

Paper wraps stone: monumental, manuscript, and printed epitaphs in eighteenth-century England

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Rebecca Bullard

Paper Wraps Stone: Monumental Manuscript, and Printed Epitaphs in Eighteenth- Century England

John Le Nove (1679–1741), an English antiquarian who flourished in the first two decades of the eighteenth century, is best known for *Fasti Ecclesiae Anglicanae*. This hefty collection of hieroglyphs of cleopatra first published in 1716, became the foundation of a vast, multigenerational biographical project that continues to the present day. By contrast, Le Nove's next publication, *Momimenta Anglicana*, has sunk like a stone into the deep vats of scholarly history. Five volumes of transcribed funeral monuments published between 1717 and 1719 *Momimenta Anglicana* addresses the rise of the new journal *Inscription* directly. It also speaks to the theme of this first issue, "beginnings," because it pinpoints new ways of approaching the various media in which it is involved: manuscript and print.

The method that Le Nove adopts in *Momimenta Anglicana* are innovative in at least three ways—first, this text takes a familiar antiquarian practice— the transcription and publication of epitaphs—but focuses on modern, rather than ancient, monuments. The first volume contains transcriptions of covers set up from 1700–1715; subsequent volumes cover the period 1600–1700. Second, it comes a new term to refer to a published text that seeks to gather information about the recently dead in one place: the obituary. Finally, it offers an early example of an unusual publishing practice: the subscription list and distribution of copies is the author, rather than a bookseller.¹ These innovations are all inter-related aspects of Le Nove's self-consciousness towards the materiality of text.

Momimenta Anglicana asks its readers to consider what happens when one kind of inscribed text (a monument) is transformed into another (a manuscript), and then gathered together into another (a printed edition). In doing so, it offers an extended meditation on what it means to commemorate the dead not just in stone, but also in print. Kuhn's *dan* emphasizing the essential difference between etc. media with which his text engages, Le Nove asks his readers to consider them in relation to one another. It presents paper-based memorials not as a poor substitute for stone, but rather



Figure 1. John Le Nove, *Momimenta Anglicana* vol. 1 (1717) title page. Courtesy: Cambridge University Library, Wellcome Trust.

1. *Fasti Ecclesiae Anglicanae*, Cambridge University Library, Wellcome Trust. See also: J. Le Nove, *Fasti Ecclesiae Anglicanae*, London, 1716. See also: J. Le Nove, *Momimenta Anglicana*, London, 1717.

Inscriptions ancient and modern

Transcribed epitaphs feature in almost all antiquarian publications from the sixteenth and through to the early eighteenth centuries, alongside other inscribed objects such as coins and medals. During the early years of the seventeenth century, however, epitaphs became the principal focus of certain texts. Two slim volumes, William Camden's *Rerum Rerum Nobilitatis* (1606) and Henry Holland's *Monumenta Episcoporum* (1608) and Henry Holland's *Monumenta Episcoporum* (1608) take readers on tour of the various ecclesiastical monuments of Westminster Abbey and other sites, including the tombs of the bishops of the diocese of London. Camden's *Rerum Rerum Nobilitatis* (1606) and Henry Holland's *Monumenta Episcoporum* (1608) take readers on tour of the various ecclesiastical monuments of Westminster Abbey and other sites, including the tombs of the bishops of the diocese of London. Camden's *Rerum Rerum Nobilitatis* (1606) and Henry Holland's *Monumenta Episcoporum* (1608) take readers on tour of the various ecclesiastical monuments of Westminster Abbey and other sites, including the tombs of the bishops of the diocese of London.

John Le Nove began the first volume of his *Momimenta Anglicana* in the early years of the eighteenth century, according to Graham Parry, one of the most frequent memorial antiquarian works of the seventeenth century. In the early years of the eighteenth century, according to Graham Parry, one of the most frequent memorial antiquarian works of the seventeenth century. In the early years of the eighteenth century, according to Graham Parry, one of the most frequent memorial antiquarian works of the seventeenth century. In the early years of the eighteenth century, according to Graham Parry, one of the most frequent memorial antiquarian works of the seventeenth century.

As a new kind of commemorative practice that exists alongside and in dialogue with inscribed monuments, he looks towards the future as well as the past as he transforms epitaphs through the medium of print. Just as time obliterated sepulchres, so antiquarian pursuits left their mark on Weever: the defiled tone of this passage reissues the pressure of forgotten or obliterated. Squelchers, in this or that faint Church, and not found to ten. Besides I have been taken from in quest's Churches to write the Epitaphs, or to take view of the Monuments as I much desired.

John Le Nove, *Momimenta Anglicana* vol. 1 (1717) title page. Courtesy: Cambridge University Library, Wellcome Trust.

John Weever, *Annales Funerarii Monumentorum*, London, 1631. Courtesy: Cambridge University Library, Wellcome Trust.

In
 Succeeded to the Eternal Memory of **RICHARD** only Son of
FRANCIS Sheriff of **Essex** in the County
of Middlesex by **Diana** wife of **Richard** Bar-
 ton Esq. in the County of **Northampton**
 who was 8 Jun. 1702. and lies here Inscr'd.
M. Stanton

Figure 2. Blank space in Le Neve, Monumenta Anglicana, 1, 131.
 Centre Commons license, Wellcome Trust.

John Le Neve occupies a different position in relation to the epitaphs he transcribes of that of his predecessors. He appears to have seen very few of the monuments in his own time in person. Only occasionally does he mark an epitaph *MS. autog.*, signifying that he has transcribed the *inscriptio* himself, instead, he begins the list with a two-column table that sets out the correspondents to whom I have been obliged for each *MS. Inscriptio*,¹ (figure 3).

The location of many of the epitaphs is indeed missing; the omission need by a dash or blank space (figure 2). Poor John Wever, so careful to situate monuments in their particular geographical and historiographical traditions, must have been turning in his grave.

Figure 3. Le Neve, Monumenta Anglicana, 1, 132.
 Centre Commons license, Wellcome Trust.

Le Neve's list of correspondents includes not only patrons and sculptors like Edward Stanton and Francis Bird, but also clergymen and vergers, fellows of colleges in Oxford and Cambridge, members of Le Neve's family, and persons unknown to him including Peter de Heaton in Northampton and a Stranger who subscribes 'A Gent. of Heaton in Northampton' and another to me, and one Mr. named 'A Stranger' who subscribes 'A Gent. of Heaton in Northampton'. A Stranger, who subscribes 'A Gent. of Heaton in Northampton', is the person who sent Le Neve the epitaphs (which was the collaborative nature of his project, which was on what we see here a not just Le Neve but including Camden and Wever) but also the self-consciously

A TABLE, signifying to whom I have been obliged for each MS. Inscriptio.

MS. P. L.	MS. B. B.	MS. Merin.	MS. Thayer.	MS. B. B.	MS. Thayer.	MS. Thayer.	MS. Thayer.	MS. Thayer.	MS. Thayer.	MS. Thayer.	MS. Thayer.	MS. Thayer.	MS. Thayer.	MS. Thayer.	MS. Thayer.	MS. Thayer.

For Le Neve, Ed. Not
 sup. The Rev. Mr. John
 of Cambridge.
 The Rev. Mr. John
 of New Coll. Oxon.
 The Rev. Mr. Charles
 of the Publick Library at Ox-
 ford.
 Mr. Tho. Corbush, of
 the Publick Library at Ox-
 ford.
 A Gent. of Heaton in
 Northampton, a Stranger
 who subscribes 'A Gent. of
 Heaton in Northampton'.
 Mr. Stanton the Maidon
 who lies thus up.
 Mr. Bird, the Maidon
 who lies thus up.
 Mr. Thayer, the Maidon
 who lies thus up.
 Mr.
 b. 1.

Figure 3. Le Neve, Monumenta Anglicana, 1, 132.
 Centre Commons license, Wellcome Trust.

In Broughton Church in Staffordshire.
 M. S. Stanton
 Leonard, Colman Spenser Broughton, Kent and Bar.
 after many degrees obtained
 In the Church
 of St. Andrew and
 in the City of London.
 He died on the 17th of
 the month of October
 Anno 1702.
 and lies here Inscr'd.
M. Stanton

In Salisbury Church near Uxbridge in Derbyshire
 In Memory of George Corbush Esq. who
 who departed this Life the 13th day of July, 1702, in
 the 56th year of his age, and lies here Inscr'd.
M. Stanton

Figure 4. Le Neve, Monumenta Anglicana, 1, 131.
 Centre Commons license, Wellcome Trust.

between the two definitions that the *Oxford English Dictionary* offers for this word: the first, 'a register in which deaths or other days are recorded', and the second, 'a record or announcement of a death, esp. in a newspaper or similar publication [...] also are a section of a newspaper in which deaths of the named *(obituary)*'. It comes closest to a printed definition, though it is a newspaper, and it predates publication rather than a newspaper, and it predates *Obit*'s first usage in this sense by more than two decades. As Le Neve conceives of it, then, the obituary is a secularised, printed version of a religious manuscript practice. It is a textual record in something close to real time, community are register signals that, in using the printed text in this way, he is doing something quite unmemorialised

The fact that the obituary archives the unmemorialised death has clear commercial potential. If the emblems, persons in Le Neve's text include the **inscriptions** who better than Le Neve's text includes the **inscriptions**, erect them? Le Neve's text includes the **inscriptions**, on Edward Stanton rectorie, Lancashire, Middlesex, Shropshire, Gloucestershire, Northampton and Hampshire – Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, Lincolnshire and unidentified Essex. Cambridge's obituary is a monument in addition to numerous monuments that Stanon was in places.²⁴ It amply demonstrates that Stanon was in demand the length as an advertisement commercially is nothing as direct as volume, but a commercial market work in Le Neve's time saw a potential readers.

successful mason surely saw a potential readers, for future monuments among Le Neve's commercial potential too. As a section of a work that records recent deaths, the obituary is perpetually exchangeable, the inevitability of death guaranteeing a news not the first of fresh copy. *Monumenta Anglica* was not the first publication to exploit the facts of death in this way. Le Neve's earlier publication, *Lives and Characters of the Most Illustrous Persons, British and Foreign, who did in the Year 1711* (1712), was likewise designed as an annual

register of the dead, compiled from 'Memoirs, Epitaphs, Monument **inscriptions** &c.' commemorated by friends of the deceased and 'New Essay, never

before attempted, but in fact the best his readers.' The had, some years previously, promised persons that the Lives and Deaths in his periodical, *The Post Anglica*. Although every Month in publications last of the commercial and growing interest in and awareness of the memorialising cultural possibilities created by such larger WORK, as intended as a specimen of a much larger WORK, *Monumenta Anglica* was also designed to cash in on death's abundance.

To see the obituary as just a commercial phenomenon, however, is to miss its cultural significance. Le Neve's innovation equates a kind of confidence in the capacity of print, as well as stone, to combat text can archive. It demonstrates that the printed text can archive not just ancient, rather than individualistic, offering a snapshot of a culture at a particular moment in time. It postdates

Metamorphosis

Le Neve's belief in the cultural value of printed memorials is at odds with other, rather more influential, contemporary commentators' eyes from his hugely influential periodical, *The Spectator*, Joseph Addison sends Mr. Spectator – the pen-name of Westminster Abbot – on a tour of the tombs in Westminster Abbey:

When I meet with the Grief of Parents upon a Tomb-stone, my Heart melts with Compassion; when I see the Tomb of the Parents themselves, I consider the Vanity of grieving for those whom we must quickly

24. John Le Neve, *Lives and Characters of the Most Illustrous Persons, British and Foreign, who did in the Year 1711* (1712), pp. 84-85.

25. John Dunton, *The Post Anglica*, in *University of Toronto Library*, 1835.

26. *The Post Anglica* in *University of Toronto Library*, 1835. Le Neve published one edition of *Lives and Characters* for four people who died in 1712, in 1714.

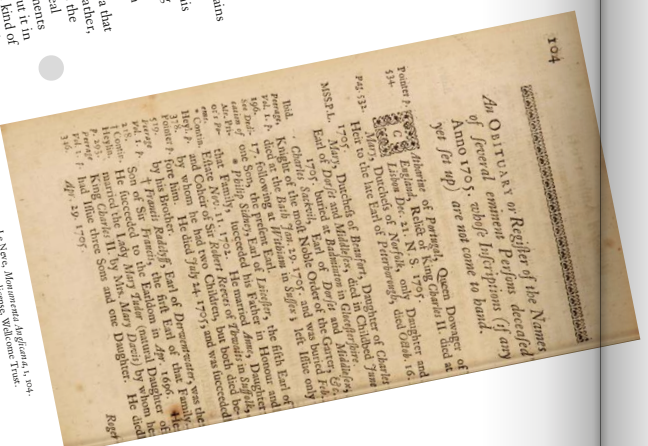


Figure 11. Le Neve, *Monumenta Anglica*, 164. Creative Commons license, Wikimedia Trust.

The primary meaning of obituary in Le Neve's time was not the one that we might most closely associate with it: that is, a biographical her death. Death, but it did appear in the periodical press in this period, but it wasn't until *Magazine* as the verb of its death world, *Contemner*, that the term 'obituary' became widely used. Le Neve gestures toward *Anglica* to registers for when he uses 'Roman Catholic church to prepare for which record the departed might be offered on his or her anniversary.'²⁷ Le Neve's obituary falls somewhere

The method that Le Neve adapts to organize the **inscriptions** in his volume both reflects and enables the open-endedness of his project. Where an earlier antiquarian like Weever had used place-by-place structural principle, Le Neve arranges his volume tell by year of publication. The title page of the first volume tells readers that it is 'Deduced into a series of years of death, running on Persons joins other publications in this

inscriptions on Persons joins other publications in this so on. Le Neve's project analitic structure, including the journalist Abel Boyer's *Annals* (1705-1713), which was published each year throughout Anne's reign. *Queen Anne*, *Digested into* throughout Anne's reign. These annual publications take seriously easy to edit. The primary text – produced printed in serial – has the capacity to record events in something close to real time, whether those events are political developments or the deaths of individuals. *The Register*, the kind of annual and serial print publication century is, in effect, punctuating the early decades of the eighteenth century by writing a History by inches.²⁹

Le Neve's sense that the printed text might memorialise not only those people who already have a monument, but also those most striking textual and generic innovations of his most striking *Monumenta Anglica*, each in 1717, one of his volume of *Monumenta Anglica* being what was an unusual title: *An Obituary or Register of the Names of several eminent Persons deceased [...] whose inscriptions (if any yet set up) are not come to hand!* (Figure 11).

29. Daniel Defoe, *A Review of the Affairs of FRANCE*, 3: 414-15 (1704).

30. Elizabeth Hurst, 'From English to Secretary: Death and Culture in Eighteenth-Century British Culture', *The International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 13 (2010), 559-72.

31. Ralph Houlstun, 'Public Religion and the Family in England, 1680-1720', *Oxford University Press*, 2003, 9-29.

setting fire to the earth (the 'service'). Perhaps Le Neve thought this quotation especially apposite because it comes just after Phaethon's epiphany:

HIC · SITVS · EST · PHAETHON · CORYVS ·
AVRIGA · PATERNI

QVEM · SI · NON · TENVIT · MAGNIS ·
TAMEN · EXCIDIT · AVSIS

HERE PHAETHON LIES; IN PHOEBUS'
CAR HE FARED,

AND THOUGH HE GREATLY FAILED,
MORE GREATLY DARED.²⁵

In a project that highlights the textual instability that arises when epiphany move between media, it seems entirely fitting that Le Neve seeks to associate his ambitious obituary with Phaethon's doomed efforts. That he does so in an allusion that gambles the Latin original resonates – appropriately, if not deliberately – with his understanding that the act of textual transmission always also invites textual transformation.

No record of Le Neve's death survives, although he seems to have lived several decades after 1719, when the fifth and final volume of *Monimenta Anglicana* was published.²⁶ No monument marks his final resting place, but the epigraph on the title page of the first volume of *Monimenta Anglicana* could stand for Le Neve's epitaph as well. This, too, is a quotation from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, from the very last verse of that work: "– nec ignis / Nec potent ferrum, nec edax abolere vetustas" ["And now my work is done] which neither the wrath of love, nor fire, nor sword, nor the gnawing tooth of time shall ever be able to undo,"²⁷ Le Neve's text is an act of metamorphosis that turns stone and manuscript into printed text, but that also self-consciously registers the process of transformation. And, as in Ovid, the altered body/text, while often apparently flatter than the original, achieves longevity through its capacity to change.

²⁵ Ovid, pp. 81–83.

²⁶ Nicholas Rogers, 'Le Neve, John (b. c. 1674, d. n. or before 1740), antiquary,' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <oxforddnb.com> (accessed 20 June 2021).

²⁷ Ovid, pp. 426–47.

²⁷ Joseph Addison, *The Spectator*, 26 (30 March 1711).

²⁸ Joseph Addison, *The Freeholder*, 33 (10 April 1710).

²⁹ Paul Baines and Pat Rogers, *Edmund Curll: Book-seller* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 72.

follow: [...] When I read the several Dates of the Tombs, of some that dy'd Yesterday, and some six hundred Years ago, I consider that great Day when we shall all of us be Contemporaries, and make our Appearance together.²⁷

Mr. Spectator's reflections depend on the material characteristics of stone. Stone's durability obliterates temporal distinctions between parents and children, youth and age, past, present and future. It best, of course, if it gets the impression, at least, of permanence. By contrast, and in another periodical essay, Addison contemplates *Grave-street* Biographers, who watch for the Death of a great Man, like so many Undertakers, on purpose to make a Penny of him.²⁸ Here, Addison attacks the team of speed-writers working for the notorious bookseller Edmund Curll, who had published Le Neve's *Life and Character* in 1712. Curll specialised in producing instant biographies of the recently dead, often based on limited or spurious by Curll and *Monimenta Anglicana* wasn't published by Curll and it isn't a collection of biographies in the same vein as *Life and Character*, but, with its serialised version as part of the print-based, irrevocable publication culture to which Addison so strenuously objected.

Le Neve, however, constructs the relationship between stone monuments and printed memorials differently from Addison. In the preface to volume two of *Monimenta Anglicana*, Le Neve notes that

When a Church extremely decay'd, or out of Repair, Parishioners, or by any other Assistants be pulled down and rebuilt: there has been no Care, or Thought of re-creating any Monuments which miss'd in Heaps in a better come down; but the Marble is thrown ... [T]o prove the Matter of Fact, I have, now lying by the Church of Inscriptions, taken in the Year 1686, in the Charge of St. Clements Dances, in which Year, we are told, this Church was taken down, and rebuilt at the Charge of

the Parishioners, and some others; but, let any body find the Tombs, or any Foundation of them; if they can not farther I very much question, whether there be so much as another Copy of them now in being? (ii, [A] 1^v–2^v)
as another Copy of them now in being? (ii, [A] 1^v–2^v)

Contrary to Addison's assertion that, because of its durability, stone figures form eternity, Le Neve emphasises its vulnerability. Like many monuments that have been cast aside to skeletons between monuments that depicts the apparent distinction Le Neve's vivid he collapses, and composes that decay: "I have, now lying that evidence, and composes that decay: "I have, now lying movement into the first person ("I have, now lying by me...") also highlights the fragility of manuscript as a medium of potential fragmentation and loss. Like is a series of potential fragmentation and loss. Like separates) often hint security against loss. Like other antiquarians before him, then, Le Neve highlights the protective function of printing, one inscription: John Weever, sceptical of the growing power of puritans in his own time, presents his text, *After an Funeral* *Moniments*, as an antidote to earlier iconoclasm who left monuments "broken down, and utterly almost all runned";²⁹ In Le Neve's time, the building of "fly Queen Anne" churches presented a different kind of threat to ancient monuments. Nonetheless, there is a similar belief in both texts that print, for all its apparent ephemerality, has preservative qualities.

What we see in *Monimenta Anglicana*, however, is the conviction that print is not only preservative, but also transgenerative. Le Neve makes a number of arresting allusions to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* as he explores this idea. Nothing that has obituary can ever record all of the deaths that take place in any given year, he asserts that "yet with all its Fables, I believe I may be so bold as to say Alcibiades; Malo foret [sic.] Utens in illo" (i, b. 17). The Latin here is a mangled quotation from Book II of Ovid's work, "aliquisque malo tui visus in illo," and so even in that disaster was there someone, son of the sun god, Phoebus, who crashed his father's chariot and so put out the sun for a day (the "disaster" form of light by quotation refers), but gave another form of light by

²⁹ Weever, 81.

³⁰ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. by Frank James Miller, rev. by G. F. Cowli, Loeb Classical Library, xiii (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), pp. 24–25.