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**On the Monumental Brasses at Cirencester**

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## ON THE MONUMENTAL BRASSES AT CIRENCESTER.

BY

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THE Monumental Brasses in Cirencester Church, although not of the same ornate and richly chased or diapered character which marks some brasses in other parts of the kingdom, are yet extremely interesting, and, some of them, valuable; extending, as they do, over a period of five centuries,—if we may include some simple inscriptions among their number. Most of them are memorials to civilians, and, therefore, do not give so much of the variations in the military costumes of this country, as may be seen in other churches.

The metal of which this kind of monument is composed is named '*laten*' or '*latten*,' which up to the middle of the 17th century was manufactured exclusively on the continent, and thence imported into England. The chief seats of the manufacture appear to have been Ghent and Cologne—as in old documents we find the "finest Cullen plate" specified as that of which the monuments were to be made. As may be supposed, therefore, these brasses are to be found chiefly in those parts of England which had more constant communication and intercourse with Flanders and the Rhenish provinces; and so brasses abound in the eastern counties, but become proportionately fewer as we go westward, until beyond Gloucestershire they become extremely rare; Cirencester may

therefore be congratulated on possessing so many fine specimens of the early engravers' skill. Fuller says that they were paid for in Cotswold wool; which statement seems to be supported by the fact that at Cirencester, Northleach, and Campden—all three formerly great places of the wool trade—fine brasses are to be found, variously exhibiting the symbols of the trade, in the sheep and the woolpack.<sup>1</sup>

The earliest dated brass in Cirencester Church is in the Lady Chapel—it is that to the memory of William Nottingham and his wife. But in the same chapel there is a very fine specimen, at least sixty years earlier than Nottingham's; it lies near the north wall of the chapel, and is greatly mutilated; it represents a merchant and his wife, with a very fine double canopy, the underpart of which shows the groining of the arch, while the cusps terminate in trefoils, characteristics which mark this brass as dating between 1320-1360 (temp. Ed. II. and Ed. III.). The male figure, which has lost the head, is clad in a gown with flowing sleeves, and bound round the waist with a girdle falling in front of the figure; on the end of the girdle the letter **T** is found worked as a monogram; the feet are in pointed shoes, resting on a wine cask, and above the canopy, over the male figure, is a shield bearing an almost obliterated escutcheon of arms, somewhat resembling the old arms of the city of Bristol; so possibly this merchant may have had some connection with that place. There is also another escutcheon with the following:—**"*Mic haue mercy on us.*"** The female figure has almost entirely disappeared, but the lower part still remains, shewing the bottom of a long flowing kirtle, buttoned to the feet, which, like her husband's, rest on a wine cask. The inscription, only a fragment of which remains, is remarkable for being alternately in raised and sunken letters, and is the only specimen of the two sorts of lettering occurring in the same inscription that I am acquainted with.

<sup>1</sup> In Lyson's 'Collections of Stone Antiquities' are engraved the brasses in Northleach Church of J. Fortey, with one foot on a sheep and the other on a woolpack; and of Thomas Fortey, whose feet rest on a woolpack. In Bigland's Collections, under Chipping-Campden is engraved the brass of Willemus Grevel, who is described as "*Flos mercator lanæ tocius Angliæ.*"

Next comes the brass of W. NOTTINGHAM, which, as I before stated, is the earliest dated brass in the church; it bears the following inscription:—"Orate pro *aiabus Willi Notyngham et Cristine uxoris eius qui quidem Will<sup>m</sup>s obiit xxi<sup>o</sup> die mensis Nouembris Anno d<sup>ni</sup> Mill<sup>mo</sup> cccc<sup>o</sup> xxvii<sup>o</sup> et predict<sup>a</sup> Cristina obiit iiii<sup>o</sup> die Julij A<sup>o</sup> d<sup>ni</sup>. M<sup>o</sup> cccc<sup>o</sup> xxxiii<sup>o</sup> q<sup>o</sup>r aiabs p<sup>o</sup>piciet<sup>r</sup> Deus.—Amen.* This fixes the dates at the 5th and 12th years of Henry VI. The effigy of the man, who is headless, is clothed in the usual civilian's gown of the period with a rosary on the right hand side of the belt, the end of which is visible. The female figure wears the 'horned' or 'mitred' headdress, but no hair is visible beneath; the kirtle is long and flowing to the feet; the sleeves are tight, and no cincture is visible at the waist. The collar is remarkable as coming down in a loop to the waist.

Next in chronological order comes the very handsome and valuable brass of RICHARD DIXTON, who was squire to Richard, Duke of York, father of Edward IV. The date is 1438 (16th of Henry VI.). This brass is in Trinity Chapel, and lies, with others, close to the reredos. The canopy is very fine, but is now mutilated. The effigy is that of a warrior of the times of the wars of the Roses; he is clad in complete plate, without a trace of mail armour to be seen; the basinet is globular, and round the opening for the face is an ornamental edging, the same pattern also appearing on the top of the cuirass; pointed tuilles are appended to the taces, which are eight in number, and are crossed from right to left by a narrow sword belt, the fastening of which is not shown. Placcates<sup>1</sup> of different size and form, and fixed by rivets and arming points, afford additional defence for the shoulders, a demi-placcate, or second covering of steel, strengthens the lower part of the cuirass, and the gauntlets have but two joints at the back of the fingers. The sollerets are also remarkable for their peculiar lamination; only the indent of the misericorde remains; the arms of the wearer are engraved on the pommel of the sword, and are *or, a pile azure, over all a chevron gules*; the same coat appears on the north wall of the chapel. The inscription, part of which is

<sup>1</sup>These placcates are engraved in Boutell's Monumental Brasses, p. 69.

lost, runs thus,<sup>1</sup> “ [*Hic jacet Ricardus*] **Dixton Armiger qui obiit die sancti Laurentii** [*Martyris anno Domini*] **Millesimo cccc° xxxviii°.** **Cujus anime propicietur** [*Deus. Amen.*].”<sup>2</sup>

REGINALD SPYCE and his four wives follow next in order. The date of the brass is 1442 (20th Hen. VI). The male figure in the centre is clothed in a close-fitting gown, reaching nearly to the ankles, girded at the waist; the sleeves are somewhat full, but fit tolerably closely at the wrist; the collar is an upright one; the gown is buttoned from the neck to the breast; beneath appears the collar of the under tunic. Of the wives, the two on the husband's left hand wear that peculiar shape of the horned head-dress, which may be distinguished as the “heart shaped;” the folds of the head-dress descend in front of the figures on to the breast; the kirtles are long, and flowing over the feet, the sleeves shaped like their husbands; the collar is opened, so as to fall back, and no buttons are visible; the kirtle is confined round the waist by a girdle. The two wives on the husband's right hand wear the coverchef, falling in folds in front on the breast; and the one on the extreme right has the hair in a sort of caul or close cap: both these head-dresses are of older date than the heart-shaped, and thus on the same brass we have examples of the style in which ladies dressed their hair, from the latter part of the 14th to the middle of the 15th century. The kirtles of both the earlier wives are flowing like the others, but the sleeves are of quite a different pattern, being cut straight, and are not so full. There are buttons from the neck to the breast; both also wear girdles. The inscription, at the foot, is as follows:—“*Hic iacent Reginaldus Spycer quondam m'ator isit' bille qui obiit ix° die Julij Anno dn'i, millimo cccc° plij° et Margareta Juliana Margareta ac Johana uxores ei' quor' aiabs p'picietur d's. Amen.*”

Beneath the figures is an escutcheon charged with a merchant's mark between the letters “**R**” and “**S**,” (see Plate).

<sup>1</sup>The portion in italics is supplied from Bigland, I. 356.

<sup>2</sup>This brass is engraved, Bigland, vol. I., p. 341; Waller, p. 12; see also Haines' Brasses, No. 166, Ed. 1848. This is described in Haines' Brasses, Ed. 1861, p. 211.—ED.



Hic iacent Reginaldus Spyerer quondam Alcaior iſtius Ville qui obiit 27 die July Anno dñi Millesimo  
 cccc lxxi et Margareta Johana Margareta ac Johna uxores ei⁹ quorū aīabz p̄cietur dñs Amen



Monumental Brass at Cirencester.  
 [Spyerer family.]

In this same chapel, Trinity, is another very fine brass, with double canopies, representing a merchant and his wife, with fourteen children at their feet. There is no name, as the whole of the inscription is lost; but the style of execution of the brass would place the date about the latter half of the 15th century (temp. Ed. IV., or Rich. III.). The male figure is depicted wearing a loose gown, with large sleeves, gathered in tighter at the wrist; the collar is standing up round the neck, and there is a girdle round the waist; the female figure is dressed much in the same style. At the foot of the male figure, and above the canopy, are escutcheons charged with a merchant's mark, and a letter "R" in old English. This is probably one ROBERT PAGGE and his wife, who are stated in the history of Cirencester as being commemorated by a fine brass in the church. A scroll issues from the woman's mouth with these words, "**That to the Trinity for us;**" the rest is lost, but the words most probably were "**pray, singe, or read,**" as examples are to be found in other parts of the kingdom.<sup>1</sup>

Close to this is the valuable brass of WILLIAM PRELATTE and his two wives: dated 1462 (2 Ed. IV.), and the costume may well be compared with that of R. Dixton, which is only a quarter of a century earlier. The variations in the dress will fully repay careful study; here we see mail again visible, the haussecol of mail

<sup>1</sup>Bigland happily has preserved the inscription of this and other memorials, stating in a note that he has "given them as before the mutilation from a manuscript of Thomas Carles, M.A., vicar, dated Dec. 8, 1673. obligingly communicated by the Rev. Mr. Kilner."

*Hic jacet Robertus Pagge cum Margareta sibi sponsa prole fecunda.*

*Vicinis gratus fuerat mercator amatus  
Pacificus, plenis manibus subventor egenis,  
Ecclesiisque viis ornator, et his reparator,  
Mill' C quater X quater anno, sed Aprilis  
Octava luce mortem p' transit ipsce,  
Celi solamen Deus illi conferat. Amen.*

He states that on a Pilaster between him and his wife is engraven the usual diagram of the Trinity, and on a Label "That to the Trinite for us pray, singe, or read." Pagge's Label it would seem was then already lost.

protecting the neck, while gussets of the same material are to be seen in the joints of the plate; the visor is raised, showing the features; gauntlets, very much resembling a tortoise shell, cover the back of the hands; the fingers are bare; round the neck is a ribbon or collar, to which is attached a sun, the emblem of the House of York: (W. Prelatte was, I believe, steward of the Gloucestershire estates of the Duke of York). The sollerets differ from those in the Dixton brass, in being laminated throughout, and the rowelled spurs have no strap beneath the feet; the placates and coudières, the latter of which are fan-shaped and beginning to take the extravagant size which afterwards they had, also are to be remarked and contrasted with those worn by Dixton; the sword belt shows the buckle by which it is fastened.

The two wives wear the horned head-dress—a peculiar costume long in high favour with the ladies, in spite of the severe censures launched against it both by the clergy and laymen—the hair being visible beneath. They are clad in long kirtles, with high waists, the sleeves and collars, which open and lie back leaving the neck bare, are guarded with fur. One wife wears a ribbon with a sun, like her husband; the second one wears a cross in lieu of the sun; at the feet of each wife is a little dog, with a collar of bells. The inscription is thus worded<sup>1</sup> “**Hic sepeliuntur Willms Prelatte Armiger specialissim' benefactor hui' Capelle Agnes nup' uxor Johannis Martyn et Johana filia et heres Ricardi de Cobyn-don Relicta Johannis Twynyho de Capforde in comitatu Som's Armigeri uxores ipsius Willi qui quide Willms Prelatte obiit in bigilia Ascencionis d'nice r'fbi<sup>o</sup> die maij Anno d'ni M<sup>o</sup>. CCCC<sup>o</sup> Xij<sup>o</sup> quor' p'piciet' de' A.**” The indents of five shields remain.

The brass of William Prelatte and his two wives is engraved in Lyson's Gloucestershire, pl. 16, where the inscription is not correctly given, either in the letter-press or on the engraving; in both *aihus* is inserted, which word is omitted in the inscription—simply because there was not room for it—and in the former, after *heres* is omitted *Ricardi de Cobyn-don relictæ*.

The arms of these two husbands, Prelatte and Twynyho, are in the spandrels of the east window of Bagendon Church.

In Trinity Chapel also is the brass of an ecclesiastic, vested in alb, stole, amice, chasuble, and maniple ; and valuable as having the chalice and host in the hands. The inscription is "**Orate pro anima Dni Radulphi Parsons quondam capellani p'petue cantarie Ste Trinitatis in hac eclia fundate qui obiit xxix. die Augusti A° d'ni M. CCCC° lxxviii' cuj' aīe. p'piciet' deus. Amen.**"

Close to this are two nondescript brasses, one representing a civilian in the furred gown of the 15th century, while the head is of the 14 century work ; the other has the lower part of a female figure enveloped in the flowing kirtle of the 14th, or early part of the 15th, century, joined to a head of a much later date, of far inferior execution, and different metal.

Returning now to the Lady Chapel. There is another ecclesiastical figure, clad only in a cassock, valuable on account of its rarity.<sup>1</sup> The fragments of inscription at the foot have no relation to the figure.

In this same chapel are the brasses of a merchant and his wife, which have been much injured ; they lie at the head of the oldest brass in the church, and, like it, close to the north wall. The male figure is dressed in a long gown, descending to the feet, bound round the waist by a girdle, which falls down the front of the figure, and supporting on the right side a rosary ; the sleeves are loose at the wrist, showing the sleeves of the under tunic. The female figure wears a kirtle, falling in folds over the feet, surmounted by a robe with a standing collar, fastened at the throat ; the head is covered with a coverchef falling behind the figure. There is no name nor inscription of any kind, or trace of any—but the brass is most probably late in 14th century, or early in the 15th century.

There is also the brass of a man and his wife, evidently another wife has been there, and children also. The man wears a gown falling to the feet, the sleeves are large at the wrist, and lined and

<sup>1</sup> See Haines, Ed. 1848, Introduction, p, ccciiij.

faced with fur; from the girdle hang a rosary on the right, and the gypcière on the left side; on the right shoulder rests a cap of a peculiar construction, in high favour with all classes of persons during the reign of Henry VI., and very often worn throughout the remainder of the 15th century; in form the cap was circular, like a turban, and was made of a roll of cloth, or some rich material, from which on one side a long and broad band or scarf hung down to the ground, unless tucked in the girdle or wound round the neck; while to the other side of the cap was attached a kind of loose hood, which fell, negligently, about the head and shoulders. In this brass the scarf is represented as hanging down in front of the figure. The wife's figure is clad in a flowing kirtle down to the feet, with a tightly-fitting bodice, cut low and square on the breast, showing the under tunic round the throat; the sleeves have large cuffs of fur, and there is a cincture round the waist; she wears the horned head-dress, hanging in folds behind the figure. Part of the inscription only remains, and reads thus "**qui quidem Johannes obiit decimo nono;**" and in another part of the chapel are the following words, which evidently, from the style of lettering, belong to this brass, "**mensis Julij anno domini millimo cccc° nonages' septimo quor' aibus.** From the mouths of the two figures are scrolls issuing, and bearing the following words:—man's scroll, "**Sctā Trīnitas unus Deus miserere nobis;**" woman's "**Spiritus s'cti (sic) de miserere nobis.**"<sup>1</sup>

Near this are two female figures—small, but well executed—(the male one in the centre is lost), with some children at the

<sup>1</sup>This inscription is also preserved by Bigland, 1-357.

Orate pro a'iabus Johannis Bennett ac Agnetis uxoru' suar', qui quidem Joh'es obiit decimo nono die Mensis Julij, anno d'ni Millimo CCCC, nonages' septimo quorum a'ibus.

From the other wife a label with—Fili, redemptor mundi miserere nobis.

It is singular that the name, effigy, and scroll of the second wife have disappeared.

His merchant's mark resembles a cross, with knops at each end; and on the long staff, a St. Andrew's cross, with similar knops.

feet. The two wives are represented as wearing a close-fitting kirtle to the feet, with tight sleeves, furred at the wrist, and a square cut collar; the dress is secured at the waist by a massive embroidered einture, which slung loosely round the person, and passing through an embroidered loop (the figure on the left hand having the larger loop of the two), falls down with a long pendant end in front of the figure, nearly to the feet; on their heads they wear the *kennel* or *angular* head-dress, so generally worn during the latter part of the reign of Henry VII., and which continued in fashion some time after the accession of Henry VIII. It was made of velvet or embroidered cloth, sometimes of lighter materials, and being pointed somewhat stiffly over the forehead, descended in lappets on the shoulders and back. A similar head-dress is worn to the present day in some of the valleys of the Pyrenees. From the style of costume, therefore, in this brass we may fix the date as being of the end of the 15th or early in the 16th century.<sup>1</sup>

Not far from this, but nearer to the east end of the chapel, is the brass of JOHN GUNTER and his wife, who are represented in the stiff dresses of the latter part of the 16th and early part of the 17th century, from Elizabeth's later years to the beginning of Charles 1st's reign. The man wears a long furred robe, the sleeves of which are ornamented with velvet, and showing the sleeves of the doublet beneath; round his neck is a ruff, and frills round his wrists; the head is bare, and the beard is cut in the quaint and formal way not uncommon in the time of James I. The woman wears a broad-brimmed hat, a ruff round the neck, and a stiff-bodied, full-bottomed dress with tight sleeves. The inferiority of the execution of this brass to those of earlier date is very apparent, and the attempt to give the effect of shading by

<sup>1</sup> On this slab remain the indents and nails of the two figures, male and female, both somewhat larger than the existing effigies. Our Archæologist, the Rev. W. Dyke, is disposed to consider the present effigies as those of the children of the persons represented by the missing brasses, but in this opinion I do not concur, as I never remember an instance of children being delineated otherwise than as very young, and in a diminishing scale. Probably the slab was used for an earlier memorial, which, being lost, some members of the same family made use of it as a foundation for their own brasses.

means of hatched lines is very poor ; it is, however, very usual in brasses of this and subsequent periods. The inscription is in capitals " Mr. John Gvnter and Alice, his wife, being fvll as | of years so of bovnty and charity are gathered | to their fathers in peace, shee was here bvryed | 18<sup>th</sup> martii A°. Dni., 1626, Aged 86 yeares. Hee was | bvryed at Kyntbvry in the covnty of Berks | with the like monument, 2<sup>do</sup> Janvarii A°. Dni. | 1624, aged 89 years.

"Io<sup>s</sup>. Plat. Ar. Eorvnd<sup>m</sup>. Gener et Exec<sup>r</sup> Hoc Posvit."

In this chapel also are many inscriptions arranged without any order, and evidently placed without any idea of marking the spot of burial ; and it is to be regretted that several bits of inscription have, at some time or other, been separated from the brasses to which they clearly belong ; for example, on a slip in the chapel, close to the effigy of Sir W. Master, is the following brass inscription in raised letters:—"Vicinis gratius fuerat mercator amatus," which from its style, I should say ought to belong to the brass in the Trinity Chapel, which I have supposed to be that of Robert Pagge.

On the wall are several figures of children, an angel,<sup>1</sup> lilies, and inscriptions, which, although mixed up together in a heterogeneous way, are likely to be preserved ; one inscription, a fine and quaint one in black letter, is as follows : " **Reyse gracious Ihu to endless lyfe, at thy grete dome where all schall apere, Hughe | Norys, Groc' & Johan hys wyf nowe dede in gtabe & beryed here, yo' p'pers desyring | There soules for there the 1. day of July, the yere our Lord god, M.CCCC ppix.**" Another curious inscription, on the floor of the chapel, close to the east end, is to the memory of Hodgkinson Paine, who was killed at the Siege of Cirencester by Prince Rupert. He is said to have fallen with the colours (Parliamentarian) in his hand, close to where the Barton Mills now are. The inscription is this:—" Here lyeth the body of Hodgkinson Paine, clothier, who died y<sup>e</sup> 3rd of Feb., 1642."

<sup>1</sup>The angel is doubtless Gabriel and is one of the group of the Annunciation from a slab lying below it ; the indent of the B. Virgin is on one side of a very pretty lily in a flower-pot, while this angel would fit the indent on the other.

“The poore’s supplie his life and calling grae’t,  
 ’till warre’s made rent, and PAINÉ from poore displac’t  
 But what made poore unfortunate PAINÉ blest,  
 by warre they lost their PAINÉ, yet found no rest,  
 Hee looseing quiet by warre, yet gained ease ;  
 by it PAINÉ’S life began, and paine did cease.  
 And from ye troubles here him God did sever  
 by death to life, by warre to peace for ever.”

Close by is this inscription to his wife :—“ Here lieth the body  
 of Elizabeth Paine, deceased the 8th day of January, an. do., 1668.

“ One was our thought, one life wee sought,  
 One rest we both intended ;  
 Our bodies haue to sleep one graue,  
 Our soules to GOD ascended.”

On the wall of the nave, close to the organ, is a small brass,  
 to the memory of PHILIP MARNER, who is represented bare-headed,  
 dressed in a long gown, with a staff in his hand, a pair of shears  
 over his head, and a dog at his feet. The inscription is this :—

“ In Ient, by will, a serman he deuised,  
 and yerely precher with a noble priseD ;  
 Seuen nobles he did giue ye poore, for to defend,  
 and 80<sup>l</sup> to XVI men did lend,  
 In Ciceter, Bursford, Abington, and Tetburie,  
 ouer to be to them a stocke yerely.”  
 “ Phillip Marnar, who died in the yere 1587.”

Other inscriptions will amuse, and re-pay the trouble of deciphering, by showing the variations in the style of lettering, and the gradual decline of the art ; the later engravings not being to be compared in artistic execution to the earlier ones.

In concluding this very brief, and necessarily defective, sketch of the brasses in this noble church, I cannot refrain from pressing the search after the information which these monuments of mediæval art confer, not only upon archæologists, but upon every one who would desire to attain to a thorough knowledge of history. The result is well worthy of the trouble, and care, and labour involved ; for monumental brasses, with comparatively few excep-

tions, present the only existing portraits we possess of the heroes of ages famed for chivalry and arms, and also of worthies no less distinguished in more peaceful pursuits. They are thus extremely valuable; the herald, the genealogist, the chronologist, the architect, the artist, the palæographer, and the general antiquary, will each and all find much to interest and instruct them in their several branches of knowledge; and they furnish us, not only with well-defined ideas of celebrated persons, but make us acquainted with the manners and customs of their times; while to history they give a body and a substance, by placing before us those things which language, with all its power, is deficient in describing.