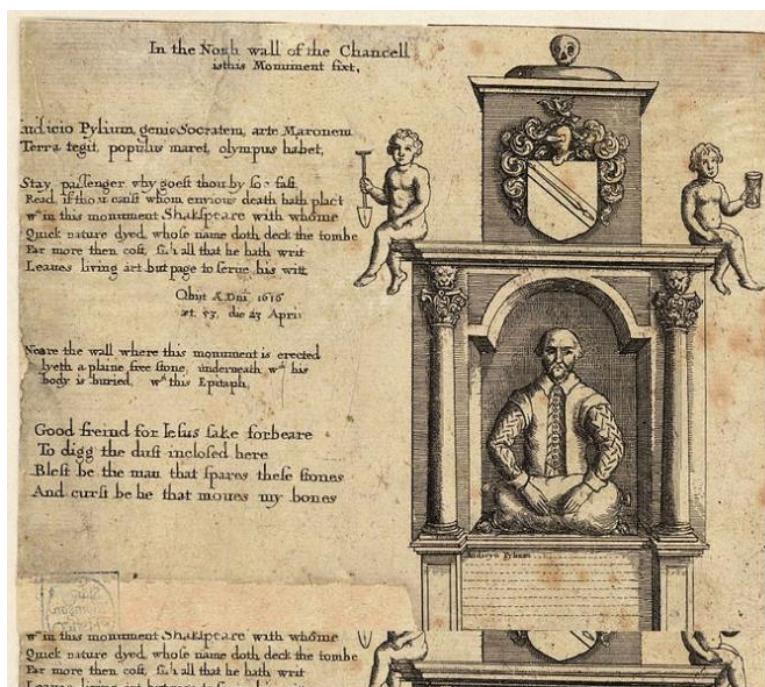


Holy Trinity's Shakespeare Monument

The Dugdale sketch

The first sketch of the Monument was made by the antiquarian Sir William Dugdale in 1634, reproduced by Wenceslas Hollar as an engraving in his *Antiquities of Warwickshire* (1656)

The sketch depicts a figure very different from the one we see now. The face is thinner, with a drooping moustache above a down-turned mouth; a wool sack is clutched by the figure, replaced by 1735 with a quill and paper, and even the architectural details of the monument are very different from its appearance today.



Dugdale engraving

Joseph Greene's renovations

In 1746, Joseph Greene, the Holy Trinity curate, began raising funds for the purpose of 'repairing and beautifying' the Stratford Monument, which had become 'much impaired and decayed'. The repairs were carried out by a local craftsman, John Hall, a 'limner' or painter. Contemporary records are insistent, as was Greene himself, that no changes were made to the bust except to repair and paint it. The monument itself was, however, renovated and its decayed alabaster architrave was replaced with marble. The records mention the involvement of 'Heath the carver', but it isn't clear what he actually did. Thereafter descriptions refer constantly to Shakespeare's 'cheerful' countenance, to the extent that Thomas Gainsborough called it 'a silly, smiling thing'; certainly not the impression given by the Dugdale engraving.

Malone's 'fashionable' desecration

In 1793, the Holy Trinity Vicar, Rev. Dr. James Davenport, acquiesced to the wishes of visiting renowned Shakespeare scholar, Edmond Malone, who persuaded him to allow the colourful Shakespeare Monument to be painted a 'fashionable' Georgian white – a decision that Davenport regretted for the rest of his life.

Britton's plaster cast

In 1814 the Monument was taken down at the behest of John Britton, a London antiquarian and topographer who was fascinated by it. He commissioned the sculptor George Bullock to make a plaster cast of the bust. Again it was found to be badly decayed and a one-day job stretched to four, suggesting more work was done than merely taking a cast. Perhaps it was on this occasion, or when it was taken down again in 1836, that the bust lost its cheerfulness and took on the more sober aspect we see today. Britton published high-quality engravings of the monument that brought it into the public eye.

For more details about the Monument's history see:

<https://medium.com/the-history-buff/the-mystery-of-the-stratford-monument-f495b0effaa6>

The Shakespeare Monument today

Each year, at the Holy Trinity Birthday weekend Sunday Service, the Head Boy of King Edward School has climbed a ladder to provide Shakespeare with a fresh quill. Last year, in 2019, the first KES Head Girl, Tamzin Chape, made history by paying this homage to the Bard. The modern bust perhaps justifies Dover-Wilson's 'self-satisfied pork butcher' description.



Head Boy, Christian Van Nieuwerburgh, places the quill in the hand of a rather surprised-looking Shakespeare, marking the 450th anniversary of his birth.

Photo taken April 26, 2014. REUTERS/Suzanne Plunkett/Files