

# Ailesbury Mausoleum

Originally, this octagonal mausoleum, which stands above a vaulted crypt, was lit by oval windows and linked by a passage to the church (see illustration of early C19 watercolour in Luton Museum and Art Gallery). The link was demolished and the upper part of the structure was 'Gothicised' in 1859. The mausoleum is built of coursed ironstone and has a steeply pitched roof with alternating bands of plain and fish-scale clay tiles. The dominant feature of the upper chamber is the oval gadrooned cistern from which rises the half-figure of the Countess, locally known as 'the lady in the punchbowl'. The busts of the Earl and his grandson stand in niches to either side. The vault below contains twenty seven loculi of which twenty four are occupied. In 1857 the coffins of Henrietta and Henrietta-Maria, Marchioness of Ailesbury (d.1831) were removed to the family vault at Great Bedwyn in Wiltshire.

Churchyard of St Mary  
Church Road  
Maulden  
Bedfordshire  
MK45 2AA  
England

Scan for Google Maps Link



## Architects

Crypt: not known. Above ground structure: largely rebuilt in 1859 by Benjamin Ferrey.

## Year Built

1656

## Style

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## Listing

Grade II\* (England and Wales)

## Condition

Good (2006).

## History

This is arguably the earliest mausoleum in England. It was built in 1656 by Thomas Bruce, 1st Earl of Elgin to commemorate his second wife, Diana, daughter of the Countess of Exeter (d.1654) and house her splendid monument. When Thomas himself died in 1664, his son, Robert, had portrait busts made of both his father and his own son, Edward (who had died the year before) and these were also placed in the upper chamber of the mausoleum, the remains being lodged in the vault below. By 1769 the coffins in the vault were in such a state that Thomas Brudenell, Lord Bruce, by this time living in Wiltshire, decided to have loculi built to contain them. There is a plan showing the arrangement of the vault in the Wiltshire and Swindon Record Office. The family continued to use the mausoleum for interment until 1836. In the 1970s the Brudenells removed the marble half-figure of Diana, Countess of Elgin (attributed to Thomas Burman) and the busts of Thomas and Edward Bruce (both attributed to George Bushnell) and took them to Deene Park in Northamptonshire. Then in 2001 the mausolum became the property of Bedfordshire County Council. It has now been restored with the aid of major grants from the Heritage Lottery Fund and EB Bedfordshire Ltd (Landfill Tax) and contributions made by individuals and local organizations. The sculpture has been replaced in replica.

## Sources

BoE: Beds (1968) 123;

H Colvin, Architecture and the After-Life (1991), 312-3;

M S F George, 'The Elgin Marbles of Maulden', Bedfordshire Magazine, (1949), 2, 60;

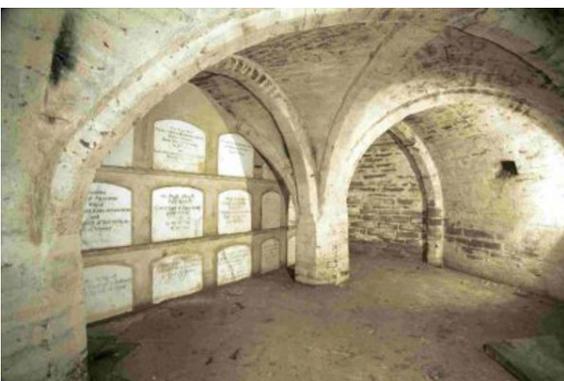
VCH: Beds (1912), 3, 314-5;

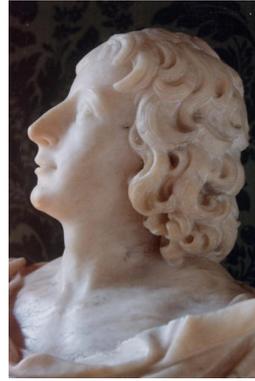
Information supplied by Bedfordshire C.C.

## Online Links

St Mary The Virgin, Maulden website

## Photos





## Location

SatNav Co-ordinates: 52.03099374656822, -0.4588146828770337