

The enigma of Fulke Greville



**Hidden
Warwickshire**

IN THE Chapter House of St Mary's church, Warwick, stands a splendidly gloomy tomb bearing the simple inscription 'Fulke Greville, Servant of Queen Elizabeth, Counsellor to King James, Friend to Sir Philip Sidney'.

The sombre monument in black marble dominates the 14th century room where deans and canons once conducted their daily business.

This magnificent monstrosity marks the final resting place of the remarkable and enigmatic Sir Fulke Greville, first Lord Brooke, courtier, statesman and much more - although strangely his body is actually interred in the Greville family vault beneath.

Regrettably the poor Fulke cannot be said to be resting in peace. The unfortunate fellow was murdered in 1628 by his long-serving manservant. His ghost is said to roam around the Watergate (or Ghost) Tower of Warwick Castle.

Fulke Greville owned Warwick Castle from 1603 until his death and we have a lot to be grateful to him for. When he bought it from James I it was in a pretty dilapidated state and Sir Fulke spent £20,000 transforming it into one of the most luxurious residences in England.

We would surely not have the splendid castle if Greville had not lavished a fortune on restoring it to its former medieval glory.

He apparently directed every aspect of the rebuilding from the Watergate Tower where he lodged. When he died, Sir Fulke Greville was said to be the richest man in England.

So who was this Fulke Greville who became such an eminent public figure over three reigns? Fulke Greville was born on October 3, 1554 at Beauchamp Court in the ancient manor of Alcester, South Warwickshire. He was the last of three con-

secutive Sir Fulkes.

Educated at Shrewsbury Grammar and Cambridge, he was presented at Court together with his great childhood friend Sir Phillip Sidney in 1575. Here he became a great favourite of Elizabeth I and according to close friend Sir Robert Naunton, 'had the longest lease, and the smoothest time without rub, of any of Elizabeth's Favourites'.

He was a humorous man noted for his great intellect. Perhaps the secret of his success was being able to make the Queen laugh.

After leaving college he travelled all over Europe working as an "intelligencer" and "recruiter" for Sir Francis Walsingham, principal secretary and "spymaster" to Elizabeth.

Back home he became Clerk to the Council of Wales and in 1598 was appointed Treasurer to the Navy. In 1599 he was made Rear-Admiral at a time when a Spanish attack was expected. In 1614 he became Chancellor of the Exchequer under James I and remained a minister of the state until his death.

Fulke Greville was a soldier, lawyer and accomplished horseman. He also represented

Warwickshire four times as MP.

Greville is also regarded as a generous patron of many of the leading writers of the day including Christopher Marlow and Ben Jonson. He was a noted poet and author himself, famous for his biography of his beloved friend Sir Phillip Sidney. Sidney, a renowned poet, exemplified the ideal courtier and was considered the "flower of chivalry". He was severely wounded in battle, aged 31, in 1586.

The nature of Fulke's relationship with Sidney has been the subject of much debate over recent times. They certainly had a deep admiration for one another but there is no specific evidence to suggest anything else. The fact that Fulke planned a double monument for himself and Philip Sidney, however, might cause the odd eyebrow to lift.

Greville wished to be buried alongside Sidney in St Paul's Cathedral but it was not to be. Instead, during his final years, he had the present monument constructed in the Chapter house of St Mary's, Warwick. This same monument is now subject to an extraordinary investigation from the author of a recent book that claims Fulke Greville to be the true author of Shakespeare's sonnets - and that he wrote many of them to Sidney. In his recent book 'The Master of Shakespeare', AWL Saunders says the tomb in St Mary's could hold the key to proving his theory.

He is applying for ecclesiastical planning permission to do a 3D scan to find out if there is anything in the tomb which could support his theory that Fulke brought the remains of Sidney to be buried with him, or placed some memorabilia of Phillip in the tomb.

■ The Fulke Greville Society meets once a year at 1pm on his birthday, October 3, to read his poetry around his monument in St Mary's.



The monument to Sir Fulke Greville.