

⟨Bodl. MS Aubrey 6, f.108

Aubrey's 'Brief Life' of Jonson, 1680⟩

Mr Benjamin Johnson Poet Laureat.

He killed Mr
.... Marlow the
Poet on Bunhill,
comeing from the
Green-curtain
play-house. from
Sir Edward
Shirburn.

I remember when I was a Scholar at Trinity College
5 Oxon 1646 I heard Mr Ralph Bathurst [now Deane of Welles]
say that Ben: Johnson was a Warwyckshire* man. 'Tis
agreed, that his father was a Minister, and by his Epistle
dedicatory of Every man to Mr *William* Camden, that
he was a Westminster scholar, & that Mr *William* Camd{en}
10 was his Schoolmaster. His mother, after his fathers death,
maried a Bricklayer, & 'tis generally sayd that he wrought
some time with his father in lawe, & particularly on the
Garden-wall of Lincolnes Inne next to Chancery lane; and
that ^a Knight^ a Bencher walking thro & hear-
15 ing him repeat some Greeke verses out of Homer, discours-
ing with ^him^ & finding him to have a Witt extraordinary,
gave him some Exhibition to maintaine him at Trinity Col-
lege in Cambridge, where he was[†] Then he went[†]
into the Lowe-countreys and spent some time ^not very long^
20 in the ~~War~~. as you may find in his Epigrammes. Then he
came over into England, and acted and wrote at The Green
Curtaine. ^but both ill^ a kind of Nursery or obscure Play-
house, somewhere in the Suburbes (I thinke towards Shored-
itch, or Clarkenwell) Then he under-tooke againe to write
25 ^a^ Playe and did hitt it admirably well. viz: Every man
. which was his first good one.

from old parson
Hill of Stretton
Hereff 1646

† *quaere*

from J. Greenhill.

Serjeant ^John^ Hoskins of Herefordshire, was his Father.

9 Camd{en}] *ms damaged* 25 Playe] *altered from Playes*

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Anthony Wood in hist *Historia*. sayes he was borne in Westminster {&} that (of riper yeares) after he {h}ad studied at Cambridge) he came of his owne accord to Oxon̄, and there entred himselfe in *Christ Church* and tooke his Masters degree in Oxford (or conferred on him) Anno 1619. / lib. 2. p. 273.

I remember his sonne [Sir Bennet Hoskins Baronet, who was something Poeticall in his youth] told me that when he desired to be adopted his Son: No, sayd he 'tis honour enough for me to be your Brother; I am your fathers son: 'twas he, that polished me: I doe acknowledge it. He was ~~of~~ (or rather 5 had been) of a clear [¶]& faire[¶] skin: his habit was very plaine. I have heard Mr Lacy the Player say, that he was wont to weare a coate like a coach-mans coate, with slitts under the arme-pitts. he would many times exceed in drinke: Canarie was his beloved liquour: then he would tumble home to bed; 10 and when he had thoroughly perspired then to studie. I have seen his studyeing chaire, *which* was of Strawe, such as old woemen used; and as Aulus Gellius {is} drawn in.

When I was an *Oxonian Bishop Skinner* [of Oxfor{d}] who lay at our *college* was wont to say, that he understood 15 an Author as well as any man in England. He mentions in his *Epigrammes*, a Sonne that he had, and his Epitaph. long since in King James time I have heard my uncle Danvers say who knew him) tha{t} he lived without temple Barre at a Combe makers shop about the *Elephant & Castle*. in his 20 later time he lived in Westminster in the house under *which* you passe, as you goe out of the Church yard into the old Palace; where he dyed: he lies buryed in the north aisle, [¶]the path of square stone, the rest is lozenges[¶] opposite to the Scutcheon* of *Robertus de Ros*. with this Inscription only on 25 him in a pavement [^]square[¶] ~~of~~ blew marble about 14 inches squa{re} O RARE BENN: IONSON, *which* was donne at the chardg of Jack Young [¶]afterwards knighted[¶], who walking

*

margin {&} ms damaged margin {h}ad ms damaged 13 {is} ms damaged
14 Oxfor{d} ms damaged 19 tha{t} ms damaged 23 Palace;] P altered from p
27 squa{re} ms damaged 27 IONSON] altered from IOHNSON

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there when the grave was covering gave the fellow eighteen pence to cutt it.

His Motto before before his (bought) Bookes was Tanquam Explorator. I remember 'tis in Seneca's *Epistles*.

5 He was a Favourite of the Lord Chancellor Egerton, as appeares by severall verses to him. In one, he begges his *Lordship*, to doe a friend of his a favour.

'Twas an ingeniose remarque of my Lady Hoskins, that *Ben Jonson* never writes of Love. or if he does, does it
10 not naturally.

⟨Bodl. MS Aubrey 8, f. 15⟩

⟨Aubrey's additional note on Jonson⟩

Ben Johnson

quaere Thomas Shadwell per Notes of [^]Ben Johnson
15 from [^]the Duke of Newcastle. & also *quaere* Thomas Hen-
shawe. [as also de Saxis in *Hiberniæ*] [^]vide his Execration
against Vulcan. [^]*quaere* my Lord Clifford—of the Gentleman
that cutt the grasse under Ben's [^]Jonsons[^] feet, of whom he
sayd "Ungratefull man! I shewed him Juvenal."

20 Ben Jonson had 50^{li} *per annum* for ... yeares to-
gether to keepe off, Sir W. Wiseman of Essex from being
Sheriff; at last King James prickt him, & Ben: came to his
Majestie: & told him he had prickt him to the heart. & then
explayned himselfe, innuendo Sir W. Wiseman being prickt
25 ~~for~~ Sheriff: & gott him struck off.

1–10 gave ... naturally.] *in margin, marked to indicate that it should be moved to its current position* 14–15 Thomas ... of Newcastle *underlined in red ink*
20–27 Ben Jonson ... x^{li}] added later, above title

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vide None-such-Charles. when *Ben Jonson* was dye-
ing, *King Charles* sent him but x^{li}.

⟨Bodl. MS Aubrey 8, f. 54⟩
⟨Aubrey's additional note on Jonson⟩

Ben. Johnson had one eie lower, than tother, and big- 5
ger. like Clun the Player. perhaps he begott Clun. He tooke
a Catalogue from Mr Lacy (the Player) of the Yorkeshire
Dialect
words —'twas his Hint for Clownery, to his Comœdy called,
The Tale of a Tub. This I had from Mr Lacy. /

⟨Bodl. MS Aubrey 8, f. 55⟩ 10
⟨Aubrey's additional note on Jonson⟩

Ben Johnson.

lyes buried in the north aisle of *Westminster* abbey.
just opposite to the Scutcheon of Robertus de Ros. under
the [^]middle[^] walke [^]or path[^] of square stones on one of which 15
is wrote o rare Ben Jonson. ~~4 yards from the pillar~~. King
James made him write against the Puritans, who began to
be troublesome in his time.

A Grace by Ben: Johnson. extempore. before King James.
Our King and Queen the Lord-God blesse, 20
The Paltzgrave, and the Lady Besse.

Bodl. MS Aubrey 8, f. 54 *Slip of paper tipped onto f. 55. Aubrey's rough draft of these notes are Bodl. MS Aubrey 8, f. 54^v* Bodl. MS Aubrey 8, f. 55 *Notes made on the blank panels of a letter to Aubrey from Andrew Paschall of 19 July 1681*
12 Ben Johnson *underlined in red ink* 16 Jonson] *altered from Johnson* 19
Ben Johnson *underlined in red ink*

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And God blesse every living thing,
That lives, and breath's, and loves the King.
God blesse the Councell of Estate
And Buckingham the fortunate.
5 God blesse them all; and keep them safe:
And God blesse me, and God blesse Raph.

The *King* was mighty enquisitive to know who this
Raph was; Ben told him 'twas the Drawer at the Swanne-
taverne by Charing-cross who drew him good Canarie. for
10 This drollery his *majestie* gave him an hundred poundes.

In his Dedication of his first play called Every man in
his Humour to Mr Camden, Clarenceaux.

—since I am none of those, that can suffer the Benefits
confer'd ~~on my~~ upon my youth to perish with my age. It is
15 a fraile ^{memorie} thing, that remembers but present things.—

⟨Bodl. MS Aubrey 4, f. 180^v⟩

⟨Aubrey's *A Perambulation of Surrey*⟩

Ben: Johnson ^{being at} rideing through in Surrey
found the Woemen weeping & wailing, lamenting the death
20 of A Lawyer who lived there: he enquired why
so great grieffe for the losse of a Lawyer? Oh, sayd they [⁠]we
have have the greatest Losse imaginable[⁠] he kept us all in
Peace & quietnesse: and was a most charitable good man.
Whereupon Ben made this Distich
25 "God workes Wonders now and than.

quære where this
was? and his
name.

11-15 In . . . things—] *continued in margin*

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Behold ^{all} a Miracle: ~~deny't who can:~~

Here lies a Lawyer & an honest Man.”

'Tis pittie but that good Mans name should be remembred.

⟨Bodl. MS Aubrey 6, f. 107^{r-v}⟩

⟨Izaak Walton's letter of 22 November 1680⟩

5

Ben: Johnson.

For your Friend's quære, this:

I only knew Ben Iohnson: but my lord of Winton knew him very well, and says he was in the 6^o—that is the upermost Forme in westminster scole. at which time, his father 10 dyed, and his mother marryed a brickelayer who made him (much against his will) to help him in his trade. but in a short time, his scole maister Mr Camden, got him a better employment, which was to atend or acompany a son of Sir 5 Walter Raulyes in his trautils. within a short time after their 15 returne, they parted (I think not in cole bloud) and with a loue sutable to what they had in their trautils [^](not to be comended)[^]. and then, Ben began to set up for himselfe in the trade by which he got his subsistance [^]and[^] fame. of which I nede not give any acount. he got in time to haue a 100^{li} 20 a yeare from the king, also a pention from the Cittie, and the like from many of the nobilitie, and som of the gentry. which was well pay'd for loue or fere of his railing in verse, or prose, or boeth. my [^]lord[^] of winton told me, he told him, he was (in his long retyrement, and sicknes, when he 25 saw him, which was often) much afflickted, that hee had ~~been~~

6 Ben: Johnson] *Aubrey's hand*

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profain'd the Scripture, in his playes; and lamented it with
sorrow: yet, that at that time of his long retyrement, his
pentions (so much as came In) was giuen to a woman [^]that
gouern'd him. [^]with whome he liu[^]d and dyed nere the Abie
5 in west mimster.) and that nether he nor she tooke much
care for next weike; and wood be sure not to want Wine: of
which he usually tooke too much before he went to bed, if
not oftner and soner. my lord tells me, he knowes not, but
thinks he was borne in westminster, the question may be put
10 to Mr wood very easily upon what grownds he is positiu[^]
as to his being borne their, he is a friendly man, and will
resolue it. so much for braue Ben. you will not think the
rest so tedyus, as I doe this.

For *your* 2. and 3^o. quære of Mr Hill and Bilingsley,
15 I doe nether know, nor can learn anything worth taling you.

for *your* two remaining quære of mr Warner and Mr
Harriott this.

Mr Warner did live and Constantly lodg, nere the
Water-stares, or market in Woolstable. (woolstable is a place
20 or a lane not far from Charing Crosse, and nerer to northum-
berland howse.) my lord of winchester tells me he knew him,
and that he [^]saide he [^]first fownd out the Cerculatio[^]n[^] of the
blood, and discouer'd it doctor Haruie (who said ~~twas he~~ that
'twas he (himselfe) that found it.) for which he is so mem-
25 orably famose. Warner had a pention of 40^{li} a yeare, from
that Earle of northumberland that lay so long a prisner in
the Towre. and som allowance from [^]Sir Thomas Alesbery
from [^]whome he had also some allowance and with whome he
usually spent his sumer [^]in Windesor park[^] and was Welcom,
30 for he was harmles, and quiet. his winter was spent at the
Wolstable, where he dyed, in the time of [^]the[^] parliament of

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1640. of *which* or whome he was no louer.

Mr Herriott; my lord tells me he knew ~~him~~ also: that he was a more gentile man, then Warner. that he had 120^{li} a yeare pention from the said Earle [^]who was a louer of ther studies⁷ and his lodging in Syon howse, where he thinks, or 5 beliuies, he dyed.

This is all I know or can learne for your friend: which I wish may be worth the time and troble of reading it.

I W /

Nouember 22.

10

80

I forgot to tell that I heard the Sermon preacht for the lady danuers, and haue it: but thanke *your* Friend.

This Account I *received* from Mr ^{Isaac} Walton [who Dr *John* Donnes life ^{8^o} wrote] December 2. 1680. he be- 15 ing then eighty-seauen yeares of age. This is his owne handwriting.

14-17 This Account ... owne handwriting] *Aubrey's hand*