

## THE MONUMENTS OF THE SEYMOURS IN GREAT BEDWYN CHURCH, WILTS.<sup>1</sup>

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Great Bedwyn is at the present time a little village in the county of Wiltshire. It must formerly have been of larger importance, considering that it sent two members to parliament. Traces of Roman occupation have from time to time been discovered, and a tessellated pavement was one of the antiquities long preserved. A spiked head of a mace made of bronze was found in a well and exhibited some few years since at a meeting of Archæologists held at Salisbury. The church is now the principal feature in the place, and has unfortunately undergone very extensive restoration. In the churchyard is a stone cross, and though, as usual, the summit has suffered mutilation, the shaft, pedestal, and steps are in good preservation. In the interior of the church there are several interesting monuments, particularly those connected with the great Seymour family. In the north transept a figure in stone of a knight, larger than life, lies under an arch, over which are the remains of a canopy. This effigy is habited in mail armour, the legs are crossed, and the right hand grasps a sword; the left, only partially visible, is covered with a shield; the feet rest on a lion. The figure represents Adam de Stokke, who died 1331, and whose family were the owners of Wulfhall, the principal estate in the village, where the marriage festivities of Henry VIII. with Jane Seymour took place. The effigy of Adam de Stokke is remarkable for its size and good preservation. From the Stokkes the estate passed to the Seymours, or St. Maurs, as originally called, in the reign of Henry V. 1413, when Roger St. Maur of Hatch Beauchamp, married the heiress of the Esturmys. Over against the chancel wall to the left of the entrance is an altar tomb, having eight shields of arms on its sides. Above is one shield.<sup>2</sup> On the tomb is the recumbent effigy in free stone of Sir John Seymour in complete armour. The head rests on a helmet with painted wings of wood. The hands are gone, and the sollerets which remain are injured. The gorget is of chain mail. The tassets are alternately of plate armour and mail. The former are singular in having serrated edges by way of ornamentation. A sword in sheath lies on the left side of the figure; on the right is a dagger with a knife in its sheath. On the wall is a long inscription as follows:—

“Here lyeth entombed the worthie Sr John Seymour of Wolfhall Knight who by Margerie his wife daughter of Sr Henry Wentworth Knight from whom the now Lord Wentworth is descended had six sonnes and fower daughters to wete John who died unmarried, Edward

<sup>1</sup> Read at the Monthly meeting of the Institute, July 3, 1882.

<sup>2</sup> The shields over Sir J. Seymour's

monument, though broken, were in existence in 1829.

Duke of Somerset, Earl of Hertforde, Viscount Beauchampe and Baron Seymour uncle to King Edwarde the Sixt, Governor of his royal person, Protector of all his dominions, and subjects, Lord Treasurer, and Earl Marshall of England which Duke maryed Anne Daughter of Sir Edward Stanhope Knight by Elizabeth his wife daughter of S<sup>r</sup> Foulke Burgchier Lord Fitzwaryn from whom the modern Earles of Bathe are descended, Sir Henry Seymour Knight who maryed Barbara daughter of Thomas Morgan Esquier, Thomas Lord Sudeley Hight Admirall of Englande who married Katharine Queen of Englande, and widow to King Henry the Eight, One other John and Anthony who died in their infancy, Jane Quene of Englande wife to King Henry the Eight and mother to King Edwarde the Sixt, Elizabeth first maryed to S<sup>r</sup> Henry Ughtred knight after to Gregorie Lord Cromwell and last to John Lord Sainct John of Basinge after Marquesse of Winchester, Margery who dyed in her infancy and Dorothy maryed to S<sup>r</sup> Clement Smythe knight. This Knight departed this lyfe at lx yeares of age the xx day of December Anno 1536 and was first buryed at Eston Priorie Church amongst divers of his ancestors both Seymours and Stormeyes. Howbeit that church beinge ruined and thereby all theare monuments either whollie spoyled or verie much defaced during the majoritie of Edwarde Earle of Hertforde sonne to the saide Duke, the said Earle after as well for the dutifull love he beareth to his said Grandfather as for the better continuans of his memory did cause his bodie to be removed and here to be entombed at his owne coste and charldge the last day of September Anno 1590 in the xxxii yeare of the moste happy raigne of our gracious souveraine ladie Queen Elizabeth.

This lengthy inscription is curious, in that it affords a genuine and exhaustive list of the family of Sir John Seymour, and for the record of his second interment. The orthography is likewise noteworthy in many particulars. This may be contrasted with the terms used by Henry VIII. when announcing the death of Queen Jane to Francis I., who had congratulated him on the birth of a son.

“ Il a semble bon à la divine providence, de mesler cette ma grande joie avec l'amartitude du trespas de celle qui m'avoit apporté ce bonheur. De la main de votre bon frere. Henry.”

Queen Jane was the eldest of the eight children of Sir John Seymour, and was married to the King on the 20th of May, 1536, the day after the execution of Queen Anne Boleyn. The marriage took place at Wulfhall, the seat of the Seymours, in the parish of Great Bedwyn. The date of the queen's birth is not known.<sup>1</sup> It is most probable that she was born here. The familiar old barn, where some of the marriage festivities were held, and which is mentioned by the Rev. Canon Jackson in the *Wiltshire Magazine* for 1875, was standing up to Midsummer, 1881, but had become quite ruinous, and was unsafe. The mansion in which Sir John Seymour lived is no longer visible; only the laundry, a small house with very huge chimneys, remaining to bespeak its whereabouts. On the wall adjacent to the knight's monument, is a brass of a man in civic habit. He is dressed in a long loose tunic with hanging sleeves, the front edged with fur. He wears no girdle, and carries no arm. The hair is long, and is trimmed round the face. The shoes, hardly in sight, are rounded,

<sup>1</sup> The registers of Births of Great Bedwyn date from 1553. Queen Jane died in October, 1537.

as are those of most civilians of the period. Underneath the figure is the following inscription :—

“Here lyeth the body of John Seymour sone and here of S<sup>r</sup> John Seymour knyght and of Margery one of the daughters of S<sup>r</sup> Henry Wentworth knyght which decessed y<sup>e</sup> xv. day of July the yere of our Lord 1510 on whose soule Jesu have mercye and of your charitie say a pater-noster and an ave.”

This effigy represents the eldest son of Sir John Seymour, mentioned in the long inscription over his father's monument as unmarried. Near to this is an elegiac couplet cut on a scroll of brass.—

“Bellocamp eram Graia genitricis Semerus  
Tres habui natos est quibus una Soror.”

Both these memorials were, at one time, fixed on blocks of Purbeck marble; they are now let into the chancel wall. The Latin verses are in memory of Edward, Lord Beauchamp, eldest son of Edward, Earl of Hertford and Lady Catharine Grey. He was born in the Tower of London, after the committal of his parents to that fortress; and was, therefore, the direct descendant of Sir John Seymour. He must not be confounded with the Seymour whose name appears on the walls of the Beauchamp Tower. That individual was no relation to the Bedwyn Seymours, but a zealous adherent bearing their name. Other brasses mentioned by Aubrey are not to be found, though there is no record existing of any other relative of the Seymour's having been at any time placed here. Beyond these two memorials may be seen a heavy marble pile, reaching almost to the ceiling, which is crowned by a bust of a lady. At the sides are two gigantic cupids, all unmistakeably of the taste of the early part of the 18th century.”

There is a record on the lower part of this memorial showing that it was erected by Lord Weymouth in 1706 to the memory of Frances Devereux, daughter of Robert, Earl of Essex, and widow of William, Duke of Somerset, died 24 April, 1674, aged 74. This Lord Weymouth was the husband of the Duchess's granddaughter. The funeral of this lady cost £81 16s. 8d., as we learn from the muniments preserved at Longleat, and noted by Canon Jackson in his excellent paper in the *Wiltshire Magazine*. A large pall of velvet, edged with white sarsnett, together with “shields,” “atchievements,” “escutcheons,” “pendants,” and other expensive vanities, were part of the funeral costs.

<sup>1</sup> The figure in brass and the inscription were formerly fixed on slabs of Purbeck marble.

<sup>2</sup> There is a paper by the Rev. John

Ward, in the sixth volume of the *Wilt's Archaeological Magazine*, on Sir John Seymour's monument.