

## THE MONUMENTS OF St MARY'S CHURCH, FAIRFORD - 21

### ROGER LYGON (1502-1584) KATHERINE LYGON (1503-1582)



Perhaps the jewel in the crown of any medieval church is an effigy monument and St Mary's is fortunate to have a well-preserved, albeit somewhat late, example. The subjects of this monument are Roger Lygon and his wife Katherine who was the widow of Sir Edmund Tame, the grandson of John Tame who is regarded as the founder of St Mary's.

Katherine was the daughter of Sir William Dennis (Denys) of Dyrham and Pucklechurch, a well-known Gloucestershire family linked by marriage to the Berkeleys and the Danvers. Katherine married Sir Edmund Tame on 15 September 1521 and lived in the Tame mansion in Rendcomb as Sir Edmund's father, also a Sir Edmund, lived in the family house at Fairford until his death in 1534. Sir Edmund (junior) died in 1544 whereby Katherine inherited the remainder of the Tame lands and fortune and two years later she married Walter Buckler, the son of John Buckler of Causeway in Dorset. Walter was a successful diplomat and spent some time in France, Italy and Germany on state business on behalf of Henry VIII and his chief minister Thomas Cromwell. He was also private secretary to Catherine Parr, Henry VIII's sixth and last wife and was knighted for his services by Edward VI on 22 February 1547. Sir Walter died in either late 1553 or early 1554 and was apparently buried in the Lady Chapel at Fairford, although there is now no trace of a commemoration in the church.

Not long after Walter Buckler's death Katherine married Roger Lygon as her third husband. The Lygons had been lords of the manor of Madresfield in Worcestershire since 1420 and had taken up arms on the side of the Yorkists during the Wars of the Roses; Roger's grandfather had fought at the Battle of Towton in 1461. Roger was the youngest son of Richard Lygon and his wife Anne, the daughter of 2nd Baron Beauchamp of Powick. The earliest mention of Roger Lygon and Katherine Buckler is on 26 October 1554 when the Manor of Cheltenham was granted by Queen Mary to the couple who were probably married very soon after this date. Roger had already taken a lease of the 800-acre Tewkesbury Park from Sir Henry Jerningham in 1545 and in 1556 Roger and Katherine

also leased Painswick manor from Sir Henry. Another manor acquired by Roger and Katherine was that of Coln Rogers which was leased from William Morris in 1557. Roger bequeathed the lease of this manor to his nephew George, the son of his brother Michael of Beauchamp Court, Powick. George lived in Fairford and died there in 1593. Coln Rogers was eventually passed down to George's grandson, Robert Oldisworth, the father of William Oldisworth (1609-1680) of Fairford.

It would appear that the Lygons resided in Fairford after their marriage, probably in John Tame's mansion near the church. Katherine settled the manor on herself and her new husband but granted reversionary rights to her brother Sir Walter Denys who died in 1570. Even though Katherine had been married to Roger Lygon for several years, there is a manuscript dated 12 September 1575 at Fairford from 'Katharine Buckler' requesting that Lord Burghley redress a verdict against Andrew Buckler, Comptroller of the Port of Poole and a nephew of her dead husband, Sir Walter. It is possible that she was using her former married name simply to underline her family connection to Andrew Buckler.

Katherine died in 1582 and Roger Lygon died two years later and was buried alongside his wife in the Lady Chapel in Fairford church. The arrangements for the building of the tomb were probably made by Roger's nephews George and Henry Lygon whom Roger had appointed as his executors. However, his will also mentions three overseers: his friend Sir Richard Berkeley; his cousin William Oldisworth; and his servant Thomas Ingram, who may also have had a hand in the building of the tomb which is believed to have been constructed by 1590.



The tomb consists of two full-sized effigies of Roger and Katherine with Roger wearing very detailed Elizabethan plate armour complete with the remains of a sword. Katherine is shown wearing a 'Paris hood', a close cap with a long closely-plaited frill attached at the back. Both figures sport a starched ruff which became very popular during the Elizabethan era.

On the two visible sides of the chest tomb there are several heraldic shields which depict the arms of Lygon along with the arms of families connected by marriage including the Denys, Corbet, Russel and De Gorges families.

The tomb was restored in 1913 by William Lygon, 7<sup>th</sup> Earl Beauchamp who also paid for the adjacent painted reredos in remembrance of his ancestral family. Despite some damage to his sword and to the tilting helm upon which Roger's head is resting and some minor damage to Katherine's nose and fingers, the effigies are in remarkably good condition although both pairs of hands (which are held in prayer) have been replaced. Faint traces of paint may be seen on a few places on the tomb, but this may only date from the restoration work.

Roger's will, written on 4 November 1583, bequeathed his leased estates in Fairford and Coln Rogers along with 600 "sheepe and wethers that pastureth in Olgore and Carmesden" to his nephew George. He left generous sums of money to other relatives (particularly his nephew Henry and his niece Sibell). He also left sums of money to no less than 29 named servants but left only a paltry five marks to Fairford church and the same amount to the poor of Fairford.