

HEMPSTEAD CHURCH FROM THE WESTERN SIDE.



MEMORIAL TABLET AND BUST

PROFILE OF BUST.

Lapt in lead': the remains of William Harvey at Hempstead church

by James Bettley

He lies buried in a Vault at Hempsted in Essex, which his brother Eliab Harvey built; he is lapt in lead, and on his brest in great letters

DR. WILLIAM HARVEY.

I was at his Funerall, and helpt to carry him into the Vault.

John Aubrey's *Brief Lives* have an immediacy that is often lacking in history written long after the event, but of the accounts none is more vivid, perhaps, than that of the life and death of William Harvey (1578-1657), senior physician to King Charles I, Warden of Merton College Oxford, the discoverer of the circulation of the blood, and benefactor of the Royal College of Physicians: 'Ah! My old Friend Dr Harvey, I knew him right well.' Harvey died on 3 June 1657 at the house of his brother Eliab in Roehampton. Sir Eliab Harvey was a successful London merchant who purchased Hempstead Hall (described by Morant as 'an old mean edifice') and in about 1655 constructed a family vault on the north side of the chancel of St Andrew's Church, which was in fact (and remained until 1977) not the parish church, but a chapel of ease to the parish church of Great Sampford. At this time, family vaults were highly fashionable; the antiquary John Weever wrote in 1631 that

It was usuall in ancient times, and so it is in these our dayes, for persons of especiall ranke and qualitie to make their own Tombes and Monuments in their life-time; partly for that they might have a certain house to put their head (as the old saying is) whensoever they should bee taken away by death, out of their Tenement, the world; and partly to please themselves, in beholding their dead countenance in marble. But most especially because thereby they thought to preserve their memories from oblivion.²

Eliab's vault was a simple affair, a plain brick building that, seen from the east, echoes the sixteenth-century chancel, but otherwise makes no attempt to harmonise with the rest of the church; above ground, the western portion provided space for family monuments, while the eastern part was originally a schoolroom, and is now a vestry. No doubt Eliab imagined that he himself would be the first occupant of the vault beneath, but he did not die until 1661; two of his daughters were laid there in 1655 and 1656, but the first adult occupant was in fact his more distinguished elder brother William.

The funeral did not take place until three weeks after his death. On 25 June,

such of the fellows of the College of Physicians as wished to follow the body of its greatest ornament and benefactor the next day on its way to the place of his interment in Essex were instructed by the College to do so, habited in the gowns of their respective offices or of their university degree... On the morning of the following day ... the body of Harvey was attended by the president and a large number of the fellows of the College far beyond the city walls...³

It is thought that two nights were spent on the road, the journey being about fifty miles. At Hempstead, Harvey's remains were placed in his brother's new vault, in its leaden coffin. Lead coffins were usual at this period and although heavy to carry, had the advantage of containing any unpleasantness that might result from the passing of three weeks between death and interment in midsummer.

Over the next two centuries the vault slowly filled with Harveys, a number of the remains being in distinctive anthropomorphic lead coffins which follow the form of the corpse to the extent of having detailed facial features;

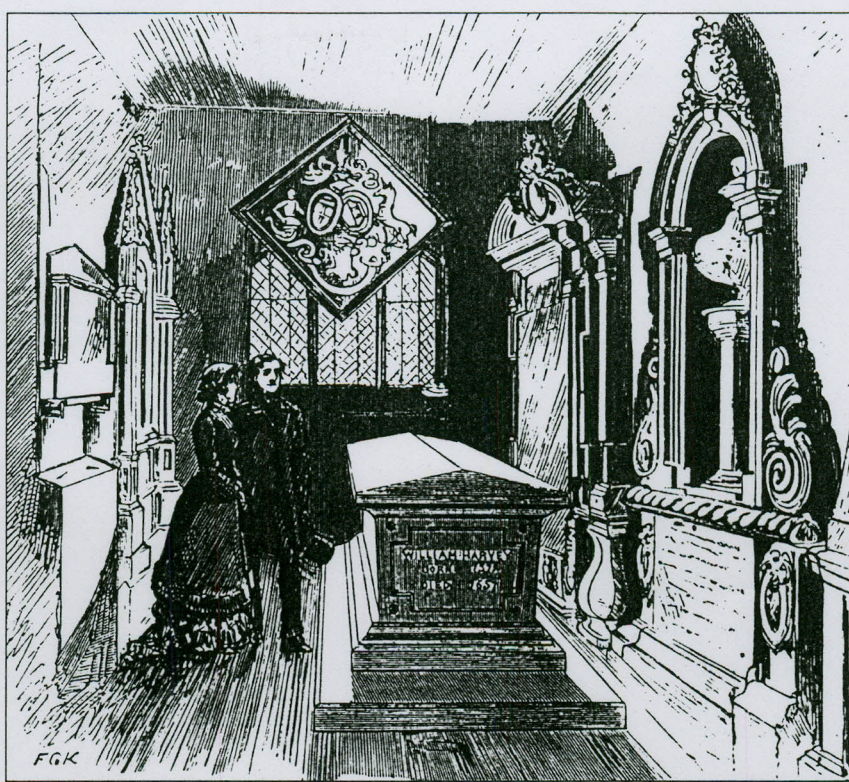


Fig. 3. Showing the newly - installed sarcophagus (from the Graphic 1883).

the finest of these is of Mary Harvey, who died in 1677 at the age of 5.⁴ The vault was extended in 1766 by another Eliab Harvey, who dug out space beneath the chancel. Meanwhile, above ground, suitable monuments were being erected to commemorate those who lay beneath. William Harvey's monument, by Edward Marshall, incorporates a frontal bust which is said to be a striking likeness. The large wall monument to Sir William Harvey (died 1719) is unsigned, but the elegant memorial to the next William, who died in 1742, with medallion portraits of William and his wife Mary, is by Louis Roubiliac and was erected by her in 1758 before she in turn died in 1761. Humphrey Hopper sculpted the memorial to Admiral Sir Eliab Harvey (1758-1830), the captain of the *Temeraire* of Trafalgar and at different times M.P. for both Maldon and Essex.

This corner of the church is, however, dominated by the massive marble sarcophagus that, since 1883, has contained the remains of the physician William Harvey and which is a memorial not so much to Harvey as to the continuing devotion to him on the part of the fellows of the College of which he was the principal benefactor: as well as building a new library and museum in his lifetime, he had endowed the College with his estate at Burmarsh in Kent. In December 1847, a young doctor named Benjamin Ward Richardson who was assistant to Thomas Browne, the surgeon at Saffron Walden, was attending the accouchement of a patient at Radwinter. He learnt then about the resting place nearby of the great William Harvey, and visited Hempstead. Richardson rose in the profession (he was eventually knighted in 1893) but remembered Hempstead and was instrumental in ensuring that it was remembered also by the Royal College, to which he was admitted as a member in 1856 and elected fellow in 1865. Rumours began to reach the College at this time that the leaden coffin and the remains it contained were falling into a

sorry state, and in 1859 the College deputed two of its fellows, Richard Quain and Alexander P. Stewart, to visit Hempstead, make enquiries, and report to the College. They found the vault, containing 46 coffins placed on the floor more or less irregularly; that of William Harvey was placed immediately beneath one of the three open windows that are placed high in the vault at ground level. Over the years, the lead in most of the coffins, including Harvey's, had collapsed, leaving a concave cavity on the upper surface, with the result that rainwater coming through the window had gathered in the hollow and then passed into the coffin through a crack at the feet. The report recommended that 'means be taken to remove the water, that the coffin be repaired; and that being removed to a less exposed situation in the vault, it be enclosed in an open stone case'. The President of the College wrote to representatives of the Harvey family asking for permission to take matters in hand, but this was not granted, although he was subsequently told that the 'necessary repairs' had been undertaken by the family themselves.⁵

Dr Richardson visited Hempstead again with Dr Quain in 1868, on which occasion he was startled in the course of examining Harvey's coffin when a frog leapt out at him. The remains, however, appeared to be dry. He also examined, for the first time, the bust of Harvey on his monument, and thought that it had been copied from a death-mask. This opinion was confirmed for him on his next visit, in 1878, when he was accompanied by the sculptor Thomas Woolner. Woolner was not, however, generally impressed by the quality of the monument:

The sculptor, whoever he may be, has exhibited no knowledge of sculpture, except when he was copying what was directly before him. With the cast of the face for his copy, he has shown true artistic delineation, but all that he has been obliged to add ... is of the worst possible quality.

Richardson contributed a long account of the Harvey's remains, his examination of them, and their present undignified condition to the *Lancet*, illustrated with drawings by George Evans based on photographs taken on the day by F.T. Day of Saffron Walden. He proposed removing the remains to Westminster Abbey and placing them 'in some quiet corner' in a hole 2 ft below the surface of the floor, 'covered merely with a thick glass plate', so that the original coffin could still be seen. The most interesting question he left until last: were any remains of Harvey left in coffin? He had come equipped with a small mirror, a magnesium light, 'and every appliance for making what may be called a sarcophoscopic investigation'. But the opening in the lead out of which the frog had jumped in 1868 had now closed up somewhat, as the lead had collapsed around it, and the remaining crack 'is positively filled, at the opening, with a thick, dirty fluid, like mud, a fluid as thick as melted pitch, and having a peculiar organic odour'. He was forced to conclude that 'there can be little remaining of the body; not much, probably, even of the skeleton'.⁶

This watching brief over the remains might have gone on for years, had matters not been brought to a head by the dramatic events of Saturday 28 January 1882. During the preceding week old cracks in the fifteenth-century tower of the church had worsened, and new ones appeared. About 4.30 in the afternoon the curate, John Escreet, left the church, gave instructions that the bells were not to be rung and that the clock should not be wound, and sat down to write to the vicar of Great Sampford, R.H. Eustace, to express his concern. Between 6 and 7 o'clock the south wall of the tower began crumbling away a few feet above the ground, and in less than an hour the whole tower, except a small part of the north wall, slipped down, bringing with it half the nave roof, an arch from the south side of the nave, and a good deal of the roof of the south aisle.

The news reached Richardson quickly. On 1 February he wrote a letter to the *Lancet* telling what had happened and brought the matter to the attention of the College. Fortunately the debris had not fallen as far as the vault, so no damage had been done to various Harveys; but it raised new concerns about the general state of the church, and on 23 February the College



Figs. 4 and 5. Hempstead church before and after the fall of the tower (from the Graphic 11.3.1882).

appointed a committee to report on what steps should be taken to ensure the preservation of William Harvey's remains.⁸ Richardson's earlier proposal was rejected, the committee 'believing that the most suitable resting place for our distinguished and honoured Fellow is amongst his ancestors'.⁹ It was decided, therefore, to place the remains in a sarcophagus in the church itself. First, permission had to be sought from the family's representative, Richard Thomas Lloyd of Aston Hall, Shropshire; he was the eldest son of the eldest daughter of Admiral Harvey of Rolls Park, Chigwell, and was still the owner of that property although he did not himself live there.¹⁰ An architect named James Osborne Smith was consulted to advise on the condition of the vault and its roof, which would need to be strengthened in order to support the weight of the sarcophagus: the design chosen from the four suggested by the monumental sculptors, G. Maile & Son of Euston Road, weighed between 4½ and 5 tons. Made of white Sicilian marble, the estimate of its cost ranged from £155 to £200, depending upon the level of ornament chosen; the College opted for the cheapest. The entire scheme, including transport and the work necessary to strengthen the floor, was estimated at £200-250.¹¹

In October 1882 the College agreed to proceed with the project. On 24 June 1883 the President announced to the College that the sarcophagus was completed, and in July the faculty for strengthening the vault was granted.¹² St Luke's Day, 18 October 1883, was chosen as the most appropriate day for the ceremony.

The affair was conducted with suitable pomp and circumstance. A special train carried the President, fellows and guests from St Pancras to Saffron Walden. Unfortunately the Bishop of Colchester missed the train, and the ceremony, because he went to Liverpool Street by mistake. Another absent cleric was the Hon and Revd Canon J.W. Leigh, who had been invited to conduct the service, but declined on the grounds that he was associated with the Anti-Vivisection Movement; that honour therefore fell to R.H. Eustace, assisted by John Escreet. The editor of the *Lancet* was invited to 'select a presentable person' to report the proceedings.¹³

The ceremony began at 4 o'clock in the afternoon. The party inspected the remains in the vault before the President and Officers of the College, together with the Regius Professors of Physic of Oxford and Cambridge withdrew to the vestry to put on their robes. The coffin was then raised from the vault, placed on a bier, covered with a pall, and carried by eight fellows of the College (including Richardson) round the eastern end of the church to the south porch, and through the church itself. (It should be remembered that at this time the church still lacked a western end, so there would only have been a temporary west wall.) Following the coffin were four members of the Harvey family: Col R.T. Lloyd, his sons Capt Francis Lloyd and Mr Rossendale Lloyd, and Col Thomas Harvey Bramston. Then came Sir William Jenner, the President of the College, carrying the silver caduceus which is the emblem of his office, accompanied by the Officers: the four Censors, the Treasurer, the Registrar and Assistant Registrar, and the Harveian Librarian, William Munk. They were followed by the two Regius Professors, and seven other fellows of the College.

The bier was placed next to the sarcophagus and part of the service of Evening Prayer was read; the lesson was

Ecclesiasticus 38:1-5, which begins 'Honour a physician with the honour due unto him for the uses which ye may have of him'. Then the coffin was placed in the sarcophagus and the vicar read a prayer from the Order for the Burial of the Dead. That concluded the religious part of the ceremony. The President then placed in the sarcophagus a bound copy, encased in lead, of the edition of Harvey's works published by the College in 1766, and next to it a smaller leaden case containing a sealed glass bottle (made especially by James Powell & Sons of the Whitefriars Glass Works)¹⁴ in which was a parchment scroll. On this was written an account, by William Munk, of the day's proceedings. Then, as Munk later described, 'the heavy monolith cover was, ... with some difficulty, rolled on to the sarcophagus and securely fixed there, and the proceedings terminated.'¹⁵

Although William Harvey was now safe and sound, there was of course still much to be done in terms of putting the church to rights. The cost of this was estimated by the architect A.W. Blomfield to be £3500, but an appeal to the College by Escreet for a contribution towards this was unsuccessful.¹⁶ £1600 of this was for rebuilding the tower, work which was in the event postponed. Eventually a grant was forthcoming from the Incorporated Church Building Society in 1887 (after an unsuccessful application in 1886), and work was able to proceed under the direction of an architect named Samuel Knight. Perhaps some of the difficulty in raising funds can be attributed to the character of Escreet, the tone of whose letters to the College is prickly and whose 'unpopularity' was the subject of an anonymous letter to the ICBS after they awarded their grant in 1887.¹⁷ The church was reopened on 3 May 1888, and included a new pulpit, reading desk and lectern carved by Escreet himself, who also executed the carving on the south porch as well as other furniture in the church and the vicarage.¹⁸ Escreet lasted as curate nearly 30 years, from 1877 until 1905: perhaps his personality denied him higher preferment.

The tower had to wait until the next century, when it was rebuilt as a memorial to Harvey at the expense of the William Harvey Memorial Fund and the Harveian Society of London. A new tower was designed by Sir Charles Nicholson, and the foundation stone was laid on 7 July 1933; by the following year it had reached a point just below the present clock.¹⁹ Here, however, it stuck: £3000 had been raised but a further £1000 was needed, and the appeal for the remaining sum was unsuccessful. The tercentenary of Harvey's death in 1957 gave impetus to a new round of fundraising and work was resumed in 1959, the architect being Stanley Bragg. By this time, the cost had risen to £14,000, but the work was nonetheless completed and the new tower was dedicated by the Bishop of Colchester in 1962.²⁰

William Harvey himself had no connection with Essex, to which his family were newcomers when he died in 1657; he was born in Folkestone, where there is a statue to him, and his estates were in Kent. But his brother Eliab's descendants, who represented the county in parliament at various times between 1679 and 1830, certainly count as 'Essex worthies',²¹ and William Harvey, by virtue of the unusual nature of his twice-burial, may be considered an adopted son of the county, and a worthier name to associate with Hempstead than that of Dick Turpin. The ambitious vision to be found in the pages of the *Lancet*, however, has yet to be fulfilled:

In the course of time many feet from many places of the earth will travel to the church of Hempstead to see the tomb of Harvey. The resting-place of his remains, like that of the remains of Shakespeare, will be one of the national monuments that strangers as well as natives will feel it imperative to visit. Over and over again will be recited to the interested visitor the story of the re-entombment, and how after a lapse of two hundred and twenty-six years the Fellows of the College of Physicians a second time performed funeral rites. Perhaps it will be told, too, that whereas the first company of Fellows was probably some days travelling from London to Hempstead, the second sped there in a pleasant afternoon ride of three hours and returned to the metropolis to sleep.²²

- 1 Oliver Lawson Dick (ed), *Aubrey's Brief Lives* (1949; Mandarin Paperbacks, 1992), 133. I am grateful to the staff of the Library and Archive of the Royal College of Physicians, London, for assistance with the research for this article. Papers in the College Archive are referred to below as 'RCP'
- 2 Quoted in J. Litten, *The English Way of Death* (1991), 197
- 3 The principal account of Harvey's burial and his reinterment was written by William Munk, Harveian Librarian of the Royal College of Physicians, in 1883, and published in *Notes and Queries*, 6th series vol 8 (27 Oct 1883), 321-3. Another version was published privately by Munk in the same year; a copy is in ERO Box H4A.
- 4 J. Litten, 'Tombs fit for kings: some burial vaults of the English aristocracy and landed gentry of the period 1650-1850', *Church Monuments*, vol 14 (1999), 104-28, discusses various aspects of the Harvey vault at Hempstead
- 5 *Notes and Queries*, 6th series vol 8 (27 Oct 1883), 321-3

- 6 *Lancet* (30 Nov 1878), 776-8
- 7 *Lancet* (4 Feb 1882), 203, from which the account of the fall of the tower is taken
- 8 RCP 1024/251
- 9 RCP 1024/253
- 10 RCP 1024/212
- 11 RCP 1024/214-215, 219, 252, 255-256, 350
- 12 ERO D/CF 22/4
- 13 RCP 1024/242, 365, 368. The *Lancet's* account (20 Oct 1883) appears to have been written in advance of the event, because it states, incorrectly, that the Bishop of Colchester conducted the service
- 14 RCP 1024/366
- 15 *Notes and Queries*, 6th series vol 8 (27 Oct 1883), 321-3. The events were also recorded in the *Lancet* (20 Oct 1883), 706-7 & (27 Oct 1883), 736, and *Illustrated London News*, vol 83 (27 Oct 1883), 400; and previewed in the *Graphic* (20 Oct 1883), 383-4 (copy at RCP, 1024/499)
- 16 RCP 1024/248-249, 377
- 17 ICBS file 9140 (Lambeth Palace Library)
- 18 Kelly's *Directory of Essex* (1902), 228; photocopy of undated article by F.A. Jones, 'A clerical artist in wood', from the *Royal Magazine* (c.1900) in ERO Box H4A
- 19 *British Medical Journal* (3 Nov 1934), 820. A print of Nicholson's design for the tower is at Hempstead church
- 20 Church guides
- 21 *Essex Review*, vol 7 (1898), 126-8; William Addison, *Essex Worthies* (1973), 97-8
- 22 *Lancet* (27 Oct 1883), 736

The Courtauld family and the Essex landscape

by Tony Crosby and Adrian Corder-Birch

In the Spring 2000 edition of *Essex Journal*, Shane Gould described Essex County Council's commitment to and progress with surveying and assessing sites and monuments from 1750 to the present¹. The purpose of these surveys is to assess the overall significance of surviving sites and structures so that an informed response can be made on their preservation or otherwise should they become subject to a development proposal. One such survey undertaken during 2000 was that of the textile industry in Essex, including the wool cloth trade, but principally of the silk industry².

The wool cloth trade declined throughout the 18th century and although of significance in its extent (centred upon the major market towns but with spinners and weavers in most of the surrounding villages) and economically important, it had almost completely ceased by the beginning of the 19th century. This decline created a pool of unemployed but skilled textile workers and it was into this employment vacuum that the silk industry was drawn from one of its traditional bases - Spitalfields, East London. Competition from abroad and from the powered mills of the north-west, combined with the effects of the fixed wage rates in East London, caused the industry to seek cheaper labour which it found amongst these Essex textile workers. Various family businesses, therefore, moved from Spitalfields out to Essex including Beuzeville, Courtauld, Walters and Warner.

The Silk Industry

The silk industry began in earnest within the county at the end of 18th and beginning of the 19th century in the towns which had originally been the dominant wool cloth manufacturing towns. However, even in the early years of the 18th century there is reference to silk

throwing at the water mill at Gaston Green, Little Hallingbury, although it was not long used for this purpose before reverting to corn milling. Manufacturing began in Saffron Walden in 1815 but had ceased by 1836. In Coggeshall it started in 1816 and the three main mill sites there, all used by John Hall, were Abbey Mill, Gravel Mill and Orchard Mill. Abbey Mill remains intact and is listed Grade II*, while Gravel Mill and all but the mill house, warehouse and engine house of Orchard Mill have been demolished. In Colchester the industry was introduced in 1826, the main site being Stephen Brown's mill in what is now St. Peter's Street, again now demolished. Although Courtaulds dominated Braintree from 1809, Daniel Walters from 1821 and then Warner and Sons also had a major presence there. They both operated at the New Mills in Braintree, part of which was until recently the working silk museum, and all of which is listed Grade II.

Courtauld's Business

The Courtauld family began their association with the silk industry in the county in 1799 in Pebmarsh. They were a French Huguenot merchant family who fled to England in the late 1680s and settled in Spitalfields as goldsmiths. Samuel Courtauld (1720 - 1765) married into a silk throwing and weaving family and his son George (1761 - 1823) was apprenticed to a Spitalfields silk throwster. Following a stay in America and a return to silk crape manufacture in Kent, George was engaged by Witts & Co. in 1799 to convert the flour mill in Pebmarsh for water-powered silk throwing and to manage it once it was in operation. George moved on in 1809 to undertake similar conversion and management work on the former Megs Mill flour mill in Braintree. George returned to America but his son Samuel (1793 -