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## Notes on the Churches of Frilsham, Wattendon, Ashampstead, Hampstead Norreys and Aldworth.

*By Charles E. Keyser, M.A., F.S.A.*

(Read before the Berkshire Archæological Society, March 25th, 1915).

*(Continued from page 71.)*

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Although as has been stated a very full account of the wonderful series of monumental effigies in Aldworth Church has already been written, an essay on the Church could not be complete without a short description of its special objects of interest, and therefore with the help of our illustrations, and a due recognition of what has already been written, we may venture to add our contribution to this most interesting subject.

In composing these supplementary notes I have had before me the diary of Col. R. Symonds, whose notes, taken in 1644, will be set out in full, as an appendix to this paper; Ashmole's History and Antiquities of Berkshire—probably his notes were made about fifty years after the damage done by the Roundheads. It is singular that, although he carefully recorded all monumental memorials in the Churches he visited, he only mentions five of the effigies,

namely, the three on the north, and two in the south wall. Is it possible that some of the figures have been placed in their present situations since his time? Articles in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for 1760, p. 458, 1798, Part II., pp. 1013 and 1095, 1799, Part I., p. 38, and pp. 274-276, this last being a communication accompanied by numerous sketches, which unfortunately were not printed, by the distinguished architect and archæologist, John Carter; an account of the effigies in Gough's *Sepulchral Monuments of Great Britain*, Vol. II., pp. cvii., cviii., published in 1796—he includes the one on the exterior wall as being there at that time; *The Beauties of England and Wales*, Vol. I., p. 170, published in 1801; *The Berkshire volume of Lyson's Magna Britannia*, where special mention is made of these monuments; *The History and Antiquities of Newbury and its Environs*, published in 1839; sketches by the late Mr. Edward Blore, probably made before 1850; the pamphlet on the De la Beche effigies by Thomas Goodman, published in 1883: the address to the members of the Newbury and District Field Club by the then Vicar, the Rev. R. Lloyd, in 1885: and voluminous notes by Mr. Walter Money, F.S.A., compiled for a new edition of the *History of the Hundred of Compton*; and no doubt several other references can be given. In all the early accounts the magnificent yew tree is specially referred to, and its dimensions are carefully set out by several of the writers. It does not appear to have increased in girth since the measurements taken in 1760.

The series now comprises three effigies of knights under very richly carved canopies (Fig. 51) in the north wall of the nave, three more also under similar canopies (Fig. 52) in the south wall of the south aisle, and two large table tombs (Fig. 53) with effigies under the two eastern arches of the arcade between the nave and the aisle. It has been suggested that the canopies in the aisle are rather later than those in the nave, but with the exception of some new work here it is difficult to detect any difference in the carving. The canopies on the north side (Fig. 54) had suffered less than those on the south, and in the illustration facing page 237 in the *History of Newbury* seem to have been then in excellent condition, only the finial of the eastern arch being wanting. No window is shown at the back of this recess. On the south side much more renovation has taken place. In the illustration facing page 240 of the *History of Newbury* the two western canopies are shown, but the shafts supporting them and the pilasters with pinnacles between and on

either side are wanting, and there is no canopy at all over the eastern figure. Mr. Blore, in his drawing, exactly corroborates this condition of affairs, so that here the renovation is to a certain extent conjectural. The design is very beautiful, with crocketed ogee-headed canopies having a rich cinquefoiled fringe with elegant cusping, and a profusion of small roses on the tracery, and is an admirable example of the workmanship of the late Decorated period of about the date 1350.

The identification of the distinguished personages commemorated by these effigies is, of course, somewhat conjectural. There can, however, be no reasonable doubt that they represent the prominent members of five generations of the De la Beche family, and probably the tablet which was shown to Queen Elizabeth, and unfortunately not replaced, established the identity of the several figures. There can also be little doubt that the series commences at the west end of the north side of the nave, is continued in the south wall of the aisle, and concludes with the two central tombs. Mr. Lloyd has endeavoured to identify each of the figures, and we may fairly accept his conclusions, though we agree with him as to the probability of some of the figures not being in their original position. The western figure on the north side (Fig. 55) is probably Sir Robert De la Beche, who was knighted by Edward I. in 1278. Mr. Lloyd thinks the effigy to be earlier than the canopied recess within which it lies. Here we have the effigy of a knight with flat open helmet, and head on a pillow. He has a leather surcoat, open above the knees, the legs crossed, left over right, and a shield on his left arm. The right arm, sword, lower part of the legs and lion have all been broken away. There is no representation of link mail, but this may have been portrayed in colour.

The middle figure on this side (Fig. 56) is said to commemorate Sir John De la Beche, son of the above-mentioned Sir Robert. He is mentioned in conjunction with his father and his son Philip in several documents. The effigy is a very fine one, 6ft. 4ins. in length, portraying a knight in the complete armour of the period, with head on two pillows, flat bascinet, the upper part cut away, large shield on the left arm, left hand on the pommel of the sword, right hand on breast (the arm gone), legs crossed, the left over right, the left leg gone below the knee, and feet on a very large lion,

These two effigies are said to be of the stone from the quarries at Stanford-in-the Vale, near Faringdon. The eastern figure (Fig. 57)

represents Sir Philip, the eldest son of Sir John, and a man of note, being Sheriff for several years both of Berkshire and Wiltshire. He took an active part in the troublous times of Edward II. and was imprisoned, but was pardoned and had his lands restored to him on the accession of Edward III. in 1327. The effigy (Fig. 58) is one of the finest in England. It portrays a knight raised on his side, with the legs drawn up to enable it to fit into the recess, as it would be, but for this, 7ft. in length. He is in very rich armour, with surcoat open above the knees, open bascinet, legs crossed left over right. The right arm and left fore-arm and the lower part of the legs are broken away. The feet rested against a boy seated cross-legged amidst foliage. The stone probably came from quarries at Milton-under-Wychwood. Mr. Blore has an excellent sketch of this, and of a very similar effigy of a member of the Hautville family at Chew Magna, Somersetshire. J. Carter, in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for 1799, Part I., p. 275; gives a glowing account of this effigy, and sums up as follows:—"I may observe, the position of this statue is without a parallel in our ancient sculpture; and I may flatter myself that I am not presumptuous when I assert that no Roman or Grecian performance can excel it either in point of excellence of design or execution."

Let us now cross over to the series in the south wall (Fig. 59) and for want of better evidence we must accept Mr. Lloyd's identification, though in one or two instances this seems to be inconclusive and improbable.

The figure under the eastern arch (Fig. 60) bears some resemblance to the great Sir Philip on the north side. He has the open vizor, his head raised on two pillows, but is partly reclining on his side. He has the loose surcoat and the legs have been crossed right over left, but the lower part has been broken away. He is sheathing his sword with the right hand, and part only of the left arm and shield remain. Col. Symonds noted a lion at the feet, now gone. The effigy is in the soft Stanford-in-the-Vale stone. It is ascribed by Mr. Lloyd to Philip, the second son of Philip, who died in 1339. He is recorded to have had the lands at Aldworth, and elsewhere in the neighbourhood, conveyed to him by his brother John for his life, and with his brother Nicholas had the right to crenellate the mansions of the Manors of De la Beche, Beaumys and Watlington, and to empark lands at De la Beche, etc. Under the next arch is a very beautiful figure of a lady (Fig. 61). She is slightly raised and partly inclined to the left. She has the head

supported on two mutilated pillows, held by an angel, also much damaged, on either side. She has the close-fitting wimple, and long flowing robe. Her hands are apart on her bosom. The animal at her feet has been broken away. Carter writes thus: "The form and attitude of this statue is loveliness itself." It is of the same stone as that of the first Sir Philip, and Mr. Lloyd suggests it to be earlier than the recess within which it lies. He assigns it to the wife of the first Philip, and from the evidence furnished by the seal of Isabella De la Beche, unearthed in 1871, on which are the arms of Zouch, claims her to have been a member of that important family.

The western effigy of this series (Fig. 62) is very much damaged. The head is gone, though the pillow remains. The lower part of the legs is also missing, but part of a large lion remains. He has the loose surcoat open above the knees. He is described by Col. Symonds as being without armour, and "his head having bushy curly hair without any other ornament or covering lyes upon a pillow." The stone is of the same character as that of Philip the second. The effigy is assigned to John, second but only surviving son of John the eldest son of Philip the first. He died young, in the lifetime of his mother, leaving three sisters as co-heiresses of this important property.

We now come to the two important table tombs under the two eastern arches of the arcade (Fig. 63). The western one formerly had a series of panelled recesses with crocketed arches on the south side of the monument. There is an octagonal shaft attached to the west side. On the tomb lies a portion of what must have been a very admirably carved effigy (Fig. 64). He has the head with flat bascinet supported on a helmet, hands clasped on breast, rich belt, leather jupon neatly laced at the sides. The legs are gone. Carter observes that "the human figure is here finely represented." Symonds mentions "at each foot a hound sitting on his tayle."

This is reputed to represent Sir Nicholas, the third son of the first Sir Philip, and perhaps the most eminent member of the family. He was private tutor to Edward the Black Prince, and filled the important office of Constable of the Tower, though he got into disgrace and was kept in prison for a short time. He had a life interest in the estates in this neighbourhood, obtaining a grant from his nieces after the death of his nephew, John the third. He died in 1348, and was buried at Aldworth. Under the eastern arch are the last remaining effigies (Fig. 65) of this wonderful series. Here is a large table tomb with a shaft attached to each angle, proving

the existence of a former canopy above, and enclosing the figures. There is a bracket on the east respond, and a small recess above the capital, which was no doubt connected with this tomb. On the monument (Fig. 66) lie the recumbent effigies of a knight and his lady. He has his head much mutilated, with remains of bascinet and camail supported on his helmet, and his hands clasped on his breast. He wears a leather jupon laced up at the side, but very carelessly, the lower part being left undone. The bottom of the jupon is kilted, the legs are enclosed in armour, and rest on two dogs with a lion at the feet. It is of the same (Milton) stone as the effigy of Sir Nicholas, and almost a counterpart of it. Both are of later costume than the other figures. Col. Symonds, on the information of Mr. Grace, the Incumbent, calls this figure Sir Nicholas. The effigy of the lady (Fig. 67) is very elegant, though unfortunately the head is gone. "The under dress is close-fitting to the body; the mantle is thrown back; the dress caught up under the left arm; the left hand is on the breast; the right on the folds of the dress; the sleeves have long lappets. There is a hound lying at the feet. It is of the stone of the Vale of Berkshire."

These effigies are said to represent Sir John, the eldest son of the first Sir Philip, and Isabella his wife. He held lands of his father, and was one of the knights of the shire for Berkshire. He had a distinguished but somewhat chequered military career. He was an adherent of the Earl of Lancaster, and was committed to the Tower in 1322, but was released in 1327, and died soon afterwards in his father's lifetime, leaving a widow and two sons and three daughters. The lady Isabella, said to be de Elmridge, survived him and her two sons, and seems to have managed the properties for her daughters. It is suggested that she may have been the builder of the south aisle, and that the canopies may have been constructed at her expense.

There is a good deal of scribbling on the effigies, and the following dates may be noted: (1) on the effigy of John the third, 1511, 1561, 1641, 1706; (2) on that of Lady Isabella, 1626, and of John the second, 1656.

Besides this fine series there were at least two brasses, though not noted by Ashmole, and one more effigy. The brasses represented (1) the demi-figure of an ecclesiastic, and this is supposed to have commemorated Edmund, the youngest son of the first Sir Philip, who, besides being a militant cleric, was Archdeacon of Berkshire, and the last direct male representative of this family. It

is stated that the stone bearing the matrix of this brass is buried under the floor of the south aisle. In the *Gentleman's Magazine* for 1798, Part II., p. 1095, mention is made of another as follows: "In the middle of the Church, on a gravestone is a plate of brass, engraved with a figure of a man in a gown, and his wife in her usual habit, at their feet this epitaph, 'Of your charite pray for the soules of Richard Pygot, and Allys his wife, on whose soules and all Christian soules Jhesu have mercy.'" This has disappeared, probably in 1844, when a certain amount of so-called restoration took place, involving the disappearance of an ancient candelabrum, and some other objects of architectural interest. It has been suggested that the two large marble slabs on the table tombs under the nave arcade may have the matrices of brasses on their underside, and it would be interesting to ascertain if such is the case. Within the arch in the exterior south wall of the aisle was another effigy under a rich canopy, which was there in 1644, but had been probably destroyed or walled up before 1798, though Gough, in his *Sepulchral Monuments of Great Britain*, mentions it. Symonds describes it as the oldest of all the effigies, and mentions the following tradition, which we find applied elsewhere to monuments in a similar situation:—

"The Comon people call this John Ever Afraid  
and say further that he gave his soule to the Devil if  
ever he was buried in the Church or Churchyard  
so he was buried under the covering  
wall under an arch."

In the *History of Newbury, &c.*, p. 232, is the following note:—

"The vulgar tradition is that four Johns were buried here, and they are described as follows:—John Long and John Strong, John Ever-Afraid and John Never-Afraid. They say that John Ever-Afraid was afraid to be buried either in the Church or out, and was consequently buried under the wall, where the arch appears on the outside by the south Church door; we understand that the remains of the figure are bricked up, in consequence of the wet injuring the foundations of this side of the Church."

This might also be investigated, though the chance of finding anything seems to be rather remote.

We cannot close our account of these most interesting monumental memorials without adding our expressions of regret to the

many which have been previously uttered at the scandalous treatment to which these beautiful effigies have been subjected, and which caused the then Incumbent, Mr. Grace, to resign the living. It seems almost inconceivable that such wanton and senseless damage could have been perpetrated on these figures, representative in stone of men who were distinguished in their day, and no doubt benefactors to the Church. They might have claimed consideration as being super-excellent examples of the art of the best period of sculpture in England, instead of being the victims of that fanatical violence carried out under the guise of religious enthusiasm by the Covenanters of the middle of the 17th century. It is indeed a result which makes one long to be able to see our Churches and their contents in the days before the Reformation, the great Civil War, and the tide of undue restoration, which have severally wrought the irrevocable havoc we have to deplore at the present time, when, it is hoped, the beauty of our ecclesiastical structures, and the skill of the architects and those whom they employed are more fully appreciated. The Psalmist must have had the case of Aldworth in his mind when he exclaimed, "But now they break down the carved work thereof at once with axes and hammers."—Psalm lxxiv., v. 6.

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#### APPENDIX.

DIARY OF COL. SYMONDS.

British Museum, Harleian MSS., 965.

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R. Symonds Church notes, Co. Oxon, Wigorn, and Berks, 1644.

p. 253. Aldworth, vulgo Alder

Com Bercks.

This is 5 myles from Wallingford

one myle an half from Streatly

5 myles from Inglefeild

9 from Wantage 9 from Abingdon

9 from Reading

In y<sup>e</sup> East end of the South yle did hang  
a Table fairly written in parchment of  
all y<sup>e</sup> names of this family of De la Beach,  
but the Earl of Leicester rounding with Qu: El:  
in progresse tooke it downe to show it  
her, & was never brought againe.

King Edw 3<sup>d</sup> gave the castle in  
 this parish about a qr. of a myle  
 from y<sup>e</sup> Church northwards to  
 Sir Nicholas De la Beach  
 for his service done at ye battaile  
 of Poictiers in Fraunce,  
 who liv'd in this Castle & called it by  
 name of Beach Castle. a farm now  
 adjoyning to y<sup>e</sup> ruins of this Castle  
 is called Beach Farm belonging  
 to y<sup>e</sup> Lord Loudham.

- p. 254. At ye Upp end between ye middle of ye Church  
 & the north yle upon a playne Altar Tomb  
 lye these 2.

[Here is a sketch of a knight and lady, no  
 doubt those under the east arch, assigned to  
 the second Sir John and Isabella De la Beche].  
 Sir Nicholas  
 De la Beach.  
 as Mr. Grace the Incumbent  
 tells me.


- p. 255. Betweene the Two Pillars that divide  
 the Church and south yle upon an Altar  
 Tomb just of the same fashion  
 as the former lyes the like statue  
 of a man in compleat Arm<sup>r</sup> not  
 crost legd.


At each foot a hound sitting on  
 hys tayle whereon a fierce lyon & the  
 dogs head looking towards the  
 right side.

No indication of any inscription.


- p. 256. The South side of the Church is  
 adorned with 3 tall & spacious arches  
 of wrought stone & within this wall  
 lye 3 portraits of K<sup>ts</sup> as follow  
 [Here is a sketch of the effigy  
 of the first Sir Philip].

The people call this statue John Strong.

- p. 257. The middle most lyes with his left leg croost his right. At his feet a lyon  
 Upon his left arm hangs an   
 both hands holding the top of his sword  
 Under his head are pillowes.

The third and lowest towards the west end lyes with his right hand holding the hilt of his sword  
 his left hand holding an   
 At his head are cushions  
 His left leg over the right.

- p. 258. In the South wall of the South yle of the Church is also 3 arches answerable to the north side wherein are 3 severall statues lying along within the walls 4 foot or thereabouts from the floor.


1. Most to y<sup>e</sup> East End lyes the statue of a K<sup>t</sup> in Arm<sup>r</sup> with a loose coat drawing his sword with his right hand on his left arm hangs an   
 a lyon at his feet  
 Under his head are pillows.
2. The middle one is y<sup>e</sup> statue of a woman
3. the lowest is of a man without armour only a long loose coat his hands which were in y<sup>e</sup> praying posture are broken off as also the left arm his head having bushy curly hair without any other ornament or covering lyes upon a pillow.

p. 259. On y<sup>e</sup> south side of this yle  
without side is a low arch within  
the wall and even with the ground  
lyes y<sup>e</sup> Statue of another Knight  
which seemed to be older than all  
the rest. Upon his breast an  
Escutcheon.

The Comon people call this John Ever Afraid  
and say further that he gave his soule to the Devil if  
ever he was buried in the Church or Churchyard  
So he was buried under the covering  
wall under an arch.

This is a small Church but looked  
very old. 4 or 5 myles from  
Pangbourne on the road from P to  
Wantage

Nothing in the Windows  
neither have any of these old Monts  
any thing to discover for whome  
they were erected.

There was a very old flat stone in the  
South yle whiche had been adorned  
with the demy picture of a man & ye  
Inscription circumscribed & 1   
but all gone.

The glasse in the windows is playne &  
very old and yet no mention of any coats.

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N.B.—Most of the writing is very small and the letters are peculiar  
and difficult to decipher, so that it is more than probable that  
this attempt at transcription is not entirely successful.

It is worthy of note that the gallant Colonel was himself  
not absolutely accurate. Twice, namely, on page 254, line  
2, and on page 256, line 1, he makes a mistake between  
north and south, the aisle of course being south, and the first  
set of effigies being in the north wall. On p. 258, line 1, he  
repeated the error, but corrected it by writing "south" over

"north." His sketches of the effigies of the knight and lady and the first Sir Philip are rudely executed, but fairly illustrate the several figures.

In this same volume are notes of monuments, etc., chiefly heraldic, at the Churches of St. Helen's and St. Nicholas, Abingdon, St. Laurence's, St. Mary's and St. Giles', Reading, St. Mary's, St. Leonard's and St. Peter's, Wallingford, Streatley, Cholsey, and Wantage, with a sketch of the brass. Of Reading Abbey he writes: "Much of ye Abbey is still standing, ye old gatehouse at ye ruins on the east side."

## William the Templar, Abbot of Reading.

*By Jamieson B. Hurry, M.A., M.D.*

**A**BBOT William the Templar was appointed sixth Abbot of Reading in 1164, the year of the hallowing of the Abbey Church by Archbishop Thomas à Becket, in the presence of King Henry II. The completion of this vast edifice, the construction of which had taken forty years, doubtless gave a dignity to the conventual observances at Reading such as had not been possible while building operations were in progress.

This Abbot is supposed to have been of French extraction like his predecessor Hugh de Boves. An old French writer states that he was lame, but that this defect was obscured by his virtues and his learning.\*

It would be interesting to know the origin of the title "The Templar." Probably there had been some association with the Order of the Knights Templars which was founded early in the 12th century.

Abbot William held office at Reading until 1173, when he was consecrated 29th Archbishop of Bordeaux,† the ceremony taking

\* *Histoire Littéraire de la France*, Vol. XIV., p. 610.

† Biographical notices of the Archbishops of Bordeaux will be found in Lope's, *L'Eglise Métropolitaine St. André de Bordeaux* (ed. by Callen), Vol. II.; *Gallia Christiana*, Vol. II.