

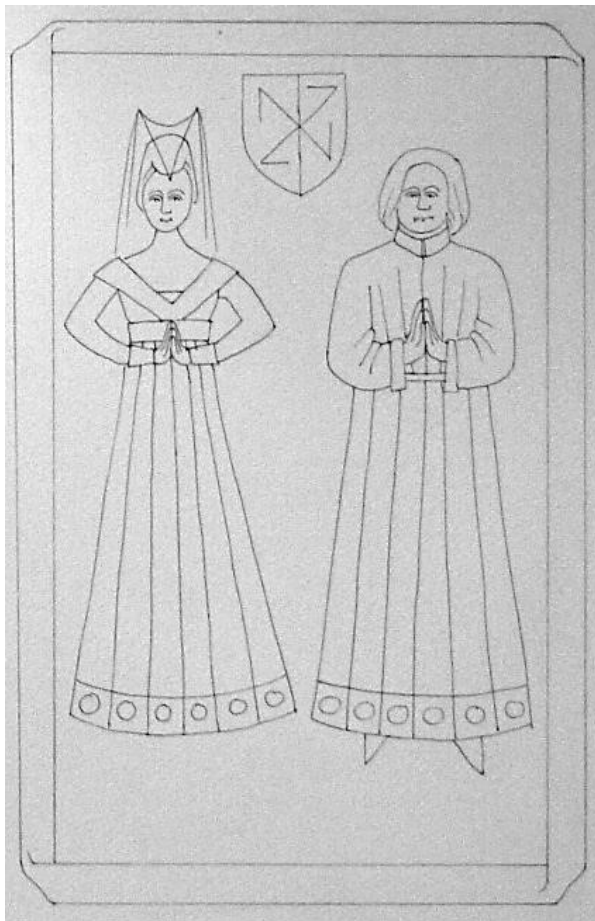
William White: citizen of London and local benefactor

The Estfeld family is known for at least one of its members becoming wealthy in London and donating money to St Mary's Church. This was not the only local family whose members found fortune in London in medieval times and then remembered their birthplace in their wills. Thomas Tikhill who died in 1419 was a citizen and mercer of London whose parents lived in Tickhill. He bequeathed a chalice costing 33 shillings and 4 pence to St Mary's Church. He also bequeathed 40 shillings to 'the warden and poor of the hospital of Tikhill' - possibly St Leonard's hospital. Another example is an even more successful man.

William White (Whyte) was born in Tickhill, the son of William and Cecyle White whose incomplete memorial is in St Mary's Church - in St Luke's Chapel on the floor close to the door from the chancel. Hunter described the stone on which are the incised effigies of William and Cecyle along with a shield depicting the 'old form of the mill roynd' (shown right and looking like a stylised mill water wheel). This emblem can also be seen in one of the windows on the south aisle. The elder William died on 31 January 1487 and Cecyle on 23 December in the same year. Their son may have contributed to the cost of his parents' memorial; other children of William and Cecyle included Nicholas, Richard (Vicar of Harworth) John, Robert and a daughter. The memorial stone is damaged with sections missing; possibly the memorial was relocated and parts lost in the process, for example, when the organ was moved to its present site. A drawing in St Luke's Chapel with the possible original appearance of the memorial is shown below.



The younger William made his will in 1500 four years before he died. He described himself as 'citizen, draper and Alderman of London', showing he had a successful career in the capital. He served as Alderman of the Coleman Street Ward 1482-96 then Alderman of Lime Street Ward 1496-1504. Additionally he was a City of London Auditor 1479-82 and 1488-90 and Master Draper at the Drapers' Company 1484-6, 1489-90, 1493-4, 1498-9 and 1503-4. He became a Freeman of the City of London in 1493 after being Mayor of London in 1489 and MP for the City of London in the same year. It was this Parliament, in session during January and February 1489, which granted Henry VII's desire to levy £100,000 from taxation to assist Brittany in maintaining its independence. Yorkshire objected to the tax, one reason being a poor harvest the previous year, and a rebellion was led by Sir John Egremont. The Yorkshire rebellion was put down by the Earl of Surrey. However, Yorkshire never did pay this particular tax and in total Henry VII only raised £27,000.



William wished to be buried in St Swithun's Church, Candlewick Street (now called Cannon Street), London. This church was in Walbrook Ward, not a Ward William represented as Alderman. He bequeathed to St Mary's a 'mustrance' of silver to the value of 10 marks to be used yearly on Corpus Christi day and 'borne apon prestis shuldres as of old tyme yt hath be usyd to be done with another such mustrance ther, which I am informyd of was stolen and wrongfully withdrawn from the same church, to thentent that the curat and parishons shall for evermore pray for my sowle, the sowlys of William Whit and Cecyle my father and mother, as for a benefactor of the same church'. Corpus Christi day was celebrated in England from 1318 onwards and usually involved a procession not only within a church but also around part of its parish on the Thursday after Trinity Sunday. A monstrance containing consecrated bread was placed on a litter and carried on clergy's shoulders in the procession so that it could be seen clearly by parishioners who venerated it. St Mary's monstrance no longer exists, possibly melted down after the Reformation.

Marion Shields made the drawing (left) in 1995 of how the Whites' memorial stone might have looked and added the following notes. Cecyle's gown would be girdled high with a wide belt, and the neckline a low V, possibly revealing the top of the kirtle beneath. Her sleeves would be very tight. Her headdress may well have been in the fashionable 'butterfly' style. It was worn at the back of the head and was covered with fine gauze supported on wires. William's gown has looser sleeves and is belted lower. The collar would be high and I believe he may be bare headed. Men's hair was worn longer at this date.

Also Marion believed he was wearing shoes, not footed hose as before. Both have similar decoration at the hem of their gowns, possibly embroidered.

The photograph, right, shows the Whites' memorial with some sections missing.

Thanks to Stella and Donald Thorpe for help with this item, especially the above two photographs, and to Hilary Shields.

