth scrolls of the figures:

Ecce quem cernis tuo nomini semper devotum
/ *Suscipe in sinum Virgo Maria tuum* (Lo, O Virgin Mary, the one you behold was always devoted to thy name, receive him to thy bosom).

Spes me non fallat quam in te semper habebam / *Virgo votes natum ...* (The hope which I have always placed in thee does not deceive me; Virgin, mayst thou entreat thy son ...) (Weever 1631, 430).

Bridget Cherry has suggested that the monument was a Franco-Flemish type, on account of the rush mat beneath the cadaver (Cherry 1990, 154, n 59). However, the Weston monument was almost certainly a London product, bearing a strong resemblance to the monument of Lady Jane Guildford (d 1555) at Chelsea (Hutchinson & Egan 2003, 74–6; Whittemore 2004, 132–5) and to that of Geoffrey Chaucer, who died in 1400, but whose monument was not erected in Westminster Abbey until 1556. It was not recorded what stone was used for

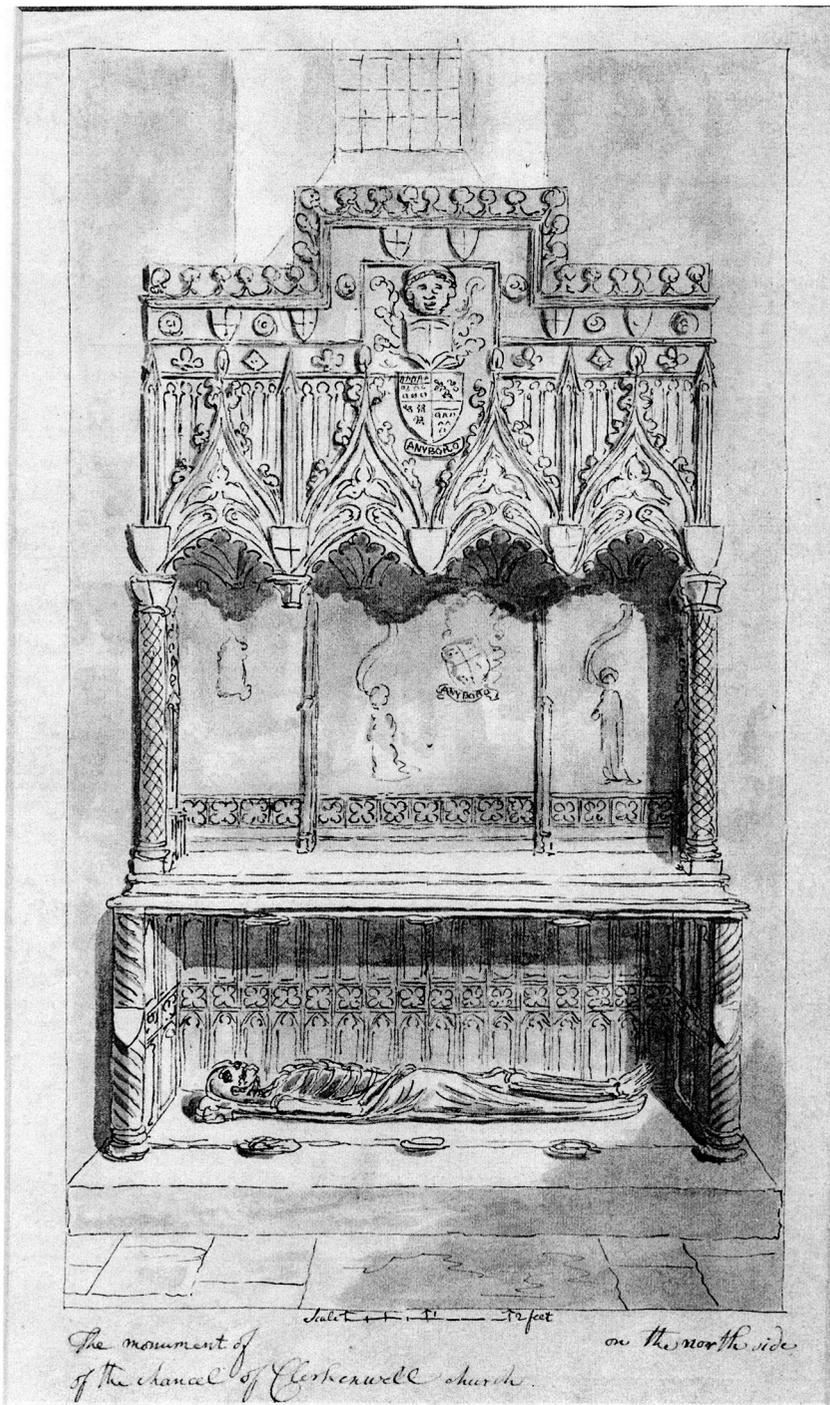


Fig 1. Drawing by John Carter of the tomb of Sir William Weston (reproduced by permission of the Islington Local History Centre). Using Carter's scale it is possible to estimate the dimensions of the tomb and brasses. Tomb: approximately 3.68m x 2.40m. Brasses: (left) Blessed Virgin Mary(?), 120mm x 60mm; (centre) kneeling figure 200mm x 70mm, scroll 160mm x 20mm, shield 130mm x 90mm, overall 220mm x 120mm; (right) figure 240mm x 60mm, scroll 160mm x 50mm

the Weston monument but it would almost certainly have been of Purbeck marble, as are the Guildford and Chaucer monuments.

Both of these monuments have a place for a priest to stand and say Mass within the body of the monument. A monument of about 1520–30 at West Alvington, Devonshire, is also of similar design, although this lacks an elaborate canopy. It originally had brasses on the back-plate, while the design of the underside of the arch mirrors the Weston monument at Clerkenwell (Alexander *et al* 2006, 108). The canopy above the monument to Sir William Fitzwilliam, c.1553, in St George's Chapel, Windsor, is also of remarkably similar design to the Weston canopy, while the canopy over the Fitzwilliam monument is of Purbeck marble and comprises four bays with decorated shafts covered with latticework and with a groined ceiling (Bond 1958, 79–80, pl 5; Saul 2007, 247–8).

Two shrouded skeletons in Devonshire, one in Exeter Cathedral, the other in Feniton, are of similar design and accord in date with that of Weston's figure. The monument in the north choir aisle of Exeter Cathedral is datable to the mid 1550s, but it is not known whom it commemorates as it lacks any form of identification. This monument is very plain and contrasts with that of Weston. It is set within an elaborate niche in the wall. The second shroud monument at Feniton is also set within a niche in the chancel; in this case it is plain, and also lacks an inscription.

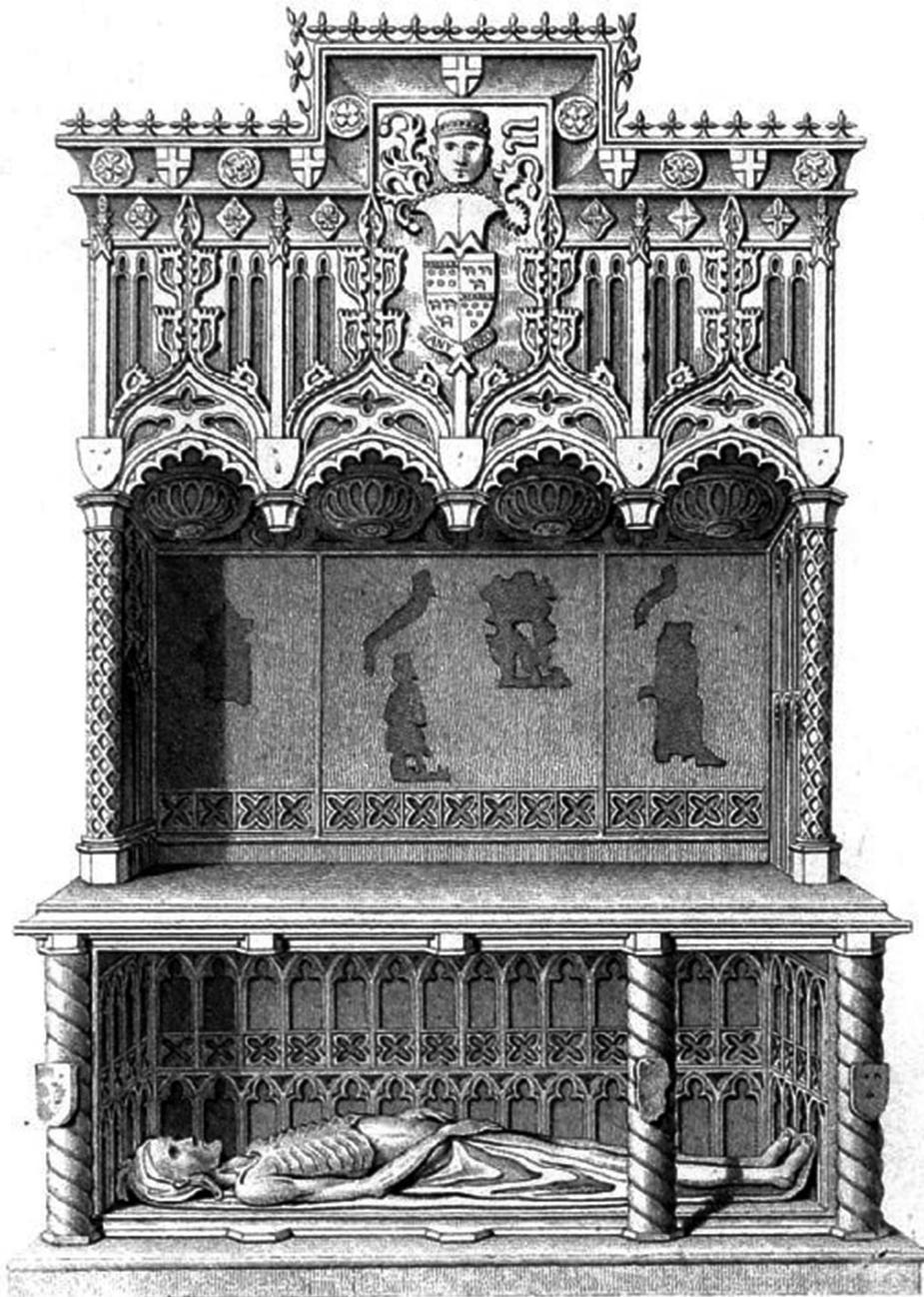
A number of drawings and engravings illustrate the Weston monument. These were all produced shortly before the monument's destruction and date from approximately 1770–8. The earliest is an anonymous ink and wash drawing of the cadaverous effigy of Weston, datable to about 1770. It shows that both arms had become broken and parts of the sinister arm were shown lying loose alongside the body.³ A drawing by John Carter (1748–1818) shows the monument *in situ* against the north wall of the church. The drawing is undated but is of great interest as it shows two pieces of brass-work, the arms of Weston and a standing figure (although the latter is somewhat sketchy) (Fig 1). An engraving from a drawing by the artist Jacob Schnebbelie (1760–92) shows the monument as it appeared in 1787 (Fig 2). This has been

reproduced on a number of occasions. It is similar to Fig 1, with variations in detail and greater clarity of line. In the dexter panel of the back-plate is an indent that may have held an image of the Virgin holding Christ in her bosom, but in the Schnebbelie drawing this is shown somewhat indistinctly. In the middle panel is a kneeling figure of a knight with sword, presumably Weston himself, with a mouth scroll. Behind him is an indent which at first sight appears to be indistinguishable but Carter's illustration shows a shield *couche* bearing the arms of Weston in the lower part of the indent, above which was probably a Saracen's head. In the sinister panel was a standing figure, possibly in a long gown with a mouth scroll. A writer to the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1784 stated that some of the plates still remained, but does not provide details, so Carter may well be correct (M S 1784, 409). They were supposed to have disappeared by 1787 (Henn 1787, 460), but contrary to this, in a report the following year, two pieces of brass are mentioned, one being described as a scroll that accompanied the kneeling armed figure (Skinner 1788, 600). In 1774 a collector of heraldic notes, William Fox, visited St James Clerkenwell and noted the monument, describing the arms of Weston above which was a *cross argent on a chief*, which he also tricked.⁴ From these notes it would appear that the shield formed part of the monument, but it is odd that both Carter and Schnebbelie failed to record it.

LATER HISTORY OF THE MONUMENT

During the 18th century St James Clerkenwell had been in a ruinous condition for a number of years and the decision was taken to demolish the church and build a new one. An Act of Parliament was sought to enable this.⁵ Monuments and gravestones were to be taken down and refixed in the new church. The Trustees of the Building Committee circumvented this requirement by advertising in local newspapers for descendants to claim family monuments (Viator Londinensis 1788, 853). Very few did, and only a handful of monuments from the old church found their way into the new building.

Weston's monument was removed during the demolition of St James' in April 1788. A



Drawn by J. L. Storer

Monument of Sir W^m Weston last Prior of St. John's.

Fig 2. Monument to Sir William Weston, 1787, by Jacob Schneckelie, print by J and H S Storer (Cromwell [1828], opp 28; reproduced by permission of the Society of Antiquaries of London)

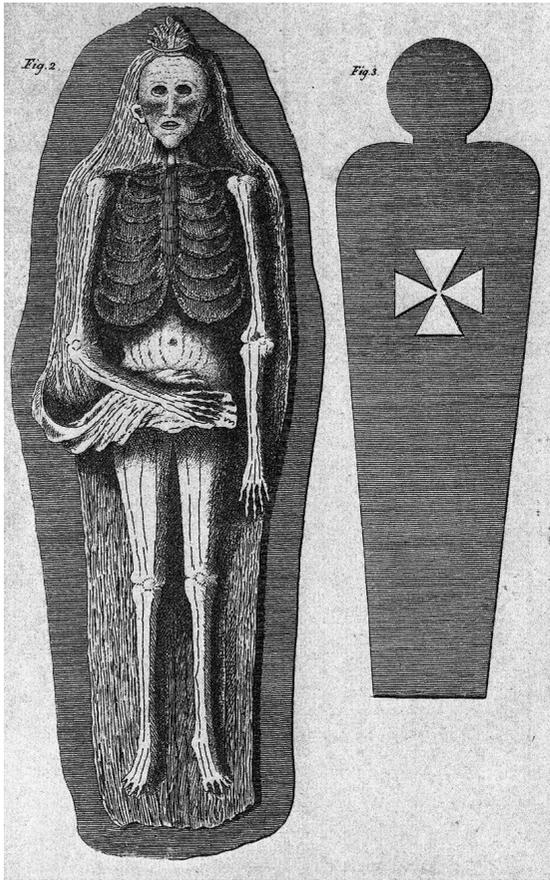


Fig 3. The cadaver of Sir William Weston beside his lead coffin, which bears the cross of St John (Skinner 1788, pl 1 opp 501; reproduced by permission of the Society of Antiquaries of London)

few inches below the surface, directly under the monument, the workmen discovered the body of the prior encased in lead. On the upper part was a cross patée raised in lead (Fig 3). The workmen raised the cover, observing that the skeleton did not appear to have been wrapped in either a cerecloth or the habit of the Order. Measuring 5 feet 11 inches (1.8m) in length, it was reportedly in a good state of preservation. Once their investigation was completed the component parts of the monument were placed in the cloister (Skinner 1788, 501).

Shortly afterwards these pieces were transferred to the garden of Francis Peter Mallet a furniture maker who had premises at nearby Newcastle House, 48 Clerkenwell Close (Heal 1988, 108).⁶ They were placed here for safe keeping by Mallet, whose premises abutted the church with space for storage. In addition, Mallet was a trustee of the Building Committee. All of these pieces, with the

exception of the figure of the skeleton, were bought by the Reverend Sir John Booth (1724–97), also a trustee of the Building Committee, of St John's Square, who had local connections. He moved the pieces to 'Burleigh' (Skinner 1788, 853–4). 'Burleigh' has not been identified and it is presumed that these pieces are now lost.

The effigy was left behind and following the rebuilding of the parish church it and the remaining monuments, that had not been disposed of, were placed in the crypt. The Weston monument was drawn in 1842 by J W Archer (now in the British Museum), who showed it propped up on its end, together with the monument of Lady Elizabeth Berkley (Pinks 1865, 66). In 1881 a faculty was obtained for, among other things, the removal of the monuments from the crypt to the church. Weston's effigy was mounted on a plinth with an inscription giving a brief history of the monument. It



Fig 4. The cadaverous effigy of Sir William Weston (photo: Graham Javes)

was placed as near to its original position in the new church as possible, in the north-east corner of the nave. The work was paid for by Colonel Hunter-Weston, knight of the Order of St John, who claimed descent from the Weston family.⁷ In 1931 a faculty was obtained for the removal of the figure from St James' to the crypt of the chapel of the Order of St John.⁸ This was subsequently done and the figure remains there today (Fig 4). Restoration was carried out on the figure in 1943 when the damaged arms were restored.⁹

The present state of the monument does no justice to its former glory and if it were not for the antiquarian evidence available, illustrating the now lost component parts, it would be difficult to interpret the original design. It is a remarkable survivor when so much from the former priory has been lost. Sir William Weston is himself a figure of much interest, with a career as an active soldier in the Mediterranean, dovetailed with high office in the Order as head of the English *langue* of the Hospitallers in England. It is hoped that with the publication

of this article on Sir William Weston and his monument that both are accorded more prominence than formerly, for both deserve to be better remembered.

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phil@si-w.co.uk

NOTES

- 1 British Library (BL), Harley 6069, fol 57.
- 2 The National Archives, E 24/23/17, E 24/23/19.
- 3 London Metropolitan Archives (LMA), Col-lage p 5370701.
- 4 BL, Additional MS 29278, fols 6r-v.
- 5 28 Geo III c 10.
- 6 Islington Local History Centre, St James' Church, Clerkenwell, Trustees Minutes, 11 April 1788.

⁷ LMA, DL/A/C/MS 18310/009.

⁸ LMA, DL/A/C/MS 18319/059.

⁹ Museum and Library of St John, London, notes on the church fabric.

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