

The Tyldesley Monument

A brief history of its inscription

The Tyldesley Monument marks where Sir Thomas Tyldesley fell whilst fighting for the Royalist cause at the Battle of Wigan Lane on 25 August 1651. Originally erected in 1679, the monument now stands in an enclosure at the junction of Wigan Lane and Monument Road.

During restoration work in 1886 a slate plaque was affixed to each side of the monument. These plaques replaced a rather more elegant arrangement, a single brass plate in a shaped recess on the west face. This plate is evident in the sketches taken by Latham in 1823 and by Whitehouse around 1829.

Only two of the slate plaques are inscribed. That facing south records Henry Park to have been Mayor of Wigan at the time of the restoration. Of more interest is the plaque on the west side which bears, in capital letters, the following inscription:

An High Act of Gratitude, which conveys the memory of Sir Thomas Tyldesley to posterity. Who served King Charles the First as Lieutenant Colonel at Edge Hill Battle, after raising Regiments of Horse, Foot, and Dragoons, and for the desperate storming of Burton-upon-Trent, over a bridge of 36 arches received the Honour of Knighthood, He afterwards served in all the Wars in great command was Governor of Lichfield, and followed the fortune of the Crown, through the three Kingdoms, and never compounded with the Rebels, though strongly invested, and on the 25th August A.D. 1651 was here slain, commanding as Major General under the Earl of Derby, To whom the grateful Erector, Alexander Rigby, Esq. was Cornet: and when he was High Sheriff of this County A.D. 1679 placed this High Obligation on the whole family of the Tyldesleys, to follow the Noble Example of their Loyal Ancestor.

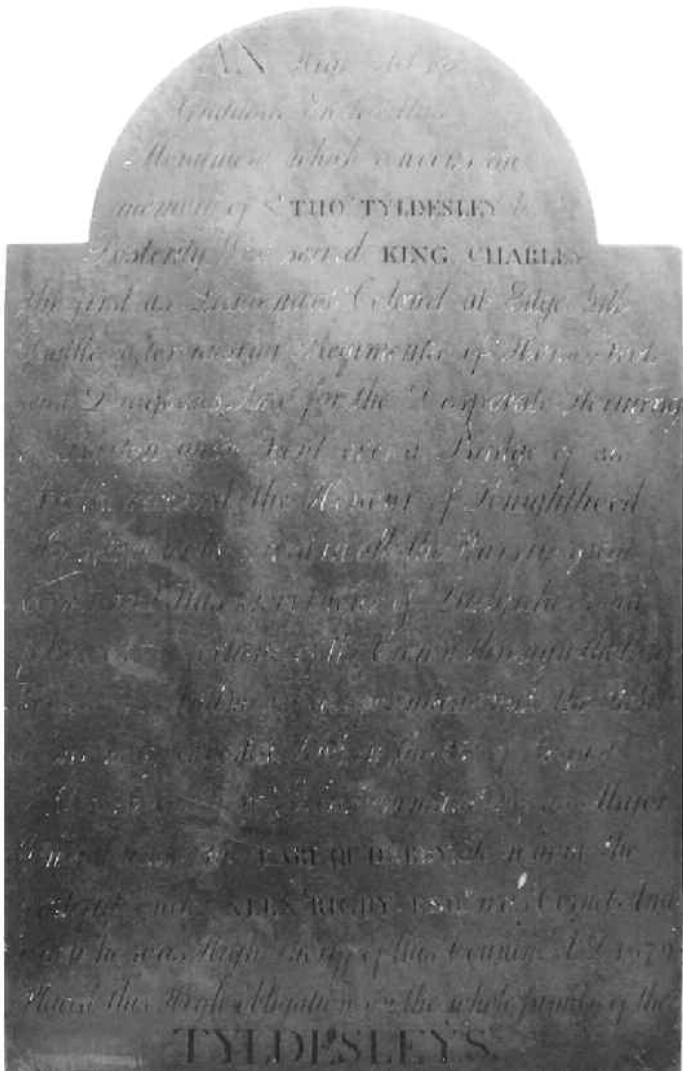
(Sketch by William Latham, Lancashire Record Office, Ref: DP 291/16)



Without the final nine words, it would be unclear what obligation is placed on the Tyldesleys. Yet a letter to the Wigan Examiner in May 1886 complained that these words were a modern addition by the restorers. Is this correct?

Remarkably the brass plate removed from the monument survives and was located by Simon Mills in the safekeeping of Lichfield Heritage Centre. On its reverse is a bolt and thumb-nut, suggesting the plate was originally bolted to an internal fixing point. The plate provides conclusive evidence of the former inscription:

AN High Act of Gratitude, Erected this Monument, which conveys the memory of S.R THO.S TYLDESLEY to Posterity. Who served KING CHARLES the first as Lieutenant Colonel at Edge hill Battle, after raising Regiments of Horse, Foot and Dragoons. And for the Desperate Storming of Burton upon Trent, over a Bridge of 36 Arches received the Honour of Knighthood. He afterwards served in all the Wars in great Command. Was Governour of Litchfield, and followed the Fortune of the Crown through the three Kingdoms - And never compounded with the Rebels tho strongly invested. And on the 25th of August A.D. 1650 was here Slain Commanding as Major-General under the EARL of DERBY. To whom the grateful Erector, ALEX.R RIGBY, ESQ.R was Cornet. And when he was High Sheriff of this County AD. 1679. Placed this High obligation on the whole family of the TYLDESLEYS.



The brass plate removed from the Monument.

Plainly, the disputed words are not included. Other differences are apparent between the two inscriptions. Most obviously, on the brass plate the year of the Battle of Wigan Lane is erroneously stated to be 1650, a mistake which is carried through into a number of early transcriptions, including those by Seacombe in 1793 and Britton in 1807.

The brass plate is not, however, the end of the story. It was itself added to the monument in an earlier restoration. In 1750, a letter to the Adams Weekly Courant noted that the monument had been dismantled. The inscription was on a piece of black marble, which the correspondent had located in a nearby alehouse. Though the gilded letters were 'much injured' they read as follows:

A high Act of Gratitude erected this Monument, & conveys the Memory of SIR THOMAS TYLDESLEY to Pofterity. Who ferved K: C: 1ft as Left: Col: at Edghill Battell; after rais'd Regiments of Horfe, Foot & Dragoons. And for the deperate Storming Burton

upon Trent, Over a Bridge of 36 Arches, Received the Honour of Knighthood. He after ferved in all the Warrs in great Commands; Was Governour of Litchfield And followed the Fortune of the Crown through the 3 Kingdoms. Would never compound with the Rebels, though ftrongly invefted And on the 25th of Aug: Anno 1650, Was here Slain, commanding as Major General under the E: of DERBY; To whom the gratefull Erector, ALEX. RIGBY, Esq; was Corne: And when hee was High Sheriff of the County of Lancafter Anno 1679, placed this high Obligation On the whole Family of the TYLDESLEYS.

Is this the earliest available transcription? Although the monument was seen by Brockbank in 1693, Kuerden around 1695 and Fiennes in 1698, they did not record the inscription. Nor did Thomas Tyldesley, grandson of Sir Thomas Tyldesley, when noting in his diary the cost of the repairs required in 1713 'Gave Hen: Hosfeild Towards reparing the stone brooken, weh was the inscription on the monimentt ffor Sr: Tho: Tyldesley, 2s: 6'

Where then, did the final words of the present inscription originate? In 1876, Picton included them when noting that the monument had been, 'repaired about thirty years since at the expense of a gentleman near Liverpool who claimed connexion with the Tyldesleys'. However the earliest mention appears to be by Raines in 1867, citing a manuscript at Knowsley House, then the seat of the Stanleys.

Sir Thomas Tyldesley and James Stanley, the seventh Earl of Derby, had been friends and comrades during the Civil War. It would be unsurprising if the original inscription had been transcribed for the Stanleys prior to 1750. Could the manuscript, if located, offer evidence that part of the 1679 inscription was lost to damage by 1750 and was merely reinstated during the 1886 restoration?

Diary of Thomas Tyldesley, grandson of Sir Thomas Tyldesley, 1713.

