

# WESTMINSTER ABBEY

WREATH LAYING, POETS' CORNER

2pm, 9 September 2015



MICHAELIS DRAYTON ARMIGERI

POETÆ CLARISS

## WELCOME

The Reverend Vernon White, *Canon of Westminster*

On behalf of the Dean and Chapter of Westminster Abbey, may I welcome you here today to our wreath-laying to celebrate the life of the poet-laureate Michael Drayton (1563-1631). The service marks a renaissance of interest in Drayton's body of work, beginning with the launch tomorrow at the Royal Geographical Society of *The Faerie Land*, an exhibition exploring his epic topographical poem of Britain, *Poly-Olbion* (1612; 1622).

Born in rural Warwickshire and educated by the literary Goodere family at Polesworth Abbey, Drayton rose to become so highly regarded by his contemporaries that he was buried here in Westminster Abbey with some considerable ceremony. According to an account of his funeral, a great stream of friends and admirers processed from Drayton's lodgings by St Dunstan-in-the-West on Fleet Street to the Abbey, "the Gentlemen of the Four Innes of Court and others of note about the Town, attending his body to Westminster, reaching in order by two and two...almost to Standbridge." It was later exclaimed by Fuller in his *Church History of Britain* of 1655, that Drayton's presence was enough to make visitors feet "move metrically, who go over the place where so much Poeticall dust is interred."

Our memorial today represents the first service for Drayton at the Abbey for many centuries and will, we hope, begin to fulfill his friend and fellow poet George Wither's hope that

Ages to come, shall hug thy POESY,  
as we our dear Friends Pictures, when they dye.  
Those that succeed us, DRAYTONS Name shall love.  
And our great-Grandsonnes Childrens-children may,  
(Yea shall) as in a Glasse, this ISLE survey, As wee now see it.



*Lux Haresbulla tibi (Warwici villa, tenebris.  
Inte tuas Cunas, obsita) Prima fuit.  
Arma, Viros, Veneres, Patriam modulamine dixti:  
Te Patria resonant Arma, Viri, Veneres.*

"That ingenious Poet Michael Drayton Esquire,  
my neere Countriman and olde acquaintance...  
why should I goe about to commend him,  
whose owne workes and worthinesse have  
sufficiently extold to the world."

William Burton,  
*The Description of Leicester Shire, 1622*

COLLECT FOR THE SAINTS AND MARTYRS OF ENGLAND

O God, whom the glorious company of the redeemed adore,  
gathered from all times and places of thy dominion:  
we praise thee for the saints of our own land,  
and for the lamps that were lit by their holiness;  
and we beseech thee that, at the last,  
we too may be numbered among those who have done thy will  
and declared thy righteousness;  
through Jesus Christ thy Son our Lord,  
who liveth and reigneth with thee,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.



PRAYERS

*As we remember Michael Drayton, we pray —*

O God our Father, who through the ages has caused  
poets and writers to perceive the world afresh,  
to enthral and provoke us to thought, reflection and wonder;  
and to explore the richness and diversity of our common nature;  
at this time we thank thee for thy servant, Michael Drayton,  
remembering him with joy, gratitude and affection;  
and giving thanks for the beauty of his poetry;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

O God, who by your spirit in our hearts leads  
men and women to desire thy perfection,  
to seek for truth and to rejoice in beauty:  
illuminate and inspire, we beseech thee,  
all writers and poets, artists and craftsmen;  
that in whatsoever is true and pure and lovely,  
thy name may be hallowed and thy Kingdom come on earth,  
as it is in heaven; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



MICHAEL DRAYTON'S LINES ON THE WELSH BARDS  
FROM SONG VI OF *POLY-OLBION* (1612)

Read by Professor Philip Schwyzer, University of Exeter,  
*Professor of Renaissance Literature,*

O memorable Bards, of unmixed blood, which still  
Posterity shall praise for your so wondrous skill,  
That in your noble Songs, the long Descents have kept  
Of your great Heroes, else in Lethe that had slept,  
With theirs whose ignorant pride your labours have disdained;  
How much from time, and them, how bravely have you gained!  
Musician, Herald, Bard, thrice may'st thou be renowned,  
And with three several wreaths immortally be crowned.



MICHAEL DRAYTON'S LINES  
ON THE HERMIT OF ARDEN'S HERBS  
FROM SONG XIII OF *POLY-OLBION* (1612)

Read by Professor Paul Farley FRSL, Lancaster University;  
*poet & author of the forthcoming Electric Poly-Olbion.*

Here finds he on an Oak Rheume-purging Polipode;  
And in some open place that to the Sonne doth lye,  
He Fumitorie gets, and Eye-bright for the eye:  
The Yarrow, where-with-all he stops the wound-made gore:  
The healing Tutsan then, and Plantan for a sore.  
And hard by them againe he holy Vervaine finds,  
Which he about his head that hath the Megrim binds.  
The wonder-working Dill hee gets not farre from these,  
Which curious women use in many a nice disease.  
For them that are with Newts, or Snakes, or Adders stong,  
He seeketh out an hearbe that's called Adders-tong;  
As Natire it ordain'd, its owne like hirt to cure,

And sportive to her selfe to nicities inure.  
Valerian then he crops, and purposely doth stampe,  
T'apply unto the place that's haled with the Crampe.  
As Century, to close the wideness of a wound:  
The belly hurt by birth, by Mugwort to make sound.  
His Chickweed cures the heat that in the face doth rise.  
For physik, some again he inwardly applies.  
For comforting the Spleene and Liver, gets for juce,  
Pale Hore-Hound, which he holds of most especiall use.  
So Saxifrage is good, and Harts-tongue for the Stone,  
With Agrimony, and that herbe we call St John.  
To him that hath a flux, of Sheepheards purse he gives,  
And Mous-eare unto him whom some sharp rupture grieves.  
And for the laboring wretch that's troubled with a cough,  
Or stopping of the breath, by fleagme that's hard and tough,  
Campana here he crops, aprooved wondrous good:  
As Comfrey unto him that's brused, spetting blood;  
And from the Falling-ill, by Five-leafe doth restore,  
And Melancholy cures by soveraigne Hellebore.

TYLWYTH TEG,  
A POEM IN ALEXANDRINE COUPLETS  
INSPIRED BY THE RIVER NYMPHS OF POLY-OLBION,  
BY RONA SMITH & HOLLY ROBBINS,  
*Children's Poly-Olbion Project artists from the  
SENSS Ormerod Base in Woodstock.*

Read by Rona Smith.

There was a Tylwyth Teg, in River Usk so swift,  
She combed her golden hair, with Amphrititae's gift.  
She sits in the cool stream water, next to a waterfall,  
A swaine man comes along, gives her a loving call.  
He proposes to her, with gentle words so sweet.  
And takes her to the bank, and lifts her to her feet  
The Tylwyth Teg says, "yes," to this overture so fine.  
"No arguments shall we, through all our loving time."  
They wed in late April, an evening of spring sun.  
Twelve children did they have, bouncy every one.  
They learned to swim at two. They grew up strong and tall.  
All school work they had done. Thoughtful were they all.  
People everywhere said, that they had never found.  
A happ'yer fam'ly in, the countryside around.  
One wicked stormy day, their life did go awry.  
The rage that followed this, like black clouds in the sky.  
In blinking of an eye, Tywith Teg said goodbye.  
No tears did she shed, but heard the children cry.  
Her husband sad at home, no longer did she love.  
She quietly slipped away, back into the flood.



EXTRACT FROM VERSES CONCERNING  
ANNE GOODERE, DRAYTON'S "IDEA,"  
"MADE THE NIGHT BEFORE HE DYED." <sup>1</sup>

Read by Anne Louise Avery,  
*Director, Flash of Splendour & the Children's Poly-Olbion Project*

So well I love thee as without thee I  
Love nothing; if I might choose, I'd rather die  
Than be one day debar'd thy company.

The seeds of love first by thy eyes were thrown  
Into a ground untill'd, a heart unknown  
To bear such fruit, til by thy hands t'was sown.

Look as your looking-glass by chance may fall,  
Divide, and break in many pieces small,  
And yet shows forth the selfsame face in all,

Proportions, features, graces, just the same,  
And in the smallest piece as well the name  
Of fairest one deserves as in the richest frame;

So all my thoughts are pieces but of you,  
Which put together makes a glass so true  
As I therein no other's face but yours can view.

<sup>1</sup> Bodl. MS. Ash.38, f.77; Unc<sup>17</sup> n.

LAYING OF THE WREATH,  
*which has been woven with flowers and herbs  
cited in Poly-Olbion*



LORD'S PRAYER AND BLESSING

*We join together in the Lord's Prayer:*

Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name.  
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass  
against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:  
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory,  
for ever and ever. Amen.

God grant to the living, grace; to the departed, rest;  
to the Church, the Queen and the Commonwealth and all people,  
peace and concord, and to us sinners, life everlasting.  
And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy  
Spirit, be with you and remain with you,  
this night and for evermore. Amen

“How I do love thee, Michael, and thy muse!’ exclaimed  
rare old Ben (Jonson); and we are very much of Ben’s  
mood with respect to Michael Drayton, never omitting  
as we pass through Poets’ Corner to give a look of  
affectionate regard at his bust in that noble corner of  
Westminster Abbey.”

“Town and Table Talk,”  
*Illustrated London News*,  
Saturday, August 30, 1856



*Written and produced by Anne Louise Avery,  
Flash of Splendour*