



Cotes Monument: once set up in St. John's Church, Chester

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AMONGST a quantity of old papers, account books, scraps, and memoranda, belonging to a former Vicar, and handed to me by the late Clerk of St. John's, was a sheet of paper about 14 inches square, which was in such a state of decay that it was difficult to preserve it. This I did by at once mounting it on a sheet of paper, so arranged as not to hide the writing on the back of the document. This document is the design of an Elizabethan Monument which was once erected in St. John's Church; but it contains not only the design (drawn to scale), but also a rough specification of the materials of which it was to be made, and a contract between the Artist who designed it and the person who desired to erect it in the Church. On the back is a receipt for the payment, which was made in three equal sums, according to the agreement, and a memorandum (apparently in a later hand) stating the place which the monument occupied in the Church.

According to the scale on the front of the lower part of the tomb, it was eight feet in length, and nearly ten feet high; it is one of those semi-classical tombs, of

which some beautiful specimens are to be found in Westminster Abbey, St. Helen's, Bishopsgate, Stratford-on-Avon, St. Bartholomew's, Smithfield, and many other places. These monuments are fixed against the wall, sometimes supported upon a corbel richly carved; and sometimes, as in this case, placed upon an altar tomb. They are characterised by columns, with classical caps and arches, under which are, frequently, kneeling figures and armorial shields, properly emblazoned. The materials used are marbles and alabaster, which appear to be veneered upon stone carved in little panels, bosses, and devices, and picked out with gold and colour.

After a period of nearly 300 years, there are few monuments adorning our Churches which are so attractive as these, distinguished as they are by their admirable proportions, the tone and colour of the marbles of which they are composed, and their quaint gilded lettering.

The Contract for the work is written below, and is as follows:—

Memorandum.—That the first daye of December, Anno Que Eliz. XLV., 1602, it is agreed betweene Alexander Cotes of the Cittie of Chester, Gentleman, and Maximilian Colte of London, Alien, that the said Maximilian shall make, frame, erect, and set up in the place agreed upon in the Church of St. John Baptist, in the Cittie of Chester, before the Feast of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin next comynge, one tombe of the forme before sett downe, to be wrought of Alabaster of the saide Alexander Cotes, with the inscriptions upon of the Armes of Alabaster to be provided by him the said Maximilian at London; and two Armes of Caen Stone to be set over the utter gate of the dwelling house of the said Alexander Cotes in the places appoynted. The tombe and the proportion to be accordinge to the scale aforesaid. And for the doinge thereof the said

Alexander Cotes is to pay to the said Maximilian Colte the summe of ten poundes in forme followinge, viz.: iii lbs. vj s. viii^d in hande; other iii lbs. vj s. viii^d when the stuffe cometh from London; other iii lbs. vj s. viii^d when the same work is finished and sett up. And Randall Holme of Chester, Paynter, is suerty for the said Maximilian for the performance thereof.

Alex. Cotes

Randle Holme

Maximilian Coult

Witness thereof

W. Powell

Anne Sparke.

On the back of the design are receipts of the three payments of £3 6s. 8d. each; and a note apparently made at a later time—"the plan of the old tomb in one of the little Chapples now in the North of the Church of St. John's, 1602." We have five signatures on this Memorandum of Agreement; and, curiously enough, some information can be had with respect to each one of them.

The specification is written on the margin of the design, and is read across it. It is divided by a streak which is drawn across the design at the top of the Altar Tomb. Above this line is written:—

"From this streak upwards all the Alabaster except such as the said Alexander now hath, and workmanshippe to be found and done by the said Maximilian Coulte, except the arches which are already done."

Below the line is written:—

"From this streak downwards is wholly to be at the cost and charge stuff and workmanshippe founde by the said Alexander Cotes and specification."

The Memoranda of Agreement were cancelled by lines drawn across them, when the Contract had been fulfilled.

Maximilian Coult or Colt flourished 1600-1618, sculptor, born at Arras, in Flanders, and settled in England about the close of Queen Elizabeth's reign.

On March 4th, 1604-5, he signed an agreement with the Lord Treasurer, Sir Robert Cecil, to carve a monument above Queen Elizabeth's grave in Westminster Abbey, for £600: the work was completed at the end of 1606.

On March 17th, 1607-8, Colt was employed on a second monument in Westminster Abbey, above the grave of the Princess Sophia, the infant child of James I., who was born and died in the preceding June; and in September, 1608, it was agreed that this monument should also commemorate the Princess' sister Anne, who had died in the previous December. Colt received for this work £215.

On 28th July, 1608, Coult was nominated the King's Master Carver; and on 3rd March, 1608-9, he was granted a suit of broadcloth and fur, to be renewed annually for life. In 1611 he carved a crown on the head of the Duke of York's barge; and in the following years he was employed in decorating the King's and Queen's private barges. The last payment for this work was made on October 14th, 1624.

Between 1610-12 he is credited with having designed and superintended the building of Wadham College, Oxford; but this statement is probably due to a confusion of Colt with (Sir Thomas) Holt, who has better claims to be considered the architect.

Colt is met with as late as 1641, when he was imprisoned in the Fleet, and released by the Warden. A Petition was presented to the House of Lords in this

year, praying for an enquiry into the Warden's lenient conduct.

Colt's name appears originally to have been Poultrain, and in early life he is often described as Powtran or "Poutraine *alias* Colt"; but he was afterwards known only as Colt or Coult. He had a house in Bartholomew Close, and is described as living in Farringdon Ward in 1618, when his name appears in a list of foreigners then resident in London, together with that of John Colt, probably his son, who was also a sculptor, and a native of Arras. A daughter, Abigail, was buried at the age of 16 in St. Bartholomew's Church, 29th March, 1629, and his wife, Susan, in 1646: he had another son, named Alexander. (*Dict. Nat. Biog.*)

The present Rector of St. Bartholomew, Smithfield, writes that a family of Coultts, sometimes spelt Koult, lived in the Parish at the time named above. The name appears no less than 30 times in as many years.

Dean Stanley, in his memorials of Westminster Abbey, gives the following interesting account of the monument to Queen Elizabeth:—

"Her tomb is a landmark of English History; it was raised by her successor, erected by Maximilian Poutram, at the cost of £965, besides stonework. Considering the little love between the two, its splendour is a tribute to the necessity which compelled the King to recognise the universal feeling of the Nation. Disfigured as it is, it represents the great Queen as she was best known to her contemporaries; and of all the monuments in the Abbey, it was the one for many years the widest known throughout the whole kingdom.

"Far into the next century, Fuller could still speak of the lively draught of it, pictured in every London and in most Country Churches, every Parish being proud of the shade of her tomb; and no wonder, when each loyal subject created a mournful monument for her in his heart."

It is probable that this thought was suggested by one such copy, amongst many, at St. Saviour's, Southwark, with the lines :—

“St. Peter's Church at Westminster
Her sacred body doth inter ;
Her glorious soul with Angels sings ;
Her deeds have patterns been for Kings ;
Her love in every heart hath room ;
This only shadows forth her tomb.”

Londiniensis i. 243.

“The tomb of Mary Queen of Scots, erected by James I., is described as being ‘like,’ but on a grander scale. There is no statement that this was the work of M. Coult ; but we have information that he designed and wrought the curious monument which James erected to the memory of the Princess Sophia, who lived but a day. Fuller says :—

“‘The King took her death as a wise prince should, and wished her to be buried in Westminster Abbey, as cheaply as possible, without any solemnity or funeral, sleeping in her cradle ; the cradle is itself the tomb, wherewith vulgar eyes, especially of the weaker sex, are more affected (as level to their cognizance, more capable of what is pretty than what is pompous) than with all the magnificent monuments in Westminster.’”

—*Stanley's Westminster Abbey.*

Mr. Loftie, in his History of Westminster Abbey, says that the tomb of Mary Stuart was the last royal monument erected in the Abbey, and suggests that the same artists were employed on it as on Queen Elizabeth's. He gives the names of Maximilian Powtran and John de Critz, and supposes they would be foreigners.

In the *Dictionary of National Biography*, I find that “John de Critz was a Flemish painter ; he lived in Paris in 1582, and was patronized by Sir Francis Walsingham. In 1603 he was appointed Sergeant Painter, at a salary

of £10, drawn from the petty customs of the Port of London. In 1604 he had authority to do the work about the King's ships. 1605 he was employed to paint the tomb of Queen Elizabeth, erected by Maximilian Powtran, *alias* Coult, and received £100 for the work. In 1610 he received £330 for work done in Westminster Abbey; he is supposed to have painted the portraits of Queen Elizabeth, Sir Francis Walsingham, and Sir Philip Sidney; he painted the royal barges, carriages, &c. (probably the heraldic work); buried in St. Martin's-in-Fields. His sons, also painters, painted scenes for Court plays, wall and ceiling figure decorations."

In "*London*," by Charles Knight, there is a statement that these two celebrated tombs were by Maximilian Coulte and Cornelius Cure.

I find from the *Dictionary of National Biography* that this Cornelius Cure was a master-mason to Queen Elizabeth, and was employed by James I. to make monuments to Queen Elizabeth and Mary Stuart. He died in 1607, and his son succeeded him as master-mason, and completed the monument to Queen Mary, painted by James Manny. Cure received £825 for this work.

"1613. Cure signed an agreement to erect a monument in Cranford Church, Middlesex, to Sir Roger Aston and family; this agreement is still in existence, as well as one by the same artist, to erect a monument in Bath Abbey, to James Montague, Bishop of Winchester, for £100.

"This artist worked on the Banqueting Hall, Whitehall, under Inigo Jones; he was buried in St. Thomas the Apostle's, Southwark. He was of Dutch origin, so that there appears to have been a little society of Flemish artists, sculptors, and painters, working together, about this time." (*Dictionary of National Biography*).

We next come to Alexander Cotes, who is the other party to the contract. He was one of the Cotes of Woodcote,¹ and derived the name from the Village of Cotes in Staffordshire, in which County, and in Salop, they possessed estates from a remote period. Thomas de Cotes held two parts of a knight's fee in 1167.

Alexander Cotes of Chester was Comptroller of the Port of Chester, and also held an office at Court; he married Ursula Powell, daughter, thirteenth and youngest child of Sir Thomas Powell of Birkenhead and Horsley, Knight. He was Clerk to the Barons of Exchequer of Chester. He carried the sword of Sir John Savage at his funeral 24th January, 1597, and John Powell the gauntlets. The monument in question was erected in memory of this Ursula Powell, who died at the end of the sixteenth century; they had one daughter and heiress, Anne, who married Richard Sparke. Alexander Cotes was Lay Impropiator and Patron of St. John's in 1587, and he lived in a house which stood upon the spot where St. John's Rectory now is; in an old plan of the time the house is marked Mr. Cotes' house; it was on the gate-posts of this house (probably) that the arms, carved in Caen stone and included in the contract for the monument, were placed; the Patronage, &c., was transferred to Trustees in 1605 for the use of Anne Cotes, the daughter, who was one of Queen Elizabeth's maids of honour.

We now come to the surety in the contract, Randle Holme, Paynter; his name is spelled Randall Hulme; he

* ¹ Alexander Cotes (if a Cotes of Woodcote) must have been a kinsman of George Cotes, Bishop of Chester from 1554 to 1555. The Bishop was a great grandson of Thomas Cotes, a younger son, who settled in Yorkshire, of John Cotes of Cotes, County Stafford, and Woodcote, County Salop, Sheriff of Staffordshire, 35 Henry VI. (See *Visitation Shropshire*, 1623). [Ed.]

* C.W. Cotes was living at Woodcote Hall in 1896.

* Alexander Cotes was nephew of the

signs, however, Randle Holme. There is no need to say much about Randle Holme at a Chester Archæological Society Meeting; but as there were four Randle Holmes who succeeded one another, and were all eminent persons, it is as well that we should define which of them it was who signed this document. It was, no doubt, the first of the name; he was the fourth son of Robert Holme of Tranmere, Deputy to College of Arms for Cheshire, Shropshire, and North Wales; he was fined £10 for contempt in not attending to receive knighthood at the Coronation of Charles I.; he was Sheriff of Chester in 1615, and Mayor in 1633.

In 1634 Thomas Howard, Earl of Arundel, came to Chester, and not finding the Deputy Herald (who happened to be Mayor) in waiting, sent for him by warrant; he came in state as Chief Magistrate of the City, and the Earl took his staff from him and scolded him for coming as Mayor in authority, when he had sent for him as Deputy Herald, who should have waited on him; Randle Holme appears to have eaten humble pie, and paid the fees demanded of him by the Earl Marshal's Officers. It was this Randle Holme, I believe, who wrote out, apparently from an earlier record, the Dexter side of the Mace-board of St. John's, which contains the names and arms of the Mayors of Chester who had lived in St. John's Parish from 1529 to 1626, when the copy was made: the earlier record has disappeared.

There remain now the two witnesses to the signatures we have already considered—W. Powell and Anne Sparke.

Sir Thomas Powell of Birkenhead and Horsley, Knight, married Alice, daughter and co-heiress of

Ralph Worsley of Birkenhead, County Chester, keeper of the Lions in the Tower of London, Esquire of the body to King Henry VIII. This Ralph Worsley died 27th December, 1573, and is buried in the St. Catherine's Chapel, in St. Mary's, Chester, where there is a memorial tablet to his memory. They had eight children, of whom the second surviving son was William Powell, born before 1573, one of the Barons of Exchequer of Chester, and one of the executors of his father. He married, 11th June, 1606, at Winwick, County Lancashire, Elizabeth, daughter of Edmund Tunstall of Raynford, Newton, County Lancashire, and widow of Thurslon Collier of Staffordshire; she died 16th November, 1609.

Anne Sparke, the heiress of Alexander Cotes, brought the advowson of St. John's into the Sparke family by marriage with John Sparke: she had been a Maid of Honour to Queen Elizabeth.

The history of the advowson of St. John's, after the dissolution of the College, is interesting, and although already in print may be repeated here.

In 1585, October 4th, Queen Elizabeth granted the Improprate Rectory and the advowson of the Church of St. John Baptist in Chester to Sir Christopher Hatton, Knight, her Vice-Chamberlain, and afterwards Lord Chancellor of England, who cared so little for his interesting possession, except so far as he could turn it into money, that he conveyed it on the next day to Alexander King, Gent., and he, in turn, to Alexander Cotes, Gent., two years later; he left it to his daughter, who married Richard Spark, who died on December 29th, 1639; and was succeeded by William Spark, his son, Alderman and Justice of the Peace, who died January 12th, 1658; and was succeeded by his grandson

John, who died July 11th, 1709; and was succeeded by Thomas Spark, his son, at whose death, March 22nd, 1716, the male line became extinct. Mary, his sister, who married Lawrence Wood, Vicar, became possessed of the advowson, and it was not until 1811 that it passed into the hands of the Grosvenor family.

We have thus on this tomb a kind of family history. Alexander Cotes is father of one of the witnesses to the contract, and brother-in-law of the other; the tomb is erected in memory of Alexander Cotes' wife Ursula, the mother of Ann Spark, and the sister of William Powell. The effigies on this tomb are said to be those of Alexander Cotes, his wife Ursula, their daughter Ann, and her husband Richard Spark. The coats of arms remain, and are fixed against the west wall of the Church. There are five of them; they appear to be chiefly the arms of Cotes and Powell, but the "Griffin" is said to be the crest of the Cotes.

The connection of Alexander Cotes and his daughter with the Court of Queen Elizabeth may account for the employment of Maximilian Coult, who was shortly to occupy an important position as the designer and carver of Royal Monuments. One question is, how did such a celebrated person, whose work commanded high prices, execute this large monument, with its effigies and coats of arms (not counting the shields which were to be set upon Mr. Cotes' gate-posts) for such a modest sum as £10? Possibly he was not yet well known. This monument at St. John's may have been one of his earliest works, and he was in the advertising stage of his career. Alexander Cotes may have had the wit and taste to appreciate the talent of the artist, and possibly he was the means of bringing him into notice.

The more we consider the histories and speculations which group themselves round this interesting monument, the more we must regret its destruction—possibly at the hands of the Parliamentary soldiers, who had a rooted dislike to figures of all kinds in churches as savouring of superstition; and the more we must rejoice that the flimsy sheet of paper round which the Cotes family gathered, with the strange artist Maximilian Coult, and the familiar figure of Randle Holme, on that 1st day of December, in the year 1602, and the last of the reign of the great Queen Elizabeth, has been preserved to us by the conservative spirit of succeeding Vicars and Officials of John's; a spirit which we should do all that lies in our power to encourage by our grateful acknowledgment.

NOTE.

THE ARMS ON THE COTES MONUMENT.

A memorandum, in the writing of the Rev. William Richardson, formerly Vicar of St. John's, gives the following reading of the Arms on the Cotes Monument:—

FIRST SHIELD—

He beareth quarterly of four: first and fourth Paly of six Or and Gules, within a bordure Azure Bezanty, by the name of Cotes. Second and third Sable a Chevron between three Trefoiles Argent, by the name of —. Impaling quarterly of eight; First Sable three Roses, Argent, Barbed, and Seeded, proper. This coat was used by the Powells of Horsley, as descendants of Cunelda Wledig. Second Azure a Lion rampant Or Eunydd Lord of Duffryn Clwyd. Third Azure a Fesse Or between three Horses heads erased. *Colour defaced* Rhys ap Mardran Lord of Duffryn Clwyd and Allington. Fourth

Azure a Lion passant gardant Or, Llewelyn dux Dorchog. Fifth Ermine a Lion Rampant the colour of Lion destroyed; but if it was Azure it was then the coat of Elider ap Rhys; and if it was Sable it was that of Kynric ap Rhiwa Mon. Sixth Gules three Chevronels Argent, Jestyn ap Gorgant Lord or Prince of Morgannwg or Glamorgan. He was one of the five Royal Tribes of Wales. Seventh Vert a Lion Rampant Or [by the name of——]. Eighth Or three, two, and one Annulets Sable by the name of Lowther.

SECOND SHIELD—

Paly of six Or and Gules within a bordure Azure Bezanty, by the name of Cotes.

THIRD SHIELD—

Checky Or and Vert a Bend Ermine by the name of Sparke. Impaling Paly of six, Or and Gules within a Bordure Azure Bezanty by the name of Cotes.

FOURTH SHIELD—

Paly of six Or and Gules within a bordure Azure Bezanty by the name of Cotes. Impaling Sable three Roses Argent, Barbed, and Seeded proper. Powell of Horsley.

FIFTH SHIELD—

Checky Or and Vert a Bend Ermine by the name of Sparke. Impaling quarterly of four, first and fourth Paly of six Or and Gules within a bordure Azure Bezanty by the name of Cotes; second and third Sable a Chevron between three Trefoils Argent by the name of ——.

Above is the following Crest: On a wreath a Griffin Segreant Or.

