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This text is made available to readers in advance of its full publication. We welcome suggestions for improvement, references and, of course, we invite readers to point out errors.

There are a scatter of missing or incomplete footnotes which will be supplied in later versions.

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Public memorials*

Viscount Hill's column in Abbey Foregate

The column commemorating Viscount Rowland Hill (1772-1842) is one of number of similar monuments erected in honour of the military leaders of the Napoleonic wars.¹ The best known is Nelson's column in Trafalgar Square. Wellington himself is honoured with a column on his estate at Stratfield Saye (Hamps.).

Hill was the second son of John Hill, later third baronet (1740–1824), of Hawkstone, and his wife, Mary, daughter of John Chambre of Petton (*d.* 1806). He was therefore one of the county's own. Educated at Ightfield and later Chester, he followed his elder brother into the army, receiving his first commission in 1790, and rising rapidly through the ranks. He was promoted successively to Major General in 1805 and Lieutenant General in 1812. He served as Wellington's second in command in the later stages of the Peninsular War. Hill commanded the British forces at the Battle of Nive at St Pierre near Bayonne on 13 December 1813 where a British force defeated a much larger French army. He was raised to the peerage as baron of Almaraz and Hawkstone in May 1814. At Waterloo Hill led the attack on the Imperial Guard in the closing stages of the battle. Hill retired from the army in 1818 but was called back to service in 1828 by Wellington, who appointed him commander in chief, a post he retained until a few months before his death on 10 December 1842. He was raised to Viscount after his retirement.

The association between Hill and Shrewsbury was strong and long-enduring. He was elected one of Shrewsbury's two MPs in 1812 but never took the seat (being on active service) before his elevation to the Lords in 1814. He was rewarded by the town with a procession from Coton Hill and a formal dinner on his return from France in 1814.² The day of his funeral was taken in Shrewsbury as one of general mourning.³

On news of Hill's success at the Battle of Nive reaching the town, the editor of the *Shrewsbury Chronicle* proposed that a memorial in the form of a triumphal column should be erected at the head of The Quarry. A public subscription was opened at the newspaper's

* Some of this section is based on George T. Noszlopy and Fiona Waterhouse, *Public sculpture of Herefordshire, Shropshire and Worcestershire* (Public sculpture of England, XI, 2010).

¹ The following is based on Noszlopy and Waterhouse, *Public Sculpture*, XI, pp. 116-18; Alison W. Yarrington, 'The Commemoration of the hero, 1800-1864: Monuments to the British victors of the Napoleonic wars' (Cambridge Ph. D, 1980, printed ver. 1988); John Straphen, *A description of the memorial in honour of Lord Hill erected at Shrewsbury* (sec. edn, 1817) (copy at SA 731/14/20). For Hill see *ODNB* and Rev. Edwin Sidney, *The life of Lord Hill GCB, late commander of the forces* (sec. edn, 1845).

² *SC*, early July 1814; Sidney, *Life*, pp. 292-4.

³ *SC*, 16 Dec., 23 Dec. 1842.

offices and a meeting of the residents was called for 30 December. This resolved that ‘some durable public monument, worthy of him and ourselves, be erected in a conspicuous situation in commemoration of his achievements’.⁴ This was communicated to Hill and he graciously accepted. At a further meeting on 14 January 1814, it was proposed that the memorial should take the form of a triumphal arch through which a new market hall could be accessed. Memorializing Hill thus became a project of civic improvement.

This proposal prompted some local debate and other suggestions were canvassed in the press. The market scheme was not popular and did not attract donations. In April the committee abandoned the idea and reverted to the proposal for a column, but placed on the outskirts of the town. The traveller to Shrewsbury would see the column, topped by a statue, from a distance of some miles. They would then pass it and proceed into the town by way of Abbey Foregate and English Bridge which, would, in effect, be converted into a triumphal entrance to the town.

The necessary land was secured from the earl of Tankerville. The turnpike trusts agreed to the diversion of roads. On 27 April an advertisement appeared in the *Salopian Journal* announcing a competition for the design of the column and its surrounding furniture. The committee awarded the prize at a meeting on 30 May. The commission was finally awarded to the second-placed architect, Edward Haycock.⁵

In October the building contract was let to John Simpson and John Lawrence, both of whom died before it was completed, and the work was brought to a close by their assistant, John Straphen. The first stone of the column was laid in an elaborate ceremony on 27 December 1814 by the mayor of Shrewsbury, Richard Phillips, master of the Salopian Lodge with the assistance of members of this and other lodges.⁶ The final stone was laid on 18 June 1816 on the first anniversary of Waterloo.⁷ The statue was installed in August 1816 having first been exhibited in London.

In July 1817 the Committee which had superintended the building declared that all the works would be finalised by 1 September and donated the column and the assemblage of buildings to Hill. They invited him to nominate a custodian.⁸

⁴ Yarrington, ‘Commemoration’, pp. 149-65.

⁵ Five unsigned designs for the monument can be found at SA, DP 584.

⁶ For an account of the laying of the first stone, SA, 6001/3060 (David Parkes’ memorandum book), p. 9.

⁷ Parkes’ memorandum book contains a watercolour of the column under scaffolding dated 27 Sept. 1816 and one of the completed structure. SA, 6001/3060, pp. 8, 10. At pp. 11-14 he gives the text of the tablets on the pedestal. A drawing by Buckler of 1821 shows the column in its surroundings and includes the detail that the whole assemblage was enclosed within a wrought iron railing: BL, Add Ms 36378, fo. 162.

⁸ SA, 6001/3060, pp. 31-5 (resolutions and subsequent correspondence with Hill); also SA, 73/11/66-8.

The total height of the shaft of the column and its capital is 91 feet 6 inches. The statue of Hill which tops it is 17 feet tall: the whole is 137 feet 6 inches high.⁹ It is higher than Nelson's column by some 15 feet. The contract stipulated that the highest-grade of Grinshill stone was to be used throughout.

The commissioning committee insisted that the statue – designed by Joseph Panzetta – was to be true to life. However, economy required that it was not carved but made from Coade stone, a form of terracotta. It is claimed to be the largest Coade stone statue ever to have been made. Although the four flanking lions were also to be made by the Coade manufactory, they were – for reasons of economy – carved from Grinshill stone by John Carline II. The pedestal on which the column sits bears inscriptions praising Hill and listing the battles in which he took part. The column is hollow and contains a cast iron staircase, the gift of the builder, John Straphen. The assemblage was completed by a cottage for a keeper – demolished during the building of County Hall in c. 1963 – who for a gratuity would show visitors to the viewing platform at the top of the column.

The total cost, including the keeper's cottage but not the internal stairs and other features, was £5973 13s. 2d.¹⁰ On its completion, the column, and the land on which it and the keeper's cottage stood, were donated to Hill.¹¹

Even though Coade stone is regarded as a durable material, the statute has required repair over the years. Repairs were made as early as 1879. An arm fell off in 1945. A concrete leg was substituted for the original in the 1970s. The statute was removed from its pedestal and brought to earth for more extensive repairs in 1994-5. The column was scaffolded in 2013 after pieces fell from it.¹² It is now held that the statute is beyond further repair and a Friends of Lord Hill's Column was established in 2013 with the objective of making and installing a replacement Coade stone statue.¹³ They also organise visits to the viewing platform.

Memorial to Admiral Benbow in St Mary's church

John Benbow (?1653-1702) was a prominent English admiral who died from wounds received in an inconclusive engagement with a French squadron in the West Indies at the end of August and in the first days of September 1703. He was buried in Kingston, Jamaica. At

⁹ Figures taken from Straphen, *Description*, p. 7.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

¹¹ Correspondence in SA, 731/11/66-68.

¹² <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-shropshire-22266247>.

¹³ www.friendsoflordhillscolumn.co.uk; <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-shropshire-27340027> (News report 12 May 2014).

the time of his death he held the title of Rear Admiral of the Blue: his promotion to Vice Admiral had been agreed and dispatched to him but he died before he could receive it.

There is some question of where and to whom Benbow was born.¹⁴ The view current in Shrewsbury was that he was born on Coton Hill in the parish of St Mary's. An early obituary says that he attended the Grammar School. Certainly the town adopted him as one of its own, and had in its possession from an early date a portrait of Benbow given it by his sister.¹⁵

The origins of the town's interest in providing a memorial for Benbow may come from comments made at a dinner held in honour of Rear Admiral Owen in August 1825.¹⁶ Owen was asked to sit for a portrait which could be exhibited alongside the town's portrait of Benbow. Owen demurred, saying that 'I have no right to hope to be deemed worthy of having my portrait placed near that of Admiral Benbow, tho [the] talent & merit of that brave man entitle his portrait to stand by itself and alone'.¹⁷ Instead Owen urged the town to repair Benbow's grave in Kingston, Jamaica. In the event a portrait of Owen was commissioned.¹⁸

Pidgeon wrote to the *Salopian Journal* in August 1827 complaining that there was no memorial to Benbow in the town.¹⁹ A fund was subsequently established, the treasurer of which was David Parkes. Amongst the subscribers was Admiral Owen, but it appears that nothing had been done when Parkes died in May 1833.²⁰ In February and March 1839 there was some correspondence in the *Shrewsbury Chronicle* about what had happened to the subscribers' donations.²¹ It seems that the uncompleted project was taken up by the vicar of St Mary's, the Rev. W. G. Rowland. A memorial had been commissioned from Sir Francis Chantrey before his sudden death on 25 November 1841 and the commission passed to his pupil, J. Evans Thomas. In December 1841 Thomas was asking to be sent engravings of Benbow. In September 1843 he asked for the text of the inscription and the memorial was finally placed in St Mary's in December of that year.²²

The memorial was placed in a slightly odd position, in the baptistry high on the wall over the arch leading into what was then the vestry and is now the café. Under a drape, it has a

¹⁴ For an account which acknowledges his connection to Shrewsbury, Owen and Blakeway, II, pp. 390-4.

¹⁵ D. Parkes, 'Life and exploits of Admiral Benbow', *Gentleman's Magazine* 89 (ii) (1819), frontispiece and pp. 9-11. The portrait is now in Shrewsbury Museum and Art Gallery. There was a monument to the sister, Eleanor Hind, in St Mary's: Owen and Blakeway, II, p. 390. She d. 1724.

¹⁶ Sir Edward C. R. Owen (1771-1849). Owen was born in Nova Scotia but had family at Glansevern, Montg. *SC* 19 Oct. 1849.

¹⁷ SA, 6001/3060, Parkes, 'Memorandums etc of persons and events', p. 135.

¹⁸ From Richard Evans. It is now in Shrewsbury Museum and Art Gallery.

¹⁹ SA, 6001/3057, Pidgeon, *Salopian Annals*, V, p. 45.

²⁰ *SC*, 10 May 1833.

²¹ *SC*, 8 Feb., 1 and 8 Mar. 1839.

²² P257/B/22/1-11 9 which includes a subscription list and correspondence with Thomas: *SC*, 22 Dec. 1843 (report of the erection of the monument).

bust of Benbow. This sits above a relief of the type of frigate with which Benbow was particularly associated. Beneath is an inscription which calls Benbow a 'skilled and daring seaman' 'whose heroic exploits long rendered him the boast of the British navy and still point him out as the Nelson of his times'.

Robert Clive, Lord Clive²³

Clive (1724-75) was a Shropshire man, the elder son of Robert Clive of Styche Hall, Moreton Say, near Market Drayton in Shropshire. He was sent to India when aged 17 to serve as a clerk to the East India Company. Once there he switched from administration to service in the military and commanded the army which defeated the combined French and Bengali forces at the battle of Plassey in 1757. He returned to England in 1760 having made his fortune and was created Lord Clive (in the Irish peerage) in 1762. In 1765 he accepted an invitation to return to India to reform the civil and military services. On his return to England in 1767, his work in India was severely criticised but despite being vindicated by an investigation by the House of Commons, he died by his own hand (it is widely believed) in 1774.

Clive's local standing was reflected in his election as mayor of Shrewsbury in 1762 and he served as the town's MP in 1761-4. He bought Walcot Park and acquired a controlling interest in the parliamentary seat of Bishops Castle. He built a house (Claremont) in Surrey. Despite Clive's reputation as one of the founders of British India and his parliamentary service to the town, there was no memorial to him erected on his death. It had to wait until 1856 for a proposal to be made by one William Litt, veterinary surgeon of Shrewsbury. This arose from the reception given to a Clive descendent, Percy Herbert MP on his return from the Crimea. Litt published a letter in the *Shrewsbury Chronicle* pointing out that Shrewsbury had a monument to Hill but not Clive although the latter was by far and away the more significant figure. Visitors to Shrewsbury asked where the Clive memorial was located, and of course there was none. Litt therefore proposed that the balance of the subscriptions given for the civic reception for Herbert should form the nucleus of a fund to commemorate Clive and suggested that it would be appropriate to unveil a statue on the centenary of Clive's victory at Plassey.

The centenary was handsomely missed, but the seed was sown. A meeting to consider the proposal, chaired by Viscount Hill, convened in London on the day of the centenary, 23

²³ The following account is based on Noszlopy and Waterhouse, *Public Sculpture*, pp. 112-14, the papers of the 1857 committee in SA, QA/14 (taken from notes made by Sarah Davies) and newspapers.

June 1857, resolved that there should be a statue erected in a prominent location in Shrewsbury to commemorate both Clive's service to the country and to celebrate his success at Plassey. A committee was established which included some prominent Shrewsbury figures, many of whom made handsome donations to the fund, but the East India Company made the largest.²⁴ In fact it is not clear how much support the project received in Shrewsbury itself. The outbreak of the Indian mutiny might have raised public doubts about Clive's legacy in India. The *Shrewsbury Chronicle* argued that Clive should be shown on horseback 'like a king', but the decision was taken that he should be shown as a standing figure.

At various moments it was suggested that the statue should be placed above The Quarry or outside the station, but September 1857 it was decided that the statue should be placed in the market place (arguably too small a space to show the statue to its best). At some point Carlo Marochetti was commissioned as the sculptor. By the summer of 1859 the statue had been completed and it was put on display in London before being brought to Shrewsbury.

The unveiling of the statue took place on 18 January 1860, the day being declared a public holiday in the town. Large crowds attended the unveiling ceremony: there was, as well, the usual round of civic functions including a dinner. The unveiling was undertaken by the Conservative politician and historian Phillip Stanhope, fifth Earl Stanhope who addressed the crowd, offering Clive as a figure whom the young might emulate. He also spoke of the statue's fidelity to life.²⁵ Others were more dismissive. The comment was made by one commenter that 'we are well pleased it is not in London'.²⁶ Clive is shown standing, his left leg forwards, right hand on hip, gazing into the distance. He wears a sword. In his left hand he holds a feathered tricorne hat. It was dismissed at an early date as the posture and gaze of 'an arrogant bully': it may be said that he looks impatient if not actually bad-tempered. The polished granite plinth bears the word 'Clive' without date or further explanation.

The reputation of Clive has certainly fallen, with doubts expressed whether his overthrowing of the native Indian states for the advantage of the East India Company could be justified in a longer perspective. In the Black Lives Matter agitation of 2020, it was questioned whether the statue should remain in a prominent location in the centre of Shrewsbury. Shrewsbury Town Council received two petitions calling for the statue's removal and one seeking its retention. Doubts were expressed even by the present Earl of Powis, a Clive descendent, who appeared in a television programme in 2021 expressing his

²⁴ There are subscription lists in QA 14.

²⁵ SC, 20 Jan. 1860 (which includes an account of the campaign to raise the statue).

²⁶ *Art Journal* IV (1860), p. 63, cited in Noszlopy and Waterhouse, *Public Sculpture*, XI, pp. 114.

distaste for the statue. It was agreed that information boards should be located near the statue outlining Clive's role in the establishment of the British empire but this had not been done two years later.²⁷ The statue remains in the place where it was erected in 1860.²⁸

Memorials to Charles Darwin (1809-1882)

Darwin was born in Shrewsbury and educated at Shrewsbury school although as an adult he seems not to have maintained his connection with the school. He visited Shrewsbury and or Maer every year from 1838-1848 and then 1852, 1855 and 1869.²⁹ On his death the *Shrewsbury Chronicle* firmly claimed him as a Shropshire man

It [was] in the fields and lanes of his native county that he first exhibited and developed those marvellous powers of observation which made him famous in every quarter of the globe. We have good reason to be proud of a man who went forth from our midst to be a conquerer in a world of his own.³⁰

The newspaper looked for a means by which the town could offer a memorial to him, pondering the suggestion made in a letter to the paper that a national subscription be launched to purchase the old grammar school buildings as a museum or centre for scientific education. A committee was formed which proposed a more modest commemoration of either a bust or a statute in his memory but early aspirations petered out. The exception was a memorial given to the Unitarian Chapel in the High St by its minister, Rev. E. Myers which commemorated Darwin as both the author of the *Origin of Species* and as a former member of the chapel's congregation. It was decorated with examples of the species with which Darwin was associated through his writings.³¹

In January 1894 the *Shrewsbury Chronicle* noted that visitors to Shrewsbury were sometimes surprised that the town had no memorial to its most distinguished son.³² The paper published a letter from a Mr Edwin Powell of Rowton Lodge offering a small sum to launch a subscription for the erection of a Darwin memorial. A public meeting to consider a memorial was quickly announced and took place on 30 January. A second public meeting took place on 16 May and a committee to establish funds established. But money was not as forthcoming as

²⁷ <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2021/nov/19/clive-of-india-statue-in-shrewsbury-should-be-removed-says-descendant-channel-4>

²⁸ There was also a strong Shropshire element in moves to commemorate Clive with a statue in London in 1903-07: see *Trans. SAHS* 43 part 1 (1925-6), pp. i-ii and 44 part 1 (0000-0), pp. xiii-xv and SA 1035 (Wakeman papers) 2-22.

²⁹ Ex inf. Nigel Hinton (based on an analysis of Darwin's journals).

³⁰ SC 28 Apr. 1882.

³¹ SC, 19 Dec. 1883.

³² A narrative of the campaign can be found in the newspaper account of its unveiling, SC, 13 Aug. 1897

readily as was hoped and it was reported in January 1896 that only £400 had been raised.³³ A renewed appeal was issued.³⁴ This may be a reflection of a continuing distaste in some religious circles for Darwin's work.³⁵ In the event the Horticultural Society stepped in and in November 1896 agreed to underwrite the whole cost of a statue which was placed in front of the old Grammar School building.³⁶ The money raised by subscription was returned to its donors.³⁷

The statute was unveiled on 10 August 1897 by Lord Kenyon as President of the Shropshire Horticultural Society.³⁸ The sculptor was Horace Montford, who, although resident in London, was a Shrewsbury man. The statute was made from photographs and with the willing co-operation of the Darwin family. It has been suggested that the Montford sculpture is to a degree derivative of an earlier work by Boehm in the natural History Museum in London (unveiled in 1885): both show Darwin as an older man, seated and cross legged, with a sheaf of papers balanced on his knees. The Shrewsbury statute has details not found in the Boehm statute so it is by no means a copy, but in general it conforms to the same view of Darwin.³⁹

A very different representation of Darwin is shown in a more recent statute commissioned by Shrewsbury School and unveiled in 2000. Here Darwin is shown as a young man engaged in scientific research, with a notebook in his breast pocket, with two geological hammers tucked into his belt, a water bottle and for his safety a pistol. He carries his hat. Darwin is not at home, but in the Galapagos Islands, and two Iguanas feature on the rock on which he stands. The image is one of vigour coupled with intellectual endeavour and curiosity. The sculptor was Jemma Pearson. The sculpture was unveiled by the television naturalist and personality David Attenborough.⁴⁰

³³ SC, 31 Jan. 1896.

³⁴ SA, 4335/1/52.

³⁵ The proposal that a statue should erected was not universally well-received in the town: see SC, 23 Feb. 1894 for objections including the suggestion made in a sermon that the steeple of St Mary's fell as retribution for the meeting on 31 January. Also letter 14 Feb. 1896 explaining why the subscription had been a failure. Religious disquiet continued right up to the unveiling of the statue.

³⁶ Announced in the annual report: SC 12 Feb. 1897.

³⁷ SC, 30 July 1897.

³⁸ SC, 13 Aug. 1897 for the unveiling.

³⁹ For a description see SC, 13 Aug. 1897 and Noszlopy and Waterhouse, *Public Sculpture*, XI, pp. 107-8.

⁴⁰ Noszlopy and Waterhouse, *Public Sculpture*, XI, pp. 105-6.