

JONATHAN HARMER'S TERRACOTTAS

(II)

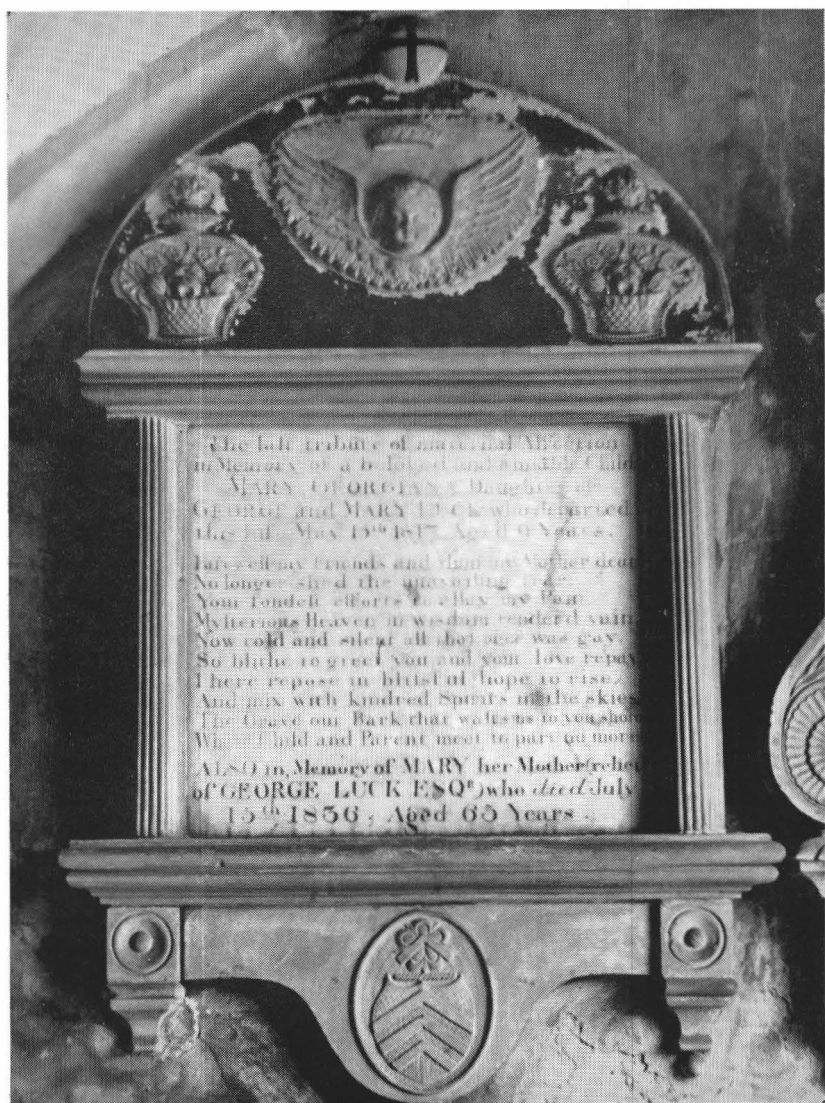
BY G. L. REMNANT

The appearance of my first survey in *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, vol. 100 brought me letters from several correspondents informing me of the existence of further examples of Jonathan Harmer's work, and this information, coupled with an examination of a family history compiled by Doris K. Miller, of Southborough, Tunbridge Wells, and lent to me by Mr. J. K. Harmer, of Mill Lane, Offham, Lewes, seemed to justify a second article. It will be remembered that the original report arose from the survey of exterior churchyard memorials being carried out by the Sussex Archaeological Society, and several of the examples noted below are interior tablets, for which I was not looking at that time, but, which, being indoors, are in better preservation than most of the outdoor work. (The tablets in Cade Street Chapel quoted in my earlier article, vol. 100, p. 146, were a chance discovery).

I will deal first with the genealogy, which reveals that there were Harmers in Frant in 1544, and also records that '17 foote' of the west churchyard wall was rebuilt by William Harmer in 1603. There are also notes of the death in 1612 of Thomas Harmer, fletcher, and that in 1638 William Harmer was churchwarden.

Heathfield probates mentioned in the history are those of John Harmer, farmer, 1540, John Harmer, yeoman, 1547 and 1551, and John Harmer, 1622. Heathfield parish register records the baptism of 'Johnan, son of Anthoine Harmer' on 10 March 1649/50, and other entries show that Josiah Harmer married Ann Curtis (possibly of the Mayfield family, see vol. 100, p. 147) on 1 March 1697/8, and that a son, Josiah, was born on 9 March 1698/9. An interesting point to note is that both these Josiahs changed their name style to Joseph, as it is recorded that Joseph (the elder) was buried in Heathfield churchyard on 13 February 1723/4 and that Joseph (the younger) died on 3 January, buried on 9 January 1749/50, and described as 'churchwarden and parish book-keeper.' Joseph the younger was the father of Jonathan Harmer senior and our Jonathan's grandfather.

Two points revealed in the family tree supplement that compiled by the writer (vol. 100, p. 143). First, the name of Jonathan's sister, Mrs. J. Hood, was Jane; second, Jonathan's own child quoted as Henry was in fact a daughter, Henrietta, and her father appears to have used the name in his letters as a diminutive. An interesting theory propounded by Mr. R. F. Newman, of Geneva, is that the name given by Jonathan to his first child, Columbiannee, who died in America, was a play on the words 'Columbian-nee'—born in Columbia. Mr. J. K. Harmer, to whose kindness I am



The late tribute of maternal Affection
 in Memory of a beloved and amiable Child
 MARY GEORGINA Daughter of
 GEORGE and MARY L. C. who married
 the 11th May 1817. Aged 9 Years.
 Farewell friends and shut my Mother dear
 No longer shd the agonizing bed
 Your fondelt efforts to ebb my Pain
 Myrtens Heav'n in wisdom renderd vain
 Now cold and silent all that once was gay
 So blithe to greet you and your love repay
 There repose in bliss'd hope to rise
 And mix with kindred Spirits in the skies
 The Grave our Bark that waltzes to you show
 Wh' our hold and Parent meet to part no more
 ALSO in Memory of MARY her Mother (relict
 of GEORGE LUCK ESQ^r) who died July
 15th 1836. Aged 65 Years.

PLATE I. Luck Memorial, Wadhurst



PLATE IIA. Detail of Durrant Memorial, East Grinstead



PLATE IIB. Memorial to F. A. Meek, Warbleton



PLATE IIIA. Tompsett Memorial, Wadhurst



PLATE IIIB. Headstone to John Fox, Warbleton

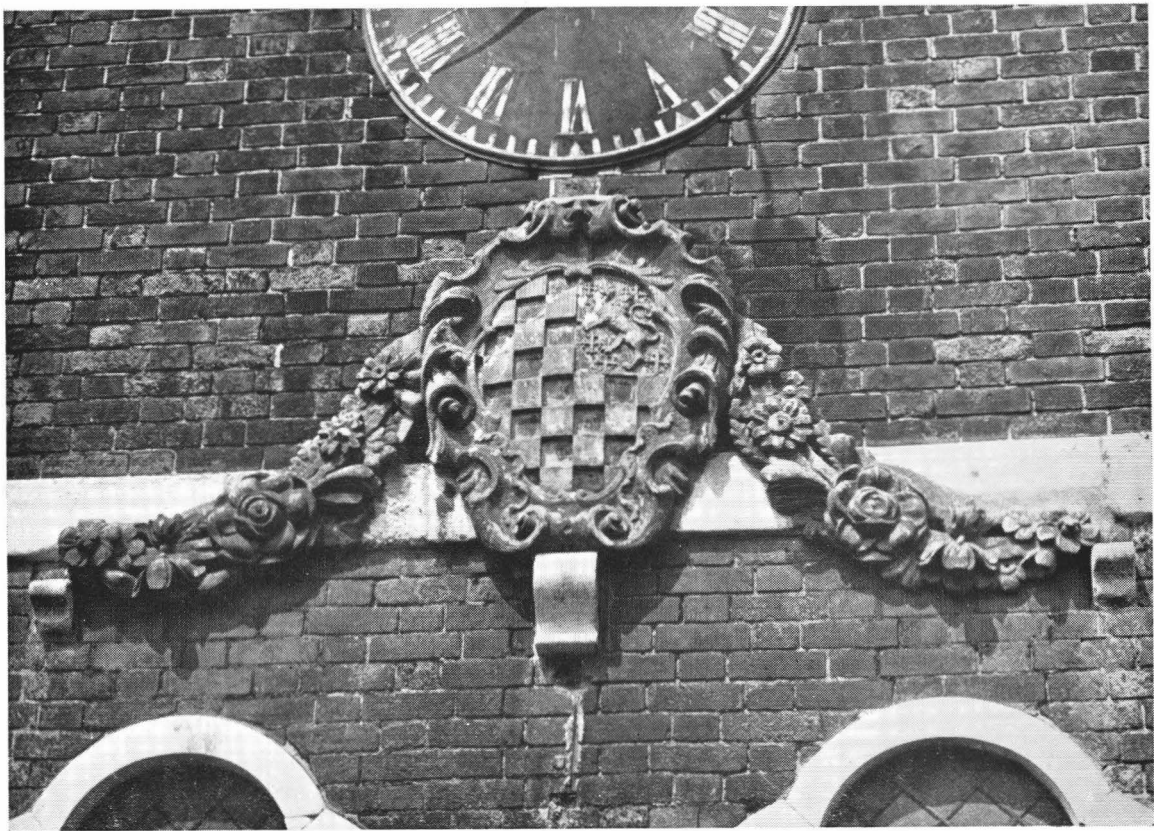
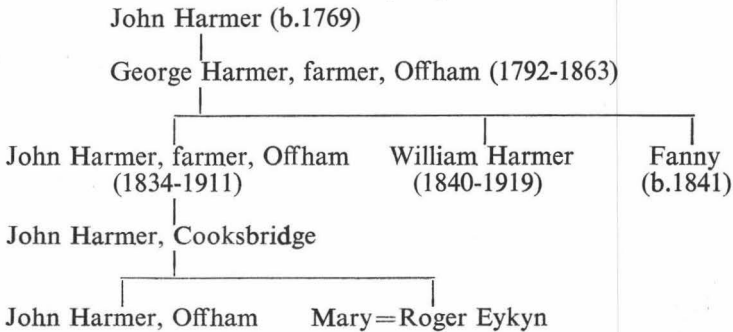


PLATE IV. Lewes Town Arms, Market Tower, Lewes

indebted for the above quotations, is a direct descendant of Jonathan's brother, John, and it is interesting to note that all the generations of Harmers linking them were connected with Offham or Cooksbridge, which suggests that when John Harmer returned from America he did not rejoin his brother, Jonathan, in Heathfield, but settled in the Offham area. The pedigree follows:



Mr. R. F. Newman, whom I quoted above, has also done some research on Jonathan Harmer's work, and I am obliged to him for drawing my attention to five of the examples which follow. I must also thank Mr. E. R. Burder and Mr. and Mrs. Dix, of Wadhurst, for further mention of the tablets there.

EAST GRINSTEAD

1. Headstone (Plate IIA), dedicated to William, son of William and Lucy DURRANT of Brambletye, died 6 February 1821 aged 32 years, also Lucy DURRANT, mother of the above, died 26 April 1835, aged 80 years. In the pedimental centre is carved in *caveo-relievo* a female figure, in classical dress, seated in profile on the right of a panelled pedestal crowned by an urn. This is not a terracotta, but is of special interest, being signed beneath the relief '... Harmer fecit.'

WADHURST

1. On east wall of south porch. Wall tablet (Plate I) of white marble in freestone setting having in pediment at top a winged cherub surmounted by a crown, flanked by baskets of fruit and flowers framed in flaming urns. Dedicated to Mary Georgiana LUCK, died 15 May 1817, aged 9, daughter of George LUCK, and Mary his widow, died 15 July 1836, aged 65. The tablet, erected by her mother c.1817 has a rhyming epitaph:

Farewell my friends and thou my mother dear
 No longer shed the unavailing tear
 Your fondest efforts to allay my pain
 Mysterious heaven in wisdom rendered vain
 Now cold and silent all that once was gay
 So blithe to greet you and your love repay
 I here repose in blissful hope to rise
 And mix with kindred spirits in the skies
 The grave our bark that wafts us to yon shore
 Where child and parent meet to part no more.

There are two more memorials to members of the Luck family in the porch, but I have not described these as they do not include terracottas, and their

early dates suggest that they may not be the work of Harmers, as there is no evidence that his father used this style of decoration. Mr. Newman, however, feels that they may have been erected later by Jonathan from his father's designs.

2. On west wall of north transept. Wall tablet (Plate IIIA) with a large urn on the pediment, which is flanked by pomegranates and is the only example I have found of the use of this fruit in Harmer's terracotta work. Dedicated to John TOMPSETT, Gentleman, late of Scrag-oak, died 22 September 1820, aged 71, and his wife, Ann, died 23 December 1802, aged 48. Date of erection c.1820.

3. On south wall of sanctuary. Wall tablet to Edward and Ann BURGIS, died 1750 and 1752 respectively. Surmounted by a large winged cherub which has obviously been added at a later time and this is confirmed by the date of the tablet itself.

WARBLETON

1. In churchyard. Headstone (Plate IIIb) bearing Harmer basket of flowers. Dedicated to John FOX, died 21 March 1815, aged 84.

2. On south wall of nave. Small rectangular tablet of white marble, surmounted by a small upright Harmer urn (Plate IIb). Dedicated to Francis-Ashfield, beloved and only son of Robert and Isabella MEEK, died 8 September 1837, aged 8 years.

Before leaving the subject of church memorials I must mention that, following up a point raised by Mr. Newman, I revisited Mayfield churchyard recently and confirmed with regret his news that the number of paterae on the Gilbert tomb (vol. 100, p. 147) had fallen from sixteen to five, either from decay or souvenir collectors. When the Society visited Ashburnham this year I found in the churchyard an illegible headstone with an oval recess, which by its size had probably contained a Harmer basket of flowers.

In the *Official Guide to Lewes*, ed. W. H. Godfrey, F.S.A., p. 47, it is stated that the town arms on the outer wall of the market tower, a very attractive terracotta (Plate IV), probably came from the works of Jonathan Harmer, of Heathfield. All efforts by Mr. L. S. Davey and myself to prove the authenticity of this statement have been unsuccessful. Mr. Davey pointed out that the Lewes Public Library has the Minute Book of the Commissioners of the Market dating from 1791 to about 1850, which period would roughly coincide with that of Jonathan Harmer's activities, but although the building of the tower is recorded there is no mention of the coat of arms. The contemporary books of account might have answered the query but these cannot be found.

The Society has received from the Towner Art Gallery, Eastbourne, through the good offices of Col. T. Sutton, F.S.A., another "basket of fruit and flowers," 10in. by 6in., an exact replica of that already in Barbican House and included in the list on p. 144 of *S.A.C.* vol. 100. In fact, identical faults in the rim ornament suggest that they may both have been cast from the same mould, but the origin of this new example is not known. It came to the Towner Art Gallery with some pieces of modern pottery.