

THE LOST BRASS TO KATHERINE BROOK, 1556, FORMERLY IN THE CHURCH OF ISLINGTON ST MARY

Philip Whittemore

In his *History, Topography and Antiquities of the Parish of St Mary Islington*, the book's author, John Nelson, records a number of memorial brasses that were formerly to be found in the old parish church of St Mary.¹ Samuel Lewis, in his account of the monuments published 31 years later, reproduces those inscriptions given by Nelson, and adds further examples that were recorded in British Library Lansdowne MS 874.² The majority were inscriptions, but three had the addition of figures. Two still survive in the church: the brasses to a man and wife of the Fowler family, c. 1540, and to Henry Savill and wife Margaret, d. 1546.³ The third figure brass, which is now lost, commemorated Dame Katherine Brook, d. 1556, wife of Sir David Brook. This memorial is only known due to its inclusion in the Lansdowne manuscript.⁴ Both Stow and Weever in their accounts of the monuments in the church totally ignore it.⁵ The old church was demolished in 1751 and no mention of the monument was made, implying that it had already been lost by that date.

The brass originally comprised the kneeling figures of a man and woman, he in judicial robes with hands raised in prayer, she in long dress with ruff, with her hands also raised in prayer. From their mouths rose two scrolls, devoid of any words, indicating perhaps that they were lost or that they were unrecorded (Fig 1). The position of the brass within the church is unknown, and all one can say is that it was probably placed on a wall, possibly in the chancel, which would

show the kneeling figures and the heraldry to better advantage.

Below was the inscription:

Here lyeth Katherine Brook, late wyff to S(i)r Davey Brook, knight Cheiff Baron of ye King's and Queen's Exchequer: w(hi)ch said Katherine was norish and nourished w(i)th her milk ye most excellent Princess Q(ueen) Mary, daughter of yo late famous Prince Henry ye Eight, and of Q(ueen) Katherine his lawfull wyffe; w(hi)ch Kath(eri)n(e) decessed at Canonbury, ye 26 of Julii, anno Domini mccccclvi. On whose sowle Ihesu haue mercy.

At the corners of the slab were four shields bearing the following arms:

1. *on a chevron a lion rampant, in the dexter chief a crescent, for Brook.*
2. *Brook impaling quarterly 1. and 4., on a cross an annulet; 2. a pile (for ?Chandos); 3. a fess between three birds.*
3. as 1. 4. as 1.

The Princess Mary, mentioned in the inscription was the eldest daughter of Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon born at Greenwich 18 February 1515–16. She was baptised on the Wednesday following and confirmed immediately afterwards at the monastery of Grey Friars. Few references to Mary's early years survive, but Lady Margaret Bryan, wife of Sir Thomas Bryan, was appointed *Lady Maistress* or *Governess* to the Princess, following her birth. Her nurse, Catherine Pole, is mentioned in the Patent Rolls for

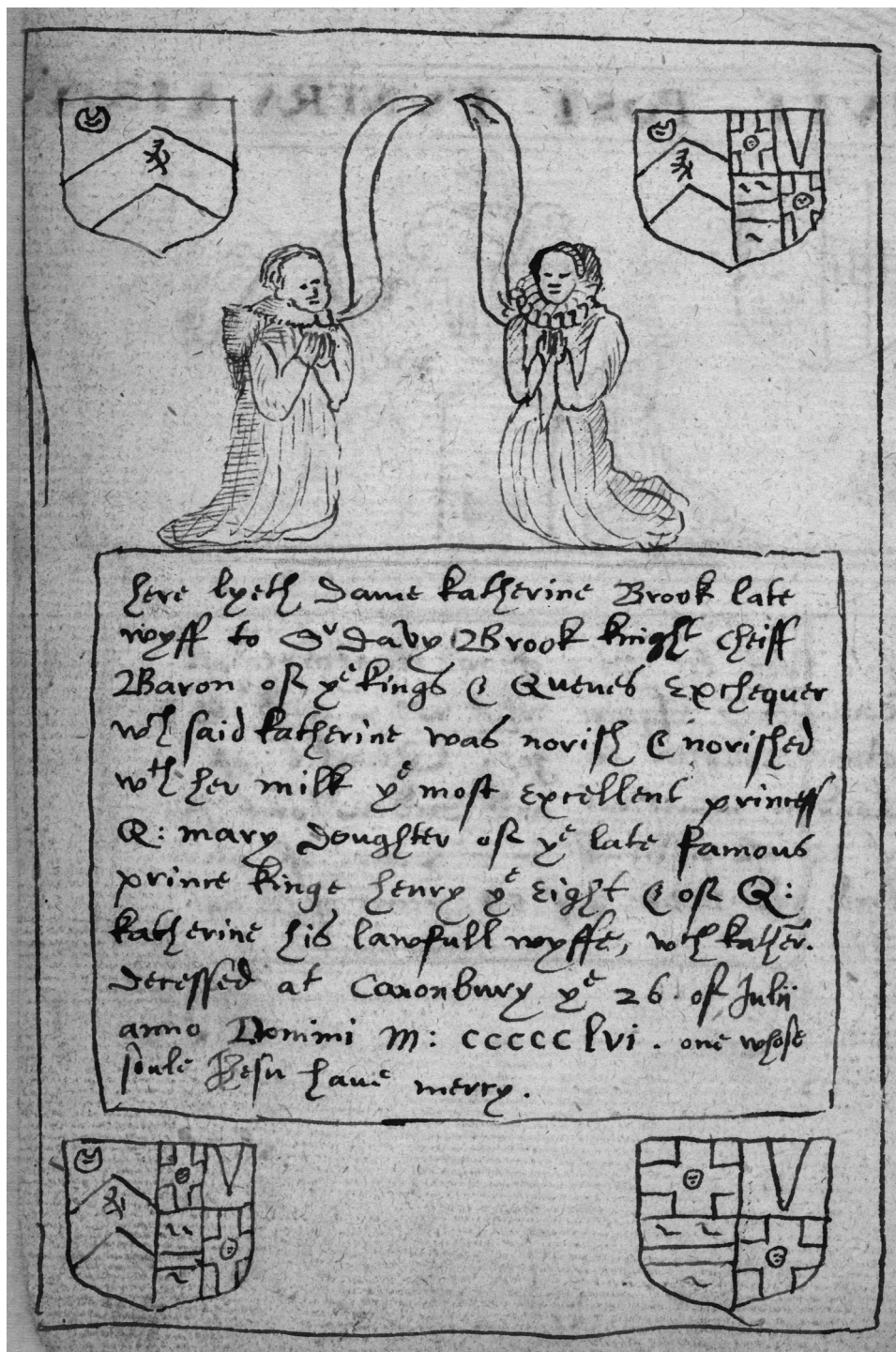


Fig 1. Drawing of the brass to Katherine Brook, 1556, formerly in the church of St Mary, Islington. From British Library Lansdowne 874, fol 69v. (Reproduced by permission of the British Library)

July 1517, where she is described as *nutrici Marie filie Regis*.⁶ Payment is recorded in the King's Household Books for March 1516–17, where the entry records: 'To the P(ri)nces norice, xxli.'⁷ No mention has been found of Katherine Brook in her capacity as wet nurse, a position she would have held almost immediately following Mary's birth. On 2 July she received a grant of two annuities, each of ten pounds, from the lordship of Cheshunt. This amount provided half her annual wage of £40.

Katherine was the daughter of Sir Giles Brydges of Cubberley, Glos., widow of Leonard Poole of Sapperton (d. 1538), and as such she is mentioned in the Privy Purse expenses for 1543 when she received the gift of a 'broche of golde of saynte george'.⁸

It is not known when Brook and Katherine married but it was probably a short time after the death of Brydges. In 1553 Katherine was part of the Queen's privy chamber. Both David and Katherine Brook gained royal favour, for in a Patent dated 18 March 1554 they were granted the manor of Horton, Glos.,⁹ and later in the same year they were both granted an annuity of £100,¹⁰ together with the lease for 21 years of the manor of Cannonbury, Middlesex.¹¹

Two years later, in July 1556, Lady Brook died of an infectious fever and 'was brought from *Canbury* to Islington church to burial, with six long torches, and six tapers of three pounds a piece, for six women, and other lights, and a herald of Arms, and other solemnities'.¹²

David Brook was the son of John Brook, serjeant-at-law, principal seneschal of Glastonbury Abbey.¹³ Like his father he was destined for a career in the law being Reader at the Inner Temple in 1534 and 1540, when he became Treasurer. In the years 1530–40 his name appears in connection with Commissions of the Peace in the counties of Somerset and Gloucestershire, and in the Oxford area. In 1547 he was made a judge and in September 1553 was appointed Chief Baron of the Exchequer, and in early October, he and a number of others were 'dobyd the knights of the carpet'.¹⁴ Following the death of Katherine, David Brook married

a second time, Margaret Butler. She had already had two husbands, Andrew Fraunces and Alderman Robert Chartsey. Following the death of Brook, she married for a fourth time, Edward, Lord North, whom she also survived. She died in 1575 and was buried in St Lawrence Jewry.¹⁵ Brook had no children by any of his wives.

NOTES

- ¹ Nelson 1811, 293–6.
- ² Lewis 1842, 197–9 and 201–2.
- ³ See Cameron 1981.
- ⁴ British Library: Lansdowne 874 fol 69v.
- ⁵ Stow 1908; Weever 1631, 538–9.
- ⁶ Madden 1831, xxi.
- ⁷ *ibid*, xxi.
- ⁸ *ibid*, 184.
- ⁹ *Calendar of Patent Rolls (CPR), Philip and Mary Vol I (1553–1554)*, 79.
- ¹⁰ *CPR Vol II (1554–1555)*, 201.
- ¹¹ *CPR Vol I (1553–1554)*, 497.
- ¹² Strype 1721, III, p 304.
- ¹³ For David Brook see J H Baker 'Brook, Sir David (c. 1498x1500–1559/60)' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004), vol 7, 856–7; Bindoff 1982, 500–1.
- ¹⁴ Nichols 1848, 335.
- ¹⁵ Strype 1720, Vol I, Book 3, ch 3, p 4.

phil@si-wi.co.uk

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