



The Monumental Brasses of Berkshire.

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FEW words upon the general subject of Monumental Brasses will be a necessary preliminary to a notice of those existing in Berkshire. Probably no branch of medieval art is more full of interest. For first, a perfectly accurate copy of a brass can be obtained with the least possible trouble, and when obtained it is, for most practical purposes, of more use than the sight of the original monument; and a complete series of such copies may be collected through any given district. Secondly, the number of existing brasses is very large,—some 3,500 with effigies, besides as many inscriptions; and of these a very large proportion is in perfect preservation. Further, in a large majority of instances the date is attached to the brass, or is otherwise known; by which means we find that in the brasses of each period a recognised type is followed, so that when the date of a brass is not recorded we can almost invariably determine it within five or ten years. And these brasses cover a period of exactly 500 years, presenting us with a series of effigies more or less continuous from its commencement in 1277, to its close in 1775. During nearly 400 years of that time, from the early years of the fourteenth century to the latter years of the seventeenth, the brasses give us numerous illustrations of a large variety of subjects. Costumes,—military, civil, and ecclesiastical,—armour and weapons, various domestic and civil usages, church architecture and ornamentation, ecclesiastical utensils and ceremonies, points of religious belief and practice, language and literature, heraldry and genealogy, and every branch of the history of the period, receive frequent illustration from this source.

The first brass effigy on record in England was that of Simon de Beauchamp, 1208, at St. Paul's, Bedford. But the earliest now known is that of Sir John d'Aubernoun, at Stoke Dabernon in Surrey, 1277. The only others of the thirteenth century are Sir Roger de Trumpington, at Trumpington in Cambridgeshire, 1289, and Dame Jone de Kobeham, 1298, at Cobham, Kent. These are nearly life-sized effigies. There is also a small fragment bearing the figure of a saint from the brass of Bishop Cantilupe in Hereford Cathedral, 1282. Earlier, however, than these is a little inscription at Ashbourne, in Derbyshire, recording the dedication of the church and consecration of the altar to St. Oswald by the Bishop of Coventry in 1241.

In 1775 we have at St. Mary Cray, in Kent, the brass of Benjamin Greenwood, esq. After an interval of fifty years, in 1826, there is the tomb of William Fletcher, alderman of Oxford at the Parish Church of Yarnton, Oxon, upon which he is represented in his aldermanic gown, in a brass copied from that of an Elizabethan alderman, 1574, at the church of St. Peter-in-the-East in Oxford. The next brass with which I am acquainted is at Blewbury, in Berkshire, to a son of the late Rev. J. Macdonald. It is interesting as not being, like most modern brasses, a reproduction of ancient forms, but having a distinct character of its own. It bears a symbolical figure representing Faith, the design being imitated from that on the covers of some of the books of the Christian Knowledge Society. Thus it may perhaps be regarded rather as a survival of old traditions than the commencement of the modern revival. Its date is 1841. It is a curious coincidence that the earliest brass of all is 1241.

As works of art, brasses attain their perfection in the earlier half of the fifteenth century. Before that time the engraving is less delicate and artistic, though of remarkable boldness and dignity. But from the middle of the fifteenth century a gradual degeneracy is observable; the engraving becomes tasteless and careless, and the designs are marred by an excess of flimsy shading; and finally, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, the art is thoroughly vulgarised. But very fine brasses are occasionally found both at this and at later periods, of which the splendid series of five brasses at West Hanney, Berks, from 1557 to 1611, is a good illustration. But between the years 1500 and 1530, a pair of figures, husband and wife, from fifteen to eighteen inches high, is as common among brasses as the ordinary upright stone of eighty years ago is among

the memorials in our churchyards. The figures were evidently made cheaply, after a common pattern, to serve anybody's purpose; and the groups of children were sometimes made in long sheets, so that the required number might be sliced off to order.

Something must be said about the brasses that have been lost, whether by wilful destruction or by negligence. Mr. Haines* mentions that 270 slabs despoiled of brasses were counted a few years ago in St. Alban's Abbey, and 207 were counted in 1718 in Lincoln Cathedral, where very large numbers are still to be seen. In the former church there are now thirteen brasses, of which several are mere fragments, besides about five inscriptions; and in Lincoln Cathedral there are no brasses, except a mitre and shield to a bishop preserved in the Library. The largest number now existing in any church is twenty-one, and four inscriptions, in New College Chapel, Oxford. No one of our larger churches now contains more than about twelve out of the great numbers formerly existing, *e.g.*, Westminster, St. Alban's, and Hereford. The largest number in any church in Berkshire is at Childrey, where there are nine, besides two inscriptions.

The very unequal manner in which the brasses are distributed throughout the kingdom is remarkable. They are most frequent in the south-east, and gradually become rare as we proceed northward and westward. Kent has a far larger number than any other county,—about 340. Essex, Suffolk, and Norfolk have each from 200 to 270. Berkshire has 150. In the far west, Devon and Cornwall have each about 50. In the four northern counties of Northumberland, Cumberland, Durham, and Westmoreland together, only twenty are known, and the last-named county has only two. Only about seventeen are known in the whole of Wales, three in Ireland, and one in Scotland. These numbers do not include inscriptions without effigies. This peculiar distribution is easily explained by the fact that, through the greater part of the period to which the brasses belong, the metal plates were made in Flanders, and were only cut out and engraved in England.

Some few of the finest brasses which we possess were engraved in Flanders; and instead of the effigies, inscriptions, and other accompaniments being cut out separately in the usual manner, the whole slab was sometimes covered with engraved plates of brass; in other words, the back ground between the effigy and the marginal

* "*Manual of Monumental Brasses*," Introd., pp. ccliv., *sq.*

inscription was filled up with diaper work and other embellishments. The best instances of this kind are two brasses of merchants at King's Lynn, and another at Newark, and the brass of an abbot in St. Alban's Abbey, all of the fourteenth century. There are two small brasses (presently to be noticed) in the Rutland Chapel of St. George's, Windsor, which may be of foreign workmanship; but otherwise Berkshire has no example of a Flemish brass.

The two existing brasses of knights in armour of the thirteenth century, already mentioned, are large effigies, nearly life-sized. About twelve effigies of knights are known belonging to the former half of the fourteenth century, all in the more eastern counties; and towards the end of that century they become more common. But Berkshire is singularly deficient in early knights, only possessing one of this century. This is Sir John Foxle, with his two wives, at Bray. It is specially interesting from the fact that, although it bears no date, the Knight's will, giving minute directions for the brass, is extant, dated 1378. The Knight is in plate armour, with chain mail about the neck, as in all brasses of this period. He wears an heraldic surcoat over the armour, and his head rests on a tilting helmet, with a fox for its crest. A bracket rising from another figure of a fox supports the three effigies, but the canopy above the heads is lost. The next knight in the county is the very fine figure of Sir Ivo Fitzwaryn, at Wantage, dated 1414. He was one of the companions of the Earl of Bucks at the Siege of Nantes. Here again the tilting helmet is laid crosswise beneath the head, but the crest (a swan naiant between ostrich feathers) is unfortunately gone. A good effigy of smaller size is that of Laurence Fyton, esq., Bailiff of Sonning, 1434, in Sonning Church. The next is a small figure at Mortimer, 1441, "Ricardus Trevet, alias dictus Hasylwode, valectus." At Faringdon is a good brass of three very small figures to Thomas Faryndon, esq., lord of Farnham and of Lusteshall (now headless), with his wife and their daughter and heiress, Katherine Pynchepole, 1443. We come now to the brass of William Fynderne, esq., and his wife, at Childrey, 1444. Its double canopy and marginal inscription are nearly complete, and it is the largest brass in the county. But, unfortunately, the tabard which the knight wears over his armour, and the entire dress of the lady, were made of lead, in order to be more easily coloured. The heads and hands, and the legs of the knight, are of brass, and well preserved, but the leaden parts are much bent and battered. At Wytham are the upper parts of good effigies of a knight and lady, *cir.* 1455;

supposed to be either Richard de Wygtham, or his son-in-law, William Browning; the male effigy showing the enlarged elbow-pieces which were introduced in the armour after the middle of this century. In the three examples that follow, the tabard is worn over the armour. One is a brass with kneeling figures of Sir Thomas Sellynger (St. Leger), and his wife Anne, Duchess of Exeter, a sister of Edward IV., 1475, at St. George's, Windsor, in the Rutland Chapel. The next is in the South Chapel of Lambourne Church, John Estbury, esq., *cir.* 1485. Both of these last were founders of the chapels in which they are buried. A good figure at Tidmarsh, whose tabard shows him to be a member of the Leynham family, must be assigned to about the year 1500.

Proceeding in chronological order, we have the following examples:—Robert Pecke, esq., “sumtyme master clerke of the spycerry wyth kyng harri the syxte,” and his wife, 1510, at Cookham. Richard Gyll, esq., “late serjeant of the Bakehous w^t kyng Henry the vij. and also wyth kyng Henr' viii. and bayly of the vij. hundreds of Cokam and Bray,” 1511, at Shottesbrooke. John Kyngeston, esq., and wife, 1514, at Childrey. An effigy in armour with two ladies, probably of the family of Isbery or Estbury, *cir.* 1515, now fixed in different parts of the church, at Blewbury. Olyver Hyde, esq., and wife, 1516, at Denchworth. Sir John Daunce, knight, “councillor and surveyor generall unto or sovereyn Lorde Kyng Henry the viij,” wearing a tabard, with his wife Alice Latton, 1523, at Blewbury. John Fetyplace, esq., and his wife, Dorothy, 1524, kneeling effigies, at Little Shefford. Richard Babham, esq., and wife, also kneeling, 1527, at Cookham. Sir Alexander Unton, knight, in tabard, kneeling, with his two wives, Mary and lady Cecyll, 1547, at Faringdon. John Latton of Chilton, esq., in tabard, and his wife Anne, 1547, at Blewbury. Crystofer Lytkott, esq., and wife, Katherine Cheyne, 1554, at Swallowfield. A fine figure, similar to the last, of Humfrey Cheynie, with text from Job. xix. and the evangelistic symbols at the margin of the slab, 1557, at Hanney. William Hyde, esq., and his wife Margery, kneeling, 1562, at Denchworth. William Hyde, esq., and his wife Alice, 1567, also at Denchworth. Nicholas Williams, esq., and two wives (the effigy of the first wife lost), 1568, at Burghfield. Edmund Wiseman, esq., son of Thomas Wiseman of Thorneham, Suffolk, esq., and wife, 1584, at Steventon. John Barnes, esq., a small effigy kneeling at a table, on an arched plate, 1588, at Little Wittenham. Antony Forster (the famous owner of Cumnor Hall in

Sir Walter Scott's romance), and his wife, Anne, niece of Lord Williams of Thame, kneeling effigies, 1589, at Cumnor. John Eyston and wife, of the same year, at East Hendred. Thomas Maryet, esq., a small headless effigy, 1591, at Remenham. Sir Christopher Lytcot (probably youngest son of Christopher Lytkott, esq., of Swallowfield, described above), twice high sheriff of Berks, "knighted in the campe before Roane the xvith of November 1591 by the hands of the French kinge Henry the fourth of y^t name & kinge of Navarre who after his travailes in Germany Italye and Fraunce & the xecution of justice to the glory of God & the good of his country ended this pilgrimage at Bastledon," 1599, at Hanney. Francis Wellesborne, esq., and two wives, 1602, also at Hanney, a remarkably fine brass. (The second wife, Alianora, daughter of Thomas Stafford of Bradfield, Berks, was married subsequently to Anthony Harford of Bosbury, Hereford, esq., where she died in 1631, as appears from a stone slab in the church of that parish.) The latest effigy in armour in Berkshire is that of Hugh Keate of Hodcot, gentleman, buried at West Ilsley, 1613, but commemorated with his wife Christian at Hagbourne, 1627. They are represented on a quadrangular plate kneeling at a table, with four sons and four daughters kneeling behind them.

(To be continued.)

