

Camden and Church Monuments

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Abstract

This article examines the epigraphic scholarship of William Camden through close readings first of his guidebook to Westminster Abbey, and then of his other works in which he discusses the histories of church monuments, epitaphs, and inscriptions. Camden emerges here as the pivotal figure between the continental epigraphic tradition, which sprung up in the mid-sixteenth century, and brought together philologically minded antiquaries focused on classical inscriptions, and a vein of specifically English church antiquarianism that appeared in the seventeenth century, and which turned instead to medieval and post-medieval remains, often with genealogical and heraldic motivations in mind. Camden's epigraphic works have received little attention from modern scholars, certainly in comparison with either the *Britannia* or the *Annales*, but as this article shows, that neglect ignores both their significance for the history of scholarship and their considerable contemporary impact.

Keywords

Epigraphy – epitaphs – inscriptions – church monuments – genealogy – heraldry – Westminster Abbey

1 Introduction: The First Guide to Westminster Abbey

On 21 January 1600, the London publishers Edmond Bollifant and Arnold Hatfield entered a new and strikingly original work in the Stationers' Register.¹ The book was a short guide to the monuments, tombs, and inscriptions in the Collegiate Church of St Peter at Westminster, aka Westminster Abbey. Methodologically daring, and innovative in its subject matter and focus, this guide was a landmark publication in all sorts of ways, and a work that had a transformative effect on seventeenth-century antiquarianism. The book was William Camden's third title to be published: the now little-known *Reges, reginae, nobiles, & alii in Ecclesia Collegiata B. Petri Westmonasterii sepulti*.²

This slim epigraphic guide, a quarto of just forty-two leaves, was one of Camden's most immediately influential works. As the first dedicated historical guide to an English ecclesiastical building to be published, it was also a genuinely ground-breaking work. As Daniel Woolf has recently noted, the book was 'a *sui generis* composition': a book without 'a sub-genre to which it could comfortably be assigned', and yet it was also a recognisably antiquarian work, whose roots lay in both the methods of sixteenth-century continental scholars, and in a series of more specific, insular concerns and that distinctly English historical consciousness, which took shape in the wake of the Reformation.³

Camden's book, moreover, clearly struck a chord with readers, scholarly and otherwise. Subsequent years saw a series of cathedral and church descriptions modelled on it, and they also witnessed the publication of a growing number of historical works devoted to inscriptions and epitaphs inspired by it. Furthermore, on a purely commercial level, it was also a roaring success. Copies sold quickly and it soon attracted the attention of a diverse range of readers, not least because entrepreneurial vergers took to selling copies in the abbey precincts.⁴ While scholars turned to the book as a model

1 Edward Arber, ed., *A Transcript of the Register of the Company of Stationers of London; 1554–1640 A.D.*, 5 vols (London, 1875–1894), 3:356.

2 William Camden, *Reges, reginae, nobiles, & alij in Ecclesia Collegiata B. Petri Westmonasterij sepulti, vsque ad annum reparate salutis 1600* (London, 1600).

3 Daniel Woolf, 'Afterword: Some Reflection on Genre in Early Modern Histories', in *Early Modern Genres of History*, eds Emil Nicklas Johnsen and Ina Louise Stovner (Abingdon and New York, 2024), 317.

4 Ian Atherton, 'Visiting England's Cathedrals from the Reformation to the Early Nineteenth Century', in *Pilgrimage and England's Cathedrals: Past, Present, and Future*, eds Dee Dyas and John Jenkins (Cham, 2020), 88. For a contemporary source attesting to this, see the German jurist and geographer Justus Zinzerling's (c. 1580–c. 1620) *Itinerarium Galliae, Ita*

for writing about church monuments and inscriptions, travellers and tourists bought it as a form of guidebook. The Bohemian nobleman Zdeněk Brtnický Valdštejna (1581/1582–1623), who toured England in July and August 1600, was one such example, quoting from it in his travel diary on two occasions, and describing it as ‘a special book, which is printed in London’, and a work that the curious should ‘consult’ for descriptions of the ‘large number of chapels’ and the ‘very splendid royal monuments’ in the abbey.⁵ The book was also popular enough to warrant new and augmented editions in 1603 and 1606. These were issued by a different London printer, Melchizedek Bradwood, and they were updated to include, amongst other things, an account of Elizabeth I’s life and death and a description of her magnificent newly finished funerary monument and its series of inscriptions.⁶

Yet for all its innovation and impact, the *Reges, reginae, nobiles, & alii in Ecclesia Collegiata B. Petri Westmonasterii sepulti* is today one of Camden’s most unfamiliar and least discussed works. In the words of Wyman Herendeen in his 2007 biography of Camden, this book ‘has gone largely unnoticed’ even by ‘Camden scholars’ and constitutes ‘barely a footnote’ in most accounts of his life and works.⁷ That fact alone is justification for its discussion here in this special issue. But this article is also more than just an exercise in rescuing the work from its modern-day obscurity and restoring attention to less familiar parts of the Camden canon (worthy as those projects are). Camden’s book, the article argues, exemplifies some of the most important shifts in English antiquarianism that took place in the seventeenth century, developments which it anticipated, but also shaped. Notably here Camden’s guide was a landmark publication for the emergence of epigraphy as an important ‘auxiliary’ historical discipline in the years that followed, and a reference point for subsequent works of antiquarian scholarship, in print and

accomodatam, vt eius dvctv mediocri tempore tota Gallia obiri, Anglia & Belgia adiri possint: nec bis terue ad eadem loca rediri oporteat: notatis cuiusque loci, quas vocant, deliciis: cum appendice, de Bvrdigala (Lyon, 1616), Z7v–Z8r.

- 5 *The Diary of Baron Waldstein: A Traveller in Elizabethan England*, trans. and annot. G. W. Groos (London, 1981), 37. As Graham Parry points out, the work’s Latinity ensured that it reached the attention of readers overseas as well as at home: see Graham Parry, *The Trophies of Time: English Antiquarians of the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford, 1995), 211.
- 6 William Camden, *Reges, reginae, nobiles, & alij in Ecclesia Collegiata B. Petri Westmonasterij sepulti, vsque ad annum reparatae salutis 1603* (London, 1603), D3r–v; and id., *Reges, reginae, nobiles, & alij in Ecclesia Collegiata B. Petri Westmonasterij sepulti, vsque ad annum reparatae salutis 1606* (London, 1606), D3v–D4r.
- 7 Wyman H. Herendeen, *William Camden: A Life in Context* (Woodbridge, 2007), 168.

manuscript alike, which considered church monuments, their epitaphs, and their inscriptions.⁸

Camden's book was a pivotal work here for several reasons. First, and as with almost all his works, the book's method and approach were grounded in the humanist, philological scholarship of an earlier generation of continental antiquaries. As such, it was crucial for the transmission of that scholarship (in this case, specifically epigraphic) to British readers. Second, and perhaps even more importantly, his book also showed how those same scholarly techniques might be applied to a different set of historical remains: not to classical inscriptions, but to medieval and post-medieval church monuments. Moreover, in the British context, Camden's book was also the work that instigated an interest in epitaphs and inscriptions not only as pieces of supplementary textual evidence, but also as material objects worthy of historical analysis and systematic study on their own terms.

By looking closely at Camden's book, and by placing it in the context of both his own evolving scholarly career and the wider history of scholarship, as the rest of this article does, we can, therefore, shed considerable light on the history of early epigraphic studies: a subject which, as Kelsey Jackson Williams has recently noted, 'remain[s] poorly understood'.⁹ What form did the guide take? What models did Camden draw on as he set out to document the abbey monuments and inscriptions? How does the guide complement, but also supplement, his other works? What materials did he choose to include and how did he choose to write about them? These are the questions that the remainder of this article sets out to answer, as it first examines Camden's methods and materials in the *Reges, reginae, nobiles, & alii in Ecclesia Collegiata B. Petri Westmonasterii sepulti*, and then discusses his other epigraphic works to show how they developed and refined the approach pioneered in the guidebook. Furthermore, in answering these questions, the larger significance of Camden's guide also comes into view. Not only was it a keystone work for the emergence of epigraphy specifically as a discipline, but through its

8 Although the idea of a curriculum of *auxilia historica* would not be formalized until the mid-eighteenth century, the notion of 'auxiliary sciences' in early modern historiography had a longer history. See Peter N. Miller, 'A Tentative Morphology of European Antiquarianism, 1500–2000', in *World Antiquarianism: Comparative Perspectives*, ed. Alain Schnapp, with Lothar von Falkenhausen, Peter N. Miller, and Tim Murray (Los Angeles, 2013), 73; and Lydia Janssen, 'The Rise of "Auxiliary Sciences" in Early Modern National Historiography: An "Interdisciplinary" Answer to Historical Scepticism', *History of European Ideas* 43 (2017), 427–441.

9 Kelsey Jackson Williams, 'Antiquarianism: A Reinterpretation', *Erudition and the Republic of Letters* 2 (2017), 80.

adoption of heraldic and genealogical practices, and its interest in church monuments and church history, it was also emblematic of what, in the seventeenth century at least, became the defining concerns of English antiquarianism. As such, it provides an invaluable case study in how those interests coalesced to produce a very particular mode of historical enquiry: one that was at once integrally grounded in continental methods of scholarship and distinctly English in terms of its ambit and focus.

2 Camden the Epigraphist

Perhaps more than anything, the importance and originality of the *Reges, reginae, nobiles, & alii in Ecclesia Collegiata B. Petri Westmonasterii sepulti* lay in its generic inventiveness and its blending of multiple influences and models. The work allies a humanistic, antiquarian endeavour to document and collect epitaphs and inscriptions, which by the end of the sixteenth century attracted scholars across Europe, with a specifically English set of concerns occasioned by the Reformation and the despoliation of the monastic houses and the destruction of monuments (funerary and otherwise) that ensued.¹⁰ Camden also then added a further dimension to the mix, showcasing another way in which church monuments, and their epitaphs and inscriptions, might be used by both antiquaries and historians. Through both its contents and form, and in his approach to documenting his subject matter, Camden's guide also demonstrated the value of monuments specifically for heraldic and genealogical research. In this way, the book was also aligned with one of the central concerns of English antiquarianism at the time, enabling it to provide an invaluable resource for a wider audience still of the historically oriented and the antiquarian minded.¹¹ It also, of course, in this way coincided

¹⁰ For more on how the religious upheavals of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries reshaped perceptions of the past and stimulated shifts in historical methods (amongst Protestants and Catholics alike), see Alexandra Walsham, 'History, Memory, and the English Reformation', *The Historical Journal* 55 (2012), 899–938; also, more generally, Margaret Aston's classic essay 'English Ruins and English History: The Dissolution and the Sense of the Past', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 36 (1973), 231–255.

¹¹ For the significance of genealogy for antiquarian activity and research in the early modern period, see Michael Maclagan, 'Genealogy and Heraldry in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', in *English Historical Scholarship in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, ed. Levi Fox (London, 1956), 31–48; D. R. Woolf, *The Social Circulation of the Past: English Historical Culture 1500–1730* (Oxford, 2003), 99–140; and Jan Broadway, 'No historie so meete': *Gentry Culture and the Development of Local History in Elizabethan and Early Stuart England* (Manchester and New York, 2006), 150–179.

with one of the defining concerns of the age; as Oliver Harris observes, ‘the imperative to identify and proclaim one’s forebears has rarely ascended the heights that it did in England during the reigns of Elizabeth I and James I.’¹²

In terms of its contents, Camden’s guide combines a characteristically antiquarian concern for the origins of Westminster Abbey with a comprehensive enumeration of its tombs and monuments and occasional (mostly rather basic) observations about its architecture. As such, it mixes what scholars have come to call ‘church notes’ with lists of monuments, descriptions of coats-of-arms, and transcriptions of epitaphs and other inscriptions.¹³ Structurally, the book consists of two distinct parts. The first, just two pages in the original edition (and not much more in the two subsequent editions), provides a potted chronological history of the abbey from its foundation through to Camden’s own day. Headed ‘*Fundatio Ecclesiae Beati Petri Westmonasterij*’, this narrative begins with the abbey’s Romano-British pre-history, before describing its foundation in the Anglo-Saxon period and the origins of the building under King Edward the Confessor, and then speeding through its more recent history, including its dissolution as a monastery and its reconsecration as a collegiate church under Queen Elizabeth I.¹⁴ Camden’s subjects in this section range across etymology (specifically, the origins of the names Westminster and Thorney Island), the abbey’s building and architecture, and its Reformation and post-Reformation histories.

These more recent histories, brief as they are, are significant because of what they suggest about the work’s confessional identity and what they reveal about the book’s connections with the wider Westminster community at the turn of the seventeenth century. The narrative, in the original edition at least, ends with a eulogy to Gabriel Goodman (1528–1601), the long-time dean of Westminster: ‘succesorem habuit D. Gabrielem Goodman sacrae Theologiae Doctorem qui huic Ecclesiae Collegiatae iam annos 39. summa cum laude praefuit’ (‘He had a successor D. Gabriel Goodman, a Doctor of Holy Theology, who has presided over this Collegiate Church for now 39 years with the utmost praise’).¹⁵ Goodman has been described by one modern historian as

12 Oliver D. Harris, ‘Lines of Descent: Appropriations of Ancestry in Stone and Parchment’, in *The Arts of Remembrance in Early Modern England: Memorial Cultures of the Post Reformation*, eds Andrew Gordon and Thomas Rist (Farnham, 2013), 85.

13 For ‘church notes’ in the period, see further Broadway, “*No historie so meete*”, 133–136.

14 Camden, *Reges, reginae, nobiles, & alij in Ecclesia Collegiata B. Petri Westmonasterij sepulti* (1600), A2r–v.

15 *Ibid.*, A2v. The two later editions, which were published after Goodman’s death on 17 June 1601, extended this section to include similar praise for Lancelot Andrewes and Richard Neile, his successors as dean.

‘an Anglican *avant la lettre*’, and his churchmanship is usually seen to have been of a moderate, if also distinctly conservative, cast.¹⁶ As Julia Merritt has noted, during his deanship, Westminster Abbey became ‘the major centre of ceremonialism’ in England and its form of worship a demonstration of the Elizabethan church’s ‘powerful continuities with the past’.¹⁷ With his eulogy to the dean, Camden was aligning himself with the same moderate, but conservative, ecclesiastical tradition. He was also more specifically reflecting his personal connection with Goodman and with the Westminster Abbey world. Goodman had instituted a collegiate structure around the dean and chapter, fostering links between the different civic, ecclesiastical, and scholarly activities connected with the abbey. As a former under-master at Westminster School (from 1575 to 1597), Camden had been intimately involved with that world.¹⁸ Moreover, he had also been one of Goodman’s protégés: Goodman had been a patron to him when he was a younger man, supporting him in his antiquarian endeavours and assisting him financially with the travels that were an essential part of those.¹⁹ Given these connections, the *Reges, reginae, nobiles, & alii in Ecclesia Collegiata B. Petri Westmonasterii sepulti* also, therefore, needs to be understood as a specifically ‘Westmonasterian’ text, with all the connotations (social and confessional) that that would have implied at the end of the sixteenth century.²⁰

Camden’s sources for his history of the abbey were the notes of his most illustrious English antiquarian predecessor, John Leland (c. 1503–1552), and a series of medieval chronicles. His account of the abbey’s Romano-British pre-history, for example, was taken primarily from the eleventh-century Norman monk Sulcard’s *Prologus de costruzione Westmonasterii*, a work that he would have had access to thanks to the collections of his close friend and

16 C. S. Knighton, ‘Westminster Abbey from Reformation to Revolution’, in *Westminster Abbey Reformed 1540–1640*, eds C. S. Knighton and Richard Mortimer (Farnham, 2003), 12. For Goodman’s conservatism, see Glyn Roberts, ‘Goodman, Gabriel (1528–1601), Dean of Westminster and Founder of Christ’s Hospital, Ruthin’, *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*, <https://biography.wales/article/s-GOOD-GAB-1528>, last accessed 18 September 2024; and Debora Shuger, ‘A Protesting Catholic Puritan in Elizabethan England’, *Journal of British Studies* 48:3 (2009), 618–626.

17 Julia Merritt, ‘The Cradle of Laudianism? Westminster Abbey, 1558–1630’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 52:4 (2001), 624–625.

18 See Herendeen, *William Camden*, 95–111.

19 Ibid. 79, 93–95.

20 The guidebook was one of two specifically ‘Westminster’ works that Camden wrote in the final decade of Elizabeth’s reign: the other was his textbook on Greek grammar, *Institutio graecae grammatices compendiaria, in vsum Regiae Scholae Westmonasteriensis* (London, 1595), which he published expressly with Westminster School pupils in mind.

collaborator Robert Cotton (1571–1631). Two manuscripts of Sulcard's work were in Cotton's library, and Camden likely consulted both.²¹ Another important source for him was an anonymous (and again eleventh-century) life of King Edward the Confessor, the *Vita Ædwardi regis*.²² Camden drew on this work for his account of the abbey's first building and its original architecture and form, as the following quotation from it reveals:

Formam antiquæ illius structuræ, si placeat, ex antiquo manuscripto habe. *Principalis area domus, altissimis erecta fornicibus quadrato opere, parique commissura circumuoluitur, ambitus autem ipsius ædis duplici lapidum arcu ex utroque latere hinc inde fortiter solidata operis compage clauditur. Porro crux templi quæ medium canentium Domino chorum ambiret, & sui gemina hinc inde sustentatione mediæ turris celsum apicem fulciret, humili primum & robusto fornice simpliciter surgit; deinde cochlæis multipliciter ex arte ascendentibus plurimis intumescit: deinceps verò simplici muro vsque ad tectum ligneum plumbo diligenter tectum peruenit.*

Consider the form of that ancient structure, if you please, from an old manuscript. The principal open space of the building is built with very high arches in evenly-jointed ashlar, while outside it on each side there is a double arcade of stone, its masonry strongly supported from different directions. Furthermore there is the crossing of the church, built to enclose in its midst the choir of those who sing unto God, and buttressed on both sides to support the summit of the central tower. This rises simply at first, from a low and strong arch, but then soars in a multiplicity of spiralling stairways, skilfully made, before ascending, via a plain wall, to a wooden roof carefully covered with lead.²³

Only one copy of the *Vita Ædwardi regis* survives today (BL, Harley MS 526, fols 38–57); however, that is unlikely to have been the version that Camden

21 Those manuscripts are now BL, Cotton MS Faustina A.iii, fols 11r–16v, and BL, Cotton MS Titus A.viii, fols 2r–5v. For Sulcard's work, see Bernhard W. Scholz, 'Sulcard of Westminster: "Prologus de constructione Westmonasterii"', *Traditio* 20 (1964), 59–91.

22 For Camden's use of this work, see Henry Summerson, 'Tudor Antiquaries and the "Vita Ædwardi regis"', *Anglo-Saxon England* 38 (2010), 157–184; and J. T. Micklethwaite, 'Further Notes on the Abbey Buildings at Westminster', *The Archaeological Journal* 51 (1894), 9–11.

23 Camden, *Reges, reginæ, nobiles, & alij in Ecclesia Collegiata B. Petri Westmonasterij sepulti* (1600), A2r–v. The English translation is taken from Summerson, 'Tudor Antiquaries and the "Vita Ædwardi regis"', 182.

consulted, as the quotation contains passages that are not present in that manuscript. Instead, as Henry Summerson has noted, Camden likely consulted another manuscript, which was in John Stow's (1524/5–1605) collections, and that Stow himself referenced in his *Annales of England* (1592).²⁴

The first part of the guide, then, is a conventional, textually based history of Westminster Abbey: albeit one that, in good antiquarian fashion, drew on original manuscript sources, and focused on etymologies, foundations, and origins. It was also a history largely replicated in the pages of the *Britannia* (first published in 1586). Indeed, the passage in the *Reges, reginae, nobiles, & alii in Ecclesia Collegiata B. Petri Westmonasterii sepulti*, with a just few minor additions and amendments, was lifted almost verbatim from the equivalent description of Westminster Abbey in Camden's much more substantial antiquarian book. That description, moreover, which included the extended quotation from the *Vita Ædwardi regis* and the eulogy on Goodman, appeared in all editions of the *Britannia* from the first one onwards.²⁵

The second (and much more substantial) part was a different matter. This part switches from manuscripts to monuments, although it still comes at those from a predominantly textual and literary perspective. The remainder of the book is, in effect, a gazetteer of the abbey's many funerary inscriptions and a record of its epitaphic verses. Camden interspersed transcriptions of these with brief historical notes, short biographies of the persons memorialized, reflections on the literary merits (or otherwise) of the poems, and occasional descriptions of the monuments themselves. This epigraphic focus filled a notable gap in the *Britannia* and supplied historical information absent from that text. Despite that work's material turn and Camden's increased attention to 'Things', the presence of 'material historical evidence' beyond Roman antiquities is, as Lydia Janssen has recently noted, 'overall rather limited' in it, especially in its earlier editions.²⁶ This was not the case when it came to the *Reges, reginae, nobiles, & alii in Ecclesia Collegiata B. Petri Westmonasterii sepulti*. Camden's aim there was to reproduce exhaustively the monuments and inscriptions to be found within the abbey walls: admittedly, not with the attention to letter forms and scripts that the most pioneering epigraphic works of the period were starting to adopt, but with a longer-standing

²⁴ Ibid. 158, 166.

²⁵ William Camden, *Britannia sive florentissimorum regnorum, Angliæ, Scotiæ, Hiberniæ, et insularum adiacentium ex intima antiquitate, chorographica descriptio* (London, 1586), Q5r–v. In the first edition, though, the quotation from the *Vita Ædwardi regis* was slightly curtailed and did not include the description of the lead-covered wooden roof.

²⁶ Janssen, 'The Rise of "Auxiliary Sciences" in Early Modern National Historiography', 433.

humanist, philological concern for Latinity, exemplarity, and history. The project here, moreover, was an accretive one. The erection of new funerary monuments meant new inscriptions to be transcribed, new epitaphs to be noted, new lessons to be learnt from the new lives memorialized, and additions, therefore, to be made to each new edition of the guide. The tomb of Elizabeth I was thus far from the only monument added to the 1603 and 1606 versions of the text.

In terms of organization, Camden adopted a similar approach to that which he employed in the *Britannia*, but in microcosm. The book ‘walks’ the reader, or traveller, progressively through the interior of the abbey, identifying numerous monuments and inscriptions in Latin and English in twenty different locations. Here, Camden was following contemporary antiquarian and chorographic models: this kind of spatial organization and spatial approach to history was common practice for both at the time.²⁷ The guidebook begins with the Royal Chapels before proceeding to the *sacrarium*. Later sections survey other chapels in the abbey, the north and south aisles, and the cloister, before ending with a short list of individuals known to have been buried in the abbey, but the locations of whose monuments are now lost (*In locis ignotis Ecclesiae*). The work itself contains little in the way of embellishment and is, first and foremost, a documentary endeavour. Inscriptions are comprehensively recorded and certain (but by no means all) monuments described; there are also isolated architectural observations and rather more extensive records of the abbey’s various pieces of heraldic evidence.

The first section, *IN CAPELLA REGVM*, typifies Camden’s approach.²⁸ This part gives brief biographies of a series of kings, beginning with the seventh-century East Saxon king Sæberht (*d.* 616/617), who according to medieval sources had founded an earlier monastery on the site, and whose bones were supposedly translated to the present building in the fourteenth century, and then placed in a stone sepulchre erected in the south ambulatory at the entrance of the Chapter House.²⁹ Camden gives a condensed sketch of his life,

27 For the origins of this kind of ‘spatialization’, and how from the time of Petrarch onwards it provided both ‘a new way of studying and thinking about the past’ and ‘a model for reconstruction’ and ‘reconstitution’, which ‘would shape the study of the past to the present day’, see Peter N. Miller, ‘Major Trends in European Antiquarianism, Petrarch to Peiresc’, in *The Oxford History of Historical Writing*, vol. 3: 1400–1800, eds José Rabasa, Masayuki Sato, Edoardo Tortarolo, and Daniel Woolf, with Ian Hesketh (Oxford, 2012), 248.

28 Camden, *Reges, reginae, nobiles, & alij in Ecclesia Collegiata B. Petri Westmonasterij sepulti* (1600), A3r–C4r.

29 For one such source, see John Flete’s (c. 1398–1466) *History of Westminster Abbey*, which provides an extensive account, partly based on Sulcard, of Sæberht’s supposed foundation

and a brief notice of the tomb, before transcribing in full the epitaph found on it.³⁰ That epitaph, which runs to 28 lines, was then printed in italic type below, and set off from the rest of the text by a series of horizontal lines: *mise-en-page* for the printing of epitaphs and inscriptions replicated across the rest of the book. Similar notices of Æthelgoda (Sæberht's wife), Edward the Confessor, Edith (his wife and consort), Matilda, Henry III, Edward I, Eleanor of Castile, Henry V, Catherine of Valois, Edward III, and Richard II among others then follow. Camden again included just basic biographical details (dates of birth and death and some family history) with records of their tombs and transcriptions of epitaphs and inscriptions. The rest of the guide then follows in the same vein.

Camden's approach in the book was, in other words, strikingly 'matter-of-fact'. As Herendeen puts it, the book is characterized by an antiquarian 'concern for descriptive accuracy' mixed with an equally antiquarian desire for 'the preservation of facts'.³¹ In this respect, the guidebook departed significantly from one of Camden's principal literary models. Encomiastic guides to cities such as Rome and Jerusalem, which were written for secular travellers and religious pilgrims alike, provided the most prominent and obvious model for the kind of guidebook format that Camden employed. Works such as the much recopied and reprinted *Mirabilia urbis Romae* offered an illustrative example of the yoking together of touristic handbook and antiquarian description, including accounts of churches and their monuments, in a way that surely influenced Camden.³² They also offered a model for the kind of

of the abbey and his burial there; see John Flete, *The History of Westminster Abbey*, ed. J. Armitage Robinson (Cambridge, 1909), 35–36, 40–45.

30 Camden, *Reges, reginæ, nobiles, & alij in Ecclesia Collegiata B. Petri Westmonasterij sepulti* (1600), Agr: 'Sebertus Orientalium Saxonum & Mediosaxonum, id est, Essexiæ et Middlesexiæ Rex, filius Sleddæ ex Rricula Æthelberti Regis Cantij sorore, primus Regum Orientalium Saxonum hortatu Æthelberti Christianam Religionem suscepit, & Ecclesiam Westmonasterij, quæ tunc *Thornêga* dicebatur B. Petro erexit, in qua cum vxore Athelgoda conditur. Obijt vltimo die Iulij anno reparatæ Salutis 616. & 691. pòst anno videl. 1307. Monachi Westmonasterienses transtulerunt eius corpus è veteri Ecclesiâ in nouam Basilicam, & reposuerunt in sepulchro è saxo ad australem partem mensæ Dominicæ cum hoc Epitaphio'.

31 Herendeen, *William Camden*, 169. Camden's transcriptions were not, however, entirely error-free. As Peter Sherlock notes in the preface to his recent study of the Abbey monuments, '[e]ven the most dedicated antiquaries such as William Camden or John Dart made errors in their transcriptions'; see *The Monuments of Westminster Abbey: Power and Memory in Early Modern Britain* (London and New York, 2025), xvii.

32 For the *Mirabilia*, see Anna Blenow and Stefano Fogelberg Rota, eds, *Rome and the Guidebook Tradition: From the Middle Ages to the Twentieth Century* (Berlin and Boston, 2019).

progressive, ambulatory style that he adopted for the organization of his text. They also, though, differed from his book in one significant, and obvious, way. Where works in the *Mirabilia* tradition were also filled with miraculous elements, Camden's guide was a much more sober and scholarly affair, with his attention restricted to material evidence and to what could be historically documented and attested.

In this sparse presentational approach, and in his spatial organization, Camden was also likely influenced by contemporary epigraphic works, including almost certainly a pair of books that we know to have been in his library. These works were William Barker's *Epitaphia et inscriptiones lugubres. A Gulielmo Berchero, cum in Italia, animi causa, peregrinaretur, collecta* (1566; first published 1554) and Marcus Welser's *Inscriptiones antiquae Augustae Vindelicorum* (1590).³³ Barker's book, which was based on a journey that he had made around Italy, probably in 1549, comprises a large collection of Latin epitaphs from Rome (ancient and modern), Naples, Padua, Venice, Bologna, Florence, Certaldo, Siena, Alba Longa, Nola, Clusium, Aversa, Nocera, and Capua.³⁴ Barker offered even less than Camden by way of explanation or contextualization: his book consists entirely of transcriptions organized according to a geographical axis (his journey around Italy), but with nothing by way of historical reflection or interpretation. Welser's book, which was a collection of inscriptions from his native city (Augsburg) and was part of a larger project to document the classical heritage of that city, was a more scholarly endeavour. He presented 35 inscriptions found in the city itself, twenty from the surrounding area, and a further twenty found elsewhere, but which mentioned Augsburg. He then followed each of these with brief explanatory commentaries, which were grounded in contemporary epigraphic debates and thereby demonstrated his ability to interpret this kind of material evidence.³⁵ Features of his book are its attempt to reproduce the layout of the inscriptions, its fidelity to their original appearance (as far as possible given the limits of early modern typography), its interpretation of abbreviations, its explanation of individual letters, and its preservation of non-alphabetical symbols and characters.

33 Richard L. DeMolen, 'The Library of William Camden', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 128 (1984), 339 and 406.

34 William Barker, *Epitaphia et inscriptiones lugubres. A Gulielmo Berchero, cum in Italia, animi causa, peregrinaretur, collecta* (London, 1566). For a bibliographical description, see George B. Parks, 'William Barker, Tudor Translator', *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 51 (1957), 128–129.

35 For Welser and his work, see William Stenhouse, *Reading Inscriptions and Writing Ancient History: Historical Scholarship in the Late Renaissance* (London, 2005), 140–148.

Welser's book was one of several works of classical epigraphy that appeared from the mid-sixteenth century onwards, and which pioneered the study and use of inscriptions as historical evidence. As William Stenhouse has shown, there emerged in the middle of the sixteenth century a group of antiquarian and humanist scholars who 'opened avenues towards the systematic exploitation of inscriptions as historical evidence', who 'gathered extensive records of examples', who 'developed techniques to order and index what they found', who 'produced general rules for the interpretation of epigraphic material' and 'noted anomalies', and whose works pioneered 'ideas about the scope and potential of inscribed evidence'.³⁶ Originating in a small community of scholars based in Rome in the 1540s and 1550s, these individuals developed ideas about the interpretation of inscriptions that had a profound influence on future generations across Europe.

By the end of the century, a handbook on the subject had even been published in the form of the ninth and tenth dialogues (*'De las Inscripciones, y particularmente de la inscripcion de S. Iuste de Barcelona, y de las vsuras semisses'* and *'De las inscripciones antiguas del tiempo de Ciceron y de otros buenos tiempos, y de personas señaladas entre Romanos'*) of the Spanish humanist Antonio Agustín's *Dialogos de medallas inscripciones y otras antiguedades* (first published in 1587). Agustín believed that the primary value of inscriptions was philological and lay in their potential to verify the spelling of classical Latin: what he called 'el prouecho de la orthographia'.³⁷ But, importantly, he also recognized their evidentiary purpose for antiquarian and historical research, and it was here (more so than in his philology) that he offered an important model for Camden and his contemporaries. Agustín put forward the argument that inscriptions could supplement, and even correct, textual records, and that in this way they could provide valuable information about a whole range of subjects, including family history and genealogy.³⁸ Moreover, in the ninth dialogue specifically, he also included instructions in dating inscriptions. His recommended method here was a judgment based on their style and whether they were elegant ('elegante') or not ('no elegante');

³⁶ Ibid. 115, 118.

³⁷ Antonio Agustín, *Dialogos de medallas inscripciones y otras antiguedades* (Tarragona, 1587), 340.

³⁸ Ibid. 343: 'Hai sin esto infinitos otros prouechos para ente[n]der muchas cosas q[ue] en libros estan falsas y oscuras. como son los nombres y prenombrs y familias de los Romanos, las tribus, las legiones, los magistrados, los sacerdocios y sus ministros, los officios, el gouierno de las prouincias, el cargo de la gente de guerra, y muchas particularidades de los soldados, y otras casas infinitas'.

Ciceronian Latin, as we would expect for a sixteenth-century antiquary and humanist, was the benchmark.³⁹

If, as seems likely, Camden owned a copy of Agustín's treatise, it is not now one of the printed books from his library that ended up at Westminster Abbey after his death.⁴⁰ Either way, though, he would certainly have been familiar with it. The book was popular and, after its initial publication in Spain in 1587, it soon reached learned audiences across Europe, with Italian translations published in two different editions in 1592, and eventually a Latin translation published in 1617.⁴¹ Camden was also connected with this continental epigraphic tradition through his friendship with Jan Gruter (1560–1627), the Flemish-born librarian of the Bibliotheca Palatina in Heidelberg, and author of the most monumental of all Renaissance epigraphic studies, the *Inscriptiones antiquae totius orbi Romani* (1602–1603).⁴² Gruter's book, published in two volumes, brought together more than 12,000 classical inscriptions from across the Roman world and was a genuinely trans-European project.⁴³ As early as 1592, he had written to Camden to inform him of his intention of

39 Ibid. 340: 'La diferencia que yo mas buscaua era esta, y para ello me valia de conocer los tiempos de las inscripciones. y todas las q[ue] eran del tiempo de Ciceron las notaua y ponía a parte, y tras ellas las que eran poco antes o poco despues, y en tercer lugar las otras mas antiguas, y en el postrero las demas nueuas'.

40 It is important to remember here that the collection at Westminster Abbey, which consists of more than 50 bound volumes and more than 400 titles, is only a fraction of Camden's original library. For details, see DeMolen, 'The Library of William Camden', 332–334 and 336–409.

41 Stenhouse, *Reading Inscriptions and Writing Ancient History*, 158. For the reception of the book (primarily amongst Spanish readers), see also Sandra Cano Aguilera, 'Antonio Agustín's *Dialogos de medallas, inscripciones y otras antigüedades* (1587): List of Known Copies and Owners', in *Antiquarian Literature in the Sixteenth Century: Archaeology and Epigraphy in Printed Books and Manuscripts*, eds Joan Carbonell Manils and Gerard González Germain (Berlin and Boston, 2024), 139–162.

42 For the friendship between Camden and Gruter, see Herendeen, *William Camden*, 12 and 243. Gruter was both a beneficiary of Camden's will, receiving 'five poundes', and the author of a set of gratulatory verses ('Ad eundem') included amongst the prefatory material of the *Britannia* from the third edition onwards. For Camden's will, see TNA, PROB 11/142/490, 351v–352r; for the gratulatory verses, see William Camden, *Britannia sive florentissimorum regnorum, Angliæ, Scotiæ, Hiberniæ, et insularum adiacentium ex intima antiquitate chorographica descriptio* (London, 1590), A6v–A7r.

43 Jan Gruter, *Inscriptiones antiquae totius orbis Romanae, in corpus absolutissimum redactae*, 2 vols (Heidelberg, 1602–1603). For accounts of this work, see Ginette Vagenheim, 'L'Épigraphie: un aspect méconnu de l'histoire de la philologie classique au XVII^e siècle', *Les Cahiers d'humanisme* 1 (2000), 89–91; and Stenhouse, *Reading Inscriptions and Writing Ancient History*, 149–153.

publishing an edition of inscriptions and to ask for his help.⁴⁴ Whether Camden obliged and did supply Gruter with any inscriptions is unknown because of the loss of most of Gruter's papers following the sack of the Bibliotheca Palatina in 1622.⁴⁵ But given his own collaborative methods and reliance on similar requests, it seems probable that he did.⁴⁶

Another likely (and perhaps even closer) influence on Camden was the German philologist and Neo-Latin poet Nathan Chytraeus's (1543–1598) *Variorum in Europa itinerum deliciae* (1594).⁴⁷ This lengthy (846-page) book purports to document the multifarious benefits of travel across Europe, and the multiple things to be observed in various places (beginning with Rome and ending with Marburg), but in practice the 'delights' presented consist almost exclusively of lettered monuments and inscriptions. As Chytraeus made clear in his preface, his approach to these materials was, first and foremost, that of the humanist historian and pedagogue. His interest in them, and the value that he found in them, lay primarily in their exemplarity and the moral lessons they presented in how (and how not) to live. Good humanist that he was, Chytraeus also, though, emphasized the pleasure and delight (*iucunditas*) that readers could find in these remains:

Non autem opus esse existimo, vt harum Inscriptionum collectanea tibi, beneuole lector, multis verbis commendem; cùm earum euidentissimè conspicua sit & iucunditas & vtilitas. Nam vt de honestate & dignitate huiuscemodi obseruationum iam taceam; quid quæso iucundius est, quàm in vno, non nimis magno, libro comprehensa habere, tot vel virtutum, vel etiam vitiorum causa celebratissimorum virorum, mulierum, iuuenum, virginum, puerorum nomina, elogia, res gestas, mortes.⁴⁸

44 Jan Gruter to William Camden, 14 April 1592, in *V. cl. Gulielmi Camdeni, et illustrium virum ad G. Camdenum epistolæ. Cum appendice varii argumenti* (London, 1691), F4r (no. XXXVIII): 'Estque animus mihi intra annum alterum dare Inscriptionum editionem. Et si quid adhuc adferre potes præter ea, quæ jam exstant in incomparabili tuâ Britannia, haud inuidebis scio'.

45 Stenhouse, *Reading Inscriptions and Writing Ancient History*, 149.

46 For Camden's collaborative scholarship and his own reliance on friends and correspondents, see Angus Vine, *In Defiance of Time: Antiquarian Writing in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2010), 80–108.

47 As with Agustín's *Dialogos*, this is not a book now in the Westminster Abbey collection or that has been identified elsewhere; see DeMolen, 'The Library of William Camden'.

48 Nathan Chytraeus, *Variorum in Europa itinerum deliciae; seu, ex variis manuscriptis selectiora tantum inscriptionum maxime recentium monumenta* (Herborn, 1594), *5v.

I do not, however, think it necessary that I commend the collection of these inscriptions to you, benevolent reader, with many words; since the pleasantness and usefulness of them are most evidently conspicuous. For, as I pass over in silence the honesty and dignity of these kinds of observations; what, I ask, is more pleasant than to have contained in one, not too large, book, the names, praises, deeds, and deaths of so many men, women, young men, virgins, and boys, very famous either for their virtues or even for their vices.

As Jan L. de Jong has recently argued, Chytraeus's focus, in other words, was on 'the kind of inscriptions that seem to be the most pleasant and effective in evoking deliberations about how to lead a righteous life: epitaphs'.⁴⁹ These, in turn, were 'to be understood as a condensed form of wisdom about living and dying', and collections of them would constitute both a useful and a pleasing set of 'lesson[s] for life'.⁵⁰

Camden adopted a similar approach in his book, in terms of layout, organization, and focus, and seems to have had a comparable purpose and aim. In his case, though, that aim was also directed, more specifically, at kings and queens, as the first two words of his title so clearly signal: something that suggests that the late Elizabethan context to the work and its publication date were not a coincidence. This was a work that emerged out of Goodman's late sixteenth-century 'Westmonasterian' circle, but which was also shaped by, and a response to, the regnal politics of the period and, in particular, the increasingly fraught question of the royal succession. It was also a work that, by adopting a similar model to Chytraeus, in the end had more to say about the monarchs themselves memorialized than their monuments and inscriptions (or, indeed, the Abbey itself).

That monarchical focus, moreover, had a more immediate manifestation too, in that Camden also seems to have prepared a manuscript presentation copy for Elizabeth I shortly after the work's publication. That copy, which later ended up in the Broxbourne Library in Buckler's Hard in Hampshire, was bound in dark brown calf, with the queen's arms and initials stamped in gilt in the centre of both panels, probably for presentation to her in either late 1601

49 Jan L. de Jong, 'Reading Instead of Travelling: Nathan Chytraeus's *Variorum in Europa itinerum deliciae*', in *Artes Apodemicae and Early Modern Travel Culture, 1550–1700*, eds Karl A. E. Enenkel and Jan L. de Jong (Leiden, 2019), 240.

50 Ibid. 255.

or early 1602.⁵¹ The manuscript is not an exact copy of the printed text in that it ‘contains only the arms and brief biographies of those buried in the Abbey Church’; it was also arranged in another way, with the Abbey chapels listed ‘in a different order’.⁵² But the two clearly overlap, and the manuscript was evidently finished off with passages taken directly from the printed text.

When it came to *mise-en-page* and typography, Camden also followed Chytraeus. Unlike Welser, neither Camden nor Chytraeus sought to represent the material form or replicate the appearance of the inscriptions that they collected, except in a few isolated cases. Instead, their books reproduce the epitaphs in a way that emphasizes their poetic status and aligns the works with verse anthologies as much as epigraphic scholarship. Typographically, both distinguish the epitaphs from the surrounding historical discussion by switching from roman to italic, but that is it; there is no attempt to reproduce individual letter forms or scripts, and no illustrations.⁵³ In Camden’s case, that interest in epitaphic verse also extended to the occasional literary judgment: as, for example, his ambivalent remarks on John Skelton’s Latin eulogy to Henry VII, which hung from the monarch’s tomb (‘Eulogium pro suorum temporum condicione tantis principibus non indignum, per Skeltonida laureatum Oratorem Regium’), or his much warmer praise for Edmund Spenser, which appeared from the second edition onwards, and alluded to both the location of Spenser’s monument in the Abbey alongside Chaucer’s tomb and his comparable literary genius.⁵⁴

51 For this manuscript (now Bodl., Broxbourne 84.23 [formerly Broxbourne R 276]), see Howard M. Nixon, *Broxbourne Library Styles and Designs of Bookbindings from the Twelfth to the Twentieth Century* (London, 1956), no. 54 (112–114); also, *CELM*, CmW 16. For the Broxbourne Library (named after the Hertfordshire town where it was originally held), and a brief history of the collection by its owner, see Albert Ehrman, *The Broxbourne Library* (n.p., 1931).

52 Nixon, *Broxbourne Library*, 112–113.

53 For the same kind of epigraphic presentation and approach, and a similar emphasis on the literary elements of inscriptions, see also Chytraeus’s correspondent Franciscus Sweertius’s (1567–1629) slightly later *Selectae Christiani orbis deliciae ex vrbibus, templis, bibliothecis, et aliunde* (Cologne, 1608). As Sweertius put it in the epistle to the reader, emphasizing the literary and miscellaneous qualities to this collection, and the extent to which he gathered his epitaphs with readers’ delectation in mind: ‘Habe CHRISTIANI ORBIS DELICIAS, ad gustum, vti spero, plurimorum. [...] Studui miscellaneam patinam struere, vt plurimum palato consulerem’ (†5v).

54 Camden, *Reges, reginae, nobiles, & alij in Ecclesia Collegiata B. Petri Westmonasterij sepulti*, Div; Camden, *Reges, reginae, nobiles, & alij in Ecclesia Collegiata B. Petri Westmonasterij sepulti* (1603), K2r: ‘Edmundus Spencer Londinensis, Anglicorum Poetarum nostri seculi facile princeps, quod eius poemata fauentibus Musis & victuro genio conscripta

Given this method and approach, Camden's book also likely reflects the growing contemporary interest amongst English writers in funerary verse beyond monuments and outside the graveyard. Scott Newstok has argued that in the second half of the sixteenth century 'literature *in* the graveyard—epitaphs—became literature *of* the graveyard', a development that he attributes to the post-Reformation world; the Protestant 'preoccupation with textual remembrance', he observes, 'led to a saturation of epitaphs in all kinds of printed circumstances'.⁵⁵ Camden's guidebook and its textual form certainly attest to this. In other words, if the book demonstrates Camden's engagement with continental epigraphic scholarship and erudition, it also therefore, perhaps just as importantly, manifests close parallels with an abiding concern of contemporary English poetry, including the works of at least one writer, Ben Jonson (1572–1637), with whom we know he was intimately connected.⁵⁶

A further influence, and perhaps the most compelling explanation why Camden chose to write about churches, monuments, tombs, and inscriptions at the specific moment that he did, lay even closer to home. In the late 1590s, Camden underwent a significant change in his professional circumstances as he moved from Westminster School to take up an appointment as one of the senior officers of the College of Arms. Following Richard Leigh's death in September 1597, Camden was appointed first Richmond herald on 22 October, and then a day later promoted to Clarenceux king of arms, the position that Leigh had held for the previous three years. Genealogy would, therefore, have become not only an important scholarly interest of his, but also an essential part of his professional life. This development was undoubtedly a significant factor in his decision to write a book about tombs and church monuments when he did.

After all, as a number of modern scholars have shown, churches and their monuments were a crucial site for heraldic and genealogical research at the

comprobant. Obijt immatura morte anno salutis 1598. & prope Galfredum Chaucerum conditur qui fælicisimè poësin Anglicis literis primus illustrauit'.

55 Scott L. Newstok, *Quoting Death in Early Modern England: The Poetics of Epitaphs Beyond the Tomb* (Basingstoke, 2009), 1, 28.

56 Camden was Jonson's most cherished schoolmaster at Westminster School, something that Jonson celebrated in the famous opening couplet of his epigram addressed to him: 'Camden, most reverend head, to whom I owe | All that I am in arts, all that I know' ('To William Camden', in *Ben Jonson*, ed. Ian Donaldson [Oxford, 1985], 1–2). For more on the Camden-Jonson connection, see Blair Worden, 'Ben Jonson Among the Historians', in *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England*, eds Kevin Sharpe and Peter Lake (Stanford, 1993), 67–89; also, Herendeen, *William Camden*, 52–54 and 157–158 especially.

time.⁵⁷ As Oliver Harris notes, following the Reformation ‘tombs became essentially commemorative’; their inscriptions became expressions of the ‘virtue, honour, and dignity of the deceased’, and ‘one of the primary conduits for the expression of dignity was lineage’.⁵⁸ Church monuments and their inscriptions, therefore, became invaluable genealogical records. Moreover, as the century progressed, they also became places where ancestry was articulated and celebrated in increasingly complex ways.⁵⁹ Through their sculptures and inscriptions, monuments became elaborate memorials of lineage and descent: the ‘dustie heraldrie and lines’, made in ‘Jeat and Marble’, that George Herbert (1593–1633), in his contemporary charnel-house poem ‘Church-monuments’, contrasts with the ‘stemme’ of man’s ‘true descent’.⁶⁰

By the same token, antiquarian descriptions of churches from the period also increasingly focused on their funerary monuments and commonly included transcriptions of epitaphs and other inscriptions, and often also drawings of coats-of-arms. This offers an important reminder that genealogical concerns were one of the principal factors behind ‘church notes’ and other church descriptions; it also reminds us how intertwined heraldic and antiquarian activity were in the period. Given his own professional circumstances, it seems highly likely that these motivations would also have influenced Camden. In this respect, it is revealing that the *Reges, reginae, nobiles, & alii in Ecclesia Collegiata B. Petri Westmonasterii sepulti* also records some of the coats-of-arms to be seen in the abbey. For example, towards the end of the book, Camden listed the forty coats-of-arms, dating from the reign of Henry III and his rebuilding of the abbey onwards, that could be seen on either side of the nave in the north and south aisles.⁶¹

A beautifully bound copy of the first edition, which later ended up in the Old Royal Library, and is now in the British Library (shelf-mark C.32.e.4), provides a further illustration of this genealogical context.⁶² Bound in vellum

57 See, e.g., Broadway, ‘No historie so meete’, 133–134.

58 Harris, ‘Lines of Descent’, 86–87.

59 For the form and style of post-Reformation funerary monuments, including their architectural framing and heraldic devices, see Nigel Llewellyn, *Funeral Monuments in Post-Reformation England* (Cambridge, 2000).

60 George Herbert, ‘Church-monuments’, in *The Works of George Herbert*, ed. F. E. Hutchinson (Oxford, 1941), 9, 11–12, 17–18.

61 Camden, *Reges, reginae, nobiles, & alij in Ecclesia Collegiata B. Petri Westmonasterij sepulti*, K3r: ‘Nomina Regum, Principum, & Nobilium qui floruerunt cum Rex Henricus Tertius, anno 1220. Ecclesiam Westmonasteriensem restauraret, & quorum Arma ex vtraque parte nauis Ecclesiae suis coloribus depinguntur’.

62 CELM, CmW 16.5.

decorated with double gilt fillets to create panels on both covers, and with those panels in turn decorated with fleurons at the four corners and floriated centrepieces, and closed with green silk ribbons, this volume may well have been a presentation copy. A series of manuscript additions, in the form of hand-drawn and properly tintured coats-of-arms, then customized the copy to bring the genealogical concerns of the work to the fore. To accommodate these additions, the copy has unusually wide margins and interleaves inserted throughout. A heraldically trained scribe then used that space to add 171 coats-of-arms connected with monuments found in the abbey.⁶³ The scribe also made a couple of meticulous corrections to the text: (i) at sig. D2v, crossing out 'Edwardo' in the phrase '& deinceps Edwardo Stanley Comiti Derbiæ', and then writing 'Thomæ' in the margin alongside, to give the correct name for Margaret Beaufort's second husband; and (ii) at sig. H1v, doing the same thing when it came to the husband of Katherine Neville, countess of Northumberland, correcting Thomas ('Thomæ') Percy to Henry ('Henrici') Percy, also in the margin alongside. That scribe, in the event, was unlikely to have been Camden himself. The set nature of the handwriting in the annotated copy suggests that it was probably someone else: Camden's own hand, even in its display versions, tended to be rapider, with lighter and less heavily inked pen-strokes. Nonetheless, it was clearly someone connected with heraldry and the College of Arms, and almost certainly an acquaintance of his.

The identity of the recipient of this likely presentation copy, sadly, also remains a mystery. There are no marks of provenance or signatures, which might have helped with identification here. However, whoever it was, he or she was clearly interested in heraldry and in family history and sought a copy of Camden's guide customized accordingly. In turn, therefore, the copy itself underscores the extent to which Camden's book was both written and read within a genealogical context. This was a restorative project, like all contemporary antiquarian scholarship, and a response to despoliation and iconoclasm, but it was also a project concerned specifically with material evidence for lineage, pedigree, and familial and aristocratic (and also royal) descent. Furthermore, this copy was not a one-off: both the Broxbourne Library manuscript and a copy of the 1600 printed text now at Westminster

⁶³ Intriguingly, only two of these were then labelled: (i) at sig. F3v, the coat-of-arms of Elizabeth Russell drawn at the foot of that page ('Elizabetha Russell eiusdem Iohannis filia objit. 1600.');

and (ii) at sig. G3r, the coat-of-arms of Dean Goodman added in the outer margin ('Gabriell Goodman Decanus secundus huius Collegiatæ Ecclesiæ Westm: &c obdormiuit in Domino. 1601.'). It is impossible to say why these two, and these two alone, were picked out in this way.

Abbey (shelf-mark CA 32), with Camden's initials 'W.C.' on the title-page, and which previously belonged to the Isham family of Lamport Hall in Northamptonshire, were also emblazoned with hand-drawn coats-of-arms in the same way, albeit coloured by different scribes and added in different hands.⁶⁴ Multiple owners, in other words, seem to have associated Camden's text, first and foremost, with genealogy and heraldry and had copies prepared to reflect this.

3 Of Monuments, Epitaphs, and Other Remains

The publication of Camden's book sparked an immediate interest in monuments and epitaphs amongst England's antiquaries. The same year, in illustration of this, meetings of the Elizabethan Society of Antiquaries heard papers on the 'Variety and Antiquity of Tombes and Monuments of Persons deceased in Englande', on 7 June 1600, and on 'Epitaphes', on 3 November 1600.⁶⁵ Camden's book was almost certainly the trigger for both. These papers were more reflective, both methodologically and historically, than the Westminster Abbey guide, but they were also (inevitably because of their brevity) less copious and less richly exemplified. They, therefore, constituted a conceptual advance on it, but still left room for further compilation and collection—something that Camden himself would proceed to offer.

From the June meeting, two anonymous papers survive, both of which focused on the memorial function of monuments as well as on their histories. As the author of the first of these observed in his opening sentence: 'From the beginning there hath been amongst men an especial regard to shew their love to their deceased freinds and continue their memory to posteritye, which when they could effect by no other means, they invented tombes and monuments, as comforts to the living and memorialls of humane frailtye'.⁶⁶ The other paper was more concerned with etymology, and with the linguistic origins of the words 'tombes' and 'monuments', but it too shared an interest in

⁶⁴ CELM, CmW 16 and 16.7.

⁶⁵ For these meetings, see Thomas Hearne, ed., *A Collection of Curious Discourses Written by Eminent Antiquaries Upon Several Heads in Our English Antiquities. Together with Mr. Hearne's Preface and Appendix to the Former Edition. To Which Are Added a Great Number of Antiquary Discourses Written by the Same Authors. Most of Them Now Published From the Original Manuscripts*, rev. Sir Joseph Ayloffe, 2 vols (London, 1771), 1:222–228, and 1:228–260 respectively.

⁶⁶ Anon., 'Of the Variety and Antiquity of Tombes and Monuments', in *Curious Discourses*, ed. Hearne, 1:222.

methods of memorialization, with the author commenting, in particular, here on Roman burial practices.⁶⁷

At the later meeting, papers were given by Camden himself, Arthur Agarde (1535/1536–1615), Francis Thynne (1545?–1608), William Dethick (1543–1612), Joseph Holland (*act.* 1586–1607), Sir James Ley (1550–1629), and two more, also now anonymous contributors. These papers are varied in subject and approach, but all of them reflect two essential things about the contemporary antiquarian interest in monuments: that it was focused on epitaphs, and that it was primarily textual and philological rather than material or archaeological; a reflection, perhaps, of the fact that '[w]ords were intended to be the dominant element of early modern monuments'.⁶⁸ Antiquarian 'analysis' of monuments, as Peter Sherlock points out, thus 'almost entirely ignored imagery', focusing instead on three things: the history of epitaphs and inscriptions from classical and biblical antiquity onwards; the despoliation of funerary monuments (something certainly prompted by memories of the recent past); and the textual and linguistic form that contemporary epitaphs should take.⁶⁹

Camden's paper combined historical reflections on the etymology and origins of epitaphs with observations about their typical wording and their customary material form, and further brief comments on Greek and Roman funerary practices. Like most of the other papers, he also quoted a series of exemplary cases (eighteen in total) to illustrate his points. Some of these he took from library-based research, but others came from fieldwork and from actual tombs that he had 'found' on his travels around the country. He cited these examples primarily to show the memorial practices of the 'English nation' and to explore their relation to Greek and Roman customs.⁷⁰ The first of the two anonymous papers focused on the 'antiquity', 'difference of

67 Anon., 'Of the Variety and Antiquity of Tombes and Monuments of Persons deceased in Englande', in *Curious Discourses*, ed. Hearne, 1:224–228.

68 Peter Sherlock, *Monuments and Memory in Early Modern England* (Farnham, 2008), 202.

69 Ibid. 203. The first paper given at the June 1600 meeting was, in some ways, an exception here. The author of that paper ended with the following observation about Anglo-Saxon and medieval burial practices: 'In that age they only used crosses upon their monuments and no images, which seemed first to be brought in use by the Normans. Since that tyme I observe no speciall note in monuments, but such noblemen and gentlemen, as did take upon them the crosse to serve against the enemys of the crosse in the Holy Land, which were then called *Cruce Signati*, or croised, were buried for the most parte with their leggs acrossse. And whereas that taking of the crosse ceased about the tyme of king Edward the second, you shall find none afterward buried in that manner with their leggs acrossse' ('Of the Variety and Antiquity of Tombes and Monuments', 1:223).

70 William Camden, 'Of Epitaphes', in *Curious Discourses*, ed. Hearne, 1:228–232.

placing', and 'distinction of the honour of epitaphs', before adding 'some selected' examples to illustrate these rules.⁷¹ Here, like Camden, the author included material as well as literary evidence, ending his paper with an exemplary inscription and monument from the Temple Church: 'In the Temple Church on the grave of Richard Wy, who died 1519. is an ordinary epitaph with this worde, *Ecce quid eris*'.⁷² The other anonymous author, by contrast, rejected the idea that there was 'any precise art or imitation required in such compositions', and rebuffed those 'in this apish age [...] who prescribe rules for making epitaphs, allowing of none, except they contain as many parts as a demonstrative oration'.⁷³ The primary motivation for this author was a defence of the 'honor of our English epitaphes, I mean the auncient epitaphes of England', which he maintained 'to be good epitaphes', notwithstanding the fact that most did not subscribe to the pretended 'rules' for them.⁷⁴ He also, though, used his paper to lament the despoliation of church monuments in the previous century: 'By these it appeares, that epitaphs were usuall before the Conquest; but as most men in those dayes were buried in monasteries, doubtlesse the dissolution of those houses hath destroyed an infinite number of excellent epitaphs made before and since the Norman invasion'.⁷⁵

Ley's, Agarde's, Thynne's, Dethick's, and Holland's contributions were all slightly different again. Ley's paper began with a brief history of epitaphs from their origins to their present forms. His account here was an essentially declinist one, as he argued that where epitaphs were originally a record of a particular and rare virtue, 'in process of time the use of such remembrances became communicated to all noble persons, who assumed the same in right of their calling, and not their desert'.⁷⁶ The paper also proposed a taxonomy for epitaphs based on eight criteria: (i) their origins; (ii) the 'diversity' of their use; (iii) their language; (iv) their 'matter' (*i.e.* what they were made from); (v) their

71 Anon., 'Of Epitaphs', in *Curious Discourses*, ed. Hearne, 1:237.

72 Ibid.

73 Anon., 'Of the Antiquity and selected Variety of Epitaphs in England', in *Curious Discourses*, ed. Hearne, 1:238.

74 Ibid., 1:238–239.

75 Ibid., 1:241. This discourse, incidentally, confirms that the publication of Camden's guidebook was, indeed, the trigger for this meeting of the Society at least, as the author alludes explicitly to it at the end of his paper: 'Such epitaphs of our princes that have escaped the rage of fire, are for the most part at Westminster; these have been lately collected and published by Mr. Clariencieux, and therefore I forbear to recite them' (ibid., 1:242).

76 Sir James Ley, 'Of Epitaphs', in *Curious Discourses*, ed. Hearne, 1:121.

'place' (whether they were 'subterranean' or 'superterranean'); (vi) the 'time' when they were made; (vii) the 'form'; and (viii) the 'contents'. What his paper did not include, though, was much in the way of evidence, textual or material. Indeed, he cited only one actual epitaph and monument, 'that of Robert Hungerford in the Church of Hungerford in Berkshire', quoting it as a rare example of an epitaph made 'in his-life time with mention that he is living'.⁷⁷ As for Agarde, his principal purpose was to argue for a quasi-universal instinct to memorialize via epitaphs and monuments. As he put it in the opening sentence of his paper: 'man, having an instincte of divinitye in him, that is, a desyre to attayne to an everlasting contynuanee and remembraunce of his name and worthynesse, hath digged up pytts of soundrye devyses of his owne, how he might as it weere make a perpetuity thereof'.⁷⁸ His paper then traced that 'instinct' from Rome to England, documenting what he believed to be the 'auncyntest' epitaph in the country.⁷⁹ The last part of the paper also contained his theory of why there were so few epitaphs and inscriptions 'extant' in England, and why as a consequence, for English epigraphy at least, 'late printed and old wrytten hand books' were instead the best sources. The reason, he argued, was a series of events in English history, recent and distant: first, '[t]he foraginge of the Saxons and the Danes at sundry times thorough the lande, destroyinge both people, townes, and churches'; second, the 'burn [ing] and ras[ing]' of 'abbeys' and 'sacred sanctuaries' following the Norman Conquest; and third (and perhaps most significantly), 'what happened almost within our memorye, to wit, the dissolution of our most ancient religious houses, in some of which weere sumptuous monuments, bothe of the founders and of others also, some with epitaphes or inscriptions, and some without'.⁸⁰

The other three papers differed more substantially in content and approach. Thynne disavowed the possibility of asserting any overall theory about epitaphs because '[t]his question is so very spacious and dilatible, that it cannot be comprehended within lymyttes', and restricted himself instead to presenting just a few 'remarkable [...] particulars'.⁸¹ The result was a paper

⁷⁷ Ibid., 1:122.

⁷⁸ Arthur Agarde, 'Of the same', in *Curious Discourses*, ed. Hearne, 1:246.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 1:248. That was the epitaph 'of kinge Kenelme', which he found 'incerted in auncyent manuscrite of saint Augustine of Canterbury'.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 1:247–248.

⁸¹ Francis Thynne, 'Of the same', in *Curious Discourses*, ed. Hearne, 1:251.

that was a heterogeneous (but also emphatically delimited) collection of epitaphs drawn primarily from textual rather than material sources.⁸² Dethick, unlike any of the other speakers, focused almost exclusively on Roman inscriptions, as they ‘have been most noted and known unto us by their ruins, of which there are many particulars still remaining in Rome itself’.⁸³ His principal source for these was one of the editions of Francesco Albertini’s much reprinted *Opusculum de mirabilis novae & veteris urbis Romae* (1510) (‘the works of Franciscus de Albertinis of Florence, who hath made a great collection for Rome and Italy’).⁸⁴ Holland’s paper, in the version printed in the *Curious Discourses* at least, was little more than a list: a report of five ‘graven’ epitaphs that he had seen in Winwick Church, St Paul’s Cathedral, and Exeter Cathedral, with no attempt at anything other than their documentation and transcription.⁸⁵

Five years later, Camden returned once again to the subject in his miscellaneous book *Remaines of a Greater Worke, Concerning Britaine, the Inhabitants Thereof, Their Languages, Names, Surnames, Empreses, Wise Speeches, Poësies, and Epitaphes* (1605). That work, as he explained in its dedicatory epistle to Cotton, was the spillover of material that he had collected for the *Britannia*, but in the end decided against including in it: ‘the rude rubble and out-cast rubbish [...] of a greater and more serious worke’, as he put it.⁸⁶ That surplus material included, amongst other things, a ‘Century’ of epitaphs, making the chapter on them by far the longest in the whole book (and a considerable expansion on what he had included in either the *Britannia* or the Westminster Abbey guide).⁸⁷ Like his paper to the Society, the chapter traces a comparative history of ancient burial practices before providing a potted history of the epitaph as a textual form. He also attempted to map out some of the key conventions of the genre, including, for example, these observations about its formulaic openings and closings:

82 For the importance of ‘heterogeneity’ to the wider antiquarian endeavour in the period, see Damiano Acciarino, ‘The Nature of Renaissance Antiquarianism: History, Methodology, Definition’, *Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 57 (2017), 485–502; and, also more briefly, Jackson Williams, ‘Antiquarianism’, 88–89.

83 Sir William Dethick, ‘Of the same’, in *Curious Discourses*, ed. Hearne, 1:256.

84 *Ibid.*, 1:257.

85 Joseph Holland, ‘Of the same’, in *Curious Discourses*, ed. Hearne, 1:258–260.

86 William Camden, *Remaines of a Greater Worke, Concerning Britaine, the Inhabitants Thereof, Their Languages, Names, Surnames, Empreses, Wise Speeches, Poësies, and Epitaphes* (London, 1605), A3v.

87 *Ibid.*, d4r–h2r.

It is not impertinent to note in one worde as the auncient Romans beganne Epitaphes with D. M. for *Dijs Manibus. D. M. S. i. Dijs Manibus sacrum. Hic situs est. Hospes*, as speaking to the reader. So we & other Christians began them with *Hic deponitur, Hic iacet, Hic requiescit, Hic tumulatur*, in French *Icy gist. Here lieth.* and in latter time according to the doctrine of the time *Ora pro. &c. Of your charity, &c.* And now after the auncient manner *D. O. M. for Deo. Optimo. Maximo. Posteritati Sacrum. Memoriae Sacrum. Deo & Posteris. Virtuti & Honori Sacrum. &c.*⁸⁸

Camden's approach in the chapter, as with his earlier paper, thus combined anthropology, ethnology, etymology, genealogy, and philology—a mixed methodology that was typical of antiquarian scholarship in the period.

Importantly—and here was where it was at its most innovative—the chapter also constitutes one of the earliest attempts, by an English scholar at least, to evaluate epitaphs on the evidence of their style. The chapter contains, in Camden's words, 'a *Century* of choise Epitaphes of our nation for matter and conceit, some good, some bad, that you may see how learning ebbed and flowed: most of them recouered from the iniury of time by writers'.⁸⁹ Qualities by which Camden then assessed those epitaphs, and which he used to divide them into 'good' and 'bad', were primarily aesthetic, and included their wit and wordplay, their metre and verse, and the fitness of their allusions. Camden here, as he does throughout the *Remaines*, emerges as an astute literary critic. Particularly significant in this respect was his attempt to think in terms of genre, a concept that had only recently started to emerge as a category for literary judgments.⁹⁰ Furthermore, from a scholarly perspective, his discussion also constituted a significant advance on anything that he had previously written on the subject. This part of the chapter models a comparatist approach to inscriptions: something that neither the Westminster Abbey guide, nor his paper to the Society of Antiquaries, had attempted, and a development that would have significant implications for a range of subjects and disciplines. Equally valuable to subsequent scholars were his more general, historiographical reflections on how epigraphic material might be used by antiquaries and historians and on methods and practices of transcription.

⁸⁸ Ibid., d3v.

⁸⁹ Ibid., d4r.

⁹⁰ The classic study of 'genre' in the period is Rosalie L. Colie, *The Resources of Kind: Genre-Theory in the Renaissance*, ed. Barbara K. Lewalski (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London, 1973).

4 Conclusion—Readers and Reception

Five years after his first foray into epigraphy, with the *Remaines* Camden had published his definitive treatment of the subject in a work that is only marginally better known today than his abbey guide. However, if these two books are insufficiently regarded by modern scholars, things were very different in Camden's own day. A direct line can be drawn from the insights and approaches of both publications, and of the paper that he delivered to the Society of Antiquaries, to a whole series of later antiquarian books that similarly focused on church monuments, epitaphs, and inscriptions.⁹¹ A decade later, for example, the printer and bookseller Henry Holland (1583–c. 1650) issued a similar guide to St Paul's Cathedral, *Monumenta sepulchraria Sancti Pauli* (1614), a book that clearly took its cue from Camden.⁹² Holland's guide was likewise a mixture of travel guide and antiquarian compilation, and he, too, took the reader through the building and 'collected' its monuments and inscriptions. Four years later, the German jurist and chronicler, and Professor of Poetry at Frankfurt on the Oder, Valentin Arithmaeus (1587–1620) published the next work in this tradition: a guidebook to both Westminster Abbey and St Paul's Cathedral, which reproduced pretty much verbatim Camden's text, but also considerably expanded on it.⁹³

91 For these works, see Angus Vine, "History from Marble": Church Notes and the Rise of Epigraphy in Early Modern England', in *Early Modern Genres of History*, eds Johnsen and Stovner, 54–77. For the emergence of churches and cathedrals themselves as 'objects of study', see Alice Soulieux-Evans, 'Cathedrals and the Church of England, c. 1660–1714' (Ph.D. diss., University of Cambridge, 2019), 174–206.

92 Henry Holland, *Monvmenta sepvlchraria sancti Pavli. The Monvments, Inscriptions, and Epitaphs, of Kings, Nobles, Bishops, and Others, Buried in the Cathedrall Church of St. Pavl, London. Untill This Present Yeere of Grace, 1614. Together, with the Foundation of the Church: and a Catalogue of All the Bishops of London, from the Beginning Vntill This Present* (London, 1614). Holland's own copy, in which he inscribed his name on a flyleaf ('1614. HE: HOLLAND') and again on the title-page ('He: Holland'), survives, and is now in the library of the Elizabethan Club (the 'Lizzie') at Yale University (shelf-mark EC 275). The copy is annotated throughout in Holland's italic hand, with corrections and additions, which he then implemented, mostly verbatim, in the revised second edition of 1633 (*STC* 13584). Revealingly, and indicative of his models and influences, the guidebook is bound, in contemporary stiff vellum on paper boards, with Holland's copy of Camden's *Remaines* (the second edition of 1614; *STC* 4522). This also contains annotations in his hand, albeit more sparingly than in the guidebook.

93 Valentin Arithmaeus, *Mausolœa regum, reginarum, dynastarum, nobilium, sumptuosissima, artificiosissima, magnificentissima, Londini Anglorum in occidentali urbis angulo structa, H. e. eorundem inscriptiones omnes in lucem reductæ* (Frankfurt on the Oder, 1618).

The same line also extended to the most important English study of inscriptions in the whole seventeenth century, John Weever's massive (and now equally understudied) *Ancient Funerall Monuments* (1631). Works such as William Somner's *The Antiquities of Canterbury* (1640) and William Dugdale's *The History of St. Pauls Cathedral in London, From Its Foundation Untill These Times* (1658) also took their cue from it. And Camden's guide was still being read by the antiquarian-minded in the early eighteenth century, as a copy of the 1603 edition, owned and annotated by the antiquary, engraver, and art historian George Vertue (1684–1756), now in the Rare Book and Manuscript Library of the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana (shelf-mark X 929.5 C14R1603), illustrates.⁹⁴

Camden, in short, had popularized a new subject of historical research, advanced a new form of historical writing, and pioneered a new approach to historical and material culture. Of course, compared to the *Britannia* and the *Annales*, the *Reges, reginae, nobiles, & alii in Ecclesia Collegiata B. Petri Westmonasterii sepulti* and the *Remaines* were minor works. But their immediate impact was still significant. In them, Camden had shown how scholarly methods previously associated with classical remains might be extended to medieval and post-medieval culture, and how in these new contexts those approaches might serve different testamentary purposes and effects. Readers, moreover, seem to have responded positively, as the large number of works written in their wake and surviving annotated copies both attest.⁹⁵ For all these reasons, therefore, and for their contribution in themselves to the history of knowledge, Camden's epigraphic studies deserve to be better known than they are today. By the same token, the books and papers where he examined monuments and inscriptions also deserve to be restored to their original place at the heart of his historical and antiquarian projects.

94 Vertue signed his name ('GVertue') at the foot of the title-page alongside the imprint; a later owner also recorded this provenance on the first of the flyleaves ('By Camden – Geo: Vertue's copy').

95 Another revealing example here is the copy of the *Reges, reginae, nobiles, & alii in Ecclesia Collegiata B. Petri Westmonasterii sepulti* (1606) that later belonged to James Nisbet, a seventeenth-century Edinburgh 'chirurgion' (now NLS, shelf-mark A.52.c.28). A previous (English) owner used the front and back endpapers to record epitaphs, including a number copied from church monuments, and thus to augment Camden's collection.

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