

An additional Note on the Paston Brass at Paston.

COMMUNICATED BY

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In *Norfolk Archæology*, vol. iv., p. 360, in an account of the recovery and restoration to Paston Church of the two shields belonging to the brass of Erasmus and Mary Paston, and in vol. xv., p. 82, is a description of the shields and their palimpsest reverses. Although Erasmus Paston died in 1538 the costume shown on his figure and the general style of the brass prove it to have been laid down at a much later date, probably somewhere about 1570, no doubt by his wife Mary, who long survived him, and the date of whose death has never been filled in. During the summer of 1920 the Rev. J. F. Williams, rector of Beechamwell, had the opportunity of examining the reverses of the two plates bearing the verses and the inscription, and found them also to be palimpsest. In Mr. Williams' opinion the figure of Paston himself, which was not loose, is not likely to prove a palimpsest as the metal is thin, of poor quality, and much dented in places. To Mr. Williams I am indebted for the rubbings from which the accompanying illustration has been made. The plates themselves have now been securely fastened in their original indents.

The four English verses are on a plate, 24 by 4 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches, which is made up of three pieces, respectively

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measuring $10\frac{1}{2}$, $6\frac{1}{2}$, and 7 inches. It bears the following inscription in black letter:

Here Crasimus Paston and Marye his wiffe enclosed are in Claye
whiche is the Restinge place of Meache untill the latter daye
Of Sommes thre and Daughters Nyne the Lorde them parents made
Ere cruell death did worke his cruell spite or fykell lyff did fade

The reverse of the plate shows fragments of two foreign brasses. The first two pieces are portions of a marginal inscription in Flemish, which join together and include the beginning of a date. This inscription, on a slightly curved band enclosed between two other bands of running foliage, gives the words

jaer ons heere(n) · M · cccc ·
(year of our lord 14...)

and may be dated to the first half of the fifteenth century. The numeral which is defaced by the joint is probably a ten. The third piece is a fragment of good canopy work from another foreign, probably Flemish, brass of the fourteenth century, and somewhat resembles in style the work on the Lynn examples.

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jaer ons heere · M · cccc ·

Crasimus Paston deceased y^e xiiiith of
November A. 1538. and Marye his
wiffe deceased y^e of



The smaller plate, $12\frac{1}{2}$ by $2\frac{3}{8}$ inches, bearing the inscription, is made up of two pieces respectively measuring 9 and $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches. The inscription is in three lines in black letter:—

Crasmus Paston deceased y^e xiiiith of
 November A.^o. 1538. and Marge his
 wyfe deceased y^e of

The reverse of the larger piece shows a portion of embattled work either from the entablature or footpiece of a canopy and is of English workmanship of the fifteenth century. The smaller piece, which is unfortunately only a very small fragment, is of great interest. It shows three broad curved lines cutting through an oak tree and a curved scroll, the latter bearing the words *diligamus Inuicem*, from the seventh verse of the fourth chapter of the first epistle of St. John, "charissimi diligamus nos invicem quia charitas ex deo est." This fragment is of foreign workmanship.

In the possession of Sir Maurice Boileau of Ketteringham Park, Wymondham, and illustrated in vol. xiii., p. 198, is the greater part of an armed figure, $13\frac{3}{4}$ inches in height, of date about 1570. This figure is palimpsest, and has on the reverse a fair-sized piece of the figure from which the Paston fragment was cut. It is that of an ecclesiastic with folded hands, wearing a chasuble richly diapered with foliage and scroll-work, the centre orphrey bearing a small figure of our Lord, or of one of the Apostles. Amongst the diapering is the oak tree and the scroll as on the Paston fragment. In style the figure somewhat resembles those on the great brass at Schwerin to Bishops Godfrey and Frederic de Bulowe, 1375, but is probably slightly later in date.

In the church of Brundish, Suffolk, are three brasses to members of the Colby family, all laid down about the year 1570. Two are practically complete, but the third has suffered much damage. It commemorated

Francis Colby and his wife Margaret Wentworth, and consisted of figures of himself, his wife, a foot inscription, and four shields of arms. All that now remains is the headless figure of the lady and three shields. Amongst Elisha Davy's Suffolk collections in the British Museum is a rubbing (Add. MS. 32483, fol. 31) showing the brass perfect except for the inscription and the head of the lady, which had then gone. A careful comparison of a rubbing of Sir M. Boileau's figure with Davy's rubbing proves that the figure came from Brundish and is that of Francis Colby.

Returning to the Paston brass, it may be noticed that no fewer than six earlier brasses, five of foreign origin, have been re-used to make the shields and inscriptions. In four cases only have pieces of the same foreign brass been found in different churches, viz., at Marsworth, Bucks, and Walkern, Herts, where are portions of the same inscription, the later side in each case bearing date 1583; at Upminster, Essex, and Bayford, Herts, portions of the figure of an abbot or bishop, the later sides dated 1545; at Erith, Kent, and Isleworth, Middlesex, portions of an heraldic device, the later sides respectively 1574 and 1575; and at Norton Disney, Lincs, and West Lavington, Wilts, portions of a long inscription recording the foundation of a mass, the date, 1518, appearing on the Disney piece, whilst the name of the church, Westmonstre, is preserved on the Lavington fragment. To these may now be added a sixth, Paston and Brundish.

The re-use of Flemish fragments mostly occurs between the years 1540 and 1590, and may be accounted for by the religious troubles in the Low Countries, which culminated in the outbreak of the Calvinists in 1566, when no fewer than 400 churches in Flanders and Brabant alone were pillaged, and the subsequent outrages committed by the Beggars of the Sea in 1572, whose first acts were to plunder churches.