

## NOTE ON TWO PALIMPSEST BRASSES AT MARSWORTH.

[BY MILL STEPHENSON, B.A., F.S.A.]

In August, 1912, two members of the Monumental Brass Society, Mr. A. B. Connor and Mr. Vyvyan Hope, when rubbing in Buckinghamshire, visited Marsworth church and reported that half the inscription to Nicholas and Joan West, 1586, was loose and palimpsest, also that the legs of the male effigy which were in place in 1910 were missing. As the palimpsest was one of considerable interest, communications were opened with the rector, the Rev. J. J. Atkins, with a view to its being immediately re-laid before anything happened to it. The rector being keenly interested in the brasses welcomed the proposal, so Mr. Connor and the writer went down to inspect. Meantime Mr. Atkins had discovered the missing legs in the church chest, and they also proved to be palimpsest. The other half of the inscription was found to be quite loose, so with the rector's permission it was lifted and examined, with good results. Another West inscription was found to be fastened with iron nails which were corroding the surface; here again, acting on our advice, the rector consented to its being properly secured with rivets. It also proved to be an interesting palimpsest. All the loose pieces have now been securely relaid in their original stones and casts of the reverses deposited in the county museum at Aylesbury.

### I.

*Obverse.* Nicholas West, esq., one of the six clerks and afterwards a master in chancery, died 21st June, 1586, in armour, upper part of effigy lost, and wife, Joan (Hawtrey), died 19th October, 1585, effigy lost, with four sons, legs only left, and two daughters, foot inscription, achievement and shield of arms. On floor of south chapel. The upper half of the man, the

figure of the wife, and the upper part of the sons have been lost for many years. The legs show the figure of the man to have been in armour. The inscription is as follows:

Hic iacent corpora Nicholai West Armigeri et  
Johannae uoris eius quiquidem

Nicholaus per officium prius fuit unus sex  
Clericorum Curiae Cancellariae

nunc serenissimae Dominae Elizabeth Reginae  
Ac ipse ab illo officio translatus et

unus magistrorum dictae Curiae electus et  
existens (deficiente interim natura ac

sua mortalitate penitus relicta) debitum proprium  
clamanti et rapaci morti red=

dendo, hinc fugam foeliciter faciens spiritum suū  
resolutū Redemptori generis

humani dedit 21 die Mensis Junii A° Dñi 1586,  
praedicta vero Johanna iter suū usimī

liter inter aerumnas huius mundi pagens obiit 19°  
die mensis Octobris A° Dñi 1585.

The achievement above the figures bears the arms and crest of West, and the shield below, West impaling Hawtrey with numerous quarterings. The plate bearing the legs measures 11 × 5 inches, and the inscription plate  $26\frac{1}{2} \times 6\frac{1}{2}$  inches. Only the loose pieces, viz., the legs and inscription, were examined. The remaining plates may also be palimpsest.

*Reverse.* The inscription is made up of two plates, respectively measuring  $12\frac{3}{4}$  inches and  $13\frac{3}{4}$  inches in length, cut from the centre of a large foreign, probably German, brass of the last quarter of the fifteenth century, or possibly a little later. When placed one above the other the two plates join, and show a large chalice and wafer resting on the body of a priest, who wears a richly-diapered chasuble with a central orphrey, in the middle of which was apparently a

figure, as some drapery appears on the right-hand side of the stem of the chalice. Above the chalice can be seen a portion of the hands, which were joined in prayer, and the wide sleeves of the albe with broad apparels ornamented with foliage work. Over the left



REVERSE OF INSCRIPTION TO NICHOLAS WEST.

MARSWORTH, BUCKS.

(About one-quarter full size.)

arm is a portion of a narrow maniple enriched with small figures of prophets, each under a small square-headed canopy. The figures are three in number, but of the upper one only the lower portion remains. The centre one is complete, and shows a bearded man wearing a gown and a curious head dress, apparently a fur cap with tufts at the sides and with long lappets. In his right hand he holds a book. Of the third and lower figure only the upper half remains. The man is

bearded, and wears a gown and hood, much resembling



REVERSE OF LEGS OF  
NICHOLAS WEST.  
MARSWORTH, BUCKS.

(About one-quarter full size.)

an academic dress. On his head is a turban-shaped hat with a broad, turned-up brim. In his right hand he holds a book or scroll, to which he is pointing with his left. The chalice, which is 12 inches in height, has a broad quatrefoil base, a richly-worked knop, and slight ornamentation in the form of leaves at the base of the bowl. The legs of Nicholas West are cut from the lower left-hand corner of a large foreign brass, possibly a part of the same as that used for the inscription, and shows a portion of the symbol of St. Luke within a quatrefoil, a short piece of a marginal inscription bearing the letters **ANNO M** on a curved band with the lower part of a figure on the inner and a diaper of foliage on the outer side.

## II.

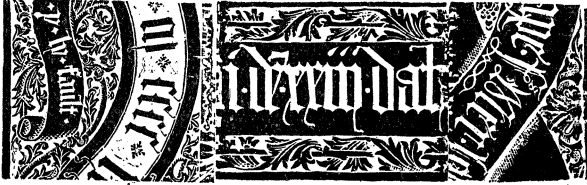
*Obverse.* Inscription: to William West, gent., died 10th July, 1583. On floor of south chapel. Size of plate  $18\frac{3}{4} \times 5\frac{1}{2}$  inches.

Here lyeth Buried under this stone the Body  
of William West Gentleman, who Departed out  
of this World unto God, the 10<sup>th</sup> daye of July  
in the yere of our Lord God 1583.

Once my God, and ever my God

In the second line the engraver cut "Wast" for "West," but subsequently repaired his error by turning the "a" into an "e."

*Reverse.* The inscription is made up of three pieces cut from the borders of three separate Flemish brasses. The pieces respectively measure  $6\frac{3}{4}$ ,  $7\frac{1}{2}$ , and  $4\frac{1}{2} \times 6$  inches. The first piece bears a portion of a date **MCCCCVL** . . in raised figures, on a curved band, with a scroll below bearing part of a motto **+ p + ly +** fault in incised letters, the background being filled

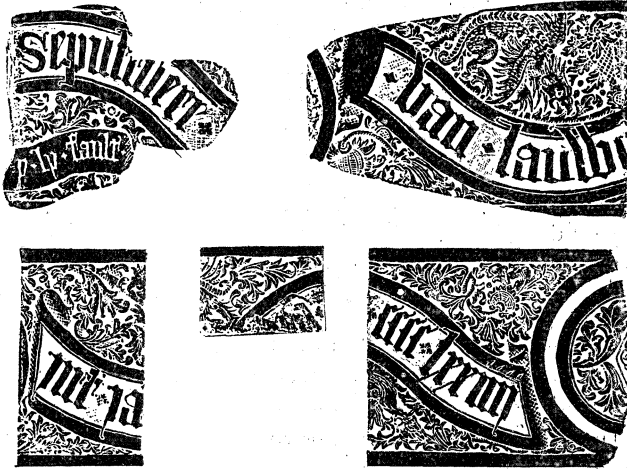


REVERSE OF INSCRIPTION TO WILLIAM WEST.

MARSWORTH, BUCKS.

(About one-sixth full size.)

with a rich diaper of foliage. This piece is of particular interest, because at Walkern, in Hertfordshire, are five more pieces from this same brass, re-used to



PALIMPSEST FRAGMENTS.

WALKERN, HERTS.

build up the memorial to Edward Humbarstone and wife, whose brass bears date 1583,\* the same date as the Marsworth inscription, so the two came from the same workshop. The Walkern pieces give the name of the family, Van Lauwr, the date 1474, of the death of one of the persons commemorated, and also the scroll with the motto. The Marsworth piece gives the motto, and part of a second date. Up to the present in three cases only have pieces of the same foreign brass been found in different churches, viz., at Upminster, Essex, and Bayford, Herts, where are portions of the figure of an abbot or bishop, the later side in each case bearing date 1545; at Erith, Kent, and Isleworth, Middlesex, portions of an heraldic device, the obverses dating respectively 1574 and 1575; and at Norton Disney, Lincolnshire, and West Lavington, Wiltshire, portions of a long inscription recording the foundation of a mass, the date, 1518, appearing on the Norton piece, whilst the name of the place, Westmonstre, is preserved on the Lavington fragment. Marsworth and Walkern may now be added as a fourth example. The second piece, also from a marginal inscription, bears the words . i . dē . **xxiii . dach** incised on a broad straight band, enclosed within an ornamental border of foliage, and may be dated c. 1500. Amongst the pieces re-used at Walkern is one of similar design, but with the inscription in raised letters. The third piece, again from a marginal inscription, bears, incised on a curved band, the words . . **ape . jfs Mder . l . .** in florid lettering of date c. 1530. The band crosses two blank pieces, possibly the drapery of some figure, and in the corners is a diaper of foliage.

The above was contributed by Mr. Stephenson to the Transactions of the Monumental Brass Society. He kindly adds the following notes:

In addition to the above, the church contains three other brasses of considerable interest: (1) an inscription on a narrow fillet, 23 by 1½

\*See *Transactions of the Monumental Brass Society*, vol. iv., p. 132.

inches, to John and Cristine Scelk, undated, but engraved about 1390, on floor of the south chapel; (2) a figure of a lady in ruff and richly embroidered petticoat, with a child in swaddling clothes, its head resting on a skull, on a plate below, and an inscription to Mary (Clare), wife of Edmund West, 1606, on floor of south chapel, a small portion of the inscription now covered by the organ; (3) a curious rectangular plate,  $18\frac{1}{2}$  by 15 inches, with the reclining figure of a man in armour with a figure of Death behind him, and surrounded by his wife and children, viz., one son, six daughters, and two infants in a cradle. Above is a small shield of arms bearing West impaling Tyrrell. In the bottom corner the plate bears the maker's name "Euesham fecit." The plate is fixed in the north panel of a very fine table tomb, now used as the altar for the south chapel. In other panels are inlaid black marble or slate slabs bearing incised figures of Death, weepers, etc., and a representation of the Resurrection. Others in white marble bear the arms of West impaling Tyrrell. The tomb bears no inscription, but the heraldry proves it to be for Edmund West, who died in 1618, and his second wife, Theodosia, daughter of Sir Edward Tyrrell. Lipscomb, iii. 414, gives a poor engraving of the brass plate.