

Monumental Effigies in Somerset

SUPPLEMENT NO. 2

SIXTEENTH AND SEVENTEENTH CENTURY BISHOPS

BY ALFRED C. FRYER, PH.D., F.S.A.

BISHOP THOMAS BECKINGTON placed his alabaster effigy within his new chantry-chapel in 1452, and after that date no other episcopal effigy for one-and-a-half centuries was erected in the Cathedral Church of Wells. However, Nathaniel Still, eldest son of John Still, bishop of Bath and Wells, erected a fine Renaissance monument with an effigy of his father in 1607. Then follows a period of sixty-five years when we find the effigy, made during his lifetime, of bishop Robert Creighton, in the chapel of St. David. Bishops Still and Creighton were both distinguished scholars of Cambridge University; each held a professor's chair, each had many ecclesiastical and academical appointments showered upon him, each held anti-puritanical principles and, eventually, each was consecrated bishop of Bath and Wells—Still in the reign of Queen Elizabeth and Creighton in that of King Charles II.

John Still was born at Grantham some four years before the demise of Henry VIII and he lived through the reigns of Edward VI, Mary, Elizabeth, and did not die until James I had been reigning several years.

For more than thirty years Still was connected with the active life of Cambridge University. He matriculated as a pensioner of Christ's College in 1559, graduated M.A., B.D. and finally D.D. in 1575. Twice he was called upon to occupy

the mastership of colleges, first St. John and two years later he was transferred to Trinity. He acquired a great reputation for learning and the Margaret Professorship of Divinity was given to him and he was twice vice-chancellor of the University. He was a wise and economical manager of the funds of the two colleges of which he was master ; but his rule never permitted him to countenance puritanical practices. On this account he appears to have met with a certain amount of opposition.

While he was rector of Hadleigh, Suffolk, he superintended the education of two youths,—John Boys¹ and John Overall. Both became in later life scholars of great repute. The first was the Cambridge translator for king James' bible, and the second ended his life as bishop of Norwich ; Fuller says he was ' a discreet presser of conformity '. At Cambridge he became acquainted with Gabriel Harvey who was about his own age and was then a fellow of Pembroke Hall, and with Edmund Spencer, who at that time was an undergraduate of Pembroke Hall. Harvey considered him ' an excellent philosopher, a reasonable good historian, a learned divine and a wise man ',² and Sir John Harington credited him as ' a rare man for preaching, for arguing, for learning and for living '.³

It has been said that church preferment was Still's ambition and in this respect he was not disappointed as at various times he was vicar of East Markham, Nottinghamshire, vicar of Greenwich, rector of St. Martin Outwich, London, rector of Hadleigh, archdeacon of Sudbury, canon of Westminster and dean of Norwich. He was elected prolocutor of the Convocation of the Canterbury province in 1588, and four years later he was consecrated bishop of Bath and Wells.

John Still has the reputation of being the author of *Gammer Gurton's Needle* which is now considered to be the second English comedy.⁴ The plot is slight and almost childish in its

¹ He translated the Apocrypha and the section from Chronicles to Canticles, and he was one of the six selected to revise the whole translation.

² Harvey's Works. ³ *Nugae Antiquae*.

⁴ The first original English comedy was, probably, Udall's *Ralph Roister Doister*, the work of an English schoolmaster, and is descended directly from the *Miles Gloriosus* of Plautus. The unique copy now in Eton College Library has lost its title-page, but the play is quoted in Wilson's *Rule of Reason* printed in 1551 ; so it must have been written before that date.

construction, the language coarse and all the characters, Gaffer and Gammer, priest and justice, converse, to say the least, in an unelevated strain. The parson lacks refinement and is treated with undisguised contempt by the other characters. Dicon is the evil genius and his machinations bring about complications, but in the end he is only subjected to a mock penalty. The touches of humour are not frequent and it has been remarked that the sparkling drinking-song in Act 2 is the best thing in the play.¹

Gammer Gurton's Needle is a boisterous play and it is difficult to believe that the serious-minded Still could be the author of this early English comedy. However, while Still was in residence at Christ's College it is known that a play was performed there in 1566 which was identical with one published in 1575 under the title of *A Ryght Pythy, Pleasaunt, and Merie Comedie: Intytuld Gammer Gurton's Nedle: Played on Stage not longe ago in Christes Colledge, in Cambridge. Made by Mr. S. Master of Art* (London, 4 to., by Thomas Colwell). Still graduated M.A. in 1565, so it is possible that 'Mr. S.' might be 'Mr. Still', yet other men with a surname beginning with 'S' graduated from Christ's College in or earlier than 1566.² During Still's life-time the comedy does not appear to have been assigned to him, and he is not known to have manifested any particular interest in the English drama. However, there is an event which looks as if he may have been in his later life desirous of not having his name in any way associated with this early production of comedy. While Still was vice-chancellor of Cambridge, officers from the Court applied to him to provide an English comedy for the Queen's amusement as the professional players could not keep their engagements on account of the plague which prevailed in London. Still replied that it might be possible to provide a Latin play, but 'Englishe comedies for that wee never used any we presentlie have none ;

¹ Ward, *History of English Dramatic Literature*, i, 142-3.

² There was William Sanderson, who graduated M.A. in 1555, and was living more than thirty years later : and twelve other Masters of Art of this college, all of whose names began with 'S' proceeded to their degree in or before 1566 and were alive in 1575, when 'Mr. S., Master of Art' was put forward as the author of *Gammer Gurton's Needle* on the title-page of the first edition.

to make or translate one in such shortness of time we shall not be able'.¹ Before Still's year of office ended he was appointed bishop of Bath and Wells. If the reverend doctor John Still, vice-chancellor of Cambridge University and soon to be the bishop of Bath and Wells, was, indeed, the author of *Gammer Gurton's Needle* and other crude English comedies written more than a quarter of a century earlier, we can well understand that he had no desire to suggest their being acted before the Queen of England and her critical court.

The fine alabaster monument to Bishop Still in Wells Cathedral was erected by his eldest son Nathaniel, and is now placed against the east wall of what was formerly the chapel of St. David and is now a passage-way to the chapter-house. The tomb is a pleasing Renaissance structure and the painted effigy of the bishop is represented in his academical scarlet gown open some 20 in. in front below the neck. Through this opening it can be seen that the bishop is vested in his white linen rochet with the close-fitting sleeves having wrist-bands of black silk or satin.² Round his neck is a double ruff, he wears a black skull-cap and his hands (uncovered) are raised in prayer. The face of the bishop is that of an elderly man and the features resemble those in the painting in the palace at Wells and other portraits.³ The recumbent effigy rests on a sarcophagus over which is a lofty canopy supported on two touch columns having carved Corinthian capitals and circular bases with gilded mouldings.

The soffit is adorned with large red roses having gold centres; the frieze is decorated, and over the entablature is a shield emblazoned with the arms of the bishop: *Sable, guttée d'eau three roses argent*. The Latin inscription was by William Camden, the antiquary and historian.

¹ Collier, *Annals of the Stage*, ii, 293.

² The abnormal size to which the sleeves of the rochet finally attained, led to their being removed from that vestment and fastened to the sleeveless chimere, so that the chimere could be passed over the rochet without soiling it. Thus it came about that English bishops wear sleeveless rochets and sleeved chimeres—both solecisms.

³ There is also a portrait in the master's lodge at Trinity College, Cambridge. This was engraved at George Stephen's expense in 1789 by J. Jones, after a drawing by Silvester Harding. A second engraving was by Henry Meyer.

English craftsmen never mastered the beauty of the Italian Renaissance, and after the Reformation the delicate technique of Italian art disappeared and our workmen turned to Flanders for their inspiration, their models and their designs. The foreign refugees who sought an asylum in England in the reign of Elizabeth came largely from the Low Countries, and thus it came about that the true Italian style was greatly modified by transmission through intermediate lands.¹ There is, however, more feeling in the work of Elizabeth's reign and the early years of James I than in the later Jacobean period. The large number of Flemings then resident in England engrafted their own ideas on English Renaissance design, and the strap-work used as ornament on this costly monument of Bishop Still is one instance of a product derived direct from Flanders.

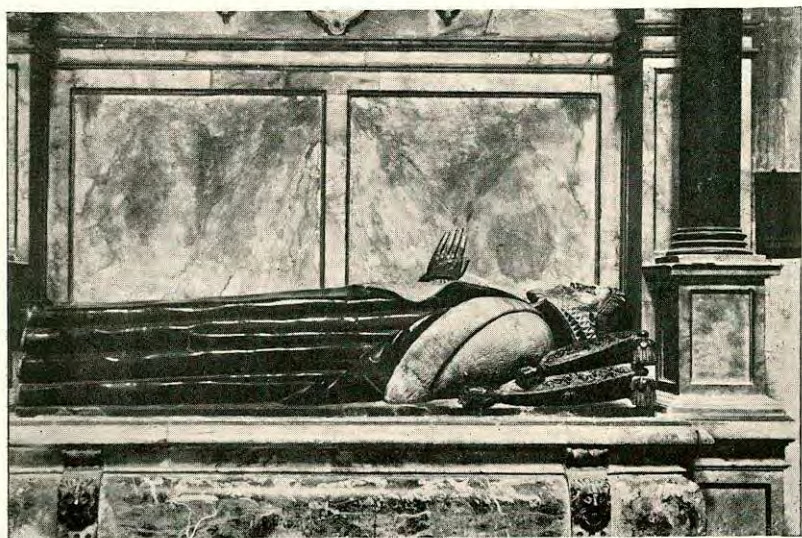
Like Still, bishop Robert Creighton was intimately connected with Cambridge University, being made professor of Greek in 1625 and succeeding his friend George Herbert as public orator of the university a year later. Like Still he had received many ecclesiastical appointments,² and his learning was so well thought of that as early as 1622 he was one of the opponents in the philosophical disputation held before the Spanish ambassador and other noble visitors 'which he very learnedly handled'.³ At the outbreak of the Civil War Creighton retired to Oxford where he was made a doctor of divinity and acted as the king's chaplain, holding the same office under Charles II. When Oxford fell into the hands of the Parliamentarians Creighton escaped into Cornwall disguised as a labourer and embarked for the Continent. He was with Charles II in his exile and Evelyn heard him preach at the Court of St. Germain's.⁴ While he was at St. Germain's, Charles appointed him dean of Wells. At the Restoration, however, Creighton found that Cornelius Burges refused to surrender the deanery and he was, therefore, forced to bring an action of ejectment against him. The Cathedral of Wells was

¹ *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.* lxxii, 28-29.

² See Topographical Index to this paper.

³ Cole, *Athenae Cantab.*

⁴ See *Diary of John Evelyn*, 12 Sept. 1649.



Two Views of the Effigy of John Still, Bishop of Bath and Wells
(1543?—1607)

EFFIGIES IN SOMERSET CHURCHES

at this date so dilapidated through neglect and mischief done in 1642, that Creighton instituted a restoration to which he himself gave several handsome gifts.¹

Creighton was called to rule the same diocese of which he had been dean of the cathedral church. Few men have received a similar honour. He was not only a man of considerable learning, but he was a fearless preacher and boldly inveighed against the sins of the court. This boldness pleased Charles II who admired one who reproved that which it was his duty to protest against.² His contemporaries refer to his preaching which was not only learned but appears to have been full of freshness and energy. John Evelyn's *Diary* contains several references to his sermons and he considered him 'a most eloquent man and admirable Grecian'.³ Samuel Pepys records hearing many discourses 'from the great Scotchman'. One on 7 March 1662, was a plain-spoken sermon on the neglect of 'the poor cavalier',⁴ another preached before the king on 7 July 1667, was a 'strange bold sermon' against the sins of the court . . . 'and our negligence in having our castles without ammunition and powder when the Dutch came upon us; and how we had no courage now-a-days, but let our ships be taken out of our harbour'.⁵

Bishop Creighton died on 21 November 1667, and was buried in the chapel of St. John Baptist, Wells Cathedral, under a monument which he had erected during his lifetime. The monument is placed in the north-east corner of the chapel and appears to have suffered some mutilations, as the eastern end

¹ A brass lectern, a bible and the painted glass for the west window for which he paid £140, the whole cost amounting to £300. See Reynolds, *Wells Cathedral*, i, 358.

The window contains two shields of arms. The one is correctly given as Creighton; 'the other shield' Jewers says in his work on Wells Cathedral, 'is charged with the incorrect arms of the see, *Arg. a saltire per saltire and quarterly countercharged, arg. and or. imp. Az. a lion ramp. or* with what appears to be a pastoral staff in bend sinister. Over the shield is a bishop's mitre. These are not the arms of any bishop of Bath and Wells. The error seems unaccountable. The window was cleaned and refixed in 1813.

² Cassan, *Lives of the Bishops of Bath and Wells*.

³ Evelyn's *Diary*, 17 Nov. 1661.

⁴ Pepys' *Diary*, i, 332.

⁵ *Op. cit.*, ii, 140.

86 has been cut away some 3 in. or 4 in.; the longer inscription¹ has been removed to the cloisters, and it may have originally possessed a canopy. As now existing the tomb has a marble sarcophagus with a black marble slab and a blue lias limestone panel on the wall behind the effigy framed in an alabaster border and surmounted by a short Latin inscription. The sarcophagus is adorned with three heater-shaped shields of arms on the south side and one on the west. Those on the west are :—(a) See of Bath and Wells surmounted by a mitre; (b) Creighton in an oval frame and surmounted by the crest; (c) See of Wells, surmounted by a mitre. The shield on the west is Creighton impaling the See of Wells.² The effigy of the bishop is vested in an amice, an alb drawn up over the girdle and partially exposing the feet, a cope with orphreys adorned with jewels, the head on a large tasselled cushion in a coif or skull-cap on which is placed the mitre *pretiosa* with infulae; the face is well sculptured showing the characteristic features of a strong man, is clean shaven except a very narrow moustache on the upper lip and a very small tuft of hair, like a minute 'Imperial' beneath the under lip. The pastoral staff is adorned with Renaissance foliage (crook damaged) and rests on the right side, while the ungloved hands are raised in prayer.³

¹ Jewers, *Wells Cathedral*, 205-6, where this Latin inscription is given in full, stating that Creighton was born at Dunkeld, in Scotland, and recording that he was descended through his father from the ancient lords of Ruthen, and his mother was Margaret Stuart, who claimed kinship with the Earls of Atholl, and therefore with the royal house.

² See details of armorial bearings in the Topographical Index.

³ Episcopal effigies in cope and mitre of the seventeenth century are rare, yet there is a brass in Chigwell Church, Essex, of Samuel Harsnett (1631), archbishop of York, in cope, and mitre with crosier (Stephenson, *Monumental Brasses*, 112).

TOPOGRAPHICAL INDEX

WELLS CATHEDRAL

CHAPEL OF ST. DAVID (Now passage-way to chapter-house)

PERSON REPRESENTED. John Still (1543 ?–1607), bishop of Bath and Wells, reputed author of *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, and only son of William Still of Grantham. He matriculated as a pensioner at Christ's College, Cambridge, in 1559, graduated M.A. in 1565, and D.D. ten years later; elected fellow of his college, took holy orders and remained an active member of the university for over thirty years. He early acquired a reputation for learning and in 1570 was admitted Margaret preacher in the University, while two months later he was appointed Margaret Professor of Divinity. Archbishop Parker collated him (1571) to the rectory of Hadleigh, Suffolk, and a year later he was appointed joint dean of Bocking with Dr. Thomas Watts, and chaplain to the primate. In 1573 he was instituted vicar of East Markham, Nottinghamshire, and in the same year he accepted a Westminster canonry when he resigned his professorship at Cambridge. A few months later he became dean of Norwich. He was elected master of St. John's College, Cambridge, in 1574, and in the following year he acted as vice-chancellor of the university. In March 1576 Still was appointed archdeacon of Sudbury and soon afterwards he was transferred from the mastership of St. John's College to that of Trinity. He preached the Latin sermon before the convocation of Canterbury province 5/2/1588 and was elected prolocutor. In 1592 Still was chosen vice-chancellor of Cambridge for a second time, and before the year of office ended he was appointed bishop of Bath and Wells. Still resided in his diocese for the remainder of his life, confining himself to his episcopal duties and died in the palace at Wells February 26, 1607. By his will, made three weeks before his death, he left £50 to buy clothing for the poor of Hadleigh where he had been rector, £500 to Bishop Bubwith's hospital at Wells and 100 marks for new buildings at Trinity College, Cambridge.

EFFIGY (5 ft. 5 in.) in a loose, full, sleeveless gown reaching to the feet, scarlet in colour and fur-lined. This academical gown resembles the *cappa clausa*, or closed cope. It possesses a longitudinal opening in front extending some 20 in. from the neck through which the arms pass and the hands (bare) are depicted as raised in prayer. Through this opening can be seen the white linen rochet and the close-fitting lawn sleeves with black silk wrist-bands. On the shoulders is the academical white fur tippet, a black skull cap on the head covers part of the ears and he has a double ruff round the neck.

The head rests on two tasselled cushions rich in yellow arabesque patterns, and the face of the painted effigy of the bishop is not unlike the features which the artist has delineated in the ecclesiastical palace of Wells. There is also a portrait of Still in the master's lodge at Trinity College, Cambridge.

This fine painted alabaster monument stands against the east wall of what was once the chapel of St. David and now forms part of the passage-way to the chapter-house. It was erected to the memory of Bishop Still by his eldest son, Nathaniel, and was engraved by G. Hollis from a drawing by J. Buckler, F.S.A. It is also figured in Cassan's *Bishops of Bath and Wells*. The effigy rests on a moulded slab (6 ft. 3½ in. by 6 in.) placed on a sarcophagus of red-veined marble having two hanging scrolls (2 in. to 2½ in.) with gilded lion-heads at the top and claws at the bottom. The canopy is supported on two black marble columns (4 ft. 2 in. and 8½ in. *circ.*) having Corinthian capitals and circular bases with gilded mouldings; the ornamental cornice is decorated in gold and colour, while above the entablature stands a decorated frame with roses placed diamond-wise containing a shield of arms charged with *Az. a saltire per saltire and per cross counterchanged arg. and or.* See of Wells imp. *Sa. guttée d'eau three roses arg.* Still. The soffit has nine compartments each decorated with a large red rose having a gold centre (5 in. *circ.*). The back of the tomb above the effigy has a plain rectangular alabaster panel with a border, and over it is the inscription in an alabaster frame adorned with small red roses. The Latin inscription was written by William Camden.

This fine alabaster monument, is 7 ft. 9 in. wide and rises to the level of the window above it, and is a fine example of the imager's work in the early years of James I. It stands on a base (6 ft. 9 in. by 2 in.) and a low plinth (6 ft. 5 in. by 10½ in.) Plate IX.

REFERENCES. *Collinson*, iii, 388, 400, 408, 410, 590; Cooper's *Athenae Cantab.*, ii, 467-9; preface to *Gammer Gurton's Needle* in Dodsley's *Old Plays*, iii, 165-9; Ward's *English Dramatic Literature*, I, 142-3; Pigot's *Hadleigh*; Baker's *History of St. John's College, Cambridge*, ed. Mayor, i, 168-172; Cassan's *Bishops of Bath and Wells*; Strype's *Works*; Harrington's *Nugae Antiquae*, i, 135; Warton's *English Poetry*; Wood's *Athenae Oxon.*, ed. Bliss, ii, 829; Brit. Mus. Addit. MS. 24487, ff. 33-7; Jewers' *Wells Cathedral*, 146; *Dict. Nat. Biog.*, liv, 370-373; Dearmer's *Wells Cathedral*, 100-101.

There is a portrait of Still in the episcopal palace at Wells, and in the master's lodge at Trinity College, Cambridge, and his monument and effigy are also well illustrated in a drawing in Cassan's *Bishops of Bath and Wells*.



Head of Effigy below



Effigy of Robert Creighton, Bishop of Bath and Wells (1593—1672)

EFFIGIES IN SOMERSET CHURCHES

CHAPEL OF ST. JOHN BAPTIST

PERSON REPRESENTED. Robert Creighton (1593-1672), bishop of Bath and Wells, son of Thomas Creighton and Margaret Stuart who claimed kinship with the Earls of Atholl, and therefore, with the royal house, was born at Dunkeld, Perthshire, in 1593, educated at Westminster, Trinity College, Cambridge (1613), M.A. in 1621, one of opponents in philosophical disputation held before Spanish Ambassador Don Carlos Colorna (1622), appointed professor of Greek and public orator of the University (1627), incorporated M.A. at Oxford (1628), prebendary of Lincoln (1631), canon residentiary and treasurer of Wells Cathedral (1632), dean of St. Burian's, Cornwall, and vicar of Greenwich (1637); at outbreak of Civil War Creighton retired to Oxford, made D.D., acted as king's chaplain and later held same office under Charles II. At fall of Oxford escaped to Cornwall and embarked for France, and became member of Court at St. Germain's during exile of Charles II when the king appointed him dean of Wells, and at the Restoration he was forced to proceed in the law courts against Cornelius Burges in order to eject him from the Deanery, took active part in restoring the cathedral of Wells, presenting lectern, bible and painted glass in west window, preached powerfully before the King and House of Commons, and was consecrated bishop of Bath and Wells (1670), died on 21 November 1672, and was buried in St. John's Chapel, Wells Cathedral, in a tomb he had prepared during his life-time.

EFFIGY (6 ft. 3 in.) vested in cassock, amice, alb drawn up at waist over girdle (not visible), cope with jewelled orphreys fastened with rectangular jewelled morse, coif or skull-cap on which rests mitre *pretiosa* having infulae, hands raised in prayer (uncovered), feet in shoes exposed under hem of alb, head on large tasselled cushion (1 ft. 4½ in. by 11 in. by 9½ in.), pastoral staff (5 ft. 10 in.) on right side adorned with Renaissance foliage (crook damaged). The face depicts a man of strong character, clean-shaven except a narrow moustache (⅛ in.) over upper lip and a small tuft of hair under the lower lip. The effigy is placed on a black marble slab (6 ft. 10 in. by 5 in. present length). The marble sarcophagus (6 ft. 2 in. by 2 ft. 6½ in.) is adorned on south side with three shields of arms, (a) shield (9½ in. by 1 ft. 1½ in.) *Az. a saltire surmounting a pastoral staff or, cantoned on the dexter by two keys addorsed the bows interlaced, on the sinister a sword arg.*; See of Bath and Wells; shield is surmounted by a mitre; (b) an oval with shield enclosed (1 ft. 1 in. by 11½ in.) *Erm. a lion ramp. az., crest, on wreath a cubit arm erect, the hand grasping a sword, all ppr. Creighton*; (c) shield (11½ in. by 10 in.) *Az. a St. Andrew's cross per saltire and quarterly counterchanged arg. and or*; See of Wells, imp. Creighton; shield is surmounted by a mitre. The sarcophagus rests on a moulded plinth (6 ft. 4 in. by 8 in.), and on wall above is placed a blue lias slab having an alabaster

border (6 ft. 10½ in. by 1 ft. 7½ in.) containing a Latin inscription. The long inscription removed to cloisters is given in full in *Jewers' Wells Cathedral*. The monument stands in the N.E. corner of the chapel of St. John Baptist and has suffered some mutilation at a later date. The features of the bishop are not unlike the portrait in the episcopal palace of Wells. The face of the effigy, however, is shown nearly clean-shaven, while the painting gives the bishop a beard and a good moustache. All paint has been removed from the monument, and no tinctures now can be seen on the armorial bearings placed on the sarcophagus. (Plate X.)

REFERENCES. *Collinson*, i, 190, iii, 389, 399-400; *Athenae Cantab*; Addit. MS. 6865, p. 3; *Wood's Fasti Oxon.*, i, 444; *Willis's Cathedrals*, ii, 164; *Walker's Sufferings of the Clergy*, ii, 72; *Pepys's Diary*, i, 332, ii, 133, iv, 140; *Evelyn's Diary and Correspondence*, i, 253, 358, ii, 88, 231; *Salmon's Lives*, 160; *Welch's Alumni Westmon.*, p. 82; *Reynolds' Wells Cathedral*, *pref.* xciii-xciv; *Som. Arch. Soc. Proc.* xii, ii, 40; *Cassan's Bishops of Bath and Wells*, ii, 70-3; *Dict. Nat. Biog.*, xiii, 69-70; *Dearmer's Wells Cathedral*, 127-8; *Jewers' Wells Cathedral*, 28, 111; *Macalister's Ecclesiastical Vestments*, 201.

There is a portrait of Creighton in the episcopal palace at Wells.