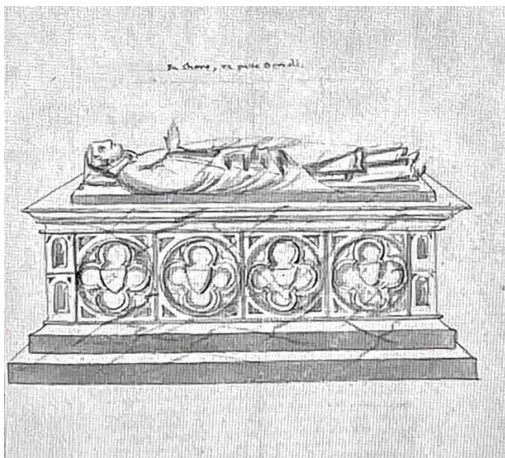


## FACT SHEET 346

**The Headless Cleric**  
**Victoria Arthurson, Hon Librarian and Archivist**  
**Pepperpots, Spring 2024 and The Steward No. 34**

Forlorn and forgotten, many of you may not have noticed the rather grubby looking carving tucked away in the South Quire Aisle behind the Stations of the Cross. Yet once this effigy occupied a place of importance, under an elegant canopy, that few could hope to emulate. Situated in the final arch of the North Quire Aisle, opposite to where Bishop Ridding's monument is now, it was very close to the Sanctuary. His importance cannot be exaggerated. Apart from a small piece of a knight in chainmail this effigy is the only remaining medieval statue that the Minster possesses. This is the effigy of a rich and high-ranking member of the Chapter. It is thought unlikely that he was an Archbishop as they were usually immortalized wearing a mitre.



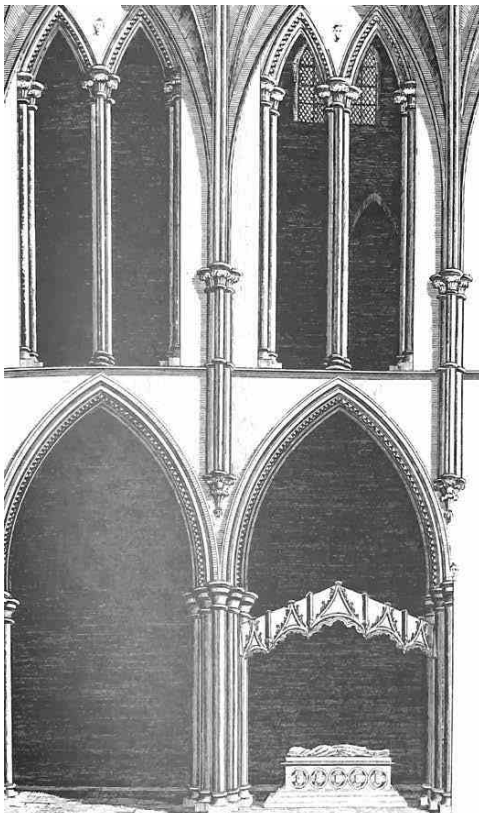
**A pre-civil war sketch, with the head intact.**

The Friends are kindly funding a report by expert conservator Dr David Carrington, of Skillington Workshop, on the best way to clean our effigy. Following this, and subject to the permission of the Fabric Advisory Committee, David will supervise the cleaning of the effigy. It is hoped that the process will be able to be viewed by the visiting public. When cleaning has taken place, it may be possible to date the figure more closely as ecclesiastics were subject to changing fashion as much as anyone.

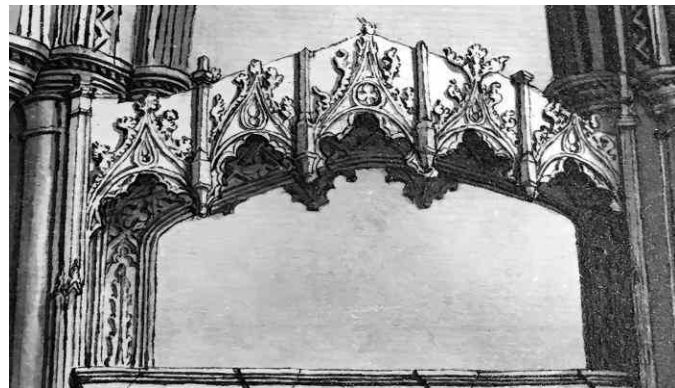
A closer inspection of the effigy shows that it appears to be carved from alabaster. Alabaster came into vogue for effigies following the use for the figure of Edward II, d.1327, in his elaborate tomb in Gloucester Cathedral. When freshly quarried, alabaster is still soft enabling delicate and flowing carving; exposed to the air it hardens and can

be polished to a high gloss with a flesh like colour. Painting and sometimes gilding would follow leaving the effigy clothed and styled, captured at death as in life.

Research will be ongoing to see how many of its secrets can be revealed. Professor Jenny Alexander, an expert in History of Art and Archaeology (and well known at the Minster for her fascinating work on medieval masons' marks) will be lending her expertise, as will Dr Chris Brooke and his international team of experts - if any paint traces are found - and the Church Monuments Society will also be consulted. The Minster is very lucky that these people give freely of their time and incredible expertise. When narrowed down to a likely date, it will be historical documentary work to try and identify who the effigy may represent. It is important to stress that we may narrow it down but be unable to be definitive. We have some pictorial records that show the effigy under a very elegant canopy and resting on a table tomb which date from the time the Pulpitum was built c1330-40. If the effigy is of the same date, it will elevate it to national importance. Traditionally it has been dated as 15<sup>th</sup> century. So, watch this space.....



**In situ in the north choir aisle, late 18th century.**



**Detail of the canopy, late 18th century.**

