

Transcript of *What'sHerName* Episode 103: [THE CARPENTER Elizabeth Gregory](#)

00:00 - 05:27

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OM: Hi Katie!

KN: Hi, Olivia

OM: I hope you're excited, because we are going on a field trip.

KN: Yay! I don't care where we're going.

OM: I think you're gonna like where we're going.

KN: 'kay

OM: ...but maybe not as much as me

KN: Interesting.

OM: (That's a hint.) [laughs] I want you to imagine you are walking into a sixteenth century building site.

KN: Okay.

OM: You're in London, and this particular building site is a *huge* church.

KN: Okay.

OM: So things are quite grand. [sound effects fade in under the voices]

All around you - frenetic activity, bustle, noise, animals working, pulling loads... big wooden cranes and other construction devices... Stone masons, carpenters... and in every grand historical drama or meticulously recreated documentary I've ever seen, these people all had one thing in common: They were all *men*.

KN: Oh, well, of course!

OM: I mean women are not going to be found employed as stonemasons or carpenters, etc-

KN: Right

OM: on the most important large-scale building projects in European religious history... *or are they?!?*  
[laughter]

[theme music plays]

OM: I'm Olivia Meikle

KN: and I'm Katie Nelson

OM: and this is *What'sHerName*

KN: Fascinating women you've never heard of.

[theme music]

OM: We are on the site of [Westminster Abbey](#).

KN: Oh, hey!

OM: Possibly my favorite church in the entire world. As you and everyone who came on our lost women of England tour last year with us experienced...

KN: [laughs] Uh huh

OM: ...being there with me.

KN: Oh, man! A full 4 hour - more than 4 hour - tour of Westminster Abbey.

OM: There has been a church here since the seventh century, or so the story goes. But we're here in the year 1698. Construction on *this* building that we are standing in began under Henry III in the mid-thirteenth century. But the stonework is crumbling, the roof is starting to give way, and since [Sir Christopher Wren](#) has already been tasked with rebuilding about half of London, because of a *minor* difficulty that happened a few years ago...

KN: [laughs] Uh-

OM: Namely-

[in unison] ...[the Great Fire](#).

KN: [laughs] Uh huh

OM: Why not add another spot to his list? We're creating a brand new city, gotta make Westminster match it.

And our guide on this time travel jaunt is Aaron Paterson.

KN: Hooray!

**05:27 - 10:37**

Aaron Paterson: I'm Aaron, and I am the Community Learning Officer at Westminster Abbey. I've been here for 5 years, and in those years I've just been exploring lots of different stories that we can uncover. There are new things that we might want to tell people who are visiting the Abbey, and give them a different insight from the usual story of royals and coronations. You know, we all want to hear those stories, but there are other stories! Between *three and a half thousand* people who are buried and remembered here. There's definitely going to be something for everyone.

OM (to KN): Aaron Paterson is Westminster Abbey's Community Learning Officer in charge of all their programs for children and families

KN: [sing-songingly] Awesome

OM: and just the most delightful human being you will ever meet in your life.

KN: and the best special access tour guide!

OM: Absolutely. And on that tour, if you remember, he introduced us to a little mystery in the Abbey.

I was so fascinated by this that I went back later that afternoon - four hours in Westminster Abbey was not nearly enough for me, and - [laughter] I went back later that afternoon to find out more about this. And I did not freak out *at all* being in the amazing medieval space in the top of the abbey, looking out over the gallery...

KN: I'm sure you didn't

OM: I was *totally* calm, with the incredible Abbey organist rehearsing for [Evensong](#) in the background. So while I might normally apologize for any sound issues for a on-site interview, in this situation, I'm gonna say: *you're welcome*.

KN: How fun!

AP: So in the Abbey, my office is about 3 stories up in a Victorian building, and on the level below me is the Clerk of the Works. And the Clerk of the Works is a job title I had never heard of before I started working at the Abbey. And it's essentially the person who has overall responsibility for the day-to-days, the fabric of the building. They're in charge of carpenters, plumbers, electricians - all of these people who are looking after the building. Above them is a job called the Surveyor of the Fabric, which is actually almost a completely different job now. They are going to be like an architect who sort of looks at the function of the building.

So the Abbey is a huge building - we've got stone masons, carpenters, plumbers, all sorts of tradespeople to

sort of look after this incredible building. And we've always had those people, so the role of the Clerk of the Works has existed for many, many years. We all know about [Sir Christopher Wren](#), who rebuilt Saint Paul's Cathedral after [the Great Fire of London](#), but a lot of people actually don't know that he was also the Surveyor of the Fabric at Westminster Abbey.

OM (to KN): Now I'm going to go out on a limb here and say that, despite Aaron Paterson's faith in our listener's knowledge, I am guessing that a few of our listeners *may not* "all know Sir Christopher Wren" [laughter], so - tiny little tutorial here. When the Great Fire of London burned down everything in 1666 - obviously huge rebuilding project. Sir Christopher Wren, one of the premier architects in London at the time is tasked with rebuilding, originally 55 churches, I think it is? and put in charge of huge swaths of the architecture of what we now know as...

KN: London

OM: iconic London, what *is* London. His greatest achievement is famously St. Paul's Cathedral, but he was actually also put in charge of Westminster Abbey. And his vision for Westminster was a little bit different from what we see now.

Now, just in case there's a handful of weirdos who *didn't* spend most of the summer of their thirteenth year obsessively studying everything they could find about Westminster Abbey...

KN: [laughs]

OM: These 2 square towers on the west front of Westminster are iconic. They *are* Westminster. They are the image on all the merch. They're extremely famous, and they were *not Wren's plan at all*.

KN: Huh!

AP: He had all of these grand plans to put pillars and spires around the Abbey, where we've got the two towers at the west front now, he wanted to have two sort of rounded, rotunda structures. But one of the designs was this spire that he wanted to have right in the middle of the lantern, which is right in the center of the crossing - as you probably know the Abbey is shaped like a cross. And he was appointing head laborers and tradespeople to do this work - he was outsourcing it. And one of the people that he was outsourcing it to was the Head Carpenter. And the Head Carpenter in the 1700s was a woman called Elizabeth Gregory.

OM (on recording): [gasps]

**10:37- 15:27**

KN (to OM): Hold on.

OM: What?! A woman!

KN: Head carpenter! Well.

OM: Now I'm going to admit right up front - we know *almost nothing* about Elizabeth Gregory. I have spent ten months trying to track down *anything* else about her. Here's what I have found:

She was born Elizabeth Gray in 1666.

KN: Woahhh!

OM: Yes, the year of the fire.

KN: Wow!

OM: It's a good year to be a carpenter. [laughs]

In 1687, she married John Gregory, who was a carpenter.

KN: Oh, my! 1688 is the glorious revolution. I mean she's living through some *huge* stuff in London.

OM: Yeah - and in Westminster, right?

KN: Yeah.

OM: Westminster goes from the Royal Church to being *lightly* vandalized, but repurposed. And then Cromwell ends up buried there... and then they dig him up. I mean...

KN: Yeah. Wow.

OM: This is the center of

KN: Puritism, and then not. And then the restoration of the monarchy.

OM: And she's there in the middle of all of it.

KN: Wow!

OM: And then after John Gregory died, she was hired as Head Abbey Carpenter, and continued in that role until her death in 1719.

KN: Wow!

OM: And *that's what we know*.

KN: [laughs] Okay.

OM: Well, and - after many hours and lots of help trolling the national archives, we have *maybe, possibly* located her will... *maybe*.

KN: Whoa!

OM: There's a lot of Elizabeth Gregorys. She is a mystery. But what a mystery!

AP: We don't really know a great deal about Elizabeth Gregory, but we have a beautiful model that she has made of Christopher Wren's design for this spire, and it takes us from the base of the Abbey all the way up to this sort of point we would have looked out across London - across the Houses of Parliament, almost sort of competing with Big Ben.

KN (to OM): Ah! The scale model-

OM: Yes

[in unison] that we saw

KN: up in the- yeah.

OM: It's amazing. It's...

KN: like a little diorama. But the most sophisticated

OM: the most amazingly sophisticated

KN: Yeah

OM: Dollhouse. [laughs] And it's not little. It's 5 feet tall.

KN: Yeah, I really like how in the early modern era, carpenters and designers would make those like massive models. Then it would be the thing that everybody works from.

OM: Yeah

KN: and they put so much time and resources into the model, before they even built the church.

OM: Yeah, you know we now look at what - sometimes churches will make these now as a sort of way of "here's how to get a grasp of the hugeness of this building," so, you know, you can see the whole thing

KN: Yeah.

OM: But these were functional *documents*. And as Aaron Paterson points out, these were the best and only way to explain to the people you're asking for money what you want to do.

AP: So now we see these, like - awful artist sketches of new builds. Don't we? Like they're getting built, and there's like animated figures in them. And so in the seventeen hundreds they're commissioning full-blown oil paintings of what this is going to look like with figures in it sort of showing scale, etc.

OM (to KN): Now I'm sure a lot of people noticed that sentence - 'after her husband died, Elizabeth Gregory was hired.'

KN: Classic

OM: Classic, and *fraught*

AP: This, sort of traditionally looking back in the past, this idea that women would take on the role that their husband had if their husband died - that sort of tradition is in many things, like often with politicians. If a politician dies and the woman just takes the role until such time that they can be replaced. But Elizabeth Gregory held the role of Head Carpenter for quite some time, and we know that she was appointed by Sir Christopher Wren, so he *chose her* to do this work. I don't think she was sort of a sympathy vote or just sort of the next person in line to do it.

**15:27- 20:21**

AP: There were lots of other carpenters around. And we know that she was also subcontracting work to other carpenters who would have been available to take that position. There's also sometimes the belief that the widow would take on the role and hold the position for her son to then take on the robe when he came of age, but, with Elizabeth Gregory, we know from the documents in our files, from payrolls and accounts, that she was hired, and her son were hired at the same time, so they were working together. In fact, she might even have been subcontracting to him - we don't know.

OM (to KN): It is a fact - this is the way that a lot of women were first able to step into realms where they were not allowed: as widows. We know that she wasn't a placeholder because she held the job for 15 years. And when it's Sir Christopher Wren, most famous architect in British history, and he can literally hire anyone he wants and this is the most important church in London

KN: Yeah

OM: He's not picking a placeholder to do that job. She *must* be exceptional.

KN: Well, legally, in London, in the 1600s, I mean, that's *legally* the only way that women could have a role like that. It would be *illegal*.

OM: Oh, yeah, I hadn't even thought about that! You literally, right, cannot-

KN: Only widows can play any role in a guild system. Only if the *guild* accepts them and the guild controls everything. So, in my mind, anytime you come across a widow who steps into the role of her husband - in my mind, I think of her as a '[Mary Irwin type](#),' [the rope maker](#)-

OM: Oh, of course

KN: Like, while the man officially had the title, the woman was actually doing it all and the guild knows it, so

when the husband dies they're like, 'Yeah, it was you all along so carry on.'

Any woman who is allowed in, *earned* her way there.

AP: So it's a really interesting sort of landscape where these people aren't directly employed by the Abbey, necessarily - it's all a bit of an individual capitalist sort of working environment.

OM (to KN): Elizabeth Gregory is the head carpenter, all of the other carpenters are freelancers, and she is the boss of all of these independent contractors.

KN: Mhm

OM: So she is running a massive, massive business enterprise, and she must be extraordinarily successful. She's obviously extremely confident in her own importance and the value of her time.

AP: So one of the things we know is that if she had to be called into the Abbey for a meeting, that her time was precious and she was going to charge for it. So she would - we've got documents of her charging extra to attend the Abbey for meetings, and I just love that detail so much. So I love that she was really in control of our business.

OM (to KN): She charges them extra to meet

KN: Wow!

OM: with *Sir Christopher Wren* and talk about the project.

KN: Wow!

OM: She's a boss.

KN: Wow, how fascinating!

OM: The other remarkable thing here is, contrary to the picture we built up at the beginning of this episode, Elizabeth Gregory is *not* the only woman doing this. There are other women employed here.

KN: As carpenters?

OM: As all kinds of things!

KN: Huh!

AP: There was also a lady called Sara Spurr, who was a smith. And, again a widow, but taking on work and being contracted to do that work in the Abbey.

OM (to KN): A smith!



KN: Oh, that's great.

OM: The idea of women as uninfluential skilled construction labor, sixteenth, seventeenth, *thirteenth* century-

KN: Wow!

OM: is so wild, but it was not wild then. Apparently, it was normal that Christopher Wren -

KN: Wow

OM: is hiring a woman as a head carpenter for Westminster Abbey. And this lack of records is, of course, the classic women's history problem. Nobody wrote down women's lives. They weren't important enough. So much of that story that we have of what women were allowed to do, what women were doing at any given time is based in just a total lack of information-

KN: Mmhm

OM: and that leads us to these wrong conclusions. Because we don't have any information about what women were doing, we assumed they weren't building cathedrals, and *they were*.

KN: See, we just need a time machine.

OM: What if women were always doing stuff?

KN: [gasps] What? [laughs]

[music]

[ad break]

**22:20- 27:10**

OM: So Head Carpenter of Westminster Abbey is a massive business enterprise. You are managing *hundreds* of independent workers who are presumably doing a lot of that work off-site, and then bringing it in. And it's not just the things that we see in the Abbey now, it's not just the decorative woodwork. It's not just the pieces that are left. It's all of the woodwork that *makes the rest of it possible*. It is all of the scaffolding that you need to put up stonework. It is the entire wood frame that you build to put a roof on. *All* of that work is under her.

KN: That's a lot of math

OM: Yes!

KN: and engineering and designing - basically, like machinery that can heft

OM: massive!

KN: heavy loads, and building pulley systems that you can hook up to oxen and... it's sourcing the wood from an increasingly limited resource in Britain [laughs]

OM: Funny you should mention that. That is one of the very few pieces of evidence we have for Elizabeth Gregory's existence, is a bill that she submitted to the Surveyor of the Fabric.

AP: We also know that she would supply materials. So there's an order that she has to provide of ten tree trunks that she has to supply. And the charge is like £10, and that includes the carriage, and everything. So, it's like - if she's able to get hold of that, is she doing that elsewhere? This is so interesting to think - what was her working life? Especially if she's like 'Okay, well, you want me to come in. That's more.' What else was she making? Where else was she working? If she's like a subcontractor or a contractor to the Abbey, does she have contracts elsewhere?

KN (to OM): Wow!

OM: And I just love thinking about her here in *this* space doing this work.

KN: Mhm

AP: The Abbey was built as a monastery for monks. We had 40 men who lived and worked here, prayed here, sung here. So what - how did that move on? You know the clergy was definitely going to all still be men in 1710. What was it like for a woman to be in this space, and to be working in this space? Not here as a worshiper, but as a professional equal in this, you know, really male-dominated building.

OM (to KN): She is bossing around

KN: Wow

OM: manly carpentry men

KN: Sure

OM: in this completely male space!

KN: She certainly got the keys to everything, and... That's cool to imagine, imagine her walking through the nave of Westminster looking around...

OM: And Aaron Paterson raised what is obviously the most important question here:

AP: and what was she *wearing*?!

[laughs]

OM (to KN): What is she wearing?

KN: Okay.

OM: She's climbing around

KN: Hmm.

OM: presumably. Even if she's not doing the work, she's inspecting the work. She has to be mobile.

AP: Because if you're doing this manual labor, you don't want to be in layers and layers of velvets and...

OM (to KN): Is she wearing *trousers*?

KN: Ooh!

OM: Is she climbing scaffolding in a *skirt*? None of these seem like they would be acceptable. Did she predate bloomers by 150 years? I **need to know**, and we'll never know.

I must say I have recently learned *a lot* more than I ever thought I would know about building sites - all the way from Medieval to Victorian times and beyond. And I think really focusing in on this process of building has made me appreciate again just what an absolutely staggering accomplishment this is. I mean I knew that, and I've read these books, and I've thought about it *a lot*. But, the fact that we're creating all of this with *workers who can't read*. When the Abbey is first built, they're doing this work without blueprints

KN: [laughs] Yeah

OM: without instructions, with *maybe* a wooden model or somebody's idea loosely described.

**27:10- 31:20**

KN: Yeah, I remember as we are walking through Westminster Abbey, just looking at one of the fluted columns and noticing the seams in the stone, you know - it is a fluted column, it looks completely cohesive, but it's separate stones that have all been carved off-site individually by different people in

OM: Yeah, you have 20 different pieces made by 20 different people in 20 different places

KN: all put together...

OM: And they magically all match perfectly. It's mind-boggling.

KN: I bet she thought about that, too. I mean, there she is working on it in the late 1600s, and that has been the church for centuries by the time she's working on it. I'm sure the weight of it, the significance of what she was doing as the next in line in this huge ongoing creation - I'm sure that was not lost on her. I wonder if she ever just walked through the building and pondered all the people who've come before and everybody who has

left their mark on it.

OM: Yeah, I mean the people doing this work are the people in the best position to really understand that experience - to walk around and say 'Look, at the *lives* that have gone into this building.' For me, it's hard to imagine the *time scale* of that, right? Nothing that we do in the world right now takes as long... the idea of spending weeks on a tiny *piece of a tiny piece* of a building

KN: Yeah, in our individualistic modern society. I don't think that's really a thing anymore.

OM: Yeah, at least not in the Western Hemisphere.

KN: But maybe we are. Maybe it's just different. Maybe we don't do it with buildings anymore, but we do it with - I don't know, like online gaming universes or

OM: Okay yeah!

KN: or...

OM: No, that's really - there's millions of hours going into people building,,, public minecraft servers.

KN: Yeah

OM: And, yeah, I mean the amount of hours that go into just a video game.

KN: Yeah.

OM: By 200 people whose name will be in font size four.... Interesting.

KN: The amount of human hours that go into making a blockbuster movie.

OM: Oh, that one I think about a lot. Movies with 900 people who *all* have to be good at their jobs. [laughs]

KN: So I take it back. People are still dumping lifetimes into things bigger than themselves, but it's just not stone buildings.

OM: They're just not physical objects as much anymore.

KN: Yeah.

OM: Huh.

KN: Go humans!

[music]

OM: So I want to come back to Elizabeth Gregory's model of an alternate Westminster Abbey for a minute, because this really is the main piece of evidence we have from Elizabeth Gregory's life. And it's the reason that we specifically know about her at all - because Aaron got interested in her, and then told us about her. And because it's just an incredible object worthy of discussion all on its own. This would have been the *center* of London. It would have been the iconic image of the skyline: this massive spire, as tall as [the Shard](#).

AP: For me I get a real sort of weird sense of scale, of like - the height of the building feels right, and then this spire is enormous - it's the *height of the building again and a half*. So it really would have been competing with Big Ben. It would've been a really, really attractive thing. I can sort of see why Sir Christopher Wren would want it. And when you look at this model, walking 'round it, you can sort of get a real sense of grandeur from it. And as a national church, perhaps it would have been a fantastic symbol... but maybe it would have been too much?

OM (to AP): I mean... I'm a fan of too much.

[laughs]

OM (to AP): There's no such thing as too much.

AP: I'm a fan of camp, and as church design goes, I would say, this is quite camp, but... [laughter]

### **31:20- 37:15**

OM (to KN): And as a royal symbol, that maybe really works - especially, as you point out, now in the Restoration, right, we have lost our monarchy and brought it back, making the royal church the visual center of the city.

KN: Yeah

OM: It's a pretty powerful political symbol.

KN: Yeah, make it the tallest thing

OM: Yeah, this is *the thing that you see* in London.

We have to assume that it was designed by Elizabeth Gregory. It's credited in her name, and presumably she designed it with Sir Christopher Wren, who designs the *design*, but she's the one creating the design for this model. The model itself was made by 3 male carpenters, and it took the 3 of them working together 185 days.

KN: Wha- for a model?!

OM: So again, this time scale, right? That 3 skilled artisans spent *half a year*-

KN: Mmm, wow. Building a model.

OM: Making a *model* of a building.

KN: and she is overseeing it. She's like-

OM: Again, it's a mystery

KN: ...Carry on, boys.

OM: We don't have enough records to know exactly what the process is - but it is *her* name, so she must have been heavily involved.

KN: Yeah

OM: Presumably designing or helping Christopher Wren take his design into

KN: Interesting

OM: ...3D wood. And it's a good example of the really frustrating task of trying to put together these women's lives from... about four documents that exist in the world. [laughs]

And it's so - it's weirdly *new* looking, too -

KN: Yeah, definitely.

OM: I mean, I remember talking about this with you at the time. If you told me it was made ten years ago, I would believe you! It's...

KN: It looks-

OM: It's not just perfectly preserved

KN: Yeah

OM: it feels *modern* somehow. Something about it feels extremely contemporary and innovative *now*. And it's almost impossible to explain what I mean by that [laughter] but... it doesn't look like an eighteenth century model.

KN: Yeah, when I first saw it, I remember thinking, 'Oh, the museum staff

OM: Yes!

KN: have made a model of what the church was supposed to look like back then,' or something like that-

OM: Yeah, exactly!

KN: Like 'this is a piece that the museum has made to help us understand.' I never, ever would have thought that it was historical.

OM: That it's 300 years old! And it's not just a model. When you kneel down, or you crouch down and get on 'person level,' it somehow magically, truly works as a 3D tour. You feel like you are *walking in* to the space. I still don't understand how it's possible - it feels like you are *inside* the model.

It's hard for me to imagine a London where *this* Westminster exists. Because it is so shockingly different from what we have.

KN: Well why wasn't it?

OM: Aaron Paterson reckons it was maybe just too expensive.

KN: Mm!

AP: Because the Abbey - we're a [royal peculiar](#). So we sit outside of the Church of England. That means we don't get funded by the Church of England, and although we're - the Queen is sort of - we call her The Visitor here. Her Majesty is the - I would always say 'the boss of the church', but actually, we're not owned by the royal family. We're not a royal palace or anything like that, so we don't actually get any funding from the Crown, the Government, or the Church. We've always been self-funded, and by donations, by selling memorial space in the Abbey. So I can only imagine that this was just considered too expensive.

But, interestingly, it's only 30 years after this that those west towers go up, and that was the next Surveyor of the Fabric, [Nicholas Hawksmoor](#), who put those up. And so it must have been quite a quick turn around, actually, from her finishing this. She dies just a couple of years later, and suddenly the plans for something else come into play. And then we've got this iconic front there now, that I think is what people think of when they think of the Abbey.

OM (to KN): So it's entirely possible that this design... didn't land. Nobody liked it enough to give Christopher Wren the money for it, and they scrapped it and went with something else.

KN: Huh! Maybe this is the reject model that they put in storage... They were like, 'forget it', and that's why it survives, because another model won out...

OM: No one is *using* it. Yeah. It's never used for construction, getting stuff dropped on it... [laughter]

KN: Yeah, maybe it was just on the menu. It was one of many options, and they just rejected this one.

**37:15- 41:45**

OM: She dies only a few years after this model is built. She doesn't get to work on the modern Hawksmoor iconic frontage. But, although the model is the most obvious *proof of life* we have for her, really her most important real work is all around us in the Abbey. Everywhere you go, seen and marveled at by tourists and worshippers every day, is her work. And there's *no way to know* which parts are hers.

KN: Hmm.

AP: Just last week I was up in the Abbey roof and we were looking at the timbers that hold the roof together. I was just thinking about the skill of the carpenters who built the Abbey, and who maintain the Abbey, even today. And just the work that goes into creating and keeping the building looking beautiful.

OM (to KN): She's everywhere and nowhere. After this interview, I was sort of wandering around just looking at things. Is *this* Elizabeth? Is *that* Elizabeth? *Where are you, Elizabeth?* It was a very odd and surreal and sort of... *humbling* feeling. And it really brought home to me something kind of ridiculous about the way that most of us visit places like this.

There are 3,000 people buried at Westminster Abbey, which is already hard to comprehend.

KN: Yeah

OM: We arrive, and we look at names on memorials, and we visit the really super famous people. You know, if you're a *What'sHerName* fan, you go and stare at [Margaret Cavendish](#)'s amazing tomb and rejoice, and you get angry that [Caroline Herschel](#)'s not there with her brother. And you find the names you know on the wall...

KN: You go to Poet's Corner.

OM: But the *best of the best*, the most talented of the talented, are in every inch of this building. They *created* this building. They created the memorial that you're looking at because it has a famous person's name on it, and you have no idea who made it.

It's such a shift in perspective for me now, that I can never go and look at these spaces again without thinking: Who made this? Who cut that stone? Who created the scaffolding that let them put that thing way up there at the top?

KN: Yeah.

OM: It feels like a symbol of so much that happens. These tiny hints of people's lives - that you'll never get more than that. How many other women are hidden...

KN: Mhm

OM: *literally and figuratively* behind these walls, under these floors?! How many women were here, and we'll *never* know their names?

It's enough to prompt an existential crisis.

KN: [laughter] But I was just thinking how beautiful it is!

OM: Oh, it's a *beautiful* existential crisis!



KN: They left something behind! Something remains of their life, centuries after, that is magnificent!

[music]

OM: And, now, for something exciting. [laughter]

OM: Twenty-three hours ago, this was going to be where we would talk about *how sad it is that Elizabeth Gregory isn't buried in the Abbey.*

KN: Mm, I was just going to ask if she was buried in the Abbey.

OM: And twenty-three hours ago, my answer was going to be 'We don't know where she's buried.'

KN: Okay?

OM: And *twenty-four* hours ago, Aaron Paterson discovered... Elizabeth Gregory *is* buried at Westminster Abbey!

KN: [gasps] No!!

OM: He knows exactly where she is.

KN: [gasps] What?!

OM: Her name has worn off.

KN: Oh my...

OM: But she's there. And in fact, on our tour we stood in front of her memorial, unknowing...

KN: What?!

OM: Because, if you remember, there is famously one plumber from the Abbey who is buried in the Abbey.

KN: Mhm.

OM: and she is right next to him.

KN: What?!

OM: We stood at her grave and didn't know it.

KN: How fantastic is that!

OM: It made me so happy. And it made Aaron Paterson so happy that he immediately went on a little pilgrimage for us.

KN: Ahh!

#### 41:45- 47:25

AP: It's really exciting that we now actually know where Elizabeth Gregory is buried. She's buried in the cloisters of Westminster Abbey. And the cloisters are really interesting because they contain, obviously, like the family of the Abbey. It's people who've served the Abbey, who have had really strong connections with the fabric of the building, with the life of the buildings. There's lots of choir members, lots of former [Canons](#). There's a plague pit very close to where Elizabeth Gregory is buried. But she's also buried next to some really esteemed people. So just around the corner is [Aphra Behn](#) - a hugely famous influential writer. And also famous actress [Anne Bracegirdle](#), and I think Elizabeth Gregory would have known who both of those people are, so she's in the quite esteemed company. And she's also under a very modern memorial to [Edmond Halley](#), the astronomer.

But she's also next to one of my favorite burials in the cloisters - of Philip Clark, who's a plumber. He's got quite a simple grave, and it just says that he is the plumber to the Collegiate Church. And in a way that's who Elizabeth Gregory is, as well. She's part of the community. And it will be the community who decided that she should be buried and remembered in the Abbey.

And it's just a fascinating place that gets walked over all the time, every day - which is probably part of why her grave has been worn away and her name isn't there any longer - which is really, really tragic. But I know now where she is, and I'll be able to think of her every time I pass there. And to know now where she's buried... I feel it just brings the whole story full circle. And even if our thousands of visitors walk over her grave every day without knowing, *I know* and I can tell other people, because of this podcast and the research we've done. And I can tell the story more and more.

[music]

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[end credits] Huge, huge thanks to Aaron Paterson, and everyone at Westminster Abbey for their help on this episode. If you'd like to hear more tidbits from our England tour, [we did a whole bonus episode with behind the scenes peeks into that tour](#), and I'll link to that in the show notes. If you enjoyed this episode, you can find photos, resources, links, and more on our website: [whatshernamepodcast.com](#). You can also follow us on [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), and [Facebook](#), where we post lots of photos each week.

Music for this episode was provided by [Solis, Choir of the Sun](#); [Kira Zeeman Rugen](#); and the [Archive of Recorded Church Music](#). Our interns are Catie Boucher and Livia Follet. Our theme song was composed and performed by Daniel Foster Smith. *What'sHerName* is produced by Olivia Meikle and Katie Nelson, and this episode was edited by Olivia Meikle.

[Westminster Abbey bells ringing over the sounds of London traffic]