



THE
GEORGIAN
GROUP

Andrew Skelton, 'The monument to Lord Harrold at Flitton, Beds.', *The Georgian Group Journal*, Vol. XXII, 2014, pp. 45-52

LORD HARROLD'S MONUMENT AT FLITTON

ANDREW C SKELTON

This article reviews the background to the execution of the monument to Anthony de Grey, Earl Harrold (1695/6–1723) in the de Grey Mausoleum at Flitton in Bedfordshire. It suggests reasons why the little-known sculptor John Dwyer was chosen to execute the work by the first Duke of Kent, father of Lord Harrold, and proposes that the designer may have been the architect Giacomo Leoni.

In 1704 Henry de Grey, twelfth Earl and later first Duke of Kent, obtained permission to build an extension to the family mausoleum at Flitton, Bedfordshire, in fulfilment of his grandmother's wishes.¹ Perhaps tempting fate in this way, the vaults beneath were rapidly filled up with his children by the time of his own death in 1740; their memorials were placed in the unornamented north chamber above. Principal amongst them is the monument, documented as executed by the carver John Dwyer, to the Duke's son and heir Anthony, Lord Harrold (Fig. 1). Lord Harrold's death at the family seat at Wrest on 21 July 1723 was totally unexpected:² 'Alas', exclaimed his Chaplain, Thomas Parne, in a memorial sermon at Bedford on 29 September 1723, 'how little did He think that he swallowed Death with a few Grains of Corn, that a simple Beard of it should be as fatal as a Poynard in the hand of the most desperate Assassin! Yet thus it was, by so seemingly trifling an Accident is He Fallen. When so fine a structure was adorned with all that the Chisel or Pencil, with all that art or Industry could give it; one unmerciful sparke, unfortunately dropd, sets the whole in a flame, and lays the Hopes and



Fig 1: John Dwyer and here attributed to Giacomo Leoni; monument to Anthony de Grey, Earl Harrold (1695/6–1723), St John the Baptist, Flitton, Bedfordshire (Author)

Expectations of many years in ashes.³ It was, as the epitaph tells us, an 'unspeakable loss to his most Noble and Antient Family, of which he was the Brightest Ornament, and the only hope'.⁴

The monument is a relatively large work built into the west wall of the chamber and, as such, is a fitting commemoration of a beloved son on whom the dynastic hopes of his father rested. It consists of a life-sized effigy of Lord Harrold reclining in classical Roman armour covered with a *Sagum*, or military cloak⁵ with a *fibula* or brooch upon the right shoulder. He lies on a bulgy black sarcophagus supported at the front on two large ball-clasping three-toed clawed feet (representing the feet of a wyvern, the crest of the de Grey family). The

background behind the effigy is restricted to a simple rectangular black-bordered inscription panel, with an armorial achievement only slightly grander than its lesser neighbours commemorating Lord Harrold's deceased siblings.

One of the earliest published descriptions of the monument is by Thomas Pennant, who in 1782 visited Flitton and saw Lord Harrold's monument with the others, commenting that 'not one of the figures do any credit to the statuary'.⁶ Over a century later it was viewed by William Treacher, who stated that 'the effigy is splendidly carved, of white marble, and represents the Earl lying on his left side. The Head is rather too erect to correspond with the rest of the body'⁷ (Fig. 2). Rupert Gunnis was even more



Fig 2: John Dowyer and here attributed to Giacomo Leoni; monument to Anthony de Grey, Earl Harrold (1695/6–1723), St John the Baptist, Flitton, Bedfordshire. Detail (*Author*)

dismissive; the effigy was 'generally clumsy, the attitude of the figure is awkward and the head is too big for the body; in fact, the only features of the monument worth noting are the curious feet of the sarcophagus, which are in the form of eagle's claws'.⁸ As for Dowyer, Matthew Craske, in his recent study of eighteenth-century commemorative sculpture, suggested that 'this character' ingratiated himself with the Duke, and considered his attempt to depict the Earl in Roman dress as 'a complete failure that demonstrated the impossibility of quickly acquiring from engravings of antiquities a mastery of classical proportion and anatomy'.⁹ Although many monuments receive constructive criticism, none has perhaps inspired the ridicule that this particular example has gained over the years, nor has its executor been so despised. A recent visit to the mausoleum by the Church Monuments Society also highlighted the negative qualities of the monument by describing it as an 'amusing dud'.¹⁰ These negative comments highlight the fundamental question posed by Gunnis: 'it seems strange that the Duke should have engaged so obscure and second-rate a sculptor to execute the monument to his deeply-loved, only surviving son'.¹¹

The twelfth Earl of Kent, raised to a Dukedom in 1710, was a keen patron of the arts. He had been active in the improvement of his estate at Wrest, near Silsoe, Bedfordshire before his succession to the property in 1702. He subsequently patronised several leading sculptors or figure makers – principally Andrew Carpenter, John Nost and Richard Dickinson, whose lead statuary was much used by the Duke in his gardens – along with architects who included Thomas Archer, Giacomo Leoni and Nicholas Hawksmoor. Some time between 1728 and 1737 he employed Michael Rysbrack¹² to carve his own monument to a design supplied by the builder/architect Edward Shepherd, then managing the rebuilding of his house in St James' Square. Rysbrack's effigy, again in Roman, but civilian, dress, inspired a more favourable note from Treacher:

'Judging by the face the sculptor has depicted on the marble, we should imagine the Duke to have been a pleasant but determined character'.¹³ Shepherd also designed the smaller monument to the Duke's eldest daughter, Amabel, Lady Breadalbane (died 1727), set up in 1739.¹⁴

Much about Lord Harrold's life and character can be learnt from the sermon preached by Parne:¹⁵ 'There was something promising in him, as in the morning of a beautiful day, in that season of life in which we first begin to pass a Judgement on men'. In 1716 he went on the Grand Tour '... to receive those finishing touches, which travelling gives to a polite education. In this way amidst a Number of more important acquisitions he added much to a fine collection of books and beautiful designs. Had he lived to execute these, our county had seen something second to the Buildings as well as the Gardens of Italy. With the Arts and Policies of Foreign Countries He brought Home none of their Vices; he returned the same Modest and good natured Gentleman.' Lord Harrold took the opportunity to show Leoni's designs for a new house at Wrest to none other than the Sicilian Filippo Juvarra, then architect to the King of Savoy, who suggested some modifications and indeed provided his own designs.¹⁶ At his death Lord Harrold left a widow who later remarried; his father, the Duke of Kent, also remarried and had a further son who also predeceased him in 1733. As Lord Harrold had had no children the de Grey line – present at Wrest since the late thirteenth century – died out with the Duke's death in 1740.

John Dowyer's professional career is only known for a six year period between 1725 and 1731. Payments of the third and fourth instalments for the Harrold monument and other work at Wrest Park in 1725 are recorded in 1726.¹⁷ From May 1726 to December 1727 he was paid extensive sums for work on the mansion at Carshalton Park, Surrey, designed by Leoni for Thomas Scawen, and between July 1729 and January 1731/2 he worked in a lesser capacity at



Fig 3: Giacomo Leoni and Jean Michael Rysbrack; monument to Daniel Pulteney (commission executed 1731–3), Westminster Abbey, London (Author)

Moulsham Hall, Chelmsford, Essex for Lord Fitzwalter, also designed and supervised by Leoni.¹⁸ From the latter date Dwyer cannot be traced until 1737, when his house was recorded on the corner of John Street and Margaret Street in the parish of St Marylebone, London,¹⁹ and thereafter in the rate books from November 1739.²⁰ His rate – £12, paying 8s – was slightly higher than his neighbours, but not as high as his fellow-carver and near-neighbour John Devall, who was rated at £30, and paid £1 on his premises, and the more distant Michael Rysbrack in Vere Fields, also rated at £30. Dwyer was buried on 5 July 1741 in the new Marylebone churchyard (now a public garden off Marylebone High Street) where his

tombstone, which gave his profession as Carver, survived to be recorded into at least the late nineteenth century.²¹ A John Dwyer, presumably his son or nephew, was recorded in the rate books as late as 7 October 1746, when he was described as ‘poor’, but his name had disappeared by 28 May 1747.²²

Dwyer, described as a ‘Mason and Carver’, subscribed to Leoni’s *Architecture of Leon Battista Alberti* (1726),²³ but he does not appear on any other subscription list of that time. The Duke of Kent was also a subscriber, as was Earl Harrold, though the book was not published in his lifetime. Other subscribing Leoni patrons include Thomas Scawen of Carshalton Park and Lord Fitzwalter of Moulsham, while amongst the many artisans are Thomas Binks the gardener and George Devall, plumber. The latter two were paid for work by Scawen at Carshalton Park, as was Dwyer, and Devall also worked at Wrest for the Duke of Kent.²⁴ John Dwyer, like these other subscribers, clearly had cause to celebrate a positive relationship with Leoni, since he was lucratively employed at the time on that architect’s major commission at Carshalton.²⁵

Leoni first became known to the Duke of Kent soon after 1713, when he provided the Duke with a treatise on architecture and building,²⁶ and he later provided designs for the new house sent to Lord Harrold in Italy.²⁷ The collapse of the South Sea Company in 1720 impaired the Duke’s finances and, with the calamity of the death of his son three years later, was to finally halt any immediate building and landscaping aspirations he may have had; a design of 1723 by Nicholas Hawksmoor for an arcade to flank the south parterre at Wrest predates Lord Harrold’s death in May of that year.²⁸ Although Leoni was not employed for the rebuilding of the Duke’s house in St James’ Square, the family maintained some contact with him after the monument was completed; the Duke’s second wife Sophia reported to her husband her intention to fulfil his commission to meet Leoni to view some architectural models in London, in 1732.²⁹ Hawksmoor also supplied a design for a

monument marked 'Dk of Kent', possibly for the Duke's first wife, who died in 1728, but it was unexecuted, and the Duchess was eventually commemorated on the Duke's own monument.³⁰

Hawksmoor and Shepherd are just two of a number of architects who provided designs for monuments in this period, and James Gibbs published several pages of designs in his *Book of Architecture* (1728), some of which were executed.³¹ Leoni designed two monuments, one to Daniel Pulteney in Westminster



Fig 4: Giacomo Leoni and Jean Michael Rysbrack; monument to the Piggott family (commission completed by 1738), St Mary and Holy Cross, Quainton
(Author)

Abbey (designed and completed 1731–3; Fig. 3),³² the other to Nathaniel Piggott and his family, at Quainton, Buckinghamshire (completed 1738; Fig. 4). Both were carved by Rysbrack, who also signed them.³³ There are several similarities to Lord Harrold's monument, not least in their simplicity of design, their use of coloured marbles, and the choice of Roman dress for Pulteney's effigy: elements that are found in many contemporary monuments. All three have black sarcophagi on clawed feet, the Pulteney sarcophagus being of angular, not sinuous form. The Piggott monument is a purely architectural composition suitable for the commemoration of multiple family members where an effigy might be inappropriate; the coloured marbles varying from whites to dark greys provide a surrounding contrast to the black sarcophagus. The monuments to Lord Harrold and Pulteney have single recumbent effigies lying on the sarcophagus, both dressed in Roman attire but with different poses; Daniel Pulteney is shown reading a book,³⁴ while Lord Harrold stares out into the ether. The Pulteney effigy is handled with more authority than that to Lord Harrold, as one would expect from a sculptor of Rysbrack's stature, and this monument would appear the more expensive of the two, the sarcophagus being raised on a tall, multi-coloured marbled plinth with inscription panel. Yet the architectural backdrop to both is of the most minimal kind.³⁵

Why then did the Duke of Kent choose Dwyer to carry out the monument to his eldest son? Considering he had already employed a number of carvers and moulders, including the experienced Andrew Carpenter, the introduction of John Dwyer can only have been on the advice from the monument's designer; it seems most unlikely that Dwyer would have been able to approach the Duke himself without any recommendation. Dwyer's subsequent appearances on sites where Leoni was designer and surveyor argues that the carver was favoured by Leoni, and that Leoni introduced



Fig 5: ?John Dwyer; an element from the Corinthian giant order executed for Thomas Scawen's Carshalton Park c1725-?. (*Author*)

Dwyer to the Duke, who also employed him at Wrest Park. Likewise, Lord Harrold's active interest in 'the Buildings as well as the Gardens of Italy' may have influenced the Duke's choice of the Venetian Leoni as designer of his son's monument, and it was presumably Leoni who contracted Dwyer for the execution of the work. Dwyer's competence is certainly suspect. The proportions and some details of the Harrold effigy are distinctly second-rate, and elements of the capitals from the Corinthian giant order at Carshalton Park were so poorly carved that they were wrongly identified on their rediscovery in the 1930s as medieval stiff-leaf foliage (Fig. 5).³⁶ There is even a hint of deception in Dwyer's dealings with Lord Fitzwalter at Moulsham, which the vigilant Earl spotted and corrected.³⁷ So Leoni, not the Duke, should take responsibility for the hiring of Dwyer, and if the Duke recognised the indifferent quality of the monument, Leoni, not Dwyer, may have suffered repercussions; it was Shepherd, not Leoni, to whom the Duke turned for the rebuilding of his house in St James' Square from 1726. The Leoni-Dwyer relationship continued for at least another five years.

The limited evidence, as outlined here, suggests a logical, conventional progress to the design and execution of Lord Harrold's monument, based on

the cascading of patronage from patron to artisan via an architect/designer rather than the manoeuvres of an individual who undeservedly managed to appropriate aristocratic patronage. Without further information on Dwyer's career it is impossible to speculate further.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author is grateful to those with whom he has discussed John Dwyer in the past, including Geoffrey Fisher, Richard Hewlings and Jane Kelsall. He is also grateful to Sally Jeffery for reading an earlier draft of this paper, to the staff at Bedfordshire and Luton Archive Services, Westminster City Archives and Essex Record Office, and to English Heritage, the Dean and Chapter of Westminster Abbey and the Rector of Quanton for permission to publish photographs of the respective monuments in their guardianship.

NOTES

- 1 Bedfordshire and Luton Archive Services (BLAS), L28/19: Bishop of Lincoln's licence for the Mausoleum, 19 August 1704. The accounts referring to the works are in L31/289; ff. 343; 4–11 August 1705; f. 393; 8–15 Oct 1705. The Duke's extension is recorded in a painted inscription inside the Mausoleum.
- 2 BLAS L31/86: Notes on Anthony, Earl of Harrold by his father (Notes on marriage of the Duke's children, in his own hand).
- 3 BLAS L31/88: *A Sermon on the Death of the Rt Honourable Anthony Earl of Harrold. Preached at the church of St Paul in Bedford the 29th September 1723, before the Corporation and Gentry of the County. By Thomas Parne MA, Fellow of Trinity Cambridge, and Chaplain to His Lordship.*
- 4 BLAS L31/87: monumental inscription.
- 5 The *Sagum* is depicted on, for example, Trajan's Column. A British version, the *Paenula*, had a hood. I am grateful to Jeff Perry for this information.
- 6 Thomas Pennant, *Journey from Chester to London* (Dublin, 1783), p. 383.
- 7 William Treacher, *A brief history of the Church of St John the Baptist, Flitton, and of the Kent Mausoleum*. (1899, reprinted Watford, 1920, p. 28).
- 8 Rupert Gunnis, *Dictionary of British Sculptors 1660–1851* (London, 1953), p. 132. His comments were repeated in the recent updated version, Ingrid Roscoe et al., *A Biographical Dictionary of British Sculptors in Britain* (New Haven and London, 2009), p. 376.
- 9 Matthew Craske, *The Silent Rhetoric of the Body, a History of Monumental Sculpture and Commemorative Art in England, 1720–1770* (New Haven and London, 2007), p. 114.
- 10 Church Monuments Society, *Newsletter* 24.2 (Winter 2008/9), p. 4.
- 11 Gunnis, *op. cit.*, p. 132. Roscoe, *op. cit.*, p. 376.
- 12 Craske, *op. cit.*, p. 114, endnote 20.
- 13 Treacher, *op. cit.*, p. 28.
- 14 Breadalbane papers, Scotland Record Office, GD 112/21/77, quoted in H.M. Colvin *Biographical Dictionary of British Architects 1600–1840* (4th ed., 2008) p. 920. The monument to her sister Anne, Lady Charles Cavendish (died 1733) of a similar architectural design, was presumably designed by Shepherd and further complements his monument to the Duke of Kent.
- 15 BLAS L31/88.
- 16 T. Friedman, 'Lord Harrold in Italy, 1715–16: four frustrated commissions to Leoni, Juvarrá, Chiari and Soldani', *Burlington Magazine* 130 (1988) pp. 836–45.
- 17 BLAS, Lucas papers L31/198: Book of bills for the years 1725–1726, ff. 11, 13. A total of £60 was paid. It is presumed that the first two instalments relate to work in 1724 and paid in 1725, now lost.
- 18 For Carshalton Park, see Bank of England Archives, C98/2576, f. 5007; The National Archives (TNA) C11/2716/120, schedule 1, and Moulsham Hall; Essex Record Office (ERO) DD/DMY/15M50/31, 125 and 126, and D/DM A5 (summarised in A.C. Edwards, *The Account Book of Benjamin Mildmay, Earl Fitzwalter*, (London, 1993) p. 30). Comparison of these accounts suggests that Dwyer was the major sculptor at Carshalton, and very much a minor one at Moulsham as he had arrived after the work had started. It should be noted that the Carshalton accounts are incomplete and it seems likely that work continued there until Dwyer was released and appears at Moulsham in July 1729.
- 19 Advertisement in *The Daily Advertiser*, Saturday 10 March 1737. See London, British Library *The Burney Collection of 18th century Newspapers*. [British Library E-resource, accessed 2011].
- 20 Westminster City Archives (WCA), St Marylebone Rate books, microfilms Reel 3, (1738–1742) and Reel 4–5 (1743–7), under Margaret Street.
- 21 WCA, St Marylebone Parish Registers, Vol 3, microfilm ref P89/MRY1/003. The tombstone was first recorded in T. Smith *A topographical and Historical Account of the Parish of St. Mary-le-Bone* (London, 1833), p. 81, and secondly and lastly by A F G. Leveson Gower in 1898 *Miscellanea Genealogical et Heraldica* 3rd Series, vol. II (1898), p. 10: see M.L. Bierbrier & L. Collins, *The Monumental Inscriptions of St Marylebone Parish Church, additional to those recorded prior to 1904, with a consolidated index (1694–1965)*, (privately printed 1979). In Leveson Gower's article Dwyer's profession as inscribed on the tombstone as 'Carrier', suggesting that the inscription had suffered some damage by this date. The clearing up of the churchyard in the 1950s and again in the 1990s removed damaged and partially defaced tombstones; the surviving ones were checked by the writer in 2008 without success.

- 22 WCA, St Marylebone Rate book, microfilms reels 3 (1738–1742) and 4–5 (1743–7), under Margaret Street. A search through the births, marriages and deaths for the period 1734–46 found no reference to a Dowyer other than the sculptor's own burial. His brother, James – also a carver/mason – was paid a total of £92.11.6 at Carshalton while at Moulsham he was paid as his brother. One interesting entry in the Fitzwalter accounts records, on 16th October 1729, a payment of 5 shillings to 'a stone-cutter who was hurt' in an accident on site (ERO, D/DM A5). This may have been James, who was termed 'the lame one' in subsequent entries for 27 October 1730, and 20 July 1731, to differentiate him from his brother John.
- 23 Craske, *op. cit.*, p. 114.
- 24 TNA, C11/2716/120, schedule 1; BLAS, L31/198: Book of bills for the years 1725–1726, f. 6 – 'Paid Deval Plummer . . . payment on acct £30' (22 June 1725).
- 25 In the incomplete accounts cited above (note 18) Dowyer is paid over £1400 between May 1726 and December 1727.
- 26 *Compendious Directions for Builders*. Leoni's career is outlined in R Hewlings, 'James Leoni c.1686–1746: An Anglicised Venetian' in A. Brown (ed.), *The Architectural Outsiders* (London, 1985), pp 21–41, and B Arciszewska 'Despairing of Success; Giacomo Leoni and Alessandro Galieni in Eighteenth Century London' in *Rocznik Historii Sztuki* 30 (Warsaw, 2005) pp.135–46.
- 27 T. Hudson 'Ducal Patron of Architects', *Country Life* 155 (1974), pp. 77–81
- 28 *Ibid.*, p.79, Fig. 5.
- 29 BLAS, L30/8/39/20, London, 5 Oct 5 1732.
- 30 Kerry Downes, *Nicholas Hawksmoor* (London, 1959) p. 144, Fig. 195.
- 31 Clive J Easter comments that Gibbs' influence on monument design is understated and probably very influential: 'The Danvers Monument at Rushbrooke, Suffolk', *Church Monuments Society Newsletter* 27.2 (Spring 2012), pp. 17–19.
- 32 Craske, *op. cit.*, pp. 144–45.
- 33 Craske, *op. cit.*, pp. 208–09, 413. Craske also suggests that the monument to Sir Robert Dormer at Quainton could also be an earlier product of the Leoni/Rysbrack partnership (1728–31).
- 34 There is a common myth on the world-wide-web that Pulteney turns a page of the book every night.
- 35 It is possible that Leoni, while working for Thomas Scawen at Carshalton Park in the 1720s, designed a 'family' monument for Scawen's family vault at Horton, Buckinghamshire which, as Quainton, had a black marble sarcophagus raised on a plinth or base. There is no inscription recorded for this, and only fragments remain. See A C Skelton 'A Lost Monument at Horton Church' in *Records of Buckinghamshire* 53 (2014) forthcoming.
- 36 This misidentification, linked to a medieval chapel demolished in the early nineteenth century, undoubtedly led to their preservation. It is doubtful that an accurate identification would have led to the same; see A.C Skelton 'Wallington House and the Elms at Wallington Corner', in *Celebrating Our Past* (Beddington, Carshalton and Wallington Archaeology Society Occasional Paper 5, 199, pp.7–28, esp p.26.
- 37 ERO, D/DM A5. 11/11/1730.