

## 18. TWO CARVED HEADS



Mounted on the wall to the right of the chancel's east window are two carved stone heads of a man and a woman. They may have been used as brackets. The man's headgear, called a *chaperon*, is a padded ring with an attached hood which could be long and elaborate. It's difficult to see, but the man has a fine moustache. The woman's braided hair is concealed by nets over each ear, and she wears a cloth, decorated or ruffed, which lays on her head and falls down her back. There is a case for thinking that these are intended as portraits, and they date to around 1430 - 1470.

The British Library holds the magnificently illustrated 'Talbot Shrewsbury book', which Lord John Talbot (later 1st Earl of Shrewsbury) commissioned and presented (in France) to Margaret of Anjou in 1445 on her betrothal to Henry VI. The pictures in the book can be viewed from the article [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talbot\\_Shrewsbury\\_Book](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talbot_Shrewsbury_Book)

Two of the illustrations show Lord John. In both cases he wears a *chaperon* pushed back over his shoulder though he has no moustache. This is relevant because the artist, thought to have been employed in a Rouen workshop where the book was produced for Talbot, would almost certainly have seen him as he was in the area at the time. The women in the pictures wear headdresses similar to the woman's carved head.

Talbot's arms and those of his son John, 1st Viscount Lisle, are those in the north aisle's east window. As Viscount Lisle's body was never found after the battle of Castillon on 17 July 1453, the heads may have supported a memorial to him or to his son, Thomas Talbot, 2nd Viscount Lisle. He was killed at the battle of Nibley Green, Gloucestershire fought on 20 March 1469/70 when he was about 20. This idea is supported by the fact that Thomas had married Margaret, daughter of William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, who held the right of presentation of the vicar of Whitchurch (in Goodrich manor) and probably of Goodrich too, though the data is missing.

William Herbert, the 1st Earl, was executed after the battle of Edgecote Moor on 20 July 1469, but he was succeeded by his son, another William who continued to hold the right of presentation.

If the heads are indeed portraits, the man seems rather too fleshy for a 20-year-old, so he could be John, 1st Viscount Lisle. The most important woman in his life was his mother, Margaret Beauchamp, whom he appointed as his executor before he left for France

to join his father in 1453. She was also guardian of his young son, Thomas, until her death in 1468. She was very assertive and sustained an inheritance quarrel with the Berkeley family for many years. It was as a result of this that Thomas picked a fight with Lord Berkeley which led to his defeat and death at Nibley Green and the extinction of that line of Viscounts Lisle.