

Silence – A Figure for a Tomb
Sculpture by Sir William Reid Dick



St Mary's Churchyard, Worplesdon

Our Discovery

In March 2019 Jonathan Cross from Art UK was asked by Historic England to come and track down and photograph a statue in St Mary's churchyard. He said the statue was 'stirring national interest' and had been reported to them by someone who had been visiting the church grounds. The statue is on the grave of a Margaret Hamilton-Fellows (former resident of Tangley Place) who died in 1926 and there is a cherub at her feet (not believed to be by Reid Dick) in remembrance of her 3-month-old grandson who died in 1925. The statue can be found on the right side of the main path down to the new ground.

The sculpture is named Silence – A Figure for a Tomb. On the day that he visited, Mr Cross was not able to find a signature on the sculpture and so was reluctant to say it was genuine, but he returned later that week and was able to locate it having got in touch with the person who had first alerted them, Charles O'Brien, editor of the Pevsner Architectural Guides. In his words 'You have a discovery on your hands! It is bound to be quite an asset, as the sculptor is now known.'



The Sculptor

Sir William Reid Dick was a Scottish Sculptor known for the innovative stylisation of form in his sculptures. He became a Royal Academician in 1928, creating numerous war memorials and also the statue of King George V outside Westminster Abbey. Born in Glasgow in 1878, Reid Dick studied at the Glasgow School of Art and City and Guilds School in Kennington London. Exhibiting at the Royal Academy and the Royal Society of British Sculptors, he established himself as a leading figure amongst his contemporaries in the field of British sculpture and was knighted in 1935. He became the King's and later Queen's sculptor and produced many busts of royalty, together with politicians and celebrities. Although perhaps best known for these works and his monumental public commissions, his other genre works include 'The Kiss'. He died in 1961 and has a memorial tablet in St Paul's Cathedral.



The Memorial

Margaret Hamilton Fellows nee Margaret Hamilton Wills was born on 14 July 1874 in Clifton, Bristol and died on 3 August 1926 in Kensington, London aged only 52. She was one of 7 children of Sir Frederick Wills, the tobacco manufacturer (created baronet in 1897, MP for Bristol North from 1900 to 1906 and governor at Guy's hospital), and his wife Annie Hamilton. Frederick was one of 8 children of Henry Overton Wills II (the H.O. of the tobacco company W.D. & H.O. Wills founded in 1830) with his first wife Isabella Board. Isabella died at the age of 37. Henry married again and had a further 7 children with his second wife, Mary Seccombe.

Margaret Fellows, married Ernest Gaddesden Fellows on 10 June 1903 (they divorced in 1910) and they had one child – a daughter Enid Margaret Hamlyn Fellows born on 20 October 1904. In 1923 Enid married the 14th Earl of Kinnoull and thus became Countess Kinnoull. On 23 November 1924 she produced a son (Atholl George Adam Baron of Hay of Kinfaurns, Viscount Dupplin) he tragically died aged just 14 weeks old while staying at Tangley Place with his grandmother on 7 March 1925. The depth of grief for his loss marked by the cherub and inscription on Margaret's tomb. There were no other children and Enid and her husband divorced in 1927. We do not know how Sir William Reid Dick came to create the statue for Margaret's grave or his connections to her family.

The Inscription on the Grave

The quote is from the 1882 hymn by John Greenleaf Whittier 'When on my day of life the night is falling.'



Margaret's husband is not mentioned on the tomb as they had been divorced for 16 years by then.



*To the memory of
Margaret Hamilton Fellows
2nd daughter of Sir Frederick Wills
1st Baronet
Born July 14th 1874
Died August 3rd 1926
Suffice it if –
Good and ill unreckoned
And both forgiven
Through thy abounding grace
I find myself
By hands familiar beckoned
To my fitting place

And of her grandson
Atholl George Adam
Baron Hay of Kinfaurns
Born November 23rd 1924
Died March 7th 1925
Hold thou his hand*

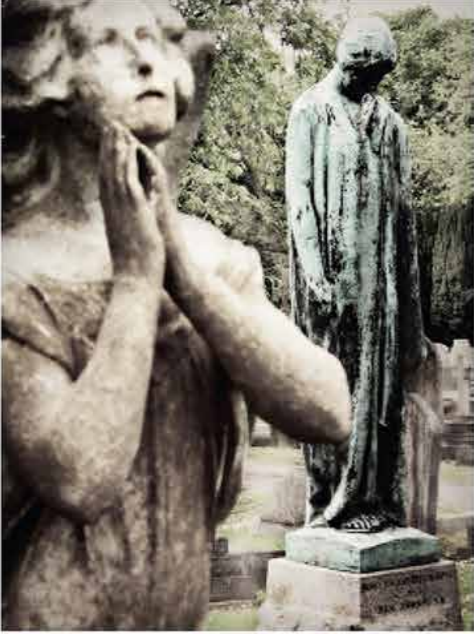
Tangley Place

Tangley Place (originally Tangley Park) was built c 1872, a mansion surrounded by beautiful gardens of rose walks, sweeping lawns and topiaried yew hedges. In the early 1900s, Tangley was home to automotive pioneer Wilson Noble, who in 1904 had four cars garaged there: a Curved Dash Oldsmobile, an 8hp de Dion-Bouton, a 12hp Gladiator and a 14hp Daimler, worth a small fortune at the time, as they would be now. After Noble's death in 1917, the house was bought by Margaret Hamilton-Fellows, now the estranged wife of Ernest, who had inherited a £2m fortune from her father. Margaret lived there until her death in 1926 at the age of 52. By 1945, the house had become a children's home and from 1947 to 1955 it was used as a convalescent home. Three years later, in 1958, the property was taken over by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. Later new laboratories were built, and the site became known as Worplesdon Laboratory. Many animals were kept on site and occasionally 'helped' to escape into the local countryside. 🐰 Black rabbits that are still occasionally spotted around Jacobs Well and Worplesdon are testament to this. There were also well intentioned but misguided freeing of seabirds. Testing on site ceased in 1996 and the premises were offered for sale in 1997. Purchased in 1999 by a developer, plans to convert the main building into luxury apartments were derailed by several fires between 2001-2009 which damaged the main building beyond repair. Tangley Place was razed to the ground in January 2010 and none of the original buildings remain, it is now the site of Worplesdon View Care Home.

Photo of Tangley Place in 1927



Other works by Reid Dick



Finchley Cemetery – grave of
Harry Dwight Dillon Ripley



In Finchley Cemetery there is also a sculpture of Silence. Sir William Reid Dick's impressive bronze sculpture stands on the grave of 'Harry Dwight Dillon Ripley of New York, USA'. Alice Ripley, Harry's wife, paid Reid Dick £500 for a copy of his latest work 'Silence – Figure for a Tomb' which had just been exhibited at the Royal Academy. It was a large amount of money – enough for Reid Dick to pay for his wedding.



King George V – Westminster



Bushey War Memorial



More information about the church is available on our website www.worplesdonparish.com

Leaflet produced by Michaela Kelly, Parish Administrator and Dr Anthony Hillard, a parishioner and former Churchwarden, he is the great great grandson of H.O. Wills and therefore distantly related to Margaret Fellows. It is a complete co-incidence that he lived for 45 years very near Tangley Place and witnessed the fire of February 2005.

Please get in touch with any amendments or further information we would be delighted to hear from you.

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