

THE ITINERANT ITALIAN ARTIST DIACINTO CAWCY, AND THE GENESIS OF THE BARROW MONUMENT AT WESTHORPE

by JOHN BLATCHLY and GEOFFREY FISHER

DIACINTO CAWCY IS known by name only because he somewhat impertinently carved it on one of the stones on the north-east side of the chancel arch at Hawstead church. He chose one at eye-level diagonally opposite his gargantuan monument in the centre of the south wall of the chancel to Sir Thomas Cullum, the first baronet (Figs 115–119).¹ Neither the memorial itself nor the inscription (Fig. 114) is conventionally elegant, and the central arms and crest which crown the monument seem to threaten the viewer below like some frightful monster rearing up in the semi-darkness.

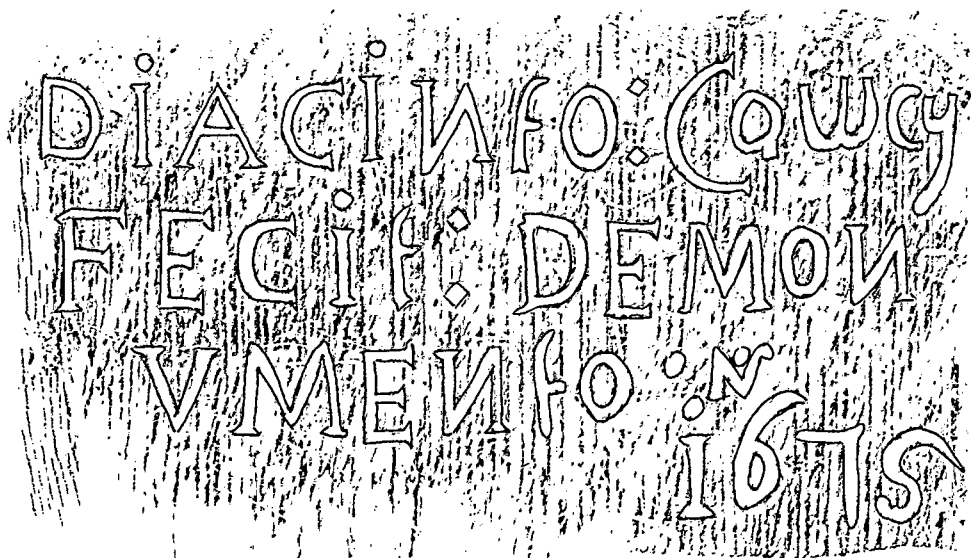


FIG. 114 – Hawstead: rubbing, with ink outlining, of Cawcy incised inscription.

Sir Thomas died 6 April 1664, in his seventy-seventh year, so it appears that the second baronet, son and namesake of the first, took over a decade to commemorate his parents. The shield at the top bears Cullum impaling Crispe with the Cullum crest, while those to dexter and sinister both show Cullum and Crispe quarterly impaling North. As the monument blocks a window of two lights with Y-tracery and a lancet it darkens the chancel considerably.

It is uncertain on what evidence Rupert Gunnis² makes the credible assertion that Cawcy 'was an Italian who was brought to Britain by Sir Thomas Cullum to decorate his seat of Hawstead Hall in Suffolk'. During the 18th century the Hall was abandoned by the family in favour of nearby Hardwick, and the last remnants of Hawstead were demolished in the 1820s. Neither edition of Sir John Cullum's *History and Antiquities of Hawsted* gives much of an account of the house, and nothing at all about its decoration. The same description of Cawcy's monument is found in both:³

Contiguous to the last but one is another large mural monument, consisting, as the last, of a sarcophagus on a basement, over which is a lofty entablature, supported by two square fluted pillars of the Ionic order, and surmounted by a large escutcheon of the arms and crest. The whole is made of a white hard plaster, painted of a dark grey colour, and ornamented with gilding and flowers. It was the work of an Italian; for in the steward's accounts in the year 1675, I find £5 were three times advanced 'to the Italian on account of the monument'. And on the north side of the arch that divides the church and chancel the artist has thus recorded his own name and performance... It is rather a heavy performance, and scarcely justifies the employing of a foreign workman in preference to a native.

A footnote adds:

There is another monument, evidently of the same artist, but upon a much smaller scale, in the chancel of Mildenhall Church, for Sir Henry North, Bart. who died in 1671. The Norths and Cullums were at that time closely connected by marriage.

The first Cullum baronet married Mary, daughter of Nicholas Crispe. She died in 1637 aged thirty-six; leaving two sons Thomas and John (d.1711, *aet.* seventy-five). Thomas, the second baronet, who died in 1680 aged about fifty, was married to Dudley, third daughter of the aforementioned Sir Henry North, Bart of Mildenhall who died in 1671. We may assume that the second Cullum baronet commissioned Cawcy to make the monument for his father at Hawstead and something more modest for his father-in-law at Mildenhall. The Hawstead monument has a painted monogram on the lid of the sarcophagus with TC and ?MAC as well as a central S (Fig. 118). The only explanation which includes the S is Sir Thomas Cullum and Mary Crispe or Cullum; perhaps it was devised by Cawcy himself. Sir Henry is commemorated by a simple mural tablet on the south wall just west of the chancel arch, next to the earlier painted wood tablet (perhaps originally intended only as a temporary memorial) to Lady North, which is inscribed with its precise date of erection, 15 February 1671 and is evidently the work of a different artist. Cawcy's trademark floral ornament imitating *pietra dura* is to be seen on Sir Henry's tablet (Fig. 120). Nothing further of Cawcy is to be found in Cullum papers.

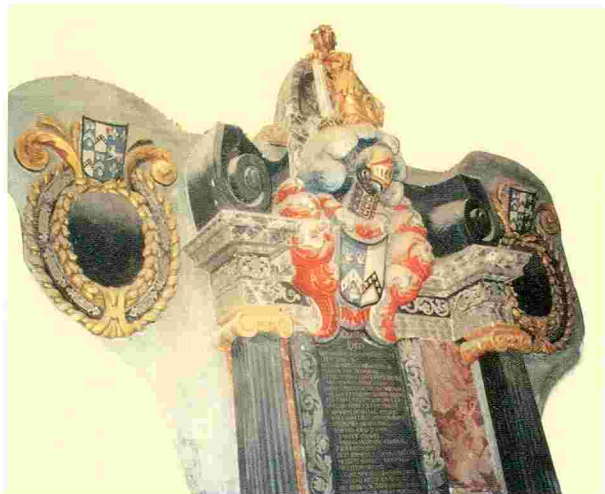
We are grateful to Peter Northeast for drawing our attention to a letter dated 17 August 1681 from John Sothebie Esq. of Bury St Edmunds to Sir Robert Kempe of Ubbeston.⁴ It tells of the complications which arose when Cawcy was commissioned to provide a monument to Maurice Barrow Esq. at Westhorpe. The merest glance at the white marble monument in the north-east chapel there (Fig. 124) shows that it is the work of an accomplished sculptor, but it is not by 'Mr Stanton'⁵ whom Sothebie wanted to engage. In a final change of plan a third sculptor⁶ was engaged, but not before Cawcy had left his mark in the chapel. The monument almost fills the east wall and the paving slabs are painted with floral decorations, all different, but typical of Cawcy's work (Fig. 121).

Maurice Barrow Esq. of Barningham, lawyer of Gray's Inn, had no progeny, but extensive lands and manors. He was a Parliamentary committee man in the Civil War, and the last member of his family to occupy Westhorpe Hall, the Tudor mansion of Charles Brandon and his wife Mary the Dowager Queen of France. He was buried at Westhorpe on 11 May 1666, having by his will made his cousin Maurice Shelton, also of Gray's Inn, one of his executors and his chief heir, but within a year of Barrow's death, Shelton was dead too, leaving a widow, Elizabeth, daughter of Sir Robert Kempe and two sons, Maurice and Henry. Barrow's will, made 16 November 1665, mentions 'a vault I built at the end of the north side of Westhorpe church for myself and Mary, Lady Pointz, my wife. She is already well endowed... For the finishing of the vault at Westhorpe, and the erecting of an

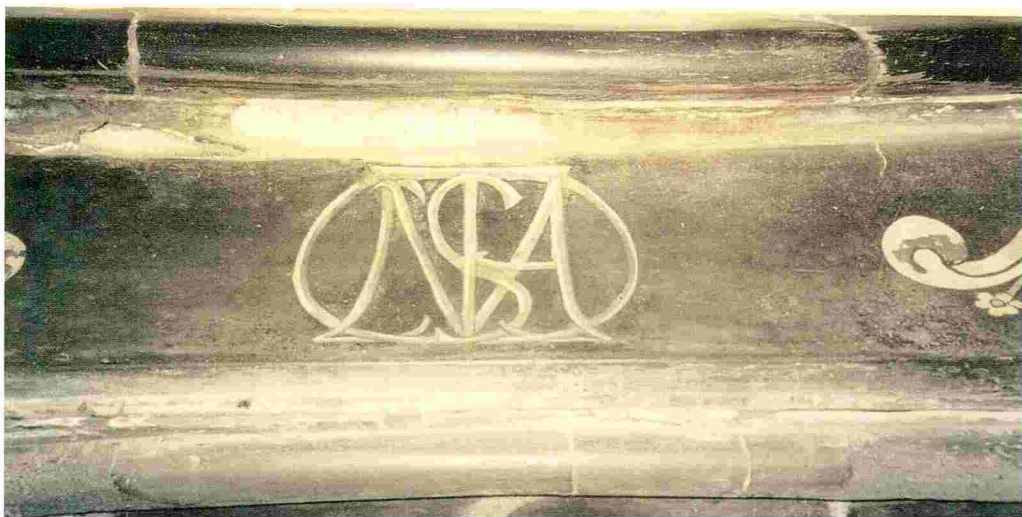


FIGS. 115 and 116 – Hawstead; Cullum monument, details.





FIGS. 117–119 – Hawstead: Cullum monument, details.
Fig. 117 (top) cut-out view;
Fig. 118 (centre) STC/?MAC monogram;
Fig. 119 (bottom) painted step in front of monument.



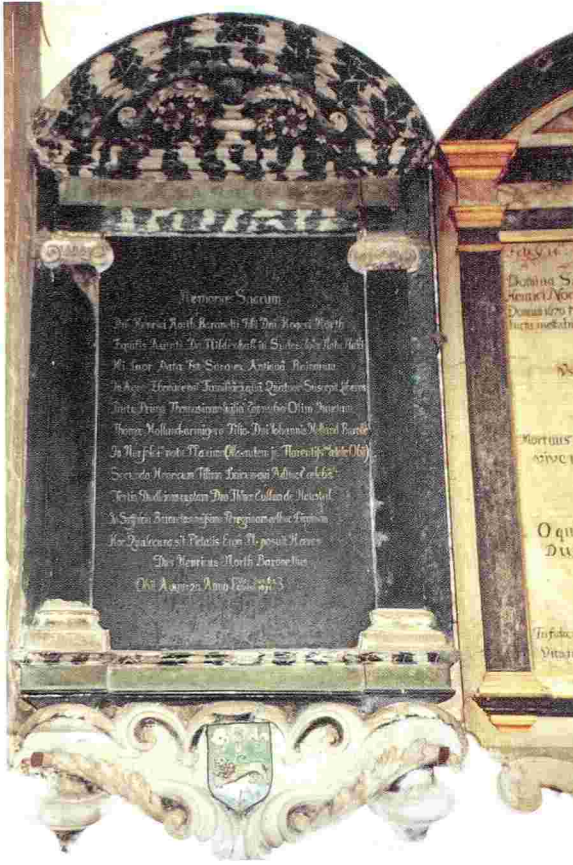


FIG. 120 – Mildenhall: mural tablet to Sir Henry North, Bart (ob. 1671).

FIG. 121 – Westhorpe: worn painted slabs on floor of Barrow chapel.





FIGS. 122 and 123 – Hinton St George, Somerset: monument of John, 1st Baron Poulett, details. (photos by Kate Martin).



FIG. 124 – Westhorpe: detail of monument of Maurice Barrow (ob. 1666) (by permission of the Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art).



FIG. 125 – Hinton St George, Somerset: general view of monument of John, 1st Baron Poulett (*English Heritage, National Monuments Record*).

iron gate for its preservation I appoint the sum of £500'.⁷ The lower inscription on the monument adds further confusion⁸ to the matter of its provision:

This monument was designed & begun by the above-named Maurice Shelton Esq but he being suddenly snatched out of this world, it was afterwards finished by the care of and at the charge of Henry Shelton Esq his brother & heire male that thereby the will of the said Maurice Barrow might be piously performed and his memory perpetuated to all posterities.

Barrow's executors were his cousin and heir Maurice Shelton, Hamond Claxton Esq. of Livermere, and John Sothebie Esq. of Bury St Edmunds, the writer of the letter. If Barrow's vault was no more than that, he must have had it excavated in an extant north-east chapel. The grand polygonal buttresses could indicate that the shell of the chapel dates from Brandon's time at Westhorpe Hall, but, if so, it would appear to have been left unfinished until the 17th century, judging from the style of the window tracery and of the beamed ceiling with large carved pendants. The east window is blocked by the monument. In the absence of further evidence, the building history of the chapel must remain conjectural.

One other monument, far from Suffolk, at Hinton St George in Somerset (Figs 122–123, 125) can be attributed to Cawcy on stylistic grounds. It is comparable in size to, and even more elaborate than, the Hawstead monument. While its central inscription is to John, 1st Baron Poulett, who died in 1649, the surviving part of the inscription to the 2nd baron is in the same lettering style, suggesting that the monument was erected after the latter's death in 1665 by his executors. The garlanded wild man and woman at the sides of the sarcophagus are the Poulett supporters. No Suffolk connections have yet been established for the Poulett family; the search continues for more of Cawcy's distinctive work.

APPENDIX

John Sothebie's letter⁹ is here transcribed into modern English with improved punctuation. Sir Robert Kempe's involvement is as father of Elizabeth Shelton and grandfather of the recently deceased Maurice Shelton junior and of Henry his brother, aged only twenty-seven. As the widowed Elizabeth died in December 1681 she may well have been unfit to oversee the remaining business over the Barrow monument.

W[orshipful]

You could not have pitched upon a more unlucky day (as to me) for a meeting at Barningham than Thursday next, for it happens to be upon the Anniversary day for election of the Aldermen at which many of the affairs of the Corporation are usually transacted, and therefore my presence there not to be dispensed with, and also it so happens that I cannot be there the next morning (as otherwise I would) by reason of a Court that a fortnight since I have appointed on Friday, so that I must crave your pardon for my absence at this meeting. But I suppose your calling me thither is about adjusting my accounts to which I can say no more than I did at the last meeting when (as will appear by your notes) there was due upon the balance of my account £29 7s 10d since which I have received of George Lister for the arrears of Coney Weston quitrents during the time that I received them, £4 8s, so the rest still due to me £20 0s 2d [*sic*] in which account if there appear to be any errors or mistakes I should be willing to have them rectified. I know there was exception to the £4 paid salary for managing the trust for five years which I think (and

so do others too) is as reasonable as ever was demanded for a business of the like nature considering the trouble and perplexity of the affair in selling lands so far distant, the estate whereof was undivided and in common with other receipts of rents in three several counties, paying so many debts and legacies all which were by my co-executors left to my sole care and management, and, (as I think) was performed with as much fidelity and as little charge as ever of the like kind was. And you know that my cousin Barrow for many years in his lifetime and to the time of his death did allow me no less for the care of his affairs when his business was not the twentieth part so much as during this transaction, and therefore I am sure you cannot in your own judgement conceive it unreasonable now. And as to the £100 legacy given to me by Major Shelton immediately after my cousin Barrow's death it can be verified by a witness or two yet living and was affirmed by Major Claxton before his death, and was not to take off any yearly allowance for my pains, but he then having a prospect of the greatness of my cousin Barrow's debts and legacies and finding that he could not be extricated out of them without much trouble and difficulty did voluntarily offer me his £100 legacy so as I would take upon me the whole care and management, and accordingly upon his earnest request and out of my respect to the family I undertook, not questioning the former allowance of £40 per annum. And I dare appeal to yourself whether (all circumstances considered) I have not deserved it. But now to take off from this the miscarriage of the Tomb is laid at my door, but without the least shadow of reason, for you cannot but remember that at your request it was postponed after the debts and legacies, and when these were near paid off I treated with an able workman at London (by name Mr Stanton) for doing it who came down to my house, went to Barningham and from thence to Westhorpe to view the place where it was to be set up, and when I went to London next term we discoursed a price but I would not conclude anything without acquainting the Major and having his concurrence, but in the interval and before my return he had heard of an Italian hereabout (whom I had never seen or heard of before) that had set up one for Sir Thomas Cullum at Hawsted and seemed to be so much taken with his skill that at my return he wrote me a letter that he looked upon him as a fitting man for the purpose, which I could not gainsay because I had never seen or heard of him before, but upon enquiry finding him to be a base man and one that had no fixed settlement I wrote and also went over to the Major to wish him to consider whether such a person were fit to be trusted with it, especially being indigent, to which his answer was that he was recommended to him by Sir Thomas Hervey¹⁰ and others for an able workman and that he should do it and no other, at which I somewhat wondered in regard the business was only under my charge and trust yet seeing him so fixed I would not contradict him lest he should think I had some private design in employing another. The next news I heard of an agreement the Major had made (without my knowledge or privity) with this man for £500 according to a model that was sent me by the same person, by which I finding the Major was circumvented in the bargain, I treated with him, and made some alteration in the model for the better and brought him down to £400 with which the Major being well satisfied desired me to draw up the Articles between them, which I did with as much caution as I could that he might not have too much money beforehand lest he should give him the slip, yet finding that he had nothing to buy materials for carrying on the work, there was a necessity to furnish him with some money otherwise nothing could be done, and therefore the Articles were made (as you see) for gradual payments as the work went on. And Mr Shulver¹¹ knows well that I frequently directed that care should be taken for proceed [*sic*] in the work as payments were made, and how it came to pass that no more was done, or what, or how the payments were made Mr Shulver (who was employed therein) can give a better account than I. But thus [*sic*] much I can and will say, that it was against my sense to have this man employed, and that the Major took it wholly upon himself for which I am sure I am in no wise accountable, but my trust still continues to have

the work perfect in due time, which must be taken care of. This I assure you is true upon the faith of an honest man, and I assure you further that I have been at some charge in reference to the Tomb which I have not nor shall put upon account. I leave what I have said to your consideration, and desire that an end may be put to my account and trust in which I can say I have been faithful to the interest of that family and (notwithstanding some causeless discouragements I have met with) shall continue so to be to the utmost of my power, and shall endeavour to approve myself as I really am

Your faithful and very humble servant
Jo: Sothebie

Bury 17: Aug: 1681

NOTES

- 1 Because the Cullum monument is so large and the chancel so narrow, it is very difficult to photograph the whole. It is hoped that the reader will be able to build a mental picture from the five details illustrated. The gaudily painted roof and the monument to the east present conflicting images; the detail in Fig. 117 has been cut to shape to eliminate them.
- 2 [Gunnis], 1951, 125 (*s.v.* Jacinthe de Coucy). Cawcy must be assumed to be the spelling the Italian adopted in England. Gunnis's frenchified form of the names is inexplicable and misleading.
- 3 1784 edition, 56–58; 1813 edition, 55–57. We are grateful to Dr Pat Murrell for her opinion that the Cullum archive contains nothing about Cawcy decorating Hawstead Hall.
- 4 A full transcript of the letter, NRO MC1/18, where it is an isolated letter in the Le Neve Collection, is given in an appendix. We are indebted to Margaret Statham for the following notes on its writer: John Sothebie saw Bury through the very difficult time at the Restoration when many of the Corporation men who had served during the Commonwealth refused to renounce the Solemn League and Covenant and were consequently ineligible for office. New men were appointed to fill the Corporation, but found themselves in a very difficult position because, in 1630, John Malloves had persuaded the then Corporation men to put the corporate estates into a feoffment consisting of the thirty-seven Corporation members, the Town Clerk, Recorder and one other, to make up forty in all. Archbishop Laud seems to have been perturbed by the clergy who had been appointed to the Bury churches. The surviving papers show that Malloves thought it likely that they were about to have their charter of incorporation withdrawn. The 1630 feoffment had been renewed a few times by 1660, so that few of those who were named then were supporters of the Crown and the Established church, though they enjoyed the profits of the corporate estates. Soon after the Restoration, the preachers of both parishes fell foul of the authorities and were suspended, but the feoffees of the corporate lands continued to pay them handsomely. Meanwhile, the orthodox men who filled the post-Restoration Corporation had to provide and pay for other clergymen. Sothebie had to direct a long drawn out case in Chancery to recover the corporate lands for the then Corporation members, and help them to obtain a further charter in 1668, to confirm the rights which had been granted earlier in the 17th century.
- 5 Either Thomas Stanton (1609 or 1610–74) or his nephew William Stanton (1639–1705).
- 6 Stylistic features of the executed monument point to the important London sculptor Edward Pearce (died 1695) as its author. No essay on Pearce's church monuments dealing adequately with attributable works has appeared in print, but relevant photographs can be studied in the Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London.
- 7 Barrow's will is known only from a transcript in D.E.Davy's MS Collections for Hartismere Hundred (B.L., Add MS 19090). Mary was the daughter and coheirress of Sir Richard Smith of London, and widow of Sir James Poyntz of Ockendon, Essex. In fact she was buried at Barningham on 18 November 1666, perhaps because the vault at Westhorpe was still unfinished.
- 8 The confusion arises because Henry Shelton, who presumably composed the lower inscription, unaccountably muddles his father 'the above-named' and his brother from whom the task came to him.
- 9 NRO MC1/18.
- 10 Sir Thomas Hervey and John Sothebie Esq. were in 1674 both taxed on ten hearths in St Mary's parish in Bury St Edmunds. The Major, Maurice Shelton junior, paid for 33 hearths at Barningham.
- 11 Roger Shulver, bachelor of Stowlangtoft, who made his will in 1682, seems likely to have been the Mr Shulver here referred to.

REFERENCES

Gunnis, R., 1951. *Dictionary of British Sculptors 1660–1851*. London.

Abbreviations

B.L. British Library.

N.R.O. Norfolk Record Office.