

# THE BRASSES OF MIDDLESEX

## PART 20

### Isleworth

H. K. CAMERON

The church of All Saints at Isleworth has changed in shape and appearance many times. The only remaining medieval feature is the 15th-century west tower. The nave was rebuilt in 1706–7 and Sir Christopher Wren was in part responsible for the design.<sup>1</sup> A major restoration took place in 1866–8 when the chancel, vestry and organ chamber were added.<sup>2</sup> The church was burnt down in 1943, not by enemy action but by miscreant boys. It took some twenty-five years before rebuilding began, supported in the main by local subscription, and six years later the reconstruction was brought to a happy conclusion with a most imaginative lay-out and modern building which is architecturally highly satisfying, enhanced as it is by the superb riverside site which this church has always enjoyed.

These many changes have had their effect on the brasses, not least the loss without trace of the most unusual and interesting small figure of a nun from the neighbouring monastery of Syon. Weever writing in 1631<sup>3</sup> quotes eight inscriptions, not specifically on brass but from the style very likely so, and not one of these exists today. On the other hand he does not mention any of those that have survived. Lysons<sup>4</sup> in 1795 records some and their positions in the church as it was. A first description of the brasses with illustrations of two of them was given by Aungier<sup>5</sup> in 1840. He notes that at least three of them were loose and kept in the vestry. Following the restoration in 1866 they were all refixed, but one at least was loose again early in this century. The later history will be described under each individual brass.

- I. An unknown figure in armour,  
c. 1450, now mounted on wood  
and on a pillar at the west end of the new church.

This excellently preserved and elegant figure is just 36 inches high. He is shown in full plate armour with bare head and short cropped hair. The sword, hung from a belt slanting from the right hip, has been broken and the lower part is missing, as is the end of the dog's tail below. His feet in long pointed sabbatons rest upon this long-nosed dog or hound. The dating of this brass to



Isleworth. No. I. Unknown Knight, c. 1450.

about 1450 is established by the close likeness in style to other brass figures whose identity is known. One of these is to Walter Grene at Hayes who died in 1456 and whose brass was described in an earlier paper in this series.<sup>6</sup> The differences are that Walter Grene's head, though also bare, is lying on a helmet: he wears a dagger at his right hip in addition to his sword; and his feet rest on a griffin. It is 35 inches high. His son-in-law's father, John Gainsford, who died in 1450, is commemorated at Crowhurst in Surrey by another brass so closely alike that it must be contemporary and from the same workshop.<sup>7</sup> The only variation is that his feet rest on a lion. The height is 37½ inches. At Ulcombe in Kent the figure of John St. Leger who died in 1442 has a dog at his feet, with head turned backwards and up towards his master, exactly like the figure at Isleworth.<sup>8</sup> Two more similar figures are to be found in Essex; one, also about 1442, represents Thomas Torrell at Willingale Doe and has the dog with upturned face;<sup>9</sup> the other is at Little Waltham and commemorates John Maltoun, the lord of the manor, who died in 1447.<sup>10</sup> Another very close parallel, this time accompanied by his wife, is the brass to Thomas Reynes, also lord of the manor at Marston Mortaine in Bedfordshire, who died in 1451.<sup>11</sup> The distinctive features of the armour on these effigies are, first the overlapping plates above the shoulders secured by rivets to the breast plate and by a strap around the neck. These were intended to provide flexibility in arm and shoulder movement. The second characteristic is the division of the taces into smaller pieces than is usual, again to assist freer movement, this time of the legs. Several of the figures have at their feet a hound, each almost identical with the others and unlike any other dogs to be found in this position. The close similarity of this group of brasses has of course been noted before, and is indeed regarded by the cognoscenti in this field of stylistic studies as part of a continuously developing pattern of engraving called Series B.<sup>12</sup>

The likelihood is that these brasses were all engraved in a workshop of renown situated probably in London and used by persons of some substance. Several of the names mentioned above were lords of the manor where they lived. Thomas Torrell had been sheriff of Essex and Hertfordshire. Walter Grene had been a member of Parliament for Middlesex no fewer than eight times and John Gaynesford had also been a member. It is unfortunate that there is no positive identification of the figure at Isleworth. For many years past the only inscription associated with it has been that commemorating William Chase (brass No. II) which postdates the style of armour by a hundred years. Mill Stephenson<sup>13</sup> in his List suggests that this brass may be for Geoffrey Goodluck, though possibly on no more evidence than is provided by Aungier in his book on the parish. On p. 459 he quotes from the will of this man:

'Testamentum Galfridi Goodlocke, 12 October, 1452. 'corpusque meum sepeliend. in ecclesia paroch. Omnium Sanctorum de Istelworth London dioc. Item lego eidem ecclesiae pro sepultura corporis mei vi<sup>s</sup> viii<sup>d</sup>.'

That Goodluck was a substantial landowner in and around Isleworth is evident from another quotation by Aungier (p. 214); in 1444 Joan, widow of Richard Maydestone, remised and quitclaimed for ever for herself and her heirs

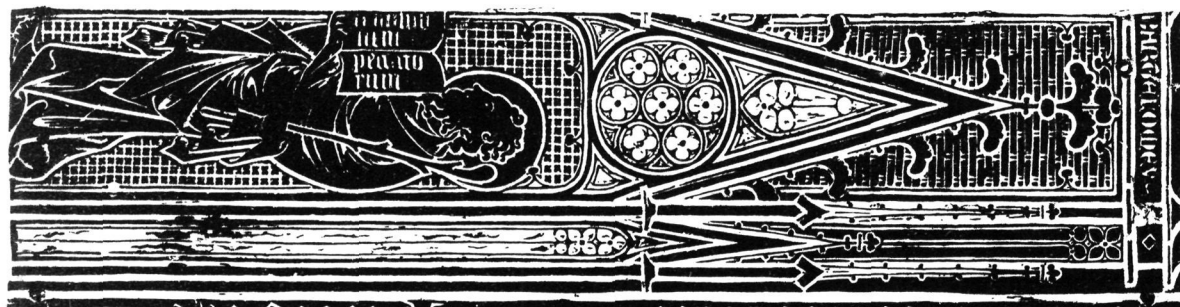
to Geoffrey Godlok and Elizabeth his wife their heirs and assigns all her right, title etc. to and in all the lands etc. in Isleworth called Thistleworth, Hounslow, Brentford and other places in the Counties of Middlesex and Hertford.

The original stone in which this brass had been laid on the floor of the north aisle and with which brass No. II had been associated as far back as the 18th century at least, had been thrown outside the church on the south side by 1840, and the brass itself was then loose in the vestry. It was relaid at the 1866 restoration in a white stone, 47 inches by 24 inches, as was noted by F. A. Greenhill who visited the church in December, 1923.<sup>14</sup> Brass No. II, an inscription, was again laid beneath, but this had already worked loose by 1902. The stone was laid on the floor at the east end of the south aisle. Since the recent rebuilding of the church it has been mounted on wood and fixed to a brick pillar at the west end of the church.

II. William Chase Esquier, *ob.* 1544.

A rectangular plate 19½ inches wide and 5 inches high records in five lines of blackletter the following inscription:

Of yo' charyte pray for the Soule of Wyllm Chase Esquier  
sūtyme sergeaunt to Kyng Henry the viii & of hys most honorable  
howsehould of hys hall & woodyerd which decessed the viii day  
of Maye yn the yer' of oure Lord god m' cccc and xliiii  
of whos soule & all crystyn Soules ihū have mercy amen



Isleworth. No. II. William Chase Esq., *ob.* 1544.

This inscription was below the figure of No. I for many years. Lysons, in 1795, wrote that 'On the floor of this (north) aisle are the tombs of William Chase Esq. (a brass plate with a figure of the deceased in armour), 1544'. This is unusual; the period when monuments were restored, often mistakenly, was the nineteenth century. It is possible that the error of placing these two pieces together occurred at the rebuilding of the nave in 1706–7, though it is also just possible that the earlier figure was appropriated, or misappropriated, to the use of William Chase when his inscription was originally laid. Such behaviour was not unknown, particularly at the time when many brasses were available from the recently despoiled monastic churches. The Chase inscription is itself cut on the back of such a piece of 'scrap' metal.

Of the obverse of this brass and of William Chase there is no more to relate than what the interesting inscription tells. The engraving on the reverse shows it to have been part of one of those large 14th-century brasses imported from the Low Countries and engraved at Tournai. Complete examples occur in this country, for example at St. Albans and at King's Lynn. This fragment comes from the side shaft of a canopy and was engraved about the middle of the century. The side shafts of these canopies enclosed a series of niches in which were small figures of saints, usually the apostles. This example is unique in two respects. It has the names of the apostles engraved in Lombardic letters immediately below the relevant figure. The name BARTELOMEVS can be seen at the top of this piece and must refer to the missing figure above. It is unfortunate that the name is missing below the figure on this fragment. The second unique feature is that the saint holds an open book on which is engraved in small blackletter the words 'remissionem peccatorum', that phrase from the Apostles' creed associated with St. Simon. His presence on these brasses is uncommon and his usual symbol is a saw. There was however more variety and less rigidity about the symbols used at this period for all but the most popular and best known saints, and Simon is also shown at times with a fish, or an oar, or as in this example with a club. Were it not for the extract from the creed, this figure would have been accepted as St. James-the-Less whose usual attribute was a fuller's bat or club.

This interesting palimpsest fragment has had a troubled history. The inscription, associated with brass No. I in Lysons' day, was loose in the vestry in 1840. Relaid under No. I in 1866 it was again reported as loose in 1902<sup>15</sup> and by F. A. Greenhill in 1923.<sup>14</sup> It survived thus until 1943 when the church was burnt down. The present illustration is from a rubbing made by R. H. Pearson on 20th May, 1945, when the brasses were loose at the vicarage. This piece and the other palimpsest piece, brass No. IV, came into the temporary keeping first of Mr. R. H. Pearson, Hon. Secretary and later President of the Monumental Brass Society, and then of myself as one deeply interested in Flemish brasses and in palimpsests. These pieces were returned to Isleworth when the new church was being built, only for this piece to be broken in two by, it is said, a careless and irresponsible brass-rubber. It has been mended and is now mounted, along with a resin replica of the reverse side, on a board in the community room of the new building.

III. Margaret Dely, a sister of Syon, ob. 1561.

This must be one of the smallest figures of an adult ever engraved, being only 6½ inches high. It represents a nun of Syon monastery, adjacent to the church. She is dressed in a gown with cuffs turned back and held in at the waist by a plain girdle tied in a bow at the front. A veil over her head leaves the face fully



Isleworth. No. III. Margaret Dely, a sister of Syon, ob. 1561.

exposed, but falls over her shoulders. Below this figure is a small rectangular plate, 11 inches by 4 inches, on which is the inscription in blackletter:

Here lyeth the body of Margaret  
Dely A Syster professed yn Syon  
who decessed y<sup>e</sup> vii<sup>th</sup> of October, A<sup>o</sup>  
1561 on whose soule Jhu have m<sup>e</sup>cy

In Lysons' time this brass was on the floor of the south aisle. By 1840 Aungier writes that it 'was let into the door of the Duke of Northumberland's pew, by his Grace's express command'. At the restoration of the church in 1866 it was mounted on a small black marble tablet at the east end of the nave on the south side of the chancel arch, where it remained until 1943. At the time of the fire this brass disappeared<sup>1</sup> and no trace of it has come to light since. It was a small brass but of the very greatest interest and it is a most unhappy loss. A resin replica is now mounted on the board in the new community room. The present illustration is from a rubbing made in 1901 by a former President of the Monumental Brass Society, Mr. A. B. Connor, the rubbing now being in the Cambridge collection.

#### IV. Fraunces Holland, *ob.* 1575

On a rectangular plate 15½ inches wide and 6 inches high is this inscription in six lines of blackletter:—

Here lieth buried under this apynion of Armes  
Mistris Fraunc<sup>e</sup> Holland one of the Daughters of  
Edwarde Holland of Denton in the Countie of Lan-  
kastre Esquier: and Servant unto the right Hono-  
rable the Ladie Margaret Countesse of Derby who  
Disseased the xxvii<sup>th</sup> daye of Marche A<sup>o</sup> dñi 15(75)

The corner of the brass has been broken off for many years past and the last two digits of the year of death are missing. The parish register records her burial on March 29th, 1575, as 'Frances Holland, gentlewoman to the Comtiss Darby.' (Fire has obliterated the word Darby, but see Ref. 15.)

This inscription is palimpsest too, also being a fragment of a Flemish brass which has been turned over and reused. It has on the reverse the corner of an armorial memorial of late 15th or early 16th century showing part of a shield with a field fretty of eagles displayed and the mantling above it. A pomegranate is in the corner and an ornamental border surrounds the original plate. Another piece of this same Flemish brass with more of the shield, mantling and border has been found on the back of an inscription to Anne Harman of date 1574 at Erith in Kent, while a third piece with the helm and mantling has more recently been found at Isleham in Cambridgeshire on the reverse of part of an inscription to Richard Peyton who also died in 1574. It is evident that these three scattered English brasses must have been engraved in a workshop, probably in London, where they were reusing metal taken from Flemish churches in the iconoclasm of the preceding years, notably 1566. An illustration connecting these three reverse pieces has recently appeared.<sup>16</sup>

This inscription at Isleworth was loose in the vestry in 1840. In 1866 it was relaid at the east end of the south aisle in the same stone as No. V. While temporarily in my possession it was possible to examine the red colouring matter with which some parts of the Flemish engraving were still filled. Analysis confirmed the use of cinnabar, or mercuric sulphide, commonly used



Here lieth buried under this epynion of Armes  
 Miltris Fraunce Holland one of the Daughters of  
 Edward Holland of Denton in the Countie of Lan-  
 kastre Esquier: and Servant unto the right hono-  
 rable the Ladie Margaret Countesse of Archie who  
 disleased the xxij<sup>th</sup> daie of Marche A<sup>o</sup> dñi. 15

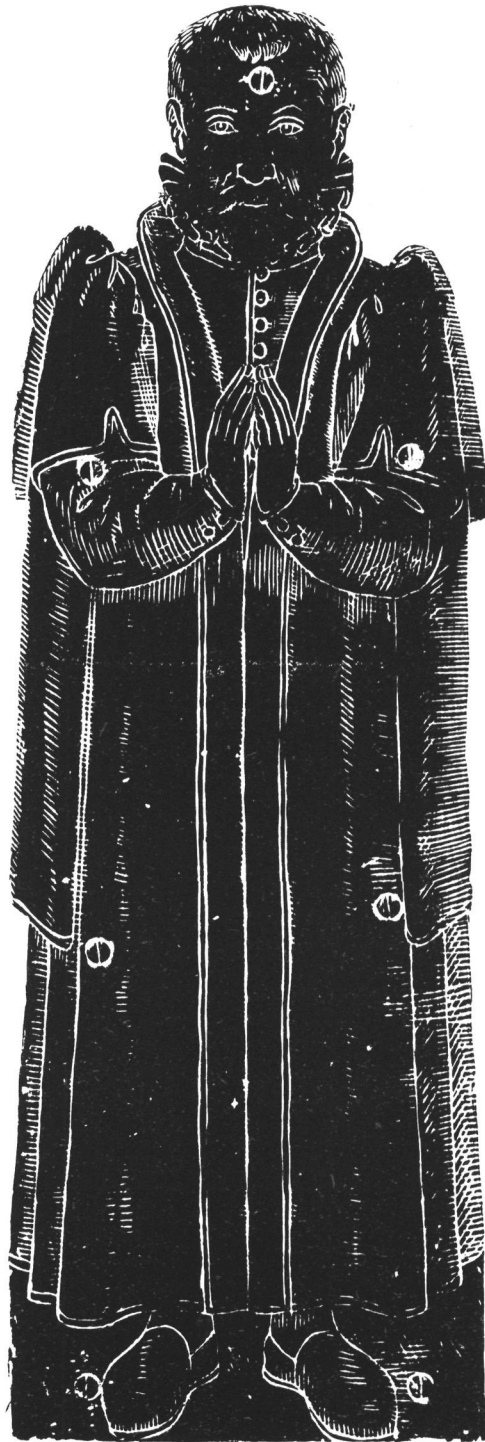
Isleworth. No. IV. Fraunces Holland, ob. 1575.

in medieval times as a bright red pigment. The brass has now been mounted with other brasses on a board on the wall of the community room, with a resin copy of the reverse.

V. A civilian, c. 1590

This is a figure of a civilian in full face view, 23½ inches high. His dress is buttoned up to his neck, around which is a ruff. There are also two buttons at each cuff. An outer gown reaches to the ankles, turned back at the front edges and half standing around the neck as a collar. The sleeves of this gown end above the elbows, are puffed at the shoulders and have false ends reaching half way down the figure. The shoes are plain and simple. He has a beard and a moustache.





Isleworth. No. V. Unknown Civilian, c. 1590.

This brass was also loose in the vestry in 1840. It was relaid in 1866 along with the inscription to Fraunces Holland, on a stone at the east end of the south aisle. It has now been mounted on a board on a brick pillar at the west end of the new church. There seems no evidence of the name of this civilian, although Mill Stephenson<sup>13</sup> suggests that it may possibly commemorate Laurence Manley, yeoman usher of the chamber and serjeant of the bears, who died in 1589.

VI. Katherine Cox, *ob.* 1598; inscription and two sons remaining

An inscription in seven lines of Roman Capitals records the death of Katherine Cox. The plate is 20 inches wide and six inches high. Associated with this is a small plate six inches high and three inches wide on which are two small male figures in long gowns with ruffs around the neck.

The inscription reads:—

KATHERINE COX THE WYFE OF RICHARD COX MARCHANT  
TAYLER WHO DECEASED THE LAST OF JVNE 1598 AND  
ABOVTE THE AGE OF FORTYE VIII YERES AND LEFT BEHIND  
HER EDWARD COX AND LAURENCE COX MARGRET AND JANE  
COX SONNES AND DAUGHTERS VNTO THE SAID RICHARD COX  
AND THE SAYD CATHERINE COX WIFF OF THE SAID RICHARD  
COX LATE DECEASED THE SERVANT OF GOD.

The burial register shows, in the year 1598: 'July 1. Catherine Coxe the wife of Richard Coxe.'

These brasses are now on the board in the community room.

VII. Mrs Ann Master, *ob.* March 5th, 1767.

This is a brass coffin plate, 16 inches high and 12 inches wide with a lozenge of arms, supported by the winged head of an angel and surrounded by floral scroll work. On it is inscribed:

Mrs.  
Ann Master  
Died March 5th  
1767  
aged 70

This plate is on the board in the community room.

VIII. Mary Nevill, Countess of Abergavenny, *ob.* 1796.

This too is a brass coffin plate, now kept in the church office, measuring 31½ inches high and 19 inches wide. At the head is engraved a fine Countess' coronet and below:

MARY NEVILL  
Countess of Abergavenny  
Died the 26th October  
1796  
AGED 36 YEARS

KATHERINE COX THE WYFE OF RICHARD COX MERCHANT  
TAYLER WHO DECEASED THE LAST OF IUNE 1598. AND  
ABOVTE THE AGE OF FORTYE VIII. YERES AND LEFT BEHIND  
HER EDWARD COX AND LAVRENCE COX MARGRET AND IANE  
COX SONNES AND DAUGHTERS VNTO THE SAID RICHARD COX  
AND THE SAYD CATHERINE COX WIFF OF THE SAID RICHARD  
COX LATE DECEASED THE SERVANT OF GOD.



Isleworth. No. VI. Katherine Cox, *ob.* 1598, with two sons.

The following extract from the parish register is quoted by Lysons<sup>17</sup>:— The Hon. Henry Nevill of St. George, Hanover-square, and Mary Robinson (daughter of John Robinson, Esq. M.P.) of this parish, were married by special licence, Oct. 3, 1781. Mary Catherine daughter of the Hon. Henry Nevill, son and heir of George Baron of Abergavenny and Mary his wife, baptized Mar. 24, 1783; Henry George, son of the Rt. Hon. Henry Visc<sup>t</sup> Nevill and Mary, June 20, 1785; Ralph, son of the Rt. Hon. Henry Earl of Abergavenny, & Jan. 22, 1787; Henrietta, Aug. 14, 1788; John, Feb. 27, 1790; William, Aug. 5, 1792.'

Inscriptions to the following persons in Isleworth church were recorded by Weever<sup>3</sup> in 1631; 'Tombs (says Lysons), mentioned by Weever, now decayed or removed.'

John Payne, vicar	1470
Henry Archer	2 Sept. 480 (for 1480)
Clemens Colyns, vicar, iuris Doctor	1498
Audry, w. of Gedeon Aundesham	1502
John Robinson & ws. Katherin & Jone	1503
John Holt & ws. Margerie & Elizabeth	1520
John Sampol, yeoman, Usher of the King's Chamber	1535
Maister Antony Sutton, B.D.	2 Aug. 1543

None of these monuments, most probably inscriptions on brass, now remains. Weever notes that the name Sampol is an alternative spelling for St. Paul, a family from Melwood in Lincolnshire. It is interesting to observe the name John Robinson who must have had as a descendant the John Robinson of Wyke House whose only child Mary became the Countess of Abergavenny (No. VIII).

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. V.C.H., *Middlesex* III (1962) 125.
2. R.C.H.M., *Middlesex* (1937) 84.
3. Weever *Funerall Monuments* (1631) 528–29.
4. D. Lysons *Environs of London* III, (1795), 102–104.
5. G. J. Aungier *History of Syon Monastery etc., the Parish of Isleworth & the Chapelry of Hounslow* (1840).
6. *Trans. London Middlesex Archaeol. Soc.*, 25, (1974), 303 *et seq.*
7. *Surrey Archaeological Collections*, XXVII 28.
8. R. Griffin & Mill Stephenson *Monumental Brasses in Kent* (1922), Pl. 32.
9. *Trans. Essex Archaeological Soc.*, N.S. VIII, 284.
10. *Essex Review*, II, 47.
11. T. Fisher *Collections Genealogical & Topographical for Bedfordshire* (1812–36), Pl. 66.
12. J. P. C. Kent in *J. Brit. Archaeol. Assoc.*, 12 (1949), 70 *et seq.*; R. Emmerson in *ibid.* 131 (1978), 50 *et seq.*
13. Mill Stephenson *A List of Monumental Brasses in the British Isles*, (1926), 305.
14. F. A. Greenhill: *pers. comm.*
15. *Trans. Monumental Brass Soc.*, IV, 202.
16. *Ibid.* XI, 296.
17. Lysons, *op. cit.*, in note 4, 118.