

AT THE REBURIAL OF HUMAN REMAINS IN THE FITZWILLIAM TOMB

The four people, whose earthly remains we are placing today in a new resting-place, were all born in the 15th Century, before the Battle of Bosworth and earlier therefore than the coming of the Tudors. We are as certain as we can be of their names - Richard Fitzwilliam and his wife Elizabeth Clarell, their son, Thomas Fitzwilliam, and his wife Lucy Neville.

Sir Richard Fitzwilliam (1415-1479) was heir to his father, Edmund, who has a tomb in Wadworth Parish Church. They belonged to a branch of the Fitzwilliam family of Sprotbrough, separate from that branch of the family which in the 18th Century was found in Wentworth, both branches sharing the same ancestry. Richard was Sheriff of Yorkshire.

Elizabeth Clarell (1415-1503), the wife of Richard, was heiress of her father, Thomas. The Clarell Family like the Fitzwilliam Family had a distinguished ancestry, and made good marriages. Elizabeth's mother was Elizabeth Scrope: the Scropes were an influential family in the north of England in medieval times. The Clarells' principal seat by the Rider Don, to the east of Rotherham, was Aldwark Hall, which disappeared over a hundred years ago as industry spread in the Don Valley. The Clarells were responsible for the founding of the Priory of the Austin Friars in 1256 here in Tickhill, and Clarell Hall was nearby.

Sir Thomas Fitzwilliam (1448-1495) was the eldest son of Sir Richard and Dame Elizabeth (as in due course we shall see them referred to on the Tomb Chest) and it is the effigy of Sir Thomas, with that of his wife Lucy Neville, that we shall also see in due course placed back on the top of the Tomb Chest. Not much is known about Sir Thomas, except that he fought at the Battle of Bosworth in 1485 on the Yorkist side. This is not surprising since Lucy his wife was closely connected with members of the Yorkist Hierarchy.

Lady Lucy Neville (1466-1534) was the youngest daughter and co-heir, with her sisters, of their father John Neville who was the first and only Marquis of Montague. John Neville, who has a Garter plate in St George's Chapel at Windsor, was the brother of Warwick the Kingmaker. The Neville family was a force to be reckoned with in the 15th Century and not only on account of Warwick the Kingmaker. Lady Lucy was the first cousin of Anne Neville (the Kingmaker's daughter) who was the wife of Richard III, and she was the great niece of Cecily Neville the mother of Richard III and of Richard's predecessor Edward IV. The Nevilles were descended from Edward III who was Lucy's great-great-great grandfather.

There is a window in the Parish Church at Ecclesfield which heraldically records Sir Richard and Dame Elizabeth, together with their eleven children and the spouses of those of them who married. It is there because Aldwark in those days was part of the parish of Ecclesfield even though it was a detached part some six miles distant from the parish church.

Here in Tickhill parish Church, this site between the Chancel and St Helen's Chapel, will be the fourth resting place of the bones of these four people who were undoubtedly of high status. Originally, their individual burials took place in the Friary in Rotherham Road, just as the burials of the earlier Clarells had done. But in 1538 the Friary was closed. Henry VIII's failure to produce a male heir led to a break with Rome, and to the throwing off of the influence which the Pope had on the English Church and Nation. The Friary of the Austin canons in Tickhill was one of many casualties of the Dissolution of the Monasteries. These bones and the Tomb Chest were moved as the Friary was dismantled, and they were brought here into the Parish Church.

The first place, as far as we know, where the Tomb Chest was re-erected and the bones enclosed within it, was to the north side of what we now call St Luke's Chapel, beneath the most easterly arch, next to the sanctuary and nearest to the high altar. In the 19th Century it was to the north-west corner of the church that the bones and the Tomb Chest were next moved, the location with which we are all familiar. It is from that damp location that today in the 21st Century a new and better position has been found, and the re-erection of the Tomb Chest, which is of considerable national significance, begins today with the placing of the bones within the base of it.

THE REBURIAL

Introduction

We meet in the name of Christ, who died and was raised to the glory of God the Father. Grace, mercy and peace be with us all.

Many years ago, Richard and Elizabeth and Thomas and Lucy were entrusted to God's mercy. Today, we remember them and commend them again to the keeping of God our merciful redeemer and judge, and we lay their mortal remains in this Tomb Chest, as it is restored and reconstructed in its new position, and where their names will be inscribed.

St John describes the first Easter

Let us remind ourselves of the faith in which we have gathered, and hear again St John's account of our Lord's resurrection. *John 20. 1-18*

The Blessing of the Place of Burial O God, whose Son Jesus Christ was laid in a tomb, bless this place where the remains of Richard, Elizabeth, Thomas and Lucy may rest in peace; through your Son, who is the resurrection and the life, who died and is alive, and who reigns with you now and forever. **Amen.**

The Committal

God our Father, in loving care your hand has created us, and as the potter fashions the clay, you have formed us in your image. Through the Holy Spirit you have breathed into us the gift of life. Your love has enriched us in our knowledge of you and of one another. In the strength of that love we place these bones in this Tomb Chest in the sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life: Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Dismissal

May the infinite and glorious Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, direct our lives in good works, enable us to walk in the way of Christ, to advance the common good, and to bring light to dark places, joy to sad lives, and peace to a disjointed world; and after our journey through this world grant us eternal rest with all the saints. **Amen.**