

## NEW LIGHT ON DIACINTO CAWCY AND THE BARROW MONUMENT

by ADAM BOWETT

IN 2004 AN article was published in this journal which revealed the role played by an itinerant Italian artisan, Diacinto Cawcy, in the creation of the Barrow monument in Westhorpe church. The same man was responsible for a high baroque monument to Sir Thomas Cullum at Hawstead, as well as a more modest creation at Mildenhall (Figs 122 and 123). Since then, research concerning another Italian artisan, Baldassare Artima, has fortuitously uncovered further details of Cawcy's career and has thrown new light on his work.

Baldassare Artima is known to architectural historians as the man responsible for creating the 'Counter fitt marble Chimneypiece' in the Queen's Closet at Ham House, Surrey. It was installed in 1672, and remains there in good, if faded, condition (Fig. 124). 'Counterfeit marble' was a contemporary English term for what is now called *scagliola*. *Scagliola* is a technique for imitating costly inlaid marble with a paste made of powdered selenite, pigments and animal glue. It was widely practised in seventeenth-century Italy, but until the discovery of Artima's work at Ham, it was not known that *scagliola* was also made in England.

*Scagliola* decoration can be produced in a number of ways, but both the Ham chimney-piece and the Suffolk monuments were made in the same fashion.<sup>1</sup> First, a stone substrate was covered with a thin monochrome base layer, usually black. When this

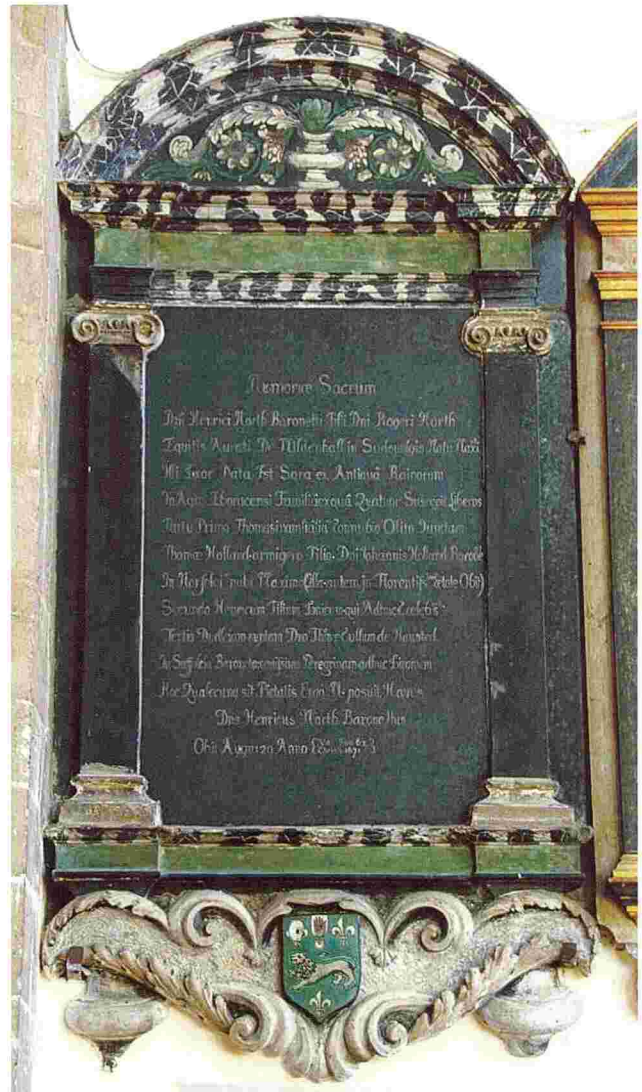


FIG. 122 – Church of St Mary, Mildenhall, funerary monument to Sir Henry North, attributed to Diacinto Cawcy, c. 1675 (photo: author).



FIG. 123 – Church of All Saints, Hawstead, funerary monument to Sir Thomas Cullum, erected by Diacinto Cawcy, 1675 (photo: Edward Martin).



FIG. 124 – Chimney-piece in the Queen's Closet, Ham House, Surrey, installed by Baldassare Artima, c. 1672 (photo: *The National Trust*).

had hardened it was polished, after which the ground for the decorative details was incised and dug out. Coloured paste was laid into the sunk areas, and when the whole was complete, it was left to dry and then polished to a high finish.

Artima's work was not restricted to architectural subjects. It is thought he was responsible for decorating a number of pieces of furniture which bear strong stylistic and technical affinities with the Ham chimney-piece, and are the subject of an article to be published in a forthcoming volume on Ham House (Fig. 125). There are strong similarities between Artima's work and Cawcy's, not only in their general handling and palette, but also in details such as the everted rims and rolled feet of the vases, the spiralling plant tendrils and feathered edges to the leaves (Figs 126–28). But there are also some obvious differences. Cawcy's work is larger in scale and generally coarser in execution than Artima's, and it seems that Cawcy was the less accomplished artist. He also favoured some individual tricks or motifs, such as the



FIG. 125 – Table attributed to Baldassare Artima, c. 1675  
(Victoria and Albert Museum, W12-1968; photo: V&A Images).



FIG. 126 – Detail of Fig. 125, showing the table top (photo: V&A Images).



FIG. 127 – Detail of the floor in front of the Hawstead monument (*photo: author*).



FIG. 128 – Detail from the Hawstead monument. The fringed leaves of the flowers are one several idiosyncratic details common to both Cawcy's and Artima's work (*photo: author*).

horizontally striped flower petals, which occur at all three churches. Nevertheless, the similarities in overall style and in detail strongly suggest a connection.

In the archives of the Lord Chamberlain's department for 1670 it is recorded that on 30 July Baldassare Artima (also spelled Actime and Actima) and Diacinto Corcy (also spelled Concy and Concie) were among a number of men sworn into the King's Company of players.<sup>2</sup> The King's Company was one of two royal theatre companies founded in 1660 (the other being the Duke of York's) and was under the personal sponsorship of Charles II. From 1663 the King's Company performed at the King's Playhouse, in what is now Drury Lane. The building was destroyed by fire in January 1672 and rebuilt to a design by Sir Christopher Wren in 1674, when it became the Theatre Royal.

An entry in the Lord Chamberlain's accounts for 9 September 1671 refers to both Artima and Corcy as 'Seene-Keepers'.<sup>3</sup> This was a rather broad term, encompassing almost everything to do with sets and scenery,<sup>4</sup> and in the seventeenth century sets were much more than mere flats of painted cloth or paper: they were three-dimensional structures erected by skilled joiners, plasterers and painters. Artima and Corcy were probably employed to create theatrical scenes for the King's Company using specialist techniques learned in Italy, including 'stucco' work and *scagliola*.

The same entry in the Lord Chamberlain's accounts for September 1671 reveals that Artima and Corcy fell out, with Artima claiming he was owed £60 by Corcy. This was probably reason enough for the two men to part company, but it is also possible that the destruction of the playhouse in early 1672 put both of them out of work and caused them to seek employment elsewhere. Artima stayed in London and maintained close links with the court. Aside from working at Ham in 1672 and 1675, he also made a chimney-piece for Queen Catherine, which had 'a frame wrought out of stucco made like the Genoue table'.<sup>5</sup> This sounds plausibly like *scagliola*. The chimney-piece was installed in the queen's 'little Bedchamber' in Whitehall Palace at some time prior to 1686. In 1681 Artima was recorded as a 'servant' of Sir John Williams, a lately deceased resident of 14 St James's Square. He paid and witnessed payments to craftsmen altering the house and had previously been a servant of Sir John's wife, Lady Williams. In January 1681 he was ordered from court for being a papist, presumably as a consequence of the Popish Plot and the subsequent Exclusion crisis of 1680.<sup>6</sup> In 1686 Artima was belatedly paid £8 for the queen's chimney piece, after which there is no further record of him.

Meanwhile, Diacinto Corcy or Cawcy went to Suffolk. John Sothebie's letter, reproduced in Blatchly and Fisher's 2004 article, suggests that it may have been Sir Thomas Hervey of Ickworth who brought him out of London.<sup>7</sup> Hervey's close neighbour was Sir Thomas Cullum (d. 1664) whose monument at Hawstead was probably the first of the three Suffolk monuments to be built. It was here that Cawcy identified himself as the creator of the monument by boldly placing a scratched graffito on the chancel arch opposite.

The sponsor of the Hawstead monument was presumably Sir Thomas Cullum's eldest son Thomas (d. 1680), who was married to Dudley, third daughter of Sir Henry North of Mildenhall. Sir Henry North died in 1671, and in Mildenhall church is a second, more modest *scagliola* monument erected to his memory. The stylistic parallels in the decoration of the two monuments are obvious, and the family connection explains the link.

The Westhorpe monument is different (Fig. 129). It is of carved marble, depicting the late Maurice Barrow Esq., reclining on a tomb beneath an inscribed circular tablet, with putti attending. The work is skilled and sophisticated, probably the work of a London sculptor.<sup>8</sup> The monument is protected by an iron railing, and in front of it the floor is paved with *scagliola* panels, now much worn (Fig. 130). Their random sizing and arrangement suggests that this was not their original situation, and on the right side of the floor are two narrow



FIG. 131 – Church of St George, Hinton St George, Somerset, monument to the first and second Barons Poulett, attributed to Baldassare Artima and Diacinto Cawcy, before 1669 (photo: author).

base man and one that had no fixed settlement'.<sup>9</sup> The Major was not to be dissuaded, however, and claimed that the Italian had been recommended by 'Sir Thomas Hervey and others for an able workman'. After haggling, the Italian was commissioned to create the monument for £400, to be paid in instalments as work progressed. Since the letter refers to the Hawstead monument, work at Westhorpe cannot have started before 1675, and by the time Sothebie wrote his letter six years later it was not finished, and work had come to a halt. Sothebie protested to Kempe that despite his best efforts, he could not explain 'how it came to pass that no more was done'. It seems that Sothebie's misgivings were justified and Cawcy had absconded, leaving the work unfinished and Barrow's estate out of pocket.

The correspondence between Sothebie and Sir Robert Kempe was presumably occasioned by the death of Major Maurice Shelton in October 1680. According to the inscription on the lower part of the monument, its completion now fell to the Major's younger brother, Henry. It must have been he, perhaps in conjunction with Sothebie and Kempe, who commissioned a highly competent sculptor to finally finish the job. It must be doubted, however, whether the finished monument was indeed 'as designed and begun' by Major Maurice Shelton, because the evidence of the surviving *scagliola* suggests the original scheme was something very different.

Blatchly and Fisher illustrate a fourth church monument far away in Hinton St George, Somerset (Fig. 131). It commemorates John, 1st Baron Poulett, who died in 1649, but is also inscribed for the 2nd Baron, who died in 1665. It was *in situ* and finished by 1669, when Cosimo, Duke of Tuscany, saw it and described it in his diary.<sup>10</sup> He thought it worthy of note because of its 'modern' style, and it is certainly more sophisticated and more technically adept than the similar one at Hawstead. The *scagliola* decoration is similar to both Artima's and Cawcy's, but the careful organisation of the design and the precision of its execution suggest Artima rather than Cawcy was the author. It is possible, however, that this was a joint effort, with Artima in the lead role. At the time of writing, no documentation has been found to support the involvement of either Artima or Cawcy, but research in the Poulett archives is continuing.

If the Poulett monument is by Artima and Cawcy, then it proves that the men were active in England in or before 1669, and before they enrolled in the King's Company in July 1670. Why and when they arrived in England remains a mystery, but they were almost certainly the earliest exponents of Italian *scagliola* to have worked on these shores.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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#### NOTES

- 1 Blatchly and Fisher assumed that the decoration was painted, but it is *scagliola*.
- 2 TNA, LC3/26, fol. 210. Highfill uses the spellings 'Artima' and 'Corcy': Highfill *et al.*, 1, 133; 3, 491.
- 3 TNA, LC5/14, fol. 64.
- 4 Bowman and Ball 1961, 311.
- 5 Bolton and Hendry 1939, 116.
- 6 Sheppard 1960, 139–42.
- 7 Sir Thomas Hervey, c. 1625–94, MP for Bury St Edmunds 1679–89.
- 8 Blatchly and Fisher suggest Edward Pearce was perhaps the sculptor.
- 9 Quoted in Blatchly and Fisher 2004, appendix.
- 10 Anon 1821, 142.



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