

The Other Garrard Memorial

The Garrard Memorial in St Helen's Church in Wheathampstead is familiar to most residents of the village but some may be unaware that there is another significant Garrard Memorial at St James Church in Dorney, Buckinghamshire.



Sir William Garrard (1518–1571)
Lord Mayor of London 1555

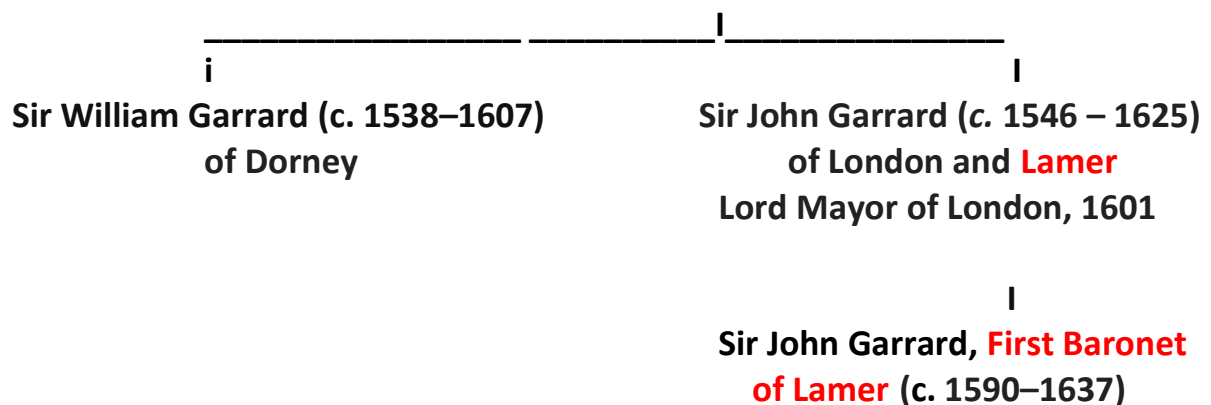
Sir William Garrard of London and Dorney, sometimes referred to as the 'father of the Garrard dynasty', grew up in the parish of St Magnus the Martyr near London Bridge. He joined the Worshipful Company of Haberdashers and was appointed Lord Mayor of London in 1555. According to the Victorian antiquary, John Cussans, Sir William Garrard acquired the manor of Lamer in Wheathampstead from a member of the Boteler family in about 1553. It is uncertain if he ever lived there, but he passed Lamer on to his third son, Sir John Garrard, who was a merchant and alderman of the City of London, six times Master of the Worshipful Company of Haberdashers, and the Lord Mayor of London in 1601.



Sir John Garrard (c. 1546 – 1625)
Lord Mayor of London, 1601

John Nichols (1745-1826), the influential editor of *The Gentleman's Magazine* for 40 years, claimed that King James I visited alderman Sir John Garrard at his country seat of Lamer in 1608. Sir John married Jane Partridge and referred to his house at Lamer in his will of 1625. Their son, another Sir John Garrard, was knighted in 1614 and purchased the first baronetcy of Lamer in 1622.

Sir William Garrard (1518–1571)
of London, Dorney and **Lamer**
Lord Mayor of London, 1555



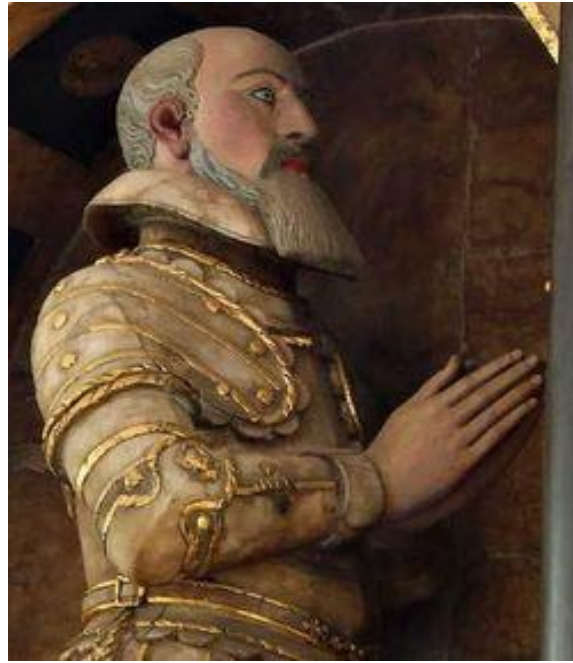
The first Sir William Garrard, a wealthy alderman based in London, purchased Dorney Court in Buckinghamshire as his main country residence in 1537.



Dorney Court, Buckinghamshire

It is one of England's most beautiful Tudor manor houses, set amidst acres of parkland. The house is now Grade 1 listed, designated as being of outstanding architectural and historical interest. It was first recorded in the Domesday Book and the ownership of the house and estate passed through the hands of six families before it was sold to Sir William Garrard in 1537. Sir William married Isabel Nethermill and together they had three sons, William, George and John, who grew up there. Dorney Court owned much of the land in the village.

On the death of the first Sir William Garrard in 1571, Dorney Court passed to his eldest son, another Sir William Garrard. He married Elizabeth Rowe, daughter of Sir Thomas Rowe, who was Lord Mayor of London in 1568. Sir William was knighted in 1603 in the royal gardens at Whitehall before the coronation of King James 1 and he died in 1607 at the age of 70.



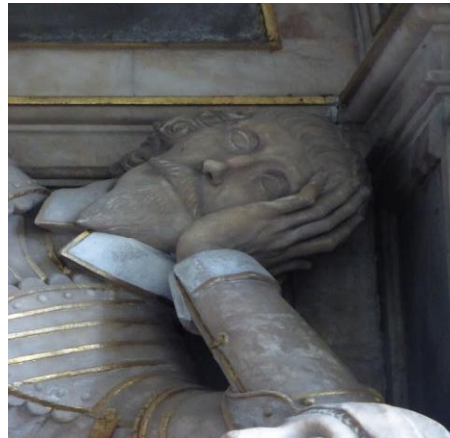
Sir William Garrard of Dorney (c. 1538–1607)

His wife built a memorial to him in the Chapel at St James Church in Dorney and he was buried in the vault below the monument. She later enlarged the memorial to serve both herself and her children. She died in 1624.



St James Church, Dorney

Meanwhile in Wheathampstead, Sir John, the first baronet of Lamer, married Elizabeth Barkham and after her death in 1632 an extravagant memorial, featuring Sir John and his wife, was erected in the north transept of St Helen's Church in the village. Nikolaus Pevsner, the historian who specialised in art and architecture, suggested that the memorial may have been erected before Sir John's death, five years after the death of Elizabeth. Thereafter Lamer continued to be the country seat of all six members of the Garrard baronetcy.



Sir John Garrard, First Baronet of Lamer (c. 1590–1637)
as depicted in the Wheathampstead Memorial

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, wealthy men and women placed great importance on how they would be remembered. They dedicated tombstones, statues and monuments, and wrote epitaphs and inscriptions to preserve their names, honours and memory. Building a memorial for family members or oneself was a sign both of status and piety and only the gentry and wealthy merchants had the money and social standing necessary to erect memorials in a church.

It has been estimated that between 1530 and 1600, around five thousand carved stone monuments were set up in churches across England. In addition, countless cheaper panels of engraved stone or brass appeared in memory of those of more limited means. Over time funerary sculpture became increasingly ambitious and it was common for memorials depicting family members to have children dutifully kneeling in a row at the bottom of their monument.

The Garrard memorials at Dorney and at Wheathampstead have some similarities but are also quite different.



The Dorney Memorial

The Dorney monument to Sir William Garrard depicts him as a bearded man in armour with a sword and a high stiff collar. In the seventeenth century, armour had a symbolic role in statues, indicating high social status and noble heritage. William's wife, Elizabeth, added later in widow's weeds, wears a black dress with a large ruff, enormous hood and widely spreading skirt.

The style of this memorial is typical of the early Jacobean period, with alabaster figures, marble columns and panelled recesses. The couple are kneeling, facing each other, while their numerous children - 7 boys and 8 girls - are positioned in prayer across the base of the monument. Two of their married sons, like their father, are wearing armour and five of the children carry skulls, signifying that they died in childhood.





Soon after Elizabeth Garrard's death at Dorney in 1624, Sir James Palmer of Wingham in Kent married her daughter, Martha Garrard. From this point the Palmers lived at Dorney in continuous succession from father to son over fourteen generations and for 400 years. In 1978, Lt Col P D S Palmer arranged for the Garrard memorial to be cleaned, gilded and re-painted by A H Packe of Burnham, who made no charge for doing the work other than for the cost of materials.

The sculptor of the Shakespeare funerary monument inside Holy Trinity Church at Stratford-upon-Avon has traditionally been identified as Gerard Johnson. Recently this attribution has been challenged by Lena Cowen Orlin, scholar of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, who argues that it was more likely modelled from life by Gerard's elder brother, Nicholas. The Dorney memorial is almost certainly the work of Nicholas Johnson. Whatever the truth about the sculptor of the Shakespeare monument, it is interesting to notice the similarities between its style and that of the memorial at Dorney.



Shakespeare's monument,
Holy Trinity Church at Stratford-upon-Avon

The Dorney memorial, built between 1609 and 1624, commemorated Sir William and his wife, who both died in their seventies, whereas the Wheathampstead memorial, created a little later in 1632, commemorated members of the next generation, Elizabeth, who died first at the age of 39 and John, William's nephew, who died at the age of 46 or 47.



In contrast to the Dorney memorial, the effigies of Sir John Garrard and his wife, Elizabeth, are life-size and recline, in Roman style, on a tomb of marble and alabaster. She is wearing an elaborate lace dress with skilfully carved details. An unusual feature is that instead of their both looking straight ahead, Elizabeth twists around as if to catch a glimpse of her husband behind her. If, as Pevsner suggested, the monument was created before Sir John died, perhaps she is looking around to see if he is following her into the afterlife.



Below them are statues of their fourteen children and those who died young are holding skulls. Each boy is similar to his brothers but differs in size, and all the girls are in almost identical poses but with distinguishing features.





In contrast to the Dorney memorial, the one in Wheathampstead has an abundance of motifs and emblems of the families represented - the leopard (the crest of the Garrards) and the emblem of a pair of arms holding a bundle of arrows (the crest of the Barkhams).



On top of the memorial are cherubs to the left and right, a representation of Old Father Time with a beard and wings, and numerous family shields.



Further down, in triangular panels, is an angel on the left in finely carved drapery and on the right a terrifying winged skeleton, the Angel of Death, holding an hourglass and brandishing an arrow, reminding onlookers of their mortality.



The format of the Wheathampstead memorial is mostly standard for its date, but the quality of the carving makes it outstanding and it is regarded as one of the most important monuments of its type in Hertfordshire.

It has been attributed to Maximilian Colt, a Dutch sculptor, who arrived in England in 1596 and quickly gained royal patronage. By 1605, he had secured prestigious commissions, including monuments to Elizabeth I and the infant daughters of James I at Westminster Abbey. By 1608 he was the King's master carver. His most innovative work, more original in concept than the Garrard memorial, is the monument to Robert Cecil, Earl of Salisbury, at Hatfield, featuring a simple black and white marble design.



Monument to Robert Cecil in Parish Church of Hatfield by
Maximillian Colt

Together with their elaborate sculpted memorials, the bereaved of the 17th century wrote epitaphs of the deceased, some of them simple and others extolling their countless virtues.

On the face of it, the Wheathampstead memorial is dedicated to Elizabeth and, indeed, to Sir John Garrard, the first baronet of Lamer. But on closer examination, it is an extravagant celebration of the whole Garrard dynasty, starting with Sir William Garrard, Lord Mayor of London in 1555 and his

descendants, who are named on the inscription. Sir John is referred to as the 'sonne of Sir John Garrard, and grandchild of Sir William Garrard, knights, both of them some time lord mayors of the cittie of London, whose ancestors lie buried in the parish church of Sittingbourne, in Kent, but themselves In the parish church of St Magnus, in London.'

The Dorney and Wheathampstead memorials both aimed to preserve the names, honours and memories of wealthy families, with no expense spared. It is perhaps ironic that, in both cases, while the monuments still stand, attesting to the lives and deaths of the landed gentry, the Garrard name and titles were relatively short-lived. Just five years after the death of Elizabeth Garrard of Dorney, the line passed, through her daughter's marriage, to the Palmer family, who became the occupants of Dorney Court for the next 400 years.

The sixth baronet of Lamer, Sir Benet Garrard, was unmarried, so when he died in 1767, the baronetcy became extinct and the estate passed to Charles Drake. He adopted the name Drake Garrard and re-modelled the Lamer estate. In due course, this passed to Apsley Cherry, who also changed his name to Cherry-Garrard in 1907 in accordance with the terms of the inheritance.

The Tudor house at Lamer, purchased by the first Sir William Garrard, was demolished and the Georgian mansion that replaced it in about 1761 was sold by Cherry-Garrard as he faced financial difficulties after the Second World War. It too was demolished so there is now little physical evidence of the Garrard baronetcy in Wheathampstead. Members of this wealthy family employed generations of agricultural labourers to work on their land to provide part of their income, but there is no evidence that they contributed to the well-being of residents of the village. They did not build almshouses or a charity school and their wills offered only the minimum contribution to the poor. Several local yeomen, such as James Marshall, left greater legacies.

Dorney Court, the magnificent manor house owned by Sir William Garrard, still stands and is open to visitors during the summer months. Wheathampstead boasts a fine memorial, but the only other specific reminder of the Garrard family in the village is a residential road named Garrard Way.

Acknowledgements

Illustrations from:

www.speel.me.uk/herts/wheathampstead/garrard1677a.jpg

icknielindagations.com

dorney-history-group.org.uk

Dianne Payne 2026

