

Burial Register for the Collegiate Church of St Mary, Warwick, DR447/24.

Document of the Month for August focuses on one of the many parish registers in our collections here at the Record Office. Specifically, we've chosen to focus on the burial register for the Collegiate Church of St Mary, Warwick covering the years 1813-1834 (catalogue reference DR447/24). We have chosen this register as it contains a rather interesting entry for the burial of three individuals in 1818. On the 14th August 1818 Thomas Ward, Thomas Williams and William Warner were interred in the burial ground at St Mary's. What makes this entry stand out, however, is the information under "abode" in the register. It states they were executed for highway robbery! The entry in the register also tells us the individuals were aged just 18, 19 and 20 when they were executed¹.

Page 74.

BURIALS in the Parish of <i>St Mary Warwick</i> in the County of <i>Warwick</i> in the Year 18 <i>18</i>				
Name.	Abode.	When buried.	Age.	By whom the Ceremony was performed.
<i>Elizabeth Reading</i> No. 585.	<i>Cow Lane</i>	<i>August 19</i>	<i>Infant</i>	<i>Alt. Morrison</i>
<i>Thomas Ward</i> <i>Thomas Williams</i> <i>William Warner</i> No. 586.	<i>Executed for Highway Robbery</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>18 19 20</i>	<i>Bondier</i>
<i>Mary Buckley</i> No. 587.	<i>Cow-Lane</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>Alt. Morrison</i>

Burial register for the Collegiate Church of St Mary, Warwick, Warwickshire County Record Office, DR447/24.

The Record Office does not hold records for Warwick Assizes. Surviving records are held at The National Archives along with the rest of the Midland Circuit (the

¹ Burial register for St Marys, Warwick, Warwickshire County Record Office, DR447/24.

catalogue for these can be viewed online²). The case is, however, mentioned in a local newspaper, The Warwick Advertiser (which is available at the Record Office) in detail. The three men had been convicted at Warwick Assizes of the assault and robbery of Mr George Greenway of Nuneaton on the King's Highway. They were executed in front of the County Gaol, then their bodies removed for burial at St Mary's. The newspaper notes after the details of the crime that the men had "from the time of their conviction, showed the strongest symptoms of remorse and contrition, and died, to all human appearance at least, sincere penitents". The article then remarks that they were born to parents whose circumstances meant they were unable to provide them with an education, and they were "entirely destitute of religious knowledge". However, in the days leading up to their execution, they received religious teachings from the Reverend H. Laughton, and received the Holy Sacraments shortly before³.

The case was, as many cases were at the time, turned into a ballad called "The Lamentation of W. Warner T. Ward & T. Williams". This, and a similar version of the song, called "Three Brothers in Fair Warwickshire", can be found listed in David Atkinson and Steve Round's book, *Street Ballads in Nineteenth Century Britain, Ireland, and North America*⁴. In the songs, more details about the crime are given, such as what was stolen (a watch and some money). These songs, referred to as broadside ballads, or news ballads, were popular in the nineteenth century. They were mass produced and bore news of the region⁵. A copy of a broadside ballad for this case can be found in the collections at Kent State University⁶.

The Collegiate Church of St Mary, Warwick

St Mary's is a large Church of England church situated in the centre of the Borough town of Warwick. It was founded on its current site by Roger de Newburgh, the 2nd Earl of Warwick in 1123⁷. The only surviving part of the Norman church built by de Newburgh is the crypt, which also contains one of only two surviving examples of a

² National Archives Discovery catalogue, <https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C1138>.

³ Information gathered from the Warwick Advertiser, 15th August 1818.

⁴ Extracts of the book can be found on Google Books

https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=7YzeCwAAQBAJ&dq=william+warner+highway+robbery+warwick&source=gbs_navlinks_s (accessed 20/04/2021).

⁵ Broadside ballads: When the news was spread through song, BBC News, 2016, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-37386026> (accessed 20/04/2021).

⁶ <https://www.library.kent.edu/criminal-broadsides-19th-century-england> (accessed 20/04/2021).

⁷ *Collegiate Church of St. Mary*, St Mary's; Warwick's Church of Treasures, Warwick, Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collegiate_Church_of_St_Mary,_Warwick (accessed 14/04/2021).

ducking stool. De Newburgh also established the college of Dean and Canons there⁸.

The church contains the monuments to many of the former Earls of Warwick, including Richard Beauchamp (housed in the Beauchamp Chapel) and Fulke Greville. It also contains the Chapel of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment⁹. The tomb of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester can also be found in the Beauchamp Chapel.

Like many other buildings in Warwick at the time, St Mary's was damaged by the Great Fire of Warwick in 1693. The tower and the nave were destroyed, however, the chancel and the Beauchamp Chapel survived. William Wilson was appointed by the Crown Commissioners to rebuild the church. This was completed in 1704¹⁰. The famous London architect Sir Christopher Wren was also approached to create a design, which is now in the Wren collection¹¹.

The church can be visited when restrictions allow. More information about St Marys, and how to visit, can be found on their website¹².

⁸ *Collegiate Church of St. Mary, Warwick*, Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collegiate_Church_of_St_Mary,_Warwick (accessed 14/04/2021).

⁹ *The History of St Mary's, St Mary's*; Warwick's Church of Treasures, <http://www.stmaryswarwick.org.uk/index.php?stmarysredesign/history> (accessed 14/04/2021).

¹⁰ *Collegiate Church of St. Mary, Warwick*, Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collegiate_Church_of_St_Mary,_Warwick (accessed 14/04/2021).

¹¹ Christine M. Cluley, *Warwick: A Short History & Guide*, Amberley Publishing, 2011, page 29.

¹² <http://www.stmaryswarwick.org.uk/index.php?stmarysredesign/history>