

A 'WESTMINSTER WORKSHOP' EFFIGY AT LECKHAMPSTEAD CHURCH, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

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The medieval military effigy in Leckhampstead church, traditionally identified as a member of the Chastiloun family, is described. It is compared with effigies produced by the 'Westminster Workshop' from which it is concluded that this effigy is a product of the same workshop. The effigy is dated to the mid fourteenth century and it is suggested that the subject is most likely to be either Richard de Chastiloun 'the elder' or Malcolm de Chastiloun.

To the majority of parishioners who worship at the church of the Assumption of the Virgin, Leckhampstead, the effigy in armour positioned under an arch, between the chancel and the north chapel, is of obvious antiquity but perhaps little more is known about it (Figs. 1–2). In fact it is from the same workshop as the fine effigies of John of Eltham, Earl of Cornwall, c.1340 (*ob.*1336), at Westminster Abbey¹ (Fig. 3) and King Edward II, c.1340 (*ob.*1327), at Gloucester Cathedral. This workshop is known to scholars as the 'Westminster Workshop'. They are effigies related to those of Edmund Crouchback and Aymer de Valence (see below) in Westminster Abbey and carved by sculptors patronized by royalty. It is not known which master mason was responsible for carving the effigies in Westminster Abbey, but the surname Canterbury appears to have been associated with building work at Westminster Abbey from the late thirteenth century until the 1330s.² The first mason of that name appears to have been Michael,³ actively employed as a royal mason between 1275 and 1321. He was very likely the designer of the tombs of Edmund Crouchback (*ob.*1296) and his wife Aveline of Lancaster (*ob.*1269) at Westminster Abbey.⁴ His successor was Walter of Canterbury⁵ (*fl.*1319–1327). Supporting Walter was Thomas of Canterbury⁶ (*fl.*1323–1335), who worked with him on the chapel of St Stephen's and the Painted Chamber. William de Ramsey III⁷ (*fl.*1323–*ob.*1349) appears

to have succeeded either Walter or Thomas as royal mason and was very likely the designer of the tomb of Aymer de Valence (*ob.*1324) at Westminster Abbey.⁸ Henry Yevele⁹ (*fl.*1353–*ob.*1400) is also recorded as a royal mason. While these master masons may have been contracted to oversee the work at Westminster Abbey, they may not have been personally directly involved in carving these effigies. It is possible, however, that they used one particular workshop for the effigies. Apart from using freestone and alabaster, this workshop also used wood for effigies. The author of this paper¹⁰ together with others, including Claude Blair¹¹ and Leslie Southwick,¹² has attributed a number of military effigies to this workshop. W. R. Lethaby¹³ and Paul Binski¹⁴ have produced academic works on the fabric of Westminster Abbey which also cover the military effigies in the abbey.

The Leckhampstead effigy is 5ft. 6in. from head to heel. It is recumbent and is represented straight-legged with the right hand gripping the pommel of a sword while the left hand holds the scabbard. The slab of the effigy lies upon a modern stone plinth. The edge of the slab has a small bead-moulding, which is a common feature seen on the products of the 'Westminster Workshop'. The head rests on two pillows, the upper one set diagonally. Covering the head is a pointed bascinet, attached to which is an aventail, a tight-fitting mail cape, falling over the top of the shoulders. Wire or



Figs. 1 and 2: Leckhampstead effigy, *c.*1340–50

cord can be seen passing through *vervelles* (staples for attaching the *aventail* to the *bascinet*). On the left arm, suspended from a *guige*, which passes diagonally across the chest and over the right shoulder, is a heater-shaped shield, which is concave towards the body. The shield is plain with no traces of heraldry present. The body is protected by a tight-fitting gown known as a *cyclas*. This is short at the front, lying across the thighs, and slightly longer at the back. The sides are slightly open, revealing the *hauberk* worn below. The sleeves of the *hauberk* are rendered as if covered in a flexible material, presumably to represent mail. They extend down the arms to the forearms. Represented on the right elbow is a circular *besagew*, decorated with a lion's face-mask, now worn.

On the hands are plate gauntlets with lames on the back of the cuffs, the fingers covered by small plates. Hanging loose around the waist is a sword-belt of medium width with a rectangular buckle. The sword, lying at an angle on the left side of the effigy, is attached to the sword-belt by a ring, but a second ring is missing. The scabbard has two raised locketts, positioned at intervals towards its middle. Both rings would have been attached to the ends of the belt, which in turn are attached to the two locketts on the scabbard's leading edge. The scabbard, below the lower locket, has been restored. Attached to the right side of the sword-belt is a broken dagger. Only its locket remains, decorated with a Gothic arch.

The thigh defence is smooth, with no rivets of studs represented. Covering the knees are *poleyns* with a central keel, presumably intended to represent metal. The lower defence of the legs, similar to those of the thighs, are smooth. No mail is represented on the *aventail*, arms or legs. This was presumably applied, rather than carved, using gesso, but no trace of it survives. The mid-fourteenth-century 'Lucy' effigy in the Victoria and Albert Museum, for example, has an impression of mail which was fabricated with tin-foil, the foil having been laid down on to wet underpaint on the effigy.¹⁵

Around the ankles are spur straps, with worn buckles. The arms of the spurs are slightly curved and have figure-of-eight terminals. The functional part on the right foot is a short prick.

Reclining below the feet is a lion, with a long tail, looking towards the effigy's left (Fig. 4). Its front feet are outstretched towards the edge of the slab. The top of the head has been damaged slightly. A survey of lion foot-rests¹⁶ has compared this lion with those of John of Eltham at Westminster Abbey (Fig. 5) and Edward II at Gloucester Cathedral. In fact the latter two are so similar they may have been carved by the same hand.¹⁷ Both are made of white alabaster, this being gypsum, a hydrated sulphate of calcium, usually quarried at this period in the Midlands. Two quarries were at Tutbury and Chellaston, both in Derbyshire. John of Eltham's effigy and that of Edward II are of exceptionally high quality, as one might expect for royal monuments. They are two early examples from the 'Westminster Workshop' of the use of alabaster. Indeed they are two of the earliest alabaster effigies in the country, dating as has been said from c.1340. The material did not become fashionable until the later fourteenth century, when its pureness was recognized as something exceptional. The Leckhampstead effigy by contrast is made of freestone and is slightly later, dating from c.1340–50. It is not of such high quality as the effigy of John of Eltham, an obvious factor in this case being cost: the better the quality, the more expensive it would be.

An identical effigy, from the same workshop, can be seen at Hinton-in-the-Hedges, Northamptonshire (Fig. 6). It is of Sir William de Hinton, who was living in 1346.¹⁸ His effigy rests on a tomb-chest, which is decorated with five shields hanging off brackets and set within *quatrefoils*. Very likely the Leckhampstead effigy's original tomb-chest was similar. Interestingly the Hinton-in-the-Hedges lion bears no relation to that at Leckhampstead. A second identical effigy can be seen at Paulerspury,¹⁹ Northamptonshire (Fig. 7). It is of either Sir Robert Pavey (*ob.*1346) or his son Laurence (*ob.*1349) and is made of wood. So interestingly the 'Westminster Workshop' was producing effigies made of three different materials, alabaster, freestone and wood. There is little information about the carvers working on effigies and we do not know whether a different person was responsible for carving the lion, compared with the effigy's head or body.

The armour worn by the Leckhampstead effigy



Fig. 3: Westminster Abbey, effigy of John of Eltham, c.1340



Fig. 4: Leckhampstead effigy (lion foot-rest)



Fig. 5: Westminster Abbey, effigy of John of Eltham (lion foot-rest)

is of a transitional period and of a very short-lived type, sandwiched between the long gowns of the thirteenth century, which were worn up to *c.*1340, and the short jupon worn from *c.*1360 onwards. Contemporary representations of this form of armour in England can be firmly dated from brasses and from incised slabs on the continent. They include those of Sir John III d'Abernon at Stoke d'Abernon,²⁰ Surrey, *c.*1340–45, Sir John de Creke at Westley Waterless,²¹ Cambridgeshire, *c.*1340–45, Sir Guillaume du Chasteler at Moulbaix,²² Hainaut, Belgium, 1352, and Sir Houdart d'Estables, now at Avallon Museum,²³ Yonne, France, from the Abbaye de Marcilly, *c.*1340.

It is not known whom the Leckhampstead effigy represents, but traditionally it is thought to commemorate a member of the Chastiloun family, who held land in the parish. It is very difficult to assign the effigy to an individual, as a number of people named Chastiloun were connected with the parish during the first half of the fourteenth century – two Richards, Hugh, three Johns, two

Williams and Malcolm – who must all have been members of the same immediate family. The spelling of the surname Chastiloun has also been recorded indifferently as 'Chasteleyn', 'Chasteloun' and 'Chastelon'.

'Richard de Chastiloun of Great Leckhampstead, the elder', is recorded in 1345²⁴ as owing the parson of Leckhampstead church 200 marks. It is also recorded that four sons were present when he maimed and imprisoned John, son of Alan de Leume, at Little Leckhampstead in 1345.²⁵ These were Hugh, John, Richard and William. In 1305²⁶ and 1319²⁷ Richard went with Hugh le Despencer overseas on the king's service. In 1313²⁸ he went to Ireland also on the king's service. In 1315²⁹ he was the sheriff of Caernarfon. He had landholdings in Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire,³⁰ although the latter may have been held by his son Richard, who is recorded in 1327³¹ with William his brother and Stephen de Sauceton, Richard's servant, as having carried away goods at 'Claneford', Oxford. It is not known when the



Fig. 6: Hinton-in-the-Hedges, effigy of Sir William de Hinton, c.1340–50



Fig. 7: Paulerspury, Pavey effigy, c.1350

elder Richard died but presumably it was some time soon after 1345.

Malcolm de Chastiloun was a knight of Buckinghamshire³² and a commissioner of the peace for the county in 1327.³³ He was also a commissioner of array for Bedfordshire in 1324,³⁴ being appointed to select 300 footmen. In 1308³⁵ he was removed from the office of verderer of the king's forest at 'Whitlewode', which may imply that he was insufficiently qualified. It seems that the Chastiloun families at Leckhampstead had a feud with Alan de Leume (or Heume), as Malcolm made a complaint about him in 1333,³⁶ saying that Alan had carried away his goods at Leckhampstead and Thornton. It was John, the son of Alan de Leume, who was imprisoned by 'Richard the elder' in 1345, as noted above. In 1337 Malcolm passed land to his son John³⁷ and in the same year he died.³⁸ Malcolm's son, John, aged 33, was his heir apparent. According to the inquisition³⁹ following his death, Malcolm held the manor of Thornton from John of Eltham, Earl of Cornwall, and two virgates of land from Richard de Chastiloun. It is possible that Malcolm was the brother of 'Richard the elder'.

John de Chastiloun, son of Malcolm, was sheriff of Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire in 1349⁴⁰ and a commissioner of array in 1339.⁴¹ In 1348⁴² he

is recorded as paying a chantry priest at Thornton church, where he evidently endowed a chantry and presumably would have been buried. His date of death has not been recorded. There was also another John de Chastiloun, who in 1316⁴³ is recorded as being sixty years of age and having a son called William.

Conclusion

From the evidence of the lion and the overall style of the effigy this monument may be added to the known output of the 'Westminster Workshop'.

On the balance of the evidence, it seems that the most likely persons to be commemorated by the effigy would be either 'Richard Chastiloun the elder' (*ob.* after 1345) or Malcolm de Chastiloun (*ob.* 1337), two local people of influence in the area. The sculptor of the effigy is very likely to have been William de Ramsey III.

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The footnotes below were omitted from the published article in error (page 96).

- 36 *Calendar of the Patent Rolls, Edward III*, 2, A.D. 1330-1334 (London, 1893),
p.498.
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