



CANOPY OF THE BRASS OF JOHN BYRKHEDE.

THE fine sepulchral brass in Harrow Church of John Byrkhede, a priest (of which an etching, by J. P. Malcolm, dated January 1, 1799, is published in that artist's "Illustrations to Lysons's Environs of London,") has been frequently, but as often imperfectly, and in several respects incorrectly noticed. The names of Weever, Gough, Lysons, and the Oxford Architectural Society, must always be mentioned as authorities claiming attention and respect; and yet, on this subject, they are all more or less to be discredited in the accounts they have given, either in their descriptions of the monument itself, or of its date, or of the person commemorated.

Let us consider it successively in these three points of view.

It is set on a ledger, or slab, measuring 9ft. 2½ by 3ft. 9 inches. The figure was 4 ft. 5 inches high. The inscription was placed on a fillet set next the margin on all four sides, and at each corner was placed a shield of arms.

The figure, which has long lost its head, represents a priest standing with his hands raised in prayer, and wearing a sumptuous cope, below which appears his linen surplice, with ample dependent sleeves, in front his almuce or tippet of fur, and towards his feet the lower portions of the cassock, which was worn beneath all the preceding. The orphreys of his cope on either side are decorated with the figures of saints standing within architectural

tabernacles, on either side five, distinguished by their usual symbols, and the name of each inscribed below:—

<b>S. Maria</b> (with her Child).	<b>S. Joh' Bapt'a</b> (with Agnus Dei on a book).
<b>S. Petrus</b> (with keys and open book).	<b>Sca Anna</b> (with the youthful Virgin).
<b>S. J. eu'ngel'</b> (with chalice, serpent, and palm-branch).	<b>S. Laurenti'</b> (habited as a deacon, with gridiron and closed book).
<b>S. Nic'us</b> (as a bishop).	<b>S. Nic'us</b> (as a bishop).
<b>Sca Paula</b> (with closed book).	<b>S. Brigitta</b> (with hands extended, and rays descending from heaven).

Saint Nicholas is represented with a crosier as a bishop; and so is Saint Richard.\* The latter must be intended for the English saint, Richard of Chichester, the canonized bishop de la Wiche, who died in 1253. Saint Paula is an unusual saint; she was a Roman widow, whose life is written by Saint Jerome.

The cope is fastened at the breast by a morse, ornamented with the *rose-en-soleil*, the peculiar badge of King Edward IV.

The inscription, with the parts now missing restored from Weever,† is as follows. The hexameters, it will be observed, rhyme in couplets, and that not only at the end of their lines, but (excepting in the third couplet) at the *cæsura*.

**Sta** morture bide, doceat te massa **Johannis**  
**Vyrkhed'** sub lapide quem trux necat **Atropos** annis  
**M Domini C** quater **Lx** octo numeratis  
**Jungitur** iste pater **Cuthberge** luce **beatia**.  
**Hunc** charitas, grabitas, fides, prudentia **morum**  
**Presulibus** primis regni fecere **decorum**.  
**O** deus in celis tua lauriet alma **maiestas**  
**Quem** tantum terris **morum** perfecit **honestas**.

Over the canopy were two scrolls, both now gone. One of

\* Mr. Gough, *Sepulchral Monuments*, vol. ii. p. 260, has misread *S. Martin* for *S. Ric'us*. He also misread the priest's name as *Vyrkhed*, and *beatia*, in the fourth line of the verses, instead of *beatia*.

† *Funerall Monuments*, 1631, p. 531. The first and fifth lines, which were at the head and foot of the stone, and the end of the second, are now lost. There are, however, several errors in Weever's copy, besides a misreading of the date hereafter noticed, particularly *docent* for *doceat* in the first line, *quem* omitted in the second line, *beatia* altered to *beatia* in the fourth, *primis* to *primis* in the sixth, and in the seventh line *lauriet* altered to *nunc fovet*.

them (as stated by Mr. Gough) contained this English inscription:—

*Thū blēssyd mitt thū be.*

The canopy was a fine architectural design, and its crockets are of unusual outline, and of peculiar elegance. Only the central portion (as shown in the cut) is now remaining; but the whole was perfect when the brass was sketched by J. P. Malcolm in 1799.

The terminations of some of the lines of the inscription are marked by garbs or wheatsheafs. These were derived from the armorial bearings of the deceased, whose entire coat, three garbs, is at the lower left-hand corner. At the right-hand upper corner is the shield of archbishop Arundell,—the pall of the see of Canterbury, impaling Arundell and Warren quarterly. The corresponding corner, over the left shoulder of the effigy, formerly contained the arms of archbishop Chicheley,—a chevron between three cinquefoils.\* This shield is now lost; and of the third no remembrance even is preserved. The fourth is Byrkhede's coat of the three garbs already mentioned.

So much for the description of this memorial. Now, let us consider its date. It is expressed in the third of the Latin verses, which has been variously interpreted. Weever misread “& x” instead of LX. Gough read the line as follows:—

*An domini C quater XL octo numeratis,*

and he placed the monument under the year 1478—by a clerical error, it must be presumed, for 1468. Lysons, in the first edition of his *Environs* 1795, leaves the date undecided; but in his second edition he assigns it to 1418. The compilers of the *Oxford Manual of Monumental Brasses*, published in 1848, at page 42, adopted this last date; but at page 190, they say “the date should be 1468, and not 1418.” The year 1468 is no doubt the true reading; but it is remarkable that that was an original error for 1467, in which year Byrkhede's will was made and proved. Of the particular day of Byrkhede's death, the day of Saint Cuthberga, it is to be remarked, that that feast was held on the 31st of August.

Lastly, with regard to the person represented. The costume,

\* Gough, *Sepulchral Monuments*.

which has already been described, is such as is usually found on the figures of canons of cathedral or collegiate churches; but the inscription gives only his name, without any of his dignities or preferments. It merely states that "his charity, gravity, fidelity, and prudent manners made him honourable in the estimation of the chief prelates of the kingdom." Who those prelates were was further intimated by the arms of archbishop Arundell and archbishop Chicheley being placed at the corners of the stone. To archbishop Arundell, who died as early as 1413, it is very probable that Byrkhede was indebted for his education; and to Chicheley, who, succeeding to the see of Canterbury upon Arundell's death, occupied it for thirty years, we have historical evidence that Byrkhede was closely attached. He appears to have been steward to that archbishop.\*

In the history of the foundation of All Souls College, Oxford, his name occurs as one of those friends of its founder who purchased the estates required for the purpose. These being purchased (says Anthony à Wood) by Thomas Chichele archdeacon of Canterbury, Henry Penwortham, John Birkhede, and John Druell, clerks, and Robert Danvers, gentleman, the founder proceeded to lay the first stone on the 10th February, 1437.†

It appears, more particularly, that Skibbowe's tenement in the High street was purchased by Thomas Chichele, John Birkhede, John Bold, and Robert Danvers, on the 4th July, 16 Hen. VI. (1438);‡ and Besford's tenement by Thomas Chichele, John Birkhede, John Druell, and Robert Danvers, on the 5th May, 17 Hen. VI. (1439).§

The executors of archbishop Chichele's will were Thomas Chichele, archdeacon of Canterbury (his great-nephew), Richard Andrews, the first warden of All Souls' College, William Byconnell, John Birkhede, Robert Danvers, and John Wraby. ||

Again, we hear of John Byrkhede many years later, when he was admitted on the 5th April, 1465, as a Confrater of All Souls.¶

\* Spencer's Life of Archbishop Chichele, 8vo. 1783, p. 165.

† Wood's Colleges and Halls of Oxford (edit. Gutch, 1786,) p. 256.

‡ Spencer's Life of Chichele, p. 224.

§ Ibid. p. 226.

|| Ibid. p. 164.

¶ The document of his admission is printed in Gutch's Collectanea

On that occasion he is described as “Johannes Birkhede clericus olim Executor recolendæ memoriæ Henrici Chicheley nuper Cantuariæ archiepiscopi et dicti collegii fundatoris.”

Lysons designates Byrkhede as Rector of Harrow; though upon no other evidence than the circumstance of this monument existing in the church. It so happens (according to Newcourt's *Repertorium Londinense*) that the institutions to the rectory are deficient at the time when they should have recorded his name. As the church of Harrow, however, was one of the richest in the disposal of the archbishop of Canterbury, and one which Chicheley was likely to have conferred on his friend, there need have been little hesitation in accepting the name of John Byrkhede as one of its Rectors; but the discovery of his Will\* has now set the fact beyond doubt. In that document he describes himself as “Rector of the parish church of Harrow.” The will is in Latin, written by a notary.

After a religious preamble of considerable length, the testator directs his body to be interred in the chancel of the church of Harrow, and bequeaths to every chaplain present at his exequies, and saying Placebo and Dirige, and attending mass, *xij d.*; to the chaplain celebrating mass at the altar on the same occasion *ij s.*; and to every clerk helping in the choir *vj d.* To his poor parishioners present at his exequies *xxvjs. iiij d.* He desires that on the days of his burial and month's mind five wax lights should burn in honour of the Crucifix of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that *Curiosa*, vol. ii. p. 267. The admission was honorary or complimentary; or perhaps chiefly regarded in reference to spiritual benefits. The lady abbess of Syon was admitted to be partaker of the suffrages of the college on the like footing.

\* I have been helped to this discovery by Henry C. Coote, esq. of Doctors' Commons, one of the council of our Society. The will is in the books of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, Godyn 24. It would have been very desirable to have inserted in this place a perfect copy of this curious will: but, as under the present system gratuitous access for literary purposes is strictly prohibited, and its official transcription would have cost *forty shillings*, I must request my readers to accept the necessarily hasty and imperfect abstract which I have above given. Before long, it is to be hoped, the remonstrances of the friends of historical and literary research will obtain a more liberal treatment from the guardians of this most interesting class of our national records.

in the interim two wax lights should burn at the ends of his tomb. To John Welles, chaplain, if resident with him at the time of his death, and not beneficed, he bequeaths xx*li.* to pray for him for a stipulated period. To Avicia Hert, his sister, he leaves xx. marks, and his best gown of scarlet ingrain; to Gilbert Hert, his nephew, x. marks; and to Alice Hert, his niece, a legacy. Among the other legatees is Henry Hert.\* To John Pelle, chaplain, xl. pounds and his best *portiforium*, or breviary, to be used by him for his life, and then left on the same condition to Robert Badcock, servant of the testator, to whom there is another legacy. To Thomas Roo he leaves his Bible, and to James Birkhede his Commentary of Saint Jerome. To his cousin Hugh Ives his best standing cup of silver, covered, engraved with the reason (or motto) *Al my pleser*. To his poor parishioners and other poor present at his month's mind lijs. iij*d.*; to his poor parishioners of Hawkhurst xxvjs. viij*d.* To the parish church of Wigan, in Lancashire, he bequeaths vestments (which are fully described); to the church of Harowe his best gilt chalice and paten; and to the church of Hawkhurst his second gilt chalice and paten. To the house of Carthusians of London x*li.*, and the like to those of Shrewsbury. Finally, the sum of ten marks for his obit for ten years in the church of Harrow. His executors were Hugh Ives his cousin, and Gilbert Hert; and the overseers Thomas Wynterborne, clerk,† and Thomas Rygby, gentleman. The will was witnessed by master Richard Parker, notary public, and by Robert Spaldyng, the scribe or scrivener. It is dated at London on the 24th July, 1467, and proved at Lambeth on the 5th October following; when administration was granted to Ives, and subsequently to Hert.

Besides the proof this document affords of Byrkhede's having been actually Rector of Harrow, it also points to his other ecclesiastical preferments at Wigan and at Hawkhurst; but the historians of Lancashire and Kent do not afford us any additional information respecting him. The church of Wigan appears to

\* A member of this family, Walter Hert, was one of the twenty Fellows of All Souls' college, appointed on its foundation in 1437.

† Wynterbourne was another of the original Fellows of All Souls.

have been in the patronage of the duchy of Lancaster, and that of Hawkhurst in the patronage of the dean and chapter of Battle, in the fifteenth century; but the institutions of the required period are again deficient.

It is pleasant, however, to revive in a partial degree the memory of a man who was manifestly a useful and honoured member of his profession when he performed his part in life; and who should not be wholly forgotten, either at Harrow or at the college of All Souls, which was evidently indebted to his nursing care, as archbishop Chicheley's steward, in the early stages of its existence.

It is remarkable that the college of All Souls possessed, at a later period, a fellow of the same name (or nearly so), who was a person of considerable eminence. This was John Birkenhead, sometime amanuensis to archbishop Laud, and afterwards writer of the *Mercurius Aulicus*. He was expelled from the college as a royalist in 1648, and was subsequently knighted by Charles the Second. He died in 1679. Sir John was the son of Randall Birkenhead, saddler, of Northwich in Cheshire; in which county the family had long flourished, deriving its name from a place opposite Liverpool, which in late years has arisen into world-wide reputation. Dr. Ormerod, in his *History of Cheshire*, vol. ii. p. 199, gives a pedigree of Birkenhead of Bachford in that county, whose arms were, Sable, three garbs or, within a bordure argent, and derives them conjecturally from John de Birkenhead, who bore three garbs on his seal temp. Edward III. The Historian remarks that this was one of the numerous Cheshire bearings which are what the old heralds call arms of affection, and were adopted with reference to the coat of the local sovereigns of the Palatinate.

NOTE.—There are several other Sepulchral Brasses of the same century which may be compared with that of John Byrkhede for its magnificent display of ecclesiastical costume. The orphreys of the cope were variously decorated; and often with heraldic devices or rebuses alluding to the family arms or name of the owner. The following is a list of such as (like Byrkhede's) exhibit figures of saints, including some, now no longer existing, which may be seen among Hollar's plates to Dugdale's *History of St. Paul's Cathedral*: they appear to have been all canons or other dignitaries:—

1400. *Thomas de Eure, dean of St. Paul's; with ten Saints on his cope: and in tabernacles round the stone the Twelve Apostles.* (Engraved in Dugdale's *St. Paul's*.)
- 14.. (Name gone), treasurer to King Richard II. With ten Saints on his cope. (In Dugdale's *St. Paul's*.)
1400. William Rythyn, minor canon and almoner of St. Paul's: a cope with twelve Saints. (Engraved in Dugdale's *St. Paul's*.)
- c. 1400. A nameless priest at Boston, co. Lincoln; with eight saints.
1401. William Ermyn, at Castle Ashby, co. Northampton; with ten Saints. (Represented in Waller's *Monumental Brasses*, and in Franklin Hudson's *Brasses of Northamptonshire*.)
1401. John de Sleaford, canon of Wells and Ripon, at Balsham, co. Cambridge; with ten Saints. (Engraved in Lysons's *Magna Britannia*, Cambridgeshire, p. 66.)
1404. Henry de Codingtoun, canon of Southwell; at Bottesford, co. Leic.: with eight Saints. (Engraved in Nichols's *Leicestersh.* ii. pl. xxiii.)
1414. Simon Bache, treasurer of the household of King Henry V. and canon of St. Paul's, at Knebworth, co. Hertford; with eight Saints. (Engraved in Clutterbuck's *Hertfordshire*, ii. 381.)
1416. John Prophete, dean of York; at Ringwood, Hampshire: with eight Saints. (Engraved in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for November 1807, and described in Gough's *Sep.* Mon. ii. 49.)
1462. John Blodwell, dean of St. Asaph; at Balsham, Cambridgeshire: with eight Saints. (Lithographed in *Illustrations of Monumental Brasses*, by the Cambridge Camden Society, 1846.)
1471. Henry Sever, warden of Merton College, Oxford, in the college chapel: with eight Saints. (Engraved in Boutell's *Series of English Brasses*, and in Ingram's *Memorials of Oxford*, 1837, Merton College, p. 32; *Glossary of Architecture*, edit. 1840, vol. ii. pl. 15.)
1485. John Newcourt, dean of Auckland and canon of St. Paul's: with eight Saints. (Engraved in Dugdale's *St. Paul's*.)  
Another canon of St. Paul's, his name gone; arms, five mullets as a cross: with twelve Saints. (Engraved in the same plate as the last.)  
Both these were also richly stored with saints in tabernacles as a border to the stone.
1456. c. 1510. A provost of Tattershall; in Tattershall Church, co. Lincoln: with the Twelve Apostles. (Engraved in Gough, ii. pl. lxvi. p. 179, under the misnomer of William Moore.)
1517. Walter Hewke, master of Trinity hall, Cambridge, in the chapel there: with twelve Saints. (Lithographed in Cambridge Camden Society's *Brasses*.)

It is observable that in the arrangement of the saints a gradation was observed. The apostles are uppermost, the native saints generally lower down, and the females (except the Virgin or St. Anne) lowest of all. So it is on Byrkhede's cope; and so in others where we know what the saints



were. On Codingtoun's cope St. Peter and St. Paul are at top; St. Katharine and St. Margaret at bottom; on Sleford's, St. Margaret and St. Winefred stand lowest.

The arrangement of those on the cope of dean Blodwell is still more remarkable. The two uppermost are the angels Raphael and Gabriel; the two next archbishops; the two next bishops; and the lowest Katharine and Margaret. In his marginal tabernacles are John the Baptist and John the Evangelist, Peter and Andrew, Asaph and Nicholas, bishops, and (lowest) Bridget and Winefred.

This characteristic arrangement was not observed by Mr. Gough, who usually names the saints as they happened to strike his eye; nor is this omission supplied in the Cambridge Camden Society's account of dean Blodwell's brass, which follows Blomfield's imperfect description, in which the archangel Raphael is turned into Michael, and some of the figures are not made out. The brass is worn by treading; but perhaps not past decyphering the names of the two archiepiscopal and two episcopal saints.

The figure of William Ermyne at Castle Ashby exhibits another arrangement, for he has female saints all down one side of his cope, and male down the other,—on his right side Anne, Katharine, Margaret, Mary Magdalene, and Elena; on his left, Peter, Paul, Andrew, Nicholas, and Laurence.

Dean Prophete at Ringwood has on one side Saint George, John the Baptist, Peter, and Paul; on the other four female saints, Winefred, Katharine, Faith, and Margaret.



PORTION OF BRASS AT L'BECK, A.D. 1464.