





Sir Nicholas Hauberk, Knt., Constable of Flint Castle, 1396=1407

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HE brass, of which a photograph from a rubbing is shown, is one of the 24 magnificent brasses in Cobham Church, Kent. The brass has a local interest to persons in this neighbourhood, as having a connection with a very important event in the history of this locality, as well as of that of the country, when a King of England was taken prisoner in the neighbouring Castle of Flint, brought here and lodged in Chester Castle for seven days, and afterwards taken from thence to London. The rubbing was made by Mr. Philip B. Davies-Cooke, of Gwysaney, who having had the arms emblazoned, and the rubbing mounted and framed, presented it to the Corporation of Flint. The brass is of the date 1407, and is erected to the memory of Sir Nicholas Hauberk, Knt., who was appointed Constable of Flint Castle, Sheriff and Raglor (or Steward) of Flintshire, and Mayor of Flint Borough, on the 19th December, 1396, in succession to Sir John Golofre, deceased. He held these offices until his death in 1407, having been re-appointed by King Henry IV., on his accession to the throne. It is interesting, therefore, to know that he was filling the office of Constable of Flint Castle when King Richard II. was made prisoner there by Henry Bolingbroke (afterwards King Henry IV.)—a

scene which has been so vividly depicted by Shakespeare in his great drama "King Richard II." Sir Nicholas is said to have kept up the castle in some state, maintaining 4 men-at-arms and 12 archers there, at an annual expense of £146—a considerable sum in those days.

The brass measures 8 feet long by 2 feet 10 inches wide, and is a fine mediæval work of art, being considered one of the finest English Military Brasses of that period. The figures represented on these brasses are said to have been intended as portraits, and are undoubtedly faithful copies of the armour, armorial bearings, and costumes of their several periods.

It will be observed that the knight is represented as clad in armour, partly chain mail and partly plate. This was the period of transition from chain to plate armour. The bascinet is acutely pointed, and to it the camail, or tippet of mail, was attached by a cord passed through vervelles or staples placed round the lower edges of the bascinet. The breast and back plates were covered with a jupon, which had an scalloped border below. A baudric or broad belt, enriched with ornament, passes round the hip. To this the sword is suspended on the left side, and a dagger, called a misericorde, anelace, or baselard, destitute of a cross-guard, is suspended on the right. Three epaulets, consisting of overlapping plates, protect the shoulders. Vambraces and rerebraces encircle the arms. The elbows are covered with plate pieces, with heart-shaped hinges. The hands are covered with gauntlets. The legs and feet are encased in plate. The genouillières, or knee-pieces, had square plates below them. The spurs are rowell or wheel spurs. The feet rest upon a couchant lion, and the head, according to the fashion in brasses of that time, reclines upon a helmet to which his peculiar crest is attached, viz., a fish within

a circle or garland. By his side, on a pedestal, is a small effigy of his little son, John, who died an infant. The canopy is Gothic in style. The figures at the top represent the Virgin and Child on the right, the Trinity in the centre, and St. George of England with the Dragon on the left. On the right shaft are Sir Nicholas' coat of arms, and on the left the same arms impaling those of Cobham. Around the whole runs the following inscription:—

“+ Hic jacet dn's Nicholaus Hauberk miles quondam maritus d'ne Joh'ne d'ne de Cobh'm Heredis d'ni Joh'is de Cobh'm fundatoris istius Collegii qui quidem Nicholaus obiit apud Castrum de Cowlyng Nono die Octobris anno domini Mill'mo Quadringentessimo Septimo Cuius anime propicietur deus. Amen.”

[Here lies Sir Nicholas Hauberk, Knight, late husband of the lady Joan, Lady of Cobham, heiress of the lord John de Cobham, the founder of this college, which Nicholas died at Cowling Castle, the 9th day of October, 1407. On whose soul may God have mercy. Amen.]

Sir Nicholas was probably “a soldier of fortune,” for there is no family of that name. The name itself is but a soubriquet derived from the interlaced mail tunic; a fitting one for a soldier. It is of the same class as Shakespeare, Fortescue, &c. We have seen that he was Constable of Flint when King Richard II. was taken prisoner there. Afterwards we find that he was one of the six knights who formed part of the train of Queen Isabella, widow of Richard II., on her return to France in 1401. He also escorted Henry IV. on the occasion of his visit to Cologne, in 1402, to attend his daughter's marriage. The historian John Stow mentions him in his account of the jousting at Smithfield in 1393, thus:

“Certain Lords of Scotland came into England to get worship by force of arms: the Earl of Mare challenged the Earl of Notingham to joust with him, and so they rode

together certain courses, but not the full challenge, for the Earl of Mare was cast both horse and man, and two of his ribs were broken with the fall, so that he was conveyed out of Smithfield, and so towards Scotland, but died by the way at York. Sir William Darell, Knight, the King's banner bearer of Scotland, challenged Sir Percie [Peter] Courtney, the King's banner bearer of England; and when they had run certain courses, gave over without conclusion of victory. Then Cookeborne, esquire, of Scotland, challenged Sir Nicholas Hawberke, Knight, and rode five courses, but Cookeborne was borne over horse and man," &c.

As we have seen from the inscription on the brass, Sir Nicholas married Joan, lady of Cobham; and this accounts for his being buried at Cobham. He was her third husband. Her first husband was Sir Robert Heningdale, her second Sir Reginald Braybroke, her third Sir Nicholas Hauberk.

On the death of Sir Nicholas she married Sir John Oldcastle, the leader of the Lollards; and on his being beheaded she took to herself a fifth husband, Sir John Harpeden, who died; and last of all she died also.

