

A New Discovery!



Compare the pictures above and note the similarity. Who do they depict? Joyce Acton? Well, that is who we have always deemed the one on the left to be as she rests on the granite pedestal in the Great Hall. What about the other two? Well, the centre bust is by Domenico Brucciani, sold by auction in 2010 and is Mary, Queen of Scots. There is a similar one in the Mary Room in Edinburgh Castle. That on the right is a photograph of the effigy on the tomb of Queen Mary in Westminster Abbey. The Assistant Keeper of Monuments of the Library at Westminster Abbey confirms that the Charlecote bust is the queen.

Cornelius Cure was one of the foremost sculptors of the early seventeenth century. His father, William, a Dutch sculptor who settled in Southwick. He was famous for his church monuments and in 1606 James I commissioned him to construct a monument for his mother, Mary Queen of Scots. Cornelius died in 1607 before completing the work which was finished by his son, William. Mary was executed in February 1587, interred in Peterborough Cathedral and reinterred in Westminster Abbey in 1612.

Enter Domenico Brucciani. Born in Lucca, Italy in 1815, he moved to London and set up a Gallery of Casts in Covent Garden. He built up a lucrative business copying art and making plaster casts. He built up links with the British Museum and the South Kensington Museum, now the V & A. Owning plaster casts of famous people, especially Royalty, was popular in the 19th century and they adorned many a stately home. Hence the one at Charlecote (and the one of Elizabeth I). I do not know if the Charlecote or the Edinburgh busts are actually by Brucciani but could be copies of his work although he possibly cast several of the same subject. Brucciani worked closely with Elkington and Co. and there is an electro-plated one in the National Portrait Gallery.

We are continuing to learn more of this exhibit in the Great Hall.

Frank Storr. Charlecote Extras No. 5