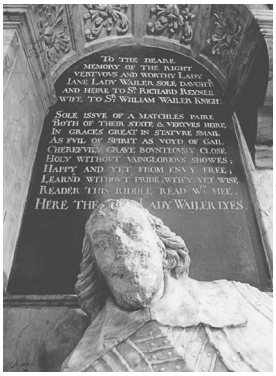
BathAbbey

Sir William Waller

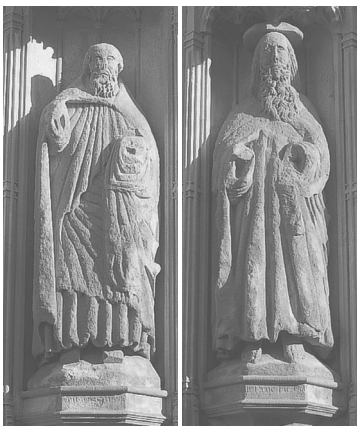
Sir William Waller (about 1598–1668) was a general in the Parliamentarian army during the English Civil War. His monument shows him wearing his armour. He planned the monument for him and his wife Jane. She died in 1633 and there is an inscription which commemorates her on one side. It is personal and kind, describing Jane as "witty (which means funny) yet wise" and "in graces great in stature small". This means she had lots of good qualities and she was not very tall.

William planned to be buried in the tomb too – his inscription would have gone on the other panel. However, he married again twice and when he died he was buried in London, so the monument was left unfinished.



William led a battle against the Royalist supporters of King Charles I at Lansdown, just outside Bath on 5th July 1643. Bath Abbey was used as a place where wounded soldiers could rest. They lay on straw on the Abbey floor.

A local baker called Richard Druce was asked to help feed the soldiers and he gave them free bread even though he was risking his life. Eventually he became Bath's Mayor.



Royalist soldiers took revenge a few years later by damaging the monument – you can see William's nose and right hand have been destroyed. His right hand held his sword so it was meant as a rude insult.

It's possible that Royalist soldiers also shot their guns to damage the head of the statue of St Peter (on the left) on the outside of the Abbey. The head looks smaller than the head of St Paul (right) on a statue close by and may have been re-carved.

What do you think?

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Other churches were badly damaged during the Civil War but Bath Abbey was not. This is possibly because the rich families in the area had previously paid for repairs to it. So, although they were on opposite sides in the war, they did not want to destroy their good work.

Waller wrote to his friend Sir Ralph Hopton before the Battle of Lansdown. Ralph was fighting on the opposite side but William still valued their friendship. In a letter to Ralph, he said:

Sir William Waller

Sir Ralph Hopton

"We are both upon the stage and must act such parts as are assigned us in this tragedy. Let us do it in a way of honour and without personal animosities."

What this means is:

"We are both involved in this war and have to get on with the job at this sad time. Let's try to do it in the best way we can, without criticising each other."

Activity ideas

1. William praised the qualities of his wife. Write a letter to a friend or family member, praising all the good things about them. It will make them feel very pleased to read it!
2. William believed in the cause of fighting on Parliament's side in the Civil War. What cause is important to you? Or, what could you do to have a positive effect on your friends or family? Write a list of things you could do to help.
3. When William found out that the monument had been damaged, how do you think he felt? Circle all the adjectives you think are possible. If there are any words you don't know, try looking them up in an online dictionary.

angry	delighted	upset	amused	enraged	relaxed
devastated	downcast	sad	defiant	bored	scared

Write some other adjectives to describe William's feelings here:

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