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'*L'usaige de mittre, d'anel et de tous signes pontificaux*': The Brass of Abbot Paschal Huguenet (d. 1399), once in the Abbey Church of La Couture, Le Mans (France)

Paul Cockerham

The centre of the choir floor of the monastery church of La Couture in Le Mans (France) was once taken up by a magnificent brass to Abbot Paschal Huguenet (d. 1399). One of the casualties of Revolutionary iconoclasm, fortunately a detailed drawing of it was made for François-Roger de Gaignières before its destruction at the end of the eighteenth century. The lengthy inscription on the brass is remarkable for being in French, and the significance of this use of the vernacular is analysed in this article, which also aims to set the brass within a wider commemorative context.

Introduction

In his encyclopaedic record of the department of Sarthe, the noted antiquary Julien Rémy Pesche (d. 1847) paused to reflect on the lack of tomb monuments in the city of Le Mans: 'Nearly all of the funeral monuments of this period [fourteenth to sixteenth centuries] have disappeared, either because of the sacking of the cathedral by the religious fundamentalists [Huguenots] in 1562, or during the Revolution'.[1] Yet despite this gloomy outlook for any student of funeral monuments, and while we have no record of what was destroyed by the Protestants in the 1560s, Louis Boudan, an artist in the employ of François-Roger de Gaignières, spent some time in Le Mans towards the end of the seventeenth century and sketched a number of tombs, brasses and incised slabs which had escaped unscathed in the cathedral, abbeys and mendicant churches of the city.[2] Much of what he recorded was subsequently lost during the Revolution, including the monuments of the Benedictine abbey church of La Couture. One saving grace was, however, that although its interior was sacked, the then recently renovated abbey buildings were converted to administrative use for the Revolutionaries, and because the parish church of La Couture 'was suppressed, given up, and soon after demolished', the parishioners adopted the abbey church for their own use and the building itself was preserved.[3]

While the structure of the church exists to this day therefore, it contains only a single medieval monument, an incised effigial slab to Jeanne de Surlestanc (d. 1407).[4] For whatever reason this was not recorded by Boudan, something which

1 J.R. Pesche, *Dictionnaire topographique, historique et statistique de la Sarthe, suivi d'une biographie et d'une bibliographie*, 6 vols (Le Mans, 1829–42), III, 760.

2 For information on these drawings, see H. Bouchot, *Inventaire des dessins exécutés pour Roger de Gaignières et conservés aux départements des estampes et des manuscrits*, 2 vols (Paris, 1891); and the illustrations assembled and published by J. Adhémar and G. Dordor, 'Les tombeaux de la collection Gaignières: dessins d'archéologie du XVIIe siècle', *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 6ème période, 84 (1974), 1–192; 88 (1976), 1–88; 89–128; 90 (1977), 1–76, *passim*. While these sources identify the drawings in the Bibliothèque nationale de France (hereafter BnF), those deposited in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, are listed by J. Bertram, *Gough's Sepulchral Monuments, being a Catalogue of Material relating to Sepulchral Monuments in the Gough Manuscripts of the Bodleian Library* (2nd edn, s.l., 2017). All of the drawings of the monuments recorded in this abbey church can be found online at: https://www.collecta.fr [accessed August 2021].

3 Pesche, *Dictionnaire topographique*, III, 345.

4 This slab is fully described by P. Cockerham, *The Incised Effigial Slabs of the Pays de la Loire: 'Bien graver et soufissement'* (Donington, 2022).

of course raises the unanswerable question of how many other medieval monumental artefacts had survived the Protestant ransacking but were ignored by the artist on his visit. Fortunately, however, he made a detailed drawing of the large brass, quite exceptional in its magnificence, to Abbot Paschal Huguenet (d. 1399), which was labelled '*Tombe de cuivre au milieu du Choeur de l'Eglise de l'abbaye de la Couture au Mans* (Tomb of copper [brass] in the middle of the choir of the church of the abbey of la Couture in Le Mans)' (Fig. 1).[5]

Description

This drawing is of a rectangular sheet of brass, and although its dimensions are not indicated by a scale, the proportions of the sides are in the ratio of $\sqrt{2.66}$: 1 and, hence, well within the order of such things practised by medieval craftsmen.[6] It depicts the figure of an ecclesiastic vested for Mass with his head resting on an embroidered cushion, wearing a chasuble decorated with fleurs-de-lys and with lozengy patterns on the orphrey, a dalmatic also *semé de lys*, large square compartments ornamenting the apparels of the amice and alb, and further elaboration on the maniple.[7] His hands are at prayer and gloved, revealed by the large precious stones, or monials – enamelled or jewelled plates – on their backs. On his head the abbot wears a tall bejewelled mitre and in the crook of his left elbow rests a crosier, which bears a richly-ornamented and crocketed volute and an enlarged node incorporating small figures housed within canopied niches, mimicking, or possibly even acting as, a reliquary.[8] Its plain shaft terminates at his feet in a sharp point which broaches the platform supporting the abbot's footrest, which comprises two lions rather aggressively facing outwards towards the spectator. The points of his embellished sandals just touch the edge of the platform, and his feet are resting on the bodies of the lions just behind their manes, a feature omitted in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France drawing. He stands in front of a background of small square compartments which contain either a fylfot cross or other (less identifiable) symbols.

From his hands issues an undulating 'speech scroll', its end obscuring a part of the round arch under which the figure stands. On the extrados of this canopy are rows of crockets terminating in a prominent foliated finial, with the intrados bearing large cusps, each containing an elongated quatrefoil. The arch is supported by foliated capitals on long plain and slender shafts, with regular bases. Outside of this is a complex architectural arrangement, comprising broad side-shafts containing tiers of double niches filled with figures, five pairs

5 This drawing is now in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, Gough Drawings Gaignières [hereafter Bod Lib, GDG] 15, f. 21; the slab is also illustrated by Adhémar and Dordor, 'Tombeaux', I, 173 no. 969.

6 For a discussion of this ratio of a slab's dimensions see P. Cockerham, 'Incised slab commissions in fourteenth century Boston', in '*The beste and fayrest of al Lincolnshire': The Church of St Botolph, Boston, Lincolnshire, and its Medieval Monuments*, eds S. Badham and P. Cockerham, British Archaeological Reports, British Series 554 (Oxford, 2012), 74–99 at 84–5.

7 P. Johnstone, *High Fashion in the Church – the place of church vestments in the history of art from the ninth to the nineteenth century* (Leeds, 2002), 50–9, for a brief study of medieval embroidery in Europe and exemplars of vestments with decoration not dissimilar to those on this brass. See also J. Luxford, *The Art and Architecture of English Benedictine Monasteries, 1300–1540. A Patronage History* (Woodbridge, 2005), 72–4, where he identifies a Benedictine identification with high-status liturgical vestments incorporating vivid colour and embroidered with imaginative iconographic schemes.

8 This model is repeated in the surviving crosier of Bishop William Wykeham, of *c.*1367; see *Age of Chivalry – Art in Plantagenet England 1200–1400*, eds J. Alexander and P. Binski (London, 1987), 471–2. It was replicated over a century later in the example surviving for Bishop Fox of Winchester, illustrated in *Gothic – Art for England 1400–1547*, eds R. Marks and P. Williamson (London, 2003), 241.

Fig. 1. Brass of Abbot Paschal Huguenet (d. 1399), abbey of La Couture, Le Mans. (© Bodleian Libraries, Oxford, MS. Gough Drawings Gaignières 15, f. 21)

on either side, rising up over the central canopy arch to incorporate a series of tabernacles, populated by saints and angels, with the figure of Abraham at the summit, holding the soul of the deceased as a small demi-figure in a sheet in front. Around the entire composition is an inscription fillet, doubled on each of the long sides, but interrupted by the tiled roof and engrailed gable of the tabernacles at the top. At the corners are barbed quatrefoils housing the symbols of the Evangelists, and halfway down the long sides is a shield superimposed on an upright crosier and within a decorated frame, bearing *a fess between three trefoils in chief and three annulets in base*, for Huguenet.[9]

The inscription is in Gothic minuscules, and starts to the right of the tabernacle roof on the top fillet, reading:

> + *Cy gist de bo[n]ne me / moire mo[n] seigneur Paschal Huguenet ney de S Junian le Vigen en diocese de Limoges* (shield) *Jadis prieur de S. Hylaire le Hascoyt apres abbé de Lo[n]glay et puis abbé de cest demo[ure] / mo[u]stier de la couture docteur en decres hom[m]e de grant prudence et de fervant religion / et amourseus de divin s[er]vice et tres mor[i]gine conseil[eu]r de n[ost]re s[ire] et du roy de Jh[e]r[usa] l[e]m (shield) et de sicile leq[ue]l acq[ui]et pour luy et pour ses success[eurs] lusaige de mittre danel et de tous signes / pontificeaulx /* (restart on the inner fillet on the right) *et de donner b[e]nediction sole[m] pnel et dona au couve[n]t de seyans diz l[i]vr[es] de rente pour son* (shield) *an[n]iv[er]saire perpetuel et fist faire et don[n]a le Vessel ou le chief mo[nsieur] sainct bertran est /* (to the opposite long side) *et fist plusi[eurs] autr[es] b[ie]ns a cest mo[u]stier, en paradis soit son ame, il trespassa lan* (shield) *mil . ccc . quatre vins et dis neuf le tiers Jour doctobre. Pater noster ave*[10] (Here lies of good memory my lord Paschal Huguenet, born in St Junien le Vigen[11] in the diocese of Limoges, once prior of St Hilaire le Hascoyt, afterwards abbot of Longlay[12] and then abbot of this house and minster of La Couture, doctor in decretals, a man of great wisdom and of devout religion and enamoured of divine service, and of outstanding morals, adviser to our lord and king of Jerusalem and of Sicily, who acquired for himself and his successors the use of the mitre, the ring and all the 'insignia pontificalia', and of giving the solemn blessing, and who gave to the convent of this place ten livres of rent for his perpetual anniversary, and had made and gave the Vessel where is the chief St Bertram, and made several other gifts to this minster. May his soul rest in paradise. He died in the year 1399 on the third day of October. [Say] Pater Noster Ave [Maria].

Despite its considerable length and complexity this inscription can be divided into several sections. Firstly, the identity of the deceased lying in the grave under the brass is established, and this is followed by a brief biographical record. We learn of his place of birth in the diocese of Limoges, and that he worked his way up the Benedictine hierarchy via the roles of prior and abbot at other, less prestigious houses in Normandy, as well as an understanding of his learning in Canon Law. There is also an acknowledgement of his social status in his appointment as an adviser to Louis I, *duc d'Anjou*, who titles also included King of Jerusalem and Sicily. As an ecclesiastical

9 A Parisian origin for this brass is assumed, based on the learned assessment by M. Norris, *Monumental Brasses – The Memorials*, 2 vols (London, 1977), I, 43–4.

10 The BnF drawing has the terminal words as '*Pater noster nost(er)*', although the rest of the two inscriptions tally.

11 Le Vigen (87) is a commune eleven kilometres south of Limoges.

12 Now known as Saint-Hilaire-du-Harcouët (50) and Lonlay-l'Abbaye (61).

grandee we are also told of his character, in upholding the dignity of the office of abbot as '*homme de grant prudence, de fervant religion, amourseus de divin service*', sentiments only rarely expressed in monumental inscriptions of the period. Secondly, the inscription records for posterity the privileges won by Huguenet for the abbey, in permitting the abbot to wear the mitre, ring and other episcopal insignia, and the right to give a solemn blessing.[13] His own donations to the abbey are also noted, in particular that specially-made 'Vessel' which incorporated the image of St Bertrand du Mans, founder of the abbey.[14] Thirdly, in recording the day of his death the inscription incorporates a permanent reminder of his anniversary mass and how it was to be funded by ten *livres [tournois]* from rental property. Lastly, and in an odd position between the documentation of Huguenet's donations and that of his death, is the express hope that his soul rests in Paradise. Equally odd is that the inscription finishes without a formal request for intercessory prayer, terminating simply with '*Pater Noster, Ave [Maria]*'.

However, with an inscription of this length and the need for a spectator taking a perimetral route in order closely to follow its lines along the fillets as well as untangle and comprehend the contractions, it would be human nature to read it out as they went along. Hence, as they recited the words of the ascending and last fillet, two things become apparent. First of all, the expectation that the deceased's soul rests in Paradise is encountered immediately after the record of Huguenet's good works and donations, acting as a kind of '*pour encourager les autres*' – that if you, the spectator, also made donations to the abbey, your soul too will rest in Paradise. Secondly, as they proceeded further along the fillet to read aloud the date of his death and arrive at the end, they would have continued to quote the prayer titles of the Pater Noster and Ave Maria. These were so common and integral to the performance of the Rosary that any spectator would automatically recite them as the termination to the inscription, where they formed an alternative to a more personalised intercession.

The discourse of a selfhood

Following this microanalysis of the brass, it is pertinent to pause, akin to Julien Pesche during his detailed account of Le Mans, and ask what it is that this monument was intended to portray. For example, why was the design as specifically engineered as it was, and how was it used to communicate to, and perhaps manipulate the understanding of, an audience? And stemming from this audio-visual dialogue between tomb and spectator several further questions arise: why was a two-dimensional brass employed and not a more ostentatious tomb chest with effigy?; why was it located where it was in the church?; and what is the significance of the monument's inscription in the vernacular – this for an elite cleric, after all?; so that we might begin to understand today how it was viewed and comprehended by a contemporary audience. Ultimately therefore, was this brass successful in producing in the spectator an insight into and an appreciation of

13 The elevation of a monastery into a 'mitred abbey' status was a highly significant step in the augmentation and image-projection of the ecclesiastical and social status of the abbot – and thereby his monastery – as the wearing of a mitre and other *pontificalia* at assemblies such as high-status funerals and the receiving of important guests, accorded him visually and practically the same privileges as a bishop; see M. Heale, *The Abbots and Priors of Late Medieval England and Reformation England* (Oxford, 2016), 176–82.

14 On the foundation of the abbey of SS Peter and Paul by Bertrand, eleventh bishop of Le Mans (587–616) in 595, see *Cartulaire des abbayes de Saint-Pierre de La Couture et de Saint-Pierre de Solesmes*, ed. P. d'Albert, duc de Chaulnes (Le Mans, 1881), 1–2. In 615 Bertrand willed to be buried in the abbey he had founded rather than in his cathedral.

the commemorated that he so clearly desired? Such an interrogation can be considered in two ways. First of all, we can examine how the monument functioned to portray the abbot in the manner he wished to express his identity, as a function of himself and of the abbey he governed. Furthermore, we can try to assess how this brass might have been used by the abbey as means of demonstrating its revival and the quasi-episcopal magnificence of the abbacy after a period of hardship, and how it related with other abbatial monuments in order to sustain this impression.

The sense of selfhood expressed in the portrayal of the abbot's figure is overwhelmingly one of prestige, power and authority, extending beyond the confines of his own monastery to identify him as one of the wider ecclesiastical elite. As there are no features which identify Huguenet as an abbot rather than a bishop there would be no doubt in the mind of any spectator that this man was a clerical and superbly well-connected *tour-de-force* in the city.[15] He is portrayed in a sumptuous set of vestments with the decoration *semé de fleur-de-lys* redolent of the royal family of France, and demonstrating the use of the *insignia pontificalia* as could reasonably be depicted – the mitre, gloves, sandals, crosier, and dalmatic.[16] The crosier itself is a magnificent creation, its terminal spike sharply separating the not just one, but two sizable lions at his feet, which add to a sense of the figure's grandeur and authority.[17] As king of the beasts they were synonymous with the qualities exemplified by Huguenet's figure, emphasising the nobility of his ecclesiastical position, symbolic of good overcoming evil, and, with their eyes open, ever watchful and vigilant in defence of adversity. The numerous figures of saints – if that is what they are, as they all appear to be not at prayer but holding implements or symbols of some kind – act as *pleurants*, and add to the visual sophistication and architectural complexity of the composition. However, as the figures are so small and relatively lost in their niches – each one occupies less than half of its compartment – they are truly subsidiary to the principal figure of the abbot. Despite his luxuriant vestments, his effigy is visually emphatic, as the chief lines of the draperies are heavily inked in the drawing to reflect wide incisions in the brass surface, setting the figure off against the fussy checkerboard background. Moreover, their asymmetry and the diagonal line of the crosier

15 M. Heale, 'Mitres and Arms: Aspects of Self-Representation of the Monastic Superior in Late Medieval England', in *Self-Representation of Medieval Religious Communities: The British Isles in Context*, eds A. Müller and K. Stöber (Berlin, 2009), 99–122.

16 There were seven insignia in all: the mitre, ring, gloves, sandals, dalmatic, tunicle and cross staff, although abbots already had the right to bear a staff. The figure of Huguenet does not portray the ring, although it is mentioned specifically in the inscription and the drawing may not have been sufficiently detailed; neither does it show him wearing the tunicle, although in comparable effigies this is also often omitted; see H. Druitt, *A Manual of Costume as Illustrated by Monumental Brasses* (London, 1906), 72–7; and H.J. Clayton, *The Ornaments of the Ministers as shown on English Monumental Brasses*, Alcuin Club Collections XXII (London, 1919), 6–7.

17 This model for a crosier is replicated on several ecclesiastical brasses of Parisian origin, all now lost, such as that of Thomas d'Estouteville, bishop of Beauvais (d. 1395), in his cathedral (Bouchot, *Inventaire*, II, 120 no. 4626, Adhémar and Dordor, 'Tombeaux', I, 170 no. 948). However, contemporaneous examples shown on incised slabs most likely produced in Le Mans were, in contrast, much more modest; for example see the slab of Jean Tarou, abbot of Perseigne (d. 1399), in his abbey (Bouchot, *Inventaire*, I, 365 no. 2863, Adhémar and Dordor, 'Tombeaux', I, 172 no. 960). It is possible that the model of crosier depicted on Abbot Huguenet's brass was simply indicative of a workshop standard for such things and reflected the richness of the medium, compared to the type of crosier depicted on Le Mans slabs at that time, which may have been more true to the original.

shaft contrast with the lines of architectural regularity.[18] Equally prominent are the thin, unornamented shafts supporting the semi-circular canopy, with the sinuous cusps and sub-cusps tightly enclosing the mitred head of the figure, emphasising its verticality, inside its own individualised framework. The gaze of any spectator standing at the foot of the brass and looking at Huguenet's face, with his wide-open eyes, would be drawn to follow the lines of the mitre upwards, to its peak, further on to the terminal finial of the canopy arch just above, and which in turn appears to support the platform on which the figure of Abraham is seated with the soul of the deceased.

In performing this optical manoeuvre, and shifting focus from the living abbot to his soul, one crosses the threshold between terrestrial and celestial – in that everything below and inside the boundary of the canopy is terrestrial, and everything outside that frame is representative of celestial glory, with the saints as *pleurants* and the salvationary tabernacle dominant over all. The only artefact that breaches – almost – this liminality is the speech scroll, the termination of which is superimposed against the canopy arch (Fig. 2). This restriction is quite appropriate, as in contrast with many such scrolls which cross this boundary and carry a message directly from the deceased to the company of saints and God above, the wording on Huguenet's scroll expresses a duality: '*Me cu[m] grege meo hui[u]s Ab[ba]ti[i] me[n]te reli[n]que* (Me and my community of this abbey [please]

Fig. 2. Close up of the head and speech scroll of Abbot Pascal Huguenet.
(© Bodleian Libraries, Oxford, MS. Gough Drawings Gaignières 15, f. 21)

keep in mind'.[19] This is applicable both as a prayer to God, that the abbot is supplicating Him personally and for the benefit of his flock; and it is equally effective as an intercessory request from the abbot speaking personally to the terrestrial audience of his monument. The go-between physicality of the scroll reflects the duality of this text, and what is clear is that it is the voice of Huguenet himself, as this eyes wide-open, neither alive nor dead in-limbo figure, who is pleading directly to whoever will

18 This was a technique well practised by the Flemish engravers and doubtless copied in Paris. For example, see the complex backgrounds and the ways in which the principal figures dominate on the episcopal brasses in the cathedral at Schwerin (Germany), Cameron 1 and 2; and in the cathedral of Lübeck (Germany), Cameron 2.

19 The text on the scroll may well contain errors in transcription, and the Latin is heavily contracted. For example, 'abbey' in Latin is '*abbatia*', so the abbreviation should not end on an 'i'; perhaps the artists intended the word '*abbatium*', which has the genitive '*abbatii*'. However, the contractions were apparently done on purpose, as if one reads the text as is, i.e., inclusive of the mistakes, the result is almost a correct hexameter, which was presumably the author's aim. I am very grateful to Reinhard Lamp for his help in understanding this inscription.

listen.[20] The architectural frame is reinforced by the marginal fillets bearing the text, with their doubling up on the long sides reinforcing the verticality of the design – that a spectator should always look upwards – something emphasised further by the inscription as we have seen terminating on an ascendant. The substantial base of blind arcading below both figure and architecture has just a single line of script underneath, yet at the top the tabernacle roof overlays the fillet, as no earthly words can justifiably be superimposed on the Heavens.

Such frameworks act as boundaries to the central designs. They invite a spectator to focus on the imagery enclosed within them, as if they are stepping inwards through an entrance into somewhere, mimicking a cathedral portal scheme where they might walk through a doorway flanked by rising tiers of saints, and simultaneously being offered a view of the security of the afterlife and the sanctity of the heavens by the tympanum over their head.[21] Alternatively, rather than the spectator entering, the central figure emerges from the frame as if coming through the door and approaching the spectator – the same community who are praying for him and to whom he is speaking – resplendent and alive in his ecclesiastical finery, and just as to be expected at the day of general resurrection.

Paradoxically however, with the identity of Huguenet affirmed by this imagery and wanting to be remembered as the prestigious individual he styled himself as, why was he content with his representation on a simple two-dimensional monument, no matter how luxuriantly it was engraved? Why did he not choose a tomb chest with his effigy sculpted in relief resting on top, both chest and effigy offering rich opportunities for sculptural aggrandisement and polychromy decoration? It is almost certain that the location of the monument was more important to Huguenet than the monumental type, as an effigial tomb chest located in the middle of the choir might have physically obstructed the performance of the liturgy and interrupted the flow of processions, as well as disrupting the sightlines of monks towards the high altar from their seats in their stalls, crucially at the focal point (literally) of the Mass at the moment of the raising of the Host. A floor monument would have done none of these things, so could have been incorporated into the pavement of the choir with no resultant disturbance of ceremonies. Moreover, the use of a single sheet of brass of this size was something restricted to the social elite, to whom Huguenet would have desired affiliation, so despite its two dimensions this monument form was perceived as exceptional and opulent.[22]

20 For further discussion on this topic see R. Marcoux, 'Breaking the silence of the grave: the agency of speech scrolls on late medieval French tombs', *Early Music* 48.4 (2020), 465–78.

21 E. Ingrand-Varenne, 'Inscriptions encadrées/encadrantes: de l'usage du cadre dans les inscriptions médiévales', Conference paper, *Formes du texte latin. Moyen Âge-Renaissance*, IVe congrès de la Société d'Études Médio et Néo-Latines (Semen–l) Valence, 4–6 juin 2015, available online at: https://www.academia.edu/34989610/Inscriptions_encadrées_encadrantes_de_lusage_du_cadre_dans_les_inscriptions_médiévales?email_work_card=title [accessed July 2020].

22 The use of large plates of brass was an option almost entirely reserved for very high-status individuals: two such brasses were recorded in 1636 as once laid down in the choir of the *couvent des Cordeliers*, Laval (53) to Gui (d. 1403), the son of Gui XII, *comte de Laval*, and his wife Jeanne, and for Jeanne herself (d. 1433), and a third in the *Collégiale Saint-Tugal*, Laval, to Jean de Laval (d. 1398), knight. See *Dubuisson Aubenay : Itinéraire de Bretagne en 1636, d'après le manuscrit original*, eds L. Maître and P. de Berthou, Archives de Bretagne 10 (Nantes, 1902), 188–90. When he visited the *couvent des Cordeliers* he found the brasses in a room in the monastery as works were being carried out in the choir of the church, yet he inspected them there, and noted

There were other advantages as well. As the slab and brass were embedded in the pavement of the choir they were physically bonded to the very fabric of the church: hence, the grave slab formed an everlasting part of the *ecclesia* itself. And not only that, but the brass acted as a grave-marker, that it physically covered Huguenet's site of interment wherein his corpse reposed, buried there with his *insignia pontificalia*, such that his image on the brass was a direct copy of his body lying in the earth a few feet below the surface. This image resonance produced an intimacy of recall, that as a spectator was able to stand by the brass and visualise the two-dimensional figure of the abbot in its entirety, this corporeal mimicry invoked a more powerful and enduring memory of the abbot than was the case when regarding a relief effigy. As a sculptured figure would have been raised up on a tomb chest a spectator might have achieved only a partial and / or oblique view of the abbot, particularly when looking at his face, revealing the static artificiality of the effigy; the link between sculptured representation and the abbot's body was difficult to realise therefore. Fundamentally, a spectator could never achieve a continued mutuality of eye contact with a raised-up figure as they moved perimetrically in reading the inscription, yet this was always possible with a floor monument. In addition, the eye contact underpinned the message of the speech scroll: 'Me and my community of this abbey, may you please keep in mind'. Looking directly into the wide-open eyes of the abbot, the spectator / image reciprocity inherent in such spoken directness would have been difficult to forget. Materially too, one can only imagine the gilding of the brass surface shimmering in the illumination of the choir from static and processional candles, as well as reflecting the light shifting from east to west through the windows. All these visual repercussions would have combined to produce a lustrous, potentially mystical effect, which reinforced the religious orthodoxy of Huguenet's soul undertaking its celestial journey, present in perpetuity as the monks celebrated their daily liturgies either side of his gravestone. Was it also a coincidence that in the Benedictine monastery of Saint-Aubin, Angers (Maine-et-Loire), there was a sumptuous brass to Abbot Jean de la Bernichière (d. 1375) (Fig. 3) – yet without the *insignia pontificalia*, and the inscription conventionally in Latin? Was there a sense of one-upmanship here between the two Benedictine houses?

Paradoxically once more, despite the richness of its imagery, a grave slab in the floor also implied an element of monastic humility in the deceased, that he was unafraid of – indeed welcomed – his body being processed over by his brethren, and otherwise walked upon less formally. Such contact induced a physical rapport of the living above ground and the dead below, and was an additional mechanism underpinning his perpetual remembrance in the community. After all, it is simply outside human nature to overlook the identity of the man whose grave one has just walked over, or been sufficiently respectful of to have skirted around. This humble monumental form was also one in which Huguenet wished to present himself to God, as the spatial isolation of this brass in the choir and its proximity to the high altar would ensure that God would see him represented there, and no matter what he had

that the figure of Jeanne incorporated a face and hands of white marble. A large rectangular floor brass was also commissioned for Bishop Nicholas Gellent (d. 1290), laid down in the centre of the choir floor in Angers cathedral; see Bouchot, *Inventaire*, I, 321 no. 2589, II, 347 no. 6662; illustrated by Adhémar and Dordor, 'Tombeaux', I, 82 no. 425; the original drawing is Bod Lib, GDG 14, f. 60, reproduced by L. de Farcy, *Notices Archéologiques sur les Tombeaux des Évêques d'Angers* (Angers, 1877), unpaginated.

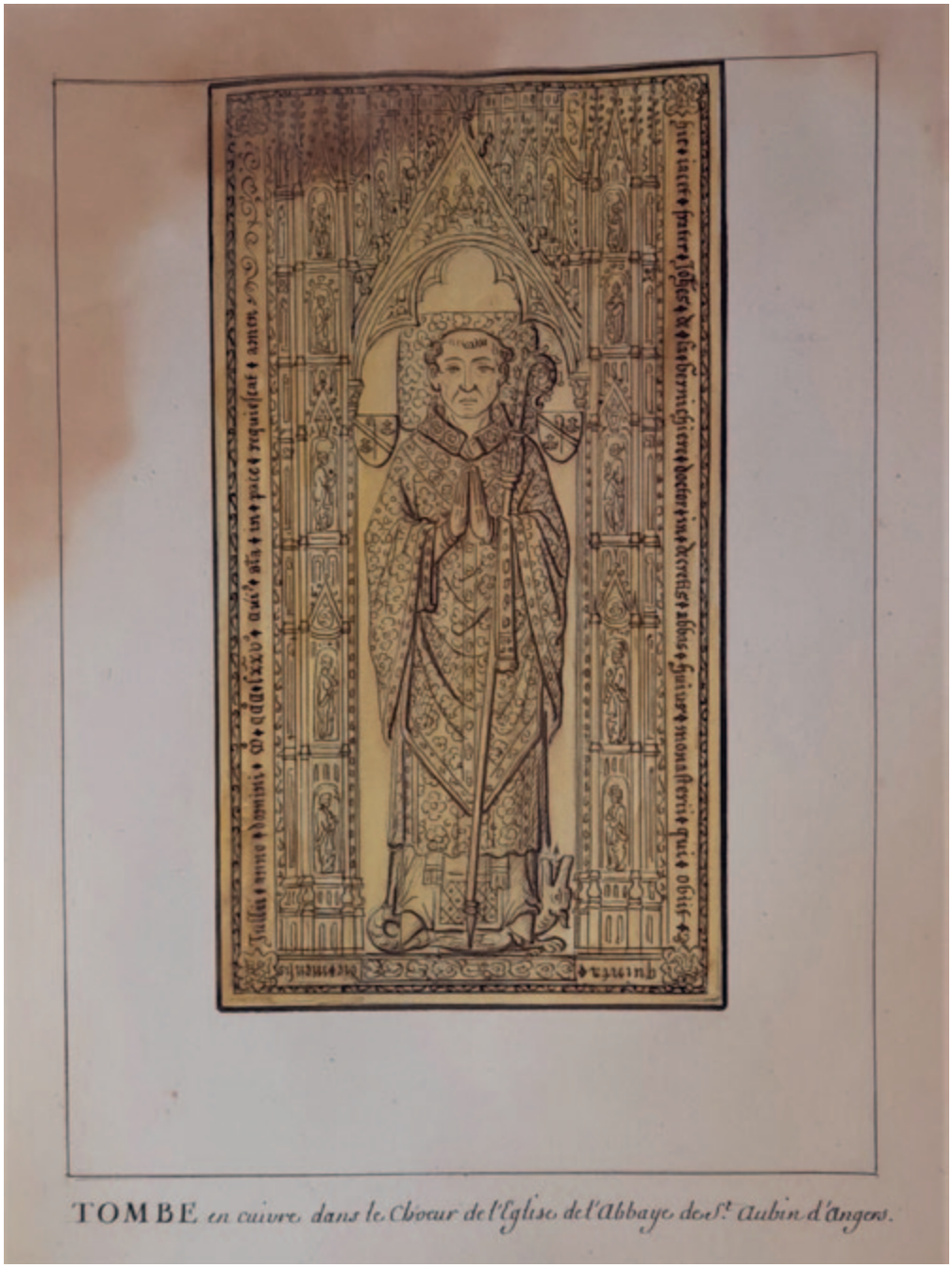

Fig. 3. Brass of Abbot Jean de la Bernichière (d. 1375), abbey of Saint-Aubin, Angers.
(© Bodleian Libraries, Oxford, MS. Gough Drawings Gaignières 15, f. 127)

achieved earth, in the eyes of God he was just a humble being. The brass achieved a balance therefore: humility before God but illustrious and of perpetual memory in the sight of his brothers.

A final point to consider is that the brass was set in the middle of the community when they came together at prayer. Hence, the abbot – monumentally and celestially alive, but terrestrially dead – retained a physical presence within the community that he had led. He was forever a visible, yet absent, part of it, a recall further refreshed at his anniversaries and the recitation of the monastic necrology. Moreover, the perceived power of intercessory prayer stimulated by this recall would have been at its maximum here, such monastic intercessions being of 'high quality', particularly as most Benedictine monks were also priests; and their utterance within view of the high altar can only have accelerated them even more effectively on their celestial journey.

An understanding of this brass within a wider monumental context

Although Huguenet's brass was in the centre of the choir of the abbey church, this was a burial space almost always reserved for the founders of a house, or those of the *noblesse* who handsomely endowed the monastery in the creation or reorganisation of dynastic mortuary schemes. Yet no such monuments were recorded for Gaignières, and although the caveat has already been made that not everything was noted at that time, a monument in the choir would most likely have been of some material and dynastic significance, the two chief qualities that motivated him in the augmentation of his antiquarian collections. Two monuments chronologically preceding Huguenet's brass were sketched, however. The tomb of Élie de la Flèche, *comte du Maine* (d. 1109) comprised a figure in complete mail armour, a fluted Norman helmet (without the nose piece), and a long heater-shaped shield with a large cross fleury. Set within an *enfeu* of plain masonry, the canopy and surrounds were gone, but it appears to have been intentionally set within the space it occupies, in the north wall of the north transept.[23] This would have been within the monks' choir therefore, but perhaps barely encompassed by their commemorative attention span. The other tomb was that of Geoffroi Freslon, bishop of Le Mans (d. 1271), which was a splendid construction, consisting of a tomb chest bearing his effigy in modest ecclesiastical dress, but with his feet on a lion and his head censed by angels.[24] The front of the tomb chest bears panels with religious figures, while above is an enormous canopy with a two-centred arch and a straight-sided gable above with pinnacled shafts to either side, all set into the north wall of the nave – in the monastic purlieu therefore.

In light of their structural integration within the walls of the church it seems very unlikely that these tombs were removed from the central choir to vacate it for Abbot Huguenet, and in consequence by the end of the fourteenth century this space was probably empty of funeral monuments. This is somewhat bizarre, considering that the abbey had always cultivated relations with the local aristocracy rather than a tenuous link with the royal family – the outstanding range of *gisants* to the Beaumonts, *viscomtes du Maine*,

23 Bouchot, *Inventaire*, I, 337 no. 2692, I, 352 no. 2781, illustrated by Adhémar and Dordor, 'Tombeaux', I, 20 no. 58; Bod Lib, GDG 15, f. 19.

24 Bouchot, *Inventaire*, I, 352–3 no. 2782, illustrated by Adhémar and Dordor, 'Tombeaux', I, 64 no. 322; Bod Lib, GDG 15, f. 20.

once in the abbey of Étival (72),[25] and those of the *comtes de Laval* in the abbey of Clermont (53)[26] – demonstrate the monumental possibilities of aristocratic patronage that are missing at La Couture.[27] However, the area had suffered considerably during the Hundred Years' War, with the region of Maine forming the territorial interface between the warring parties. As a consequence, monastic houses were seen as a soft target and repeatedly pillaged by opposing forces, the region was also host to numerous bands of mercenaries and outlaws, and the breakdown of *noblesse* patronage and their mortuary schemes, was inevitable.[28] As monastic incomes decreased and morale plummeted, it is signal that during this period of intermittent but unrelenting warfare, Huguenet petitioned for the award of the *insignia pontificalia* for the abbey – and of course himself – via the patronage of Louis I, king of Anjou.

Essentially therefore, Huguenet saw himself as the great ecclesiastical (re)founder of the abbey, re-establishing its prestige, and simultaneously freeing it from the authority of the bishop of Le Mans. Identifying himself also as a Benedictine, in his sumptuous vestments and as patron of a superb piece of metalwork set at the heart of the abbey church, perhaps he even thought of himself as following in the footsteps of the abbey's true founder, St Bertrand, the link between the two formalised by the 'Vessel' Huguenet donated to the abbey, with its precise description in the brass inscription. Moreover, this was at a time when the wider influence of La Couture was becoming increasingly centralised in the abbot, as its dependent and isolated priories and priors suffered the moral and financial repercussions inherent in the times far more acutely than the mother house. The location of the brass served not only to glorify the achievements of Huguenet as abbot, but sited at the heart of the religious community it was also appreciated as an artefact of great beauty and aesthetic splendour. It formed a material asset that was always in view, acting to reinvigorate the hearts and minds of the community that witnessed it so that they too might echo his qualities of '*fervant religion et amourseus de divin service*'.

That said, on a monument of such importance to the individual and the monastery, why was the inscription in the vernacular? French was rarely used in monumental or other inscriptions for ecclesiastics.[29] Short phrases in French were sometimes used in glass, suggesting that a glazier had acted independently or was never instructed accordingly, but a lengthy inscription in French on a costly monument such as this was clearly intentional. Bearing in mind its very limited accessibility to a lay audience, the inscription suggests its communication was between the tomb and the religious audience, at a horizontal level. It was a lengthy objectivised account of Huguenet the man himself and his good deeds, and how he had

25 E. Hucher, 'Monuments funéraires et sigillographiques des vicomtes de Beaumont au Maine', *Revue Historique et Archéologique du Maine* XI (1882), 319–408. The Musée Jean-Claude Boulard – Carré Plantagenêt in Le Mans accommodates six *gisants* from this abbey, five of military figures and one of a lady: see Adhémar and Dordor, 'Tombeaux', I, 20 no. 60; I, 33 no. 133; I, 37 no. 158; I, 48 no. 225; I, 60 no. 297; I, 99 no. 529.

26 A. Angot, *Dictionnaire Historique, Topographique et Biographique de la Mayenne*, 4 vols (Laval, 1900–09), I, 676–8. Some of their remains are still visible at Clermont but the tombs themselves have been removed to the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Laval (53).

27 A. de Dieuleveult, *La Couture – une abbaye mancelle au Moyen âge (990–1518)* (Le Mans, 1963), 30.

28 Dieuleveult, *La Couture*, 31–2.

29 E. Ingrand-Varenne, *Langues de bois, de pierre et de verre. Latin et français dans les inscriptions médiévales* (Paris, 2017), 453–7, in her outstanding study of the corpus of medieval inscriptions in the west of France, noted that of the 103 texts in French, only eight related to men of the Church.

materially aided the growth of the monastery and encouraged its sense of prestige, all underpinned by a narration of his personal qualities. Huguenet's heraldry punctuates this recital of his learning and royal connections, to remind the audience of his personal armigerous status and his lineage, and as a boost to his social credibility. From a practical aspect Latin as the language of the Church was clearly not best equipped to communicate information such as this, so the use of French ensured that all who read the text understood the earthly nature of his achievements, and the aide-memoire to maintain his anniversary with the rental endowment. The purpose of this inscription was as an intra-community voice only therefore, the tomb speaking to and across the persons making up the audience.[30]

However, as we have seen, the dual function of the Latin speech scroll lay in beseeching God above as well as the audience. It formed a link between horizontal (intra-community) communication, that is, between Huguenet and the monks, and vertical (extra-community) communication, that is, directly between the departed and God – and only Latin would have been appropriate for speaking to the Almighty. In the same way the terminal three words of the inscription inspire communication only vertically, upwards to the Heavens, reinforced verbally at intercessory Masses, and liturgically promoted by the physical elevation of the Host at the high altar. The inscription thus creates a dichotomy between the abbot's material achievements reinforced by the materiality of the brass, and the language of prayer. Moreover, with the introduction of the vernacular into the very core of the church, before the high altar, the consequent sanctity of the location hallowed Huguenet's endeavours, almost as if imparting a holiness to the text – which was all the more emphatic because of the choice of language being the vernacular rather than the Latin of the Church.

Hierarchisation

Abbot Huguenet appears to have been the only abbot buried in this location at La Couture, but in general where an abbot chose to be buried varied from individual to individual.[31] In the same way, the choice of a tomb might be just as diverse. However, not only did they select incised effigial slabs as the material form of commemoration, but by siting their grave slabs in chapels surrounding the choir, they created an expanding corporatisation of abbatial memory with Huguenet's brass at the top of this hierarchy.[32] Incised slabs substituted for brass, perhaps as a financial economy during the troubled mid-fifteenth century times, but also perhaps because successive governing superiors were motivated to view this very spectacular brass as a unique commission. The abbot to follow Huguenet was Guillaume Patry (d. 1409) whose slab was almost contemporary to that of Jeanne de Surlestanc of 1407 (Fig. 4). Did her slab provide an in-house exemplar of a particular monumental type therefore? Whatever the case, Patry's slab followed Huguenet's model, as the figure of the abbot was portrayed in Benedictine-style richly-decorated vestments with an elaborate crosier against his shoulder and a speech scroll emanating from his mouth. He stood under an ornate canopy supported by side-shafts housing

30 Ingrand-Varenne, *Langues de bois*, 456–7.

31 Luxford, *Art and Architecture*, 78–81.

32 Of the series of abbots of La Couture throughout the fifteenth century, only two who died in office have no funeral monuments on record, with all of the others commemorated by incised slabs; see *Gallia Christiana in provincias ecclesiasticas distributa … XIV Turonensi*, ed. B. Hauréau (Paris, 1856 edn), cols 478–80. It is possible of course that these two superiors were also commemorated by slabs which were lost or went unrecorded in the seventeenth century.

Fig. 4. Incised slab of Jeanne de Surlestanc (d. 1407), abbey of La Couture, Le Mans.
(photo © author)

angels with precatory scrolls which presumably reiterated the abbot's personal plea; curiously, he did not wear a mitre (Fig. 5).[33] The slab was once on a raised tomb chest with the sculpted figures of Saints Peter and Paul at its foot,[34] in the middle of the chapel of Our Lady, a location probably with personal significance as Patry himself prays '*Maria mater dei miserere mei*'.[35] This slab was followed by that of Abbot Jean Chevalier (d. 1417) laid down in the chapel of St Mathurin to the north of the high altar. He was represented in a similar way to his predecessors but now wears a mitre, with his family heraldry replacing the customary evangelistic symbols at the corners. Overall, it is a less elaborate composition than Abbot Patry's slab, and a model faithfully replicated over forty years later for Abbot Gérard de Lorière (d. 1461) laid down with Patry's slab in the chapel of Our Lady.

The incised slabs of the last three abbots commemorated in this fifteenth-century series, however, showcase new developments following a near twenty-five year period of evolution in slab design. At this point, the fully vested effigies of Abbots Jean de Tucé (d. 1485), Guillaume Herbelin (d. 1496) (Fig. 6) and Matthieu de la Motte (d. 1496) were contained within flamboyant architectural structures, each of them having the lower part of their figure obscured by a rectangular plate incised with a versified inscription. Although this device abandoned the framing effect of a marginal fillet, it facilitated an appreciation of the verses by the audience, as they are otherwise difficult to tease out when inscribed in a single continuous line.[36]

Laid down in the chapels of Our Lady and the Sepulchre, these late fifteenth-century monuments were commissioned during a period when an enhanced dignity was afforded to the abbots in recognition of their expanding wealth and influence, and following a second period of devastation in the Hundred Years War.[37] Imitating Huguenet's imagery to project the same identity and sense of selfhood as belonging to the elite, an audience was presented with figures of these monastic superiors once again as true aspirants to episcopal status, depicted in ornamented vestments, bejewelled mitres, gloves and sandals, and each with the beautifully ornate crosier of the monastery cradled against their shoulder. Equally in imitation of Paschal Huguenet these abbatial slabs displayed family heraldry, and their inscriptions recorded no longer a '*humble Abbé de ceans* (humble Abbot of this house)' as Gérard de Lorière was described, but instead the audience was informed that, for instance:

33 Bearing in mind the importance of this recently-granted privilege, it is bizarre that the opportunity is lost not to display it on his tombslab. Could this have been a generic 'abbatial slab' produced by a workshop in Le Mans, or a gesture of humility by the abbot – although this latter hardly accords with the rich vestments and ornate insignia.

34 St Peter was the original patron saint of the monastery.

35 Could it be that Jeanne de Surlestanc's slab was located in this chapel, as she also prays directly to the Mother of God: '*Ora pro … sancta Dei Genetrix*'. The shape of the speech scroll on Abbot Patry's slab is less convoluted than on Jeanne's, but by the nature of its curvature it is still quite clearly discernible against the rigidity of the architectural surround in which it is set. The attention of the audience would have been drawn to the simplicity of its words and repeated them, contributing to a continual liturgical vocalisation in that chapel to the Virgin Mary.

36 It is not unlikely that these three slabs were ordered together. The Renaissance-inspired detailing on the architectural surround of the earliest of them, to Jean de Tucé, stylistically suggests a later date than that of his death in 1485, and of the two abbots Herbelin and de la Motte, the latter retired in 1492 so his death and subsequent memorialisation in 1496 cannot have been a surprise to the community, with Herbelin dying in the same year.

37 Dieuleveult, *La Couture*, 31–3.

Fig. 5. Incised slab and tomb to Abbot Guillaume Patry (d. 1409), abbey of La Couture, Le Mans. (© Bodleian Libraries, Oxford, MS. Gough Drawings Gaignières 15, f. 25)

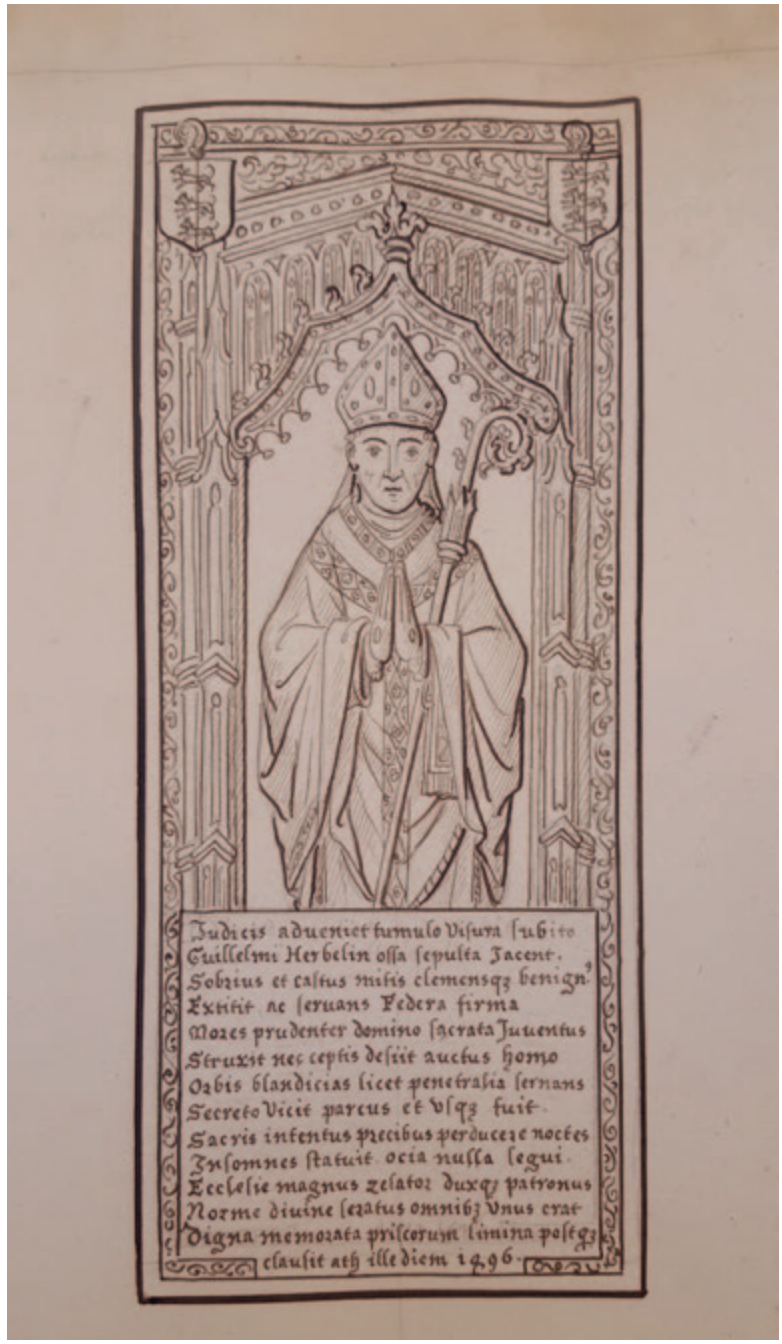

Fig. 6. Incised slab of Abbot Guillaume Herbelein (d. 1496), abbey of La Couture, Le Mans. (© Bodleian Libraries, Oxford, MS. Gough Drawings Gaignières 15, f. 31)

Judicis adveniet tumulo Visura subito, Guillelmi Herbelin ossa sepulta iacent. Sobrius et castus mitis clemensque benignus, Extitit ac servans Federa firma Mores prudenter domino sacrata Juventus / Struxit nec ceptis desiit auctus homo / Orbis blandicias licet penetralia servans / Secreto Vicit parcus et usque fuit. / Sacris intentus precibus perducere noctes / Insomnes statuit ocia nulla sequi. / Ecclesie magnus relator duxque patronus / Norme divine senatus omnibus unus erat / Digna memorata priscorum limina postquam / clausit ath ille diem 1496 (You have come to the tomb of a Judge, where the bones of Guillaume Herbelin lie buried. He was sober, chaste, gentle, sympathetic, and kept his promises inviolate. His youth was dedicated to the Lord as he moulded his character with wisdom, and, as a grown man, he did not renounce his chosen course. Ignoring the blandishments of the world he leapt to his own retreat, and, in seclusion, lived always thriftily. He resolved to spend sleepless nights in devotion to holy prayers, and to pursue no times of relaxation. He was a great promoter of the Church, and a unique guide, champion and senate of God's law to all, he closed the day at the threshold of memory, 1496)

These three slabs complemented each other as their magnificent imagery projected the dignity of the office of abbot, and their combined display of ecclesiastical and (inherently understood) social superiority reflected what these men wanted an audience to understand of their achievements while in authority. Their monuments evidenced, or attempted to, that the deceased had fulfilled institutional expectations as chronicled in their elaborate Latin epitaphs, yet none is as clear as Huguenet's inscription; instead, the verses are hubristic – something perhaps assisted by the technical requirements of versification – rather than objective. And as none of the epitaphs makes a request for intercessory prayer they are symptomatic of the shift in focus – as on slabs to the laity at that time – to boosting the projection of a selfhood rather than cultivating prospective commemoration.[38] It was as if these abbots saw themselves as such magnificent beings that they did not need the type of disorganised intercessory prayer cultivated by the audience of a gravestone. The inscriptions of the three earliest and more conventionally designed abbatial slabs were in French, following Huguenet's brass, whereas these last three were in Latin. Hence, was the Latinity of this group of slabs another device designed to instil a sense of respect and reverence in an audience for these individuals?

All six slabs were located in side chapels off the transepts and ambulatory, so they may well have been viewed by a wider but probably less well-educated audience than had they been in the choir.[39] Although such people might have been familiar with some Latin phrases, particularly if they were read out loud – Patry's speech scroll for example – interpretation of the verses is not straightforward and might have contributed further to a sense of the exclusivity of these individuals. Their locations peripheral to the choir ensured that none of them detracted from the magnificence of Huguenet's brass. Instead, they contributed to

38 M. Heale, 'Monastic Attitudes to Abbatial Magnificence', in *The Prelate in England and Europe*, ed. M. Heale ([York], 2014), 261–76; and Heale, *Abbots and Priors*, 139–86.

39 The chapel of Our Lady was an eastwards extension of the south transept, flanking the choir therefore; the corresponding chapel to the north was known as the chapel of St Léonfort, but there were structural alterations and more chapels added in the sixteenth century which may have led to dedicatory changes by the time of Gaignières; F. Lesueur, 'L'église de la Couture du Mans', *Congrès Archéologique de France*, CXIX (1961), 119–37, at 134–5.

the same kind of inter-dependent intercessory matrix created over a century earlier at the abbeys of Évron (53) and Villeneuve (44), as these later effigial monuments were enrolled in the physical role of *pleurants* gathered around a spectacular sepulchral core in the choir.[40] At La Couture, as intangible ripples of abbatial authority and influence emanated from Huguenet's magnificent brass and extended over the confines of the church, so a sense of this ecclesiastical exclusivity resonated in the other abbatial monuments in the side chapels. Yet such influence worked both ways, in that the cluster of monuments surrounding the choir visibly underpinned the significance and ultimate abbatial authority of Huguenet's brass, which positioned where it was to commemorate the effective re-founder of the abbey, upheld his importance in the overall glorification of its church and his fundamental role as leader in that process.

Conclusion

The brass of Abbot Paschal Huguenet was a quite magnificent artefact in its own right, and among the very best that Parisian engravers, heavily influenced by the Flemish workshops, were able to produce. It was a bespoke brass, doubtless commissioned by Huguenet himself as the manifold expressions of his selfhood were designed to coincide in this single representation: he was to be acknowledged not simply as an abbot of magnificence, and of quasi-episcopal status, but in being buried in the middle of the choir and his brass dominating that space, his identity was subsumed into that of the abbey's founder. But more than this, as the language of the marginal inscription was designed to communicate only with the members of the house, and retain a terrestrial focus, although the location of the brass ensured that the carefully compiled list of his achievements was not just recorded in perpetuity but, from its proximity to the high altar, sanctified. Neither was there any need for a direct intercessory supplication, as the image of the abbot – alive but dead – would have been known to God, and located in front of the monks as they worshipped in their choir, something of his presence could not have failed to ascend celestially with their prayers – something reinforced by the slabs of his successors, clustered around his core tomb as *pleurants* in acknowledgement of his leadership. Ultimately, however, the brass communicated something more than just perpetual memorialisation, as it possessed a didactic function as well. As a message to the audience via its combination of word and imagery, it discoursed a belief that if they, like Huguenet, enriched the life and work of the Church, their souls, like his, will be raised up to rest in Abraham's bosom, there to rejoice in heavenly reward.

40 See Cockerham, *Incised Effigial Slabs*.

'Preciosarum Domuum Fuit Edificator': Bishop William Alnwick (d. 1449) in Brass, Wax, Glass and Stone

Rosemary C.E. Hayes

William Alnwick, bishop of Norwich and Lincoln, died in December 1449 and was buried in Lincoln cathedral under a memorial brass. The brass was recorded by antiquaries shortly before its destruction in 1644. This paper considers evidence for the brass and compares its iconography with other known images, including the bishop's seals. It also discusses possible composers of the epitaph. Taking the lead from this epitaph's description of the bishop as the 'builder of costly houses', the rest of the paper explores traces left by Alnwick's building work. Most of this evidence survives in the buildings themselves in the form of heraldic carvings of Alnwick's arms or their depiction in painted glass. These arms are also displayed in St Michael's church, Alnwick, his birthplace, where fifteenth-century building work has not hitherto been associated with him. In the diocese of Lincoln his arms are also found at Buckden church and the episcopal palaces at Lincoln and Lyddington. A tentative suggestion is made that he may also have built at Buckden palace, while documentary evidence points to extensive building work at Sleaford Castle. The paper concludes by looking at Bishop Alnwick's contribution to Norwich cathedral close, notably in the gatehouse of the bishop's palace and the cathedral's magnificent west front, still adorned with the bishop's arms and a plea to pray for his soul.

On 11 December 1449, Dean John Mackworth and the chapter of Lincoln cathedral wrote to the archbishop of Canterbury, 'weeping, we inform you that, through the death of Lord William, of blessed memory, lately its bishop, the church of Lincoln now lies empty and destitute for want of a shepherd's comfort (*lacrimandens significamus quod ecclesia Lincolniensis … per mortem bone memorie domini Willelmi nuper Episcopi eiusdem presens vacat et pastoris solaccio iam remanet destituta*)'.[1] Archbishop Stafford was already aware of Bishop Alnwick's death, having proved his will at Lambeth on 10 December, the day before the chapter's letter.[2] As Alnwick died in London, where he had travelled to attend parliament, it is possible that the archbishop knew of his death before the chapter at Lincoln.[3]

A well-informed chronicler recorded for 1449:

> 'This year, on 5 December died W. Alnewyke, bishop of Lincoln, a man of great discretion and virtue, but because he had been too strict with his household, after his death his servants openly carried off from his executors

1 London, Lambeth Palace Library [LPL], Register of John Stafford and John Kemp 1443–54, f. 32v. The fullest examination of William Alnwick's career is R.C.E. Hayes, 'William Alnwick, Bishop of Norwich (1426–1437) and Lincoln (1437–1449)' (unpub. Ph.D. thesis, University of Bristol, 1990). See also R.C.E. Hayes, 'Alnwick, William (d. 1449)', *ODNB*, online edn, ref:odnb/421; R.C.E. Hayes, 'The 'Private Life' of a Late Medieval Bishop' in *England in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. N. Rogers (Stamford, 1994), 1–18; *Visitations of Religious Houses in the Diocese of Lincoln 1436–1449*, ed. A.H. Thompson, 2 vols, Canterbury and York Society, 24, 33 (1919, 1927).

2 LPL, Reg. Stafford, ff. 178v–179v. The will is translated, with some omissions, in *Visitations*, ed. Thompson, I, xxiv–xxx. The references below are mainly to the translation.

3 For his itinerary, see Hayes, 'William Alnwick', 410–42.

two thousand marks to distribute among themselves.[4] This was able to happen more easily because his executors were old priests, not worth fearing. (*Hoc anno, videlicet 5 Dec' obit W. Alnewyke, Lincolniensis episcopus, vir multum discretus et virtuosus, sed quia sibi famulantibus fuerat nimis strictus, post eius mortem sui famuli abstulerint palam a suis executoribus duo milia marcarum inter se distribuenda. Hujus occasio conjici poterit facilius, quia ejus executores sacerdotes senes fuerunt, et non timore digni.*)'.[5]

In fact, Alnwick's will, drafted on 12 October 1445, when Dean Mackworth was excommunicate and unlikely to weep at his bishop's death, had nominated, as one of his executors, a man of national significance, William Eastfield, prominent mercer and twice mayor of London. Unfortunately, Eastfield had died in 1446.[6] The failure to replace him with someone of equal prominence is one of several indications that Alnwick's death was sudden and unexpected. Thus, it was left to these poor 'old priests' to do what they could to fulfil the bishop's will and distribute, for the health of his soul, the goods not stolen by his household.

Five executors received Archbishop Stafford's commission to act. It is a little difficult to understand why Thomas Duncan, rector of Chalfont St Giles, Buckinghamshire, was chosen, although he seems to have been an annuitant of the duke of York, on whose council Alnwick had served, and he may have shared the bishop's Northumberland origins.[7] The connection of the others to the bishop is much clearer: John Wygenhale had been Alnwick's vicar general in the diocese of Norwich;[8] and Thomas Twyer was one of the men most often chosen to preach during the bishop's visitation round.[9] Two were canons residentiary of Lincoln cathedral, having received collation of their prebends from the bishop: Thomas Ringstede, sometime provost of Lincoln cathedral, had been Alnwick's receiver general at Norwich;[10] and John Breton was perhaps even more intimately connected to him.[11] The bishop, no doubt, relied on them to negotiate with Lincoln cathedral chapter on his behalf.

4 It has been suggested that '*strictus*' should be translated as 'tight' or 'mean' to explain the theft, if it happened; but Alnwick's bequests to his household seem far from mean: 100s. for every gentleman, 5 marks per yeoman, 40s. per groom and 20s. to every page, with an instruction to his executors to keep the household together for six months after his death. '*Strictus*' in the sense of strict or constraining seems more in keeping with Alnwick's rather austere nature. For his household, see Hayes, 'Private Life', 8–10.

5 *Incerti Scriptores Chronicon Angliae Temporibus Ricardi II, Henrici IV, Henrici V et Henrici VI*, ed. J. Giles, Part II (London, 1848), Henry VI Section, 39.

6 R.C.E. Hayes, 'William Estfield, Mercer (died 1446), and William Alnwick, Bishop (died 1449): Evidence for a Friendship?' in *Tant D'Emprises – So Many Undertakings: Essays in honour of Anne F. Sutton*, ed. L. Visser-Fuchs, *The Ricardian*, 13 (2003), 249–59.

7 P.A. Johnson, *Duke Richard of York* (Oxford, 1988), 34, 231; A.B. Emden, *A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford to 1500 [BRUO]*, 3 vols (Oxford, 1957), I, 605. Alnwick collated the rectory of Wheathampstead, Hertfordshire to him, 3 May 1449 (Lincoln, Lincolnshire Archives Office [LAO], Register XVIII, f. 170).

8 Hayes, 'William Alnwick', 113, 123–5, 133; A.B. Emden, *A Biographical Register of the University of Cambridge to 1500 [BRUC]*, (Cambridge, 1963), 655; *John le Neve: Fasti Ecclesiae Anglicanae 1300–1541, IV: Monastic Cathedrals*, comp. B. Jones (London, 1963), 31.

9 *Visitations*, ed. Thompson, I, xxx, 60, 89–90, 113, 130; II, 231, 262, 285, 319, 395, 419; Hayes, 'William Alnwick', 131, 146; Emden, *BRUO*, III, 1920; *John le Neve: Fasti Ecclesiae Anglicanae 1300–1541, I, Lincoln Diocese*, comp. H.P.F. King (London, 1962), 86, 90.

10 Norwich, Norfolk Record Office [NRO], EST 15/1/1–2; Hayes, 'William Alnwick', 48, 120–21, 259; Emden, *BRUC*, 499–500; *Fasti Lincoln*, 42, 49.

11 Hayes, 'Private Life', 9; the Norwich receiver general's accounts (1428–30) record John Breton and others being clothed, fed, schooled and barbered at the bishop's expense (NRO, EST 15/1/1–2); *Fasti 1300–1541, Lincoln Diocese*, comp. King, 114, 125.

As was conventional, Alnwick asked to be buried in Lincoln cathedral and made extensive provision for those attending his exequies. He left 3d. to every poor man coming on the day of his funeral, and 1d. to each coming on the seventh and thirtieth days after it; 6s. 8d. to every canon at the funeral, 3s. 4d. to every vicar, 20d. to every vicar of the second form, 16d. to every chantry chaplain, 12d. to every poor clerk and chorister; and asked his executors to use their discretion in distributions to any other men of religion who were present and any ministers of the church he had omitted.[12] Moreover, he asked that 'for five years... my executors find, at some altar as nigh as may be to the place of my burial, an honest priest that shall celebrate for my soul and the soul of Master Stephen le Scrope, sometime archdeacon of Richmond' and the faithful departed; thus making clear his debt to Stephen Scrope, nephew of the martyred archbishop of York.[13] Bishop Alnwick requested burial at the west end of the cathedral, 'at the place where the bishop makes his station at the time of the procession'.[14] His burial there is now commemorated by a nineteenth-century brass inlay that simply says '*Alnwick Episc: MCCCCXLIX*.'. The suggestion that, at some point, his memorial was in the north aisle of the nave seems to have derived from an error made after his tomb was lost.[15]

In May 1644, Alnwick's original brass was destroyed, with more than 200 others, by Lord Manchester's troops, perhaps responding over-enthusiastically to the anti-idolatry ordinance of 1643.[16] In 1654, John Evelyn wrote, 'the Souldiers has lately knocked off all or most of the Brasses which were on the Gravestones, so as few Inscriptions were left: They told us they went in with their axes & hammers, & shut themselves in, till they had rent & torne of some barges full of Mettal; not sparing the monuments of the dead, so helish an avarice possess'd them'.[17] Fortunately, in 1641, only three years before their destruction, Robert Sanderson, later bishop of Lincoln, and William Dugdale had recorded many of the then surviving inscriptions, Dugdale employing

12 *Visitations*, ed. Thompson, I, xxv.

13 *Visitations*, ed. Thompson, I, xxvi. Scrope, who was chancellor of Cambridge University in 1414, perhaps enabled Alnwick's study there, certainly gave him support in becoming a notary public (1411), probably gave him his first benefice, Goldsborough, Yorkshire, in Scrope's archdeaconry, made him his executor, and bequeathed him (1418) '*i flatt pecie de auro cooperto*', one sliver-covered salt-cellar bearing Scrope's arms and six books (*Testamenta Eboracensia*, ed. J. Raine, Surtees Society, 4 (1836), 385–9; Emden, *BRUC*, 515; R.C.E. Hayes, 'The Pre-episcopal Career of William Alnwick, Bishop of Norwich and Lincoln' in *People, Politics and Community in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. J. Rosenthal and C. Richmond, (Gloucester, 1987), 90–107, at 92–3, 95; Hayes, 'Private Life', 16).

14 *Visitations*, ed. Thompson, I, xxv.

15 According to Liv Gibbs, Wenceslaus Hollar's plan, made in 1672 for Bishop Reynolds and used by Browne Willis in his *Survey of the Cathedrals*, indicates that Alnwick's memorial had been translated. It is more likely that the plan, made after the destruction of the tomb, is in error (L Gibbs, *Lincoln Cathedral and Close Conservation Plan*, 3 vols, unpublished report, 2001, (available in Lincoln Cathedral Library and Lincoln Central Library), II, 126; B. Willis, *A Survey of the Cathedrals of York, Durham, Carlisle, Chester, Man, Litchfield, Hereford, Worcester, Gloucester, Bristol, Lincoln, Ely, Oxford, Peterborough, Canterbury, Rochester, London, Winchester, Chichester, Norwich, Salisbury, Wells, Exeter, St David's, Llandaff, Bangor, and St Asaph*, 3 vols (London, 1742), III. The plan contained in this volume seems to indicate that the tomb was in the north aisle but (III, 56) Willis describes the tomb in the place it was recorded in 1641, which coincides with the bishop's request).

16 E. Venables and G.G. Perry, *Lincoln Diocesan History* (London, 1897), 297; *Lincolnshire Notes and Queries*, 8 (Horncastle, 1905), 173. For a superb study of Lincoln's late medieval brasses, see D. Lepine, ''Pause and pray with mournful heart': late Medieval Clerical Monuments in Lincoln Cathedral', *MBS Trans*, 19 (2014), 15–40, at 24–5, 33.

17 *The Diary of John Evelyn*, ed. E.S. De Beer, 6 vols (Oxford, 2000 reprint), III, 131.

William Sedgwick to draw several of the brasses, including Bishop Alnwick's (Fig. 1).[18] Already, by 1641, the central brass figure had been lost, although the indent shows that he was standing erect, wearing episcopal robes and a mitre, and holding a crozier. On his right, the viewer's left, are the arms of the see of Lincoln – *Gules, two lions passant or, in a chief azure the Virgin Mary with Child*. These were also on the lower left part of Alnwick's seal as bishop of Lincoln (Fig. 2). On the bishop's left, our right, are the arms of the see of Norwich – *Azure, three mitres labelled or* – also to be seen on Alnwick's great seal as bishop of Norwich (Fig. 3).[19]

Elizabeth New has recently explored links between episcopal seals and brasses, and one can see similarities between Alnwick's brass and his seals.[20] All exhibit the similar layout of an episcopal figure between two sets of arms. However, whereas on his brass he appears to be standing erect, on his seals, Alnwick is depicted as a supplicant below his cathedral's patron – in Norwich's case the Holy Trinity, in Lincoln's the Blessed Virgin Mary. In fact, each seal contains images of both the Trinity and Mary. The main image on the Norwich seal is the Trinity but, above it, one can just make out the lower part of an image of the Virgin and Child. Similarly, the (damaged) Lincoln seal is headed by an image of the Trinity. Both are central to Christian doctrine, so it would not be unusual to find them together, but his seals may be an indication of particular devotion on Alnwick's part. In addition to these central images, the Virgin and Child on the Lincoln seal are flanked by two saints. The figures are damaged but one of the saints is clearly labelled '*Hugo*', presumably St Hugh, Alnwick's predecessor as bishop of Lincoln (1186–1200); the other would appear to be St George, perhaps a reference to Alnwick's years of service to the kings Henry V and Henry VI. Alnwick's personal devotion to the patrons of his two cathedrals and St Hugh is further illustrated by the words with which he opened his will, 'In the name of the most high and undivided Trinity, the Father and Son and Holy Spirit, and of the most glorious virgin and mother saint Mary, of St Hugh and the whole heavenly host'.[21] In his impression of the remains of Alnwick's brass, Sedgwick drew shields in its four corners but did not copy any arms portrayed therein. Nevertheless, it is probable that they bore Alnwick's own arms – *Argent, a cross moline sable*. His *cross moline* is clearly depicted (bottom right) on both seals.

As well as the imagery, Sedgwick copied the memorial inscription surrounding the brass and showed where it continued beneath the figure.[22] David Lepine suggests that Alnwick composed his own epitaph.[23] It is possible that he devised the rhyming Latin couplets, philosophising on the certainty of death, that were inscribed at the foot of his figure:[24]

18 BL, Add. MS 71474 (Dugdale's Book of Monuments) f. 93 (I am grateful to the British Library for permission to publish the images in Figures 1 and 2). Add. MS 34140 may hold Sanderson's original notes.

19 I am grateful to The National Archives for permission to publish this image.

20 E. New, 'The Tomb and Seal of John Trillek, Bishop of Hereford: some comparative thoughts', *MBS Trans*, 19 (2014), 2–14; E. New, 'Episcopal Embodiment: the Tombs and Seals of Bishops in Medieval England and Wales' in *The Prelate in England and Europe 1300–1560*, ed M. Heale (York, 2014), 191–214.

21 *Visitations*, ed. Thompson, I, xxiv.

22 The surviving copies differ a little so, in the absence of the original, I have used Sedgwick's transcript. Variations found in what seem to be the best printed versions of the transcriptions (F. Peck, *Desiderata Curiosa*, 2 vols (London, 1732), II, Liber VIII, 15; Willis, *Survey*, III, 56) are in the notes. Variations in the use of capital letters and punctuation have been ignored.

23 Lepine, 'Pause and pray', 33.

24 BL Add. MS 71474, f. 93 has copied this in 6 lines, which would indicate a couplet to a line, if a literal transcript.

Fig. 1. William Sedgwick's drawing of Bishop Alnwick's brass in Lincoln cathedral (1641).
(© British Library Board, BL, Add. MS 71474, f. 93)

Fig. 2. Bishop Alnwick's seal as bishop of Lincoln (1442). (© British Library Board, Add Ch 47801)

In cinerem rediet[25] *cinis, & nequit hic remanere.*
Mortem non fugiet homo natus de muliere.
Ut[26] *flos egreditur, etate virente decora,*
Et cito conteritur, cum mortis venerit hora.
Hic labor, hicque dolor, hic[27] *languor, et hic ululatus*
Omnis transit honor, homo nunc, cras[28] *incineratus.*
Si velis, aut[29] *nolis, tua non hic Gloria stabit;*
Et patris et prolis fera vitam mors superabit.
Decessit Solomon sapiens, mitis quoque David:
Fortis erat Sampson, tamen illum Mors superavit.

25 Willis, *Survey*, III, 56 has '*rediit*'.
26 Willis, *Survey*, III, 56 has '*Et*'.
27 Willis, *Survey*, III, 56 has '*hicque*'.
28 Willis, *Survey*, III, 56 has '*eris*'.

Fig. 3. Bishop Alnwick's seal as bishop of Norwich (1430). (© The National Archives, E 30/438)

Me mundus renuit, potior nunc iure paterno,
Quem Virgo genuit regnem[30] *cum*[31] *Rege superno.*

(Ash returns to ashes and cannot remain here.
Man that is born of woman cannot flee from Death,
As a beautiful flower grows beyond the age of its blooming
And is quickly obliterated when the hour of death comes.
Here is toil; and here is pain; here is weariness, and here is wailing;

29 Peck, 15 has '*si*'.
30 Peck, 15 has '*regnum*'.
31 Willis, *Survey*, III, 56 has '*nunc*'.

All honour passes; what is now Man, will be ash tomorrow.
Whether you will or not, your glory will not endure.
Untamed Death will overcome the life of both father and child.
Wise Solomon gave way, also gentle David.
Sampson was strong but Death overcame him.
The world has rejected me; now I occupy, by the Paternal law,
The kingdom of him whom the Virgin bore, with the celestial King.)

This is generic philosophising on the inevitability of death, even for the great. It may have been written by Alnwick or even taken off the shelf by his executors. By contrast, the script that surrounded the brass was more directly relevant to Alnwick and, as it alludes to the suddenness of his death, it is likely that this epitaph was composed by his executors, perhaps the two residentiary canons, Thomas Ringstede and John Breton. Possibly, the lead was taken by Breton, who had been brought up in Alnwick's Norwich household, and in 1448 had received collation from him of Sutton-cum-Buckingham, Lincoln cathedral's richest prebend.[32] Although Alnwick's will only asked for a five-year chantry, in 1461, twelve years after his death, Breton made an agreement with the dean and chapter of Lincoln extending this chantry.[33] Making his own will in 1465, Breton instructed his executors, to find 'a respectable priest of good behaviour (*unum sacerdotum honestum et bone conversacionis*)', not already a vicar or chantry priest in the cathedral, to celebrate for both their souls for twenty years after his death, leaving the residue of his estate to be spent for the benefit of their two souls, primarily in building bridges and roads.[34] Moreover, he requested burial 'by the side or at the feet of my matchless lord, William Alnewyk (*circa latiis et pedibus domini mei singularissimi domini Willelmi Alnewyk*)'.[35] Sedgwick did not draw Breton's brass, which seems to have contained a representation of his rebus, but the inscription was recorded as follows:[36]

Hic iacet dominus Johannes Breton, quondam prebendarius prebende de Buckingham et residentiarius istius ecclesie, qui obiit sexto die mensis Aprilis AD 1465. Cuius anime propitietur deus Amen.

(Here lies Sir John Breton, once prebendary of the prebend of Buckingham and residentiary of this church, who died 6 April 1465. May God have mercy on his soul Amen.)

In carne viventes orate pro defunctis,[37] *quia moriemini, et pro caritate, dicite Pater Noster, Amen.*

(Those who are living in the flesh, pray for the dead, for you will die, and for love, say an Our Father, Amen).

Miserere mei deus[38] *et salva me.*

(God have mercy on me and save me.)

At his feet were these verses:

Sub pedibus stratus et vermibus associatus,
Sum desolatus, sis Christe mihi[39] *miseratus;*
Vestibus ecce meis, famulis, opibus quoque nudor,
Sum privatus eis, sub terram terra recludor.

32 LAO, Reg. XVIII, f. 108v; Willis, *Survey*, III, 245–7.
33 LAO, D&C A/2/34, ff. 59, 81. Breton lent 600 marks to the dean and chapter who, if they failed to repay it, were to spend £10 yearly to sustain an obit for Alnwick and to support a chaplain to celebrate for his soul every day.
34 LAO, D&C A/2/35, ff. 96v–8, 170; D&C Dij/50/2/21.
35 LAO, D&C A/2/35, f. 97v.
36 BL Add. MS 71474, f. 104; Willis, *Survey*, III, 247; Lepine, 'Pause and pray', 36.
37 Willis, III, 247 has '*Defuncto*'.
38 Willis, III, 247 has '*Jesu*'. According to BL, Add. MS 34140, f. 15v, this line was contained in a scroll over Breton's head.
39 Willis, III, 247 has '*mei*'.

Fig. 4. The arms of Bishop Alnwick and John Breton on the vicars' choral tithe barn, Lincoln. (photo © author)

Virginis o nate genitricis[40] *pro pietate,*
Propitium da te mihi nunc, ne seperer[41] *a te.*

(Lying underfoot and associated with the worms,
I am desolate unless Christ has mercy on me;
I am stripped of my clothes, my family and my goods
I am shut off, under the earth, deprived of them.
Oh you who are born of a Virgin mother in your grace,
Give me your mercy now, lest I be separated from you.)

Despite the destruction of their brasses, the close relationship between William Alnwick and John Breton is still reflected in the arms mounted, one presumes by Breton, on the east end of the building known as the vicars' choral tithe barn, just south of Lincoln cathedral (Fig. 4). On the left there survives Bishop Alnwick's *cross moline* and, on the right, Breton's rebus of '*Bre*' on a tun or barrel.

Whether it was John Breton, Thomas Ringstede or some other associate of William Alnwick who composed the bishop's epitaph, it reveals a good knowledge of the man, his career and his interests. The couplets placed at the foot of the

40 Willis, III, 247 has '*genetricis*'.
41 Willis, III, 247 has '*separer*'.

bishop's image, philosophising on the shortness of life and certainty of death, have already been discussed. Running around the edge of the brass were the following words:[42]

Mortis vi rapide de mundi valle vocatus,
Alnwick[43] *sub lapide | iacet hic Willelmus humatus.*
Quondam privati custos fuit ille sigilli,
Noluit ille pati falsum dum constitit illi.
Primo Norwici[44] *pastoris fulsit honore,*
Postea | multiplici stetit hic non absque labore.
Multos sudores [**Populi pro pace subivit,*
Abstulit][45] *| errores sua sicut cura*[46] *petivit.*
Etheris[47] *aularum perpes*[48] *sit participator,*
Qui preciosarum domuum fuit edificator.
Anno C. Christi quater, M, quater X, deca[49] *dempto*
Una,[50] *mors isti nocuit pretio crucis empto.*

(Called by the rapid force of death from the vale of this world,[51]
William Alnwick lies buried beneath this stone.
He was once keeper of the privy seal[52]
He would not endure dishonesty while holding this post.
First, he shone with honour as shepherd of Norwich.[53]
Then he stood here [Lincoln] for many years and not without effort.
He sweated much for the peace of his people,[54]
And sought to remove their errors such was his care of them.[55]
Let him be an everlasting participator in the halls of Heaven

42 BL Add. MS 71474, f. 93. Variations noted from Peck, *Desiderata Curiosa*, II, Lib. VIII, 15 and Willis, *Survey*, III, 56 are in the notes. In the image in Add MS 71474, the text starts at the top left-hand corner, working clockwise round the brass.

43 BL, Add. MS 34140, f. 15 has 'Alnwyke'; Peck, 15 has '*Alnwyc*', either may well be closer to the original.

44 Peck, 15 has '*Norvici*'.

45 Text supplied by Willis with the note '*These crotcheted Words were wanting Anno 1641, but the Epitaph seems to have contained them' (Willis, *Survey*, III, 56). This area is crosshatched in BL Add. MS 71474.

46 Peck, 15 has '*Cor*'.

47 '*Et heris*', two words in Peck, 15.

48 Peck, 15 has '*proprius*'.

49 Peck, 15 has '*Decade*'.

50 Peck, 15 and Willis, III, 56 have '*Uno*'. BL, Add. MS 34140, f. 15 has '*dempta Uno*'.

51 This apparently, refers to the suddenness of his death. Other indications are the fact that he had not replaced William Eastfield as an executor, and his 1449 itinerary, which included travelling as far as Winchester in July 1449 for parliament. On 5 November, he was in his manor at Lyddington but by the 19th he was in London, again for parliament. He was present in Council at Blackfriars on 1 December (TNA, E 28/79/56) and undertook his last recorded episcopal act on 3 December (LAO, Reg. XVIII, f. 188), two days before his death.

52 Appointed 16 December 1422 (*Proceedings and Ordinances of the Privy Council of England (1386–1542)*, ed. N.H. Nicolas, 7 vols (London, 1834–7), III, 9), sacked in Humphrey, duke of Gloucester's coup of February 1432 (Hayes, 'William Alnwick', 305–6).

53 1426–37. Although translated to Lincoln in 1436, he was still acting in Norwich early in 1437 and did not reach Lincoln until Maundy Thursday, 1437 (Hayes, 'William Alnwick', 422).

54 This may refer to Alnwick's struggle to settle disputes raging between Dean Mackworth and the Lincoln chapter for much of the first half of the fifteenth century, including composing his *Laudum* (1439) and *Novum Registrum* (1440) for the cathedral. Many of the relevant records are in *Statutes of Lincoln Cathedral*, ed. H. Bradshaw and C. Wordsworth, 2 parts in 3 vols (Cambridge, 1892–7); discussed in Hayes, 'William Alnwick', 16–58. The best published narrative is in A.H. Thompson, *The English Clergy and their Organization in the Later Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1947), 89–96, although Thompson was unaware of Mackworth's eventual submission to the bishop's discipline.

55 Possibly a reference to Alnwick's extensive heresy trials, particularly as bishop of Norwich. Discussed in Hayes, 'William Alnwick', 198–206. The records, much used by historians of Lollardy and ecclesiastical attempts to curb it, are published in *Fasciculi Zizaniorum Johannis Wyclif Cum Tricito*, ed. W.W. Shirley, Rolls Series, 5 (1858), 417–32 and *Heresy Trials in the Diocese of Norwich 1428–31*, ed. N.P. Tanner, Camden 4th series, 20 (1977), with some supplementary documents in *The Acts and Monuments of John Foxe*, ed. S.R. Cattley, 8 vols (London, 1837–41), III, 586–601. Correcting errors was also encompassed by his extensive visitations, particularly of religious houses, as recorded in *Visitations*.

Who was the builder of costly houses.
In the year of Christ four hundred, one thousand and five decades minus
One, Death stole this man, bought by the price of the Cross.)

So this epitaph is particular in its description of the man and his qualities – upright and caring for his flocks; and his considerable achievements as holder of one of England's major offices and the two most heavily populated dioceses of the country. In praying for his salvation, it concludes with a neat pun on Alnwick's fame as a builder.

What inspired this epitaph's composer to describe him as '*preciosarum domuum … edificator*'? Alnwick himself clearly thought he had done more than the average bishop of Lincoln in contributing to its fabric. In his will, he complained 'that I found great dilapidation in the buildings of my church and have laid out and spent no small sums of money in their repair and in the construction of new buildings from money procured far beyond the sum for which the rents and revenues of my church of Lincoln, after the victuals and raiment of me and mine had been deducted from the same, could be sufficient, as may clearly appear to anyone who will look into it by my yearly accounts'.[56] Sadly, those accounts do not survive, so it is difficult to ascertain exactly what he was referring to. One wonders, if he spent much more than the revenues of his church, where the money came from? A man described by the papal collector as 'a peasant born of a vile family (*rusticanus homo et ex vili genere natus*)' presumably had no family money.[57] Was it his ten-year stint as keeper of the privy seal that made him rich and, if so, was he less upright than his epitaph-writer claimed? We will probably never know.

What had this money been spent on? In his lifetime, Alnwick participated in the foundation of several chantries, most often with educational associations. He assisted Henry VI in founding Eton and King's Colleges, helping to compile the original statutes of King's and being its designated visitor, as well as being commissioned by Archbishop Stafford to consecrate its chapel and cemetery (1444).[58] On his own behalf, he was remembered for having built the south part of the Cambridge schools;[59] and he was one of those who founded the inn for Benedictines that became Magdalene College (1428).[60] There are now no known physical indications of his connection with any of these places. Similarly, no tangible evidence survives of his part in the foundation of the confraternities of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Louth, Lincolnshire and St Christopher in Thame, Oxfordshire (1447);[61] and his involvement with Lord Cromwell's foundation at Tattershall, Lincolnshire has left no physical trace.[62]

56 *Visitations*, ed. Thompson, I, xxix.
57 J. Haller, *Piero da Monte: Ein Gelehrter Und Päpstlicher Beamter Des 15 Jahr Hunderts* (Rome, 1941), 74.
58 Hayes, 'William Alnwick', 269–72, 311–13, 339; *CPR, 1436–41*, 455, 521–3; *Memorials of the Reign of King Henry VI. Official Correspondence of Thomas Bekynton, Secretary to King Henry VI, and Bishop of Bath and Wells*, ed. G. Williams, Rolls Series, 56, 2 vols (1872), I, 270–93, II, 157–74; LPL, Reg. Stafford, f. 12.
59 '*hujus munificentia adjuti sunt Cantabrigenses in aedificando meridionali parte publicarum scholarum, et in missa Benefactorum memoratur*' (F. Godwin, *De Praesulibus Angliae* (Cambridge, 1743), 298n).
60 Hayes, 'William Alnwick', 272–3; *CPR, 1422–9*, 475; P. Cunich, D. Hoyle, E. Duffy, R. Hyam, *A History of Magdalene College Cambridge, 1428–1988* (Cambridge, 1994), 1–7.
61 *CPR, 1446–52*, 81, 180–1.
62 *CPL*, IX, 159–63; *CPR, 1422–29*, 212; *Visitations*, ed. Thompson, I, xxii.

The 'educational chantry' perhaps closest to William Alnwick's heart was at his presumed birthplace of Alnwick, Northumberland. On 6 July 1448, a licence was granted for Henry, earl of Northumberland, William, bishop of Lincoln, Sir Henry Percy, Lord Poynings, and John Lematon to found a chantry of two chaplains to celebrate daily at the altar of Our Lady within the chapel of St Michael's Alnwick.[63] One of these chaplains was to teach grammar to poor boys without payment.[64] Alnwick further demonstrated his affection for his place of origin by leaving bequests to the walls of Alnwick, Hulne Carmelite Priory, and Alnwick Abbey, a Premonstratensian house. To St Michael's he left, besides £10 for its repair, 'my third missal in value, an antiphoner, a purple suit of vestments of mine of cloth of gold with golden lions interwoven … and a chalice.'[65]

Alnwick's generosity to his home town seems to have been forgotten there. Although George Tate, the town's nineteenth-century historian, recognised the bishop's importance and recorded the bequests, he attributed mid-fifteenth-century building in the church to monies raised thanks to a charter issued by Henry VI from Bamburgh Castle on 9 April 1464, shortly before the fall of Alnwick to Yorkist forces. In this, Tate is followed by present guides to the church.[66] It is most improbable that such building work was funded by a grant that Henry VI was in no position to support. It seems much more likely that it was related to the foundation of the chantry, which followed grants allowing the town to be walled in the 1430s.[67] William Alnwick may even have first thought of contributing to the walls and church of his birthplace when, as keeper of the privy seal, he visited the area while negotiating with Scotland (1424–5).[68] The connection with the chantry would seem to be confirmed by the existence in the church's chancel of fifteenth-century angels holding not only the locket and crescent of the Percy family but also the *cross moline* of Bishop William Alnwick (Figs 5 and 6). Tate, and those following him, have identified these arms as those of Bishop Bek of Durham who died more than a century before the work was commenced.[69] However, it is surely more likely that these arms were placed by one of the town's most eminent sons, in the chantry he had recently founded there; or, possibly, by those wishing to commemorate him in his birthplace.

Turning to buildings within his two dioceses, similar angels holding shields with the *cross moline* appear spaced out along the clerestory

63 The church was appropriated to, and served from, the abbey, hence its description as a 'chapel' (G. Tate, *The History of the Borough, Castle, and Barony of Alnwick*, 2 vols (Alnwick, 1866–9), II, 21).

64 *CPR, 1446–52*, 170. Alnwick grammar school grew out of this foundation (Tate, *Alnwick*, II, 69–77).

65 *Visitations*, ed. Thompson, I, xxvi–xxvii.

66 Tate, *Alnwick*, I, 191–2, 236–41, 247, 274–5, 394, Appendix V, II, 69–77, 105–52; 'St Michael's Parish Church Alnwick: A Short History of the Building' (typescript by 'A.C.K', 2004, revised 2012 or later). For a clear chronology of the loss of Lancastrian holdings in the north east, see B. Wolffe, *Henry VI* (London, 1981), 332–8.

67 So suggested C.H. Hartshorne, *Feudal and Military Antiquities of Northumberland and the Scottish Borders* (London, 1858), 172–3. It makes more sense than Tate's reliance on the 1464 charter and it is a pity Tate dismissed Hartshorne's theory.

68 28–9 March 1424 at Durham (*CCR, 1422–9*, 143), 23 August 1425 at Warkworth, Northumberland (*Proceedings*, ed. Nicolas, III, 171–4). There is no surviving evidence that he travelled north of Lincolnshire after this date.

69 Tate, *Alnwick*, I, 394, II, 106–12. Bishop Bek's arms were *Gules, a cross moline ermine*, so, given the loss of paint on the shields, the confusion is understandable. Bek held the lordship of Alnwick for a short while, which explains why historians, unaware of Bishop Alnwick's arms, thought that the crosses *moline* in the church were his.

Fig. 5. The east end of St Michael's church, Alnwick, Northumberland, showing the position of the angels holding arms. (photo © author)

Fig. 6. Angel holding Bishop Alnwick's arms in St Michael's church, Alnwick, Northumberland. (photo © author)

of the nave of St Mary's church, Buckden, Huntingdonshire (Fig. 7).[70] The colours of Alnwick's arms were still to be seen as late as the 1684 heraldic visitation.[71] It is likely that Alnwick was responsible for building in the nave and for the fifteenth-century south porch of the church, although it is also possible to attribute the work to Canons John Depyng or William Alnwick junior, successive prebendaries of Buckden (1427–61), both close associates of the bishop.[72] The church was situated beside one of the favourite residences of the bishops of Lincoln on the Great North Road (Fig. 8). Is it possible that Alnwick's efforts here extended beyond the church to building some parts of the fifteenth-century brick palace? This has been described as 'an imitation of' Tattershall Castle, Lincolnshire, built by his friend, Ralph, Lord Cromwell (Figs 9 and 10).[73] Tempting as it is to suggest that Buckden is one of Alnwick's '*preciosarum domuum*', all extant evidence points to his successors, Bishops Rotherham (1472–80) and Russell (1480–94) as builders of 'Buckden Towers'.[74]

In contrast to Buckden, there is tantalising documentary evidence that Bishop Alnwick built at Sleaford Castle, Lincolnshire, only

Fig. 7. Angel in the nave of St Mary's church, Buckden, Huntingdonshire, holding Bishop Alnwick's arms. (photo © author)

70 Alnwick bequeathed the church 100s. and vestments worth 12 marks plus a share of the 50 marks he left to be distributed to the poor of all parishes appropriated to the bishopric (*Visitations*, ed. Thompson, I, xxvii).

71 *The Visitation of the County of Huntingdon 1684*, ed. J. Bedells, Harleian Society, New Series, 13 (1994), 112.

72 *Fasti 1300–1541, Lincoln Diocese*, comp. King, 43–4; Hayes, 'Private Life', 6–7. Depyng certainly contributed to the fifteenth-century work in the church: 'He built Buckden chancel about 1434, as appears by this inscription, in part yet remaining in the East Window, … "*Hanc Cancellam fieri fecit … Deping, hujus Ecclesiae Praebendarius AD MCC …*"' (Willis, *Survey*, III, 155).

73 W.D. Simpson, 'Buckden Palace', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, 3rd series, 2 (1937), 121–32, at 124. See also, M. Thompson, *Medieval Bishops' Houses in England and Wales* (Ashgate, 1998), 113, 162. Not only Thompson but also A. Emery, *Greater Medieval Houses of England and Wales 1300–1500*, 3 vols (Cambridge, 1996–2006), II, 229–32, 308–16 and *passim*, stress the influence of Tattershall on Buckden and other brick tower houses.

74 Rotherham and Russell are the recognised builders, and the arms of Bishops Russell and Smith are prominently displayed. As most of the evidence for Alnwick's building is heraldic, it would be wrong to argue against this. Nevertheless, it is interesting that Thompson (*Bishops' Houses*, 6) uses the Winchester pipe rolls to show that Farnham Castle, previously attributed, on heraldic evidence, to Bishop Foxe of Winchester (1501–23) was built by his predecessor, Bishop Waynflete, in the 1470s. Unfortunately, no similar records survive for Buckden.

Fig. 8 Buckden church with the episcopal palace behind. (photo © author)

fourteen miles from Tattershall.[75] A boundary dispute between the de la Launde family of Ashby and Temple Bruer Preceptory (1492–1503) brought forth aged witnesses who remembered that Bishop Alnwick often 'rode between Lincoln and Sleford, when his castill of Sleford was in beldyng'. It seems that Alnwick's frequent journeys had even created a new road, 'the litill olde Strete, west fro the s'd Brode Strete, was the old way bytwyx Lincoln and Sleford, & allway so called & used, unto the s'd Bp. Amwyk, by oft tymes using to ride betwene Lincoln & Sleford, by Continuance frett & fyrst used, & made the said new way,

75 Confident statements that 'Alnwick was … responsible for substantial building work at Sleaford' (G. Coppack, *Medieval Bishops' Palace, Lincoln* (London, 2000), 20, for example) have been hard to substantiate. Of the bibliography listed on Sleaford Castle's Historic England Listing Schedule (https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1013527) the source seems to be similarly unsupported claims in E. Trollope, *Sleaford and the Wapentakes of Flaxwell and Aswardhurn in the County of Lincoln* (London and Sleaford, 1872), 118. Trollope's source was probably J. Creasey, *Sketches Illustrative of the Topography and History of New and Old Sleaford* (London, 1825), 37, 340–1. Fortunately, Creasey cited 'Peck's MSS, vol. IV. No. 4937' (*Ibid.*, 341). This is now BL, Add. MS 4937. 'Peck's MSS' were made as Francis Peck was working towards a new edition of Dugdale's *Monasticon*. He collected information relating to Temple Bruer and Sleaford from manuscripts belonging to 'Nevil King, Esq. of Grantham' in 1730 (Add. MS 4937, ff. 78, 102, 104). This manuscript records memories of work undertaken in Alnwick's day. No other supporting evidence has been found.

Fig. 9. 'Buckden Towers', palace of the bishops of Lincoln. (photo © author)

that now is called the new brode-way'.[76] Sadly, nothing substantial remains of Sleaford Castle or any work commissioned by Alnwick.[77] These old men's memories are the only surviving evidence that he built anything there.

Fig. 10. Ralph, Lord Cromwell's Tattershall Castle, Lincolnshire, the model for 'Buckden Towers'. (photo © author)

At Lincoln itself, however, his name is preserved in the gatehouse he built for the bishop's palace, still known as the Alnwick Tower (Fig. 11).[78] Carvings of his *cross moline* are to be found on the Alnwick Tower and its original wooden doors (Fig. 12). Where the destruction of the Lincoln brasses can be blamed on the parliamentary army of 1644, it was royalist forces that severely damaged the Lincoln episcopal palace by setting fire to it in 1648.[79] Fortunately, some indication of what was to be lost was recorded by Gervase Holles in the 1630s, and by a

76 BL, Add MS 4937, ff. 78–104, especially f. 82. One witness even remembered that his master had said no good would come of using the new road (f. 84; Creasey, *Sleaford*, 340–1). This is in marked contrast to the spiritual gains from road-building envisioned by Breton. An account of payments made for items purchased to repair the castle in 1509 gives a good impression of the sheer weight of material that would have been travelling towards Sleaford (LAO, BP/ACCOUNTS/19).

77 Dr Coppack tells me, however, that Ancaster stone remaining at Sleaford is 'very closely comparable' with that used in Alnwick's chapel and tower at the Lincoln palace.

78 Emery thinks that, like Buckden, the Alnwick Tower was influenced by Tattershall (*Medieval Houses*, II, 179). See Coppack, *Bishops' Palace* for a good description of the palace and Alnwick's alterations.

79 Coppack, *Bishops' Palace*, 22.

Fig. 11. Alnwick Tower at the medieval bishop's palace, Lincoln.
(photo © author)

parliamentary survey (1647).[80] Apart from the tower, Alnwick's main contribution seems to have been the chapel range, which the survey described thus, 'In the florye over the parlour is a very faire chapel with seates and many other conveniences and very faire painted glass windows, with a small studye there and allsoe a lobye, a withdrawinge chamber with a closset Pewe lookinge in at the end of the chappell'.[81] This chapel was dedicated to the Virgin Mary and its windows filled with prayers addressed to her and the Holy Trinity on the bishop's behalf. Holles, who noted the frequent occurrence of Alnwick's arms but, mistakenly, attributed them to Bishop John Buckingham (1363–98), described the chapel glass thus:[82]

In introit ad Capellam, in Fenestra: -

(At the entrance to the chapel in the window)

Istam, Virgo, novellam do tibi, meque Capellam,
Alnwick,[83] *tu pia,*[84] *natum fac mihi propitiatum.*

(I give this new little chapel and myself, Alnwick, to you Virgin
Oh holy one, make your son gracious to me)

In ye Chappell in every window memorialls of ye saide Alnewick, as

O Benedicte[85] *satis Flos et Rosa Virginitatis*
Luminis ad regnum duc Alnwick, Virgo, Wilelmum.

(O most blessed Flower and Rose of Virginity
Virgin, lead William Alnwick to the Kingdom of Light)

O Pater! O Proles! O Consolatio! Flamen
Quem refovere soles, Alnwick, ostende solamen.

(O Father! O Son! O Consolation!
Show comfort to Alnwick, the priest whom you are wont to cherish)

80 BL, Harley MS 6829. Alnwick's arms (never recognised as such) are illustrated on pp. 45, 56, 67, 182, 239, 272; *Lincolnshire Church Notes made by Gervase Holles, AD 1634 to AD 1642. And edited from Harleian Manuscript 6829*, ed. R.E.G. Cole, Lincoln Record Society, 1 (1911), 52–3.

81 LAO, BP Surveys 1, f. 3.

82 BL, Harley MS 6829, pp. 45–6; *Holles Lincolnshire Church Notes*, ed. Cole, 52–3.

83 Peck, II, Liber VIII, 32–3 (citing '*MS J Anstis Arm.*') has '*Alnwyc*'.

84 Peck, 32 has '*pie*'.

85 Peck, 33 has '*Benedicta*', which is surely better?

Fig. 12. The doors of the Alnwick Tower, Lincoln.
(photo © author)

Triplex persona, sed simplex in deitate
Willelmum[86] *dona celis Alnwick,*[87] *precor a te.*

(Threefold in persons, but single in godhead
I William Alnwick beseech from you the gifts of heaven)

O Lux eterna, qua fulget turma superna,
Post vite cursum rapias Alnwick tibi sursum.

(O eternal Light where the celestial throng shines
After the course of his life, seize Alnwick raising him up to you.)

Principis almifici Genitrix, O digna patrona,
Alnwick Pontifici, precor, assistas prece prona.

(Mother of the most gracious Prince, O worthy patroness
I Alnwick pray that you help my prayer to be pleasing to the High Priest [i.e. Jesus].)

86 Is the accusative a transcription error here?

87 Peck, 33 has '*Willelmum Alnwyc dona Celis*'.

Fig. 13. The bow window placed by Bishop Alnwick in west hall of Lincoln bishop's palace, originally filled with images of the kings of England.
(photo © author)

> *Principis……celi dulcedine plena,*
> *……Alnwick succurre Wilelmo.*
>
> (Of the Prince…… full of the sweetness of heaven
> (……to hasten to the aid of William Alnwick)

These couplets clearly display the devotion to the Trinity and the Virgin Mary expressed by Bishop Alnwick's seals, as well as exhibiting similarities to the couplets engraved on his brass.

In the 1630s, painted glass also survived in the Lincoln palace's great west hall where Alnwick probably entertained Henry VI in 1448.[88] Holles described the large bow window (Fig. 13) placed here by Alnwick and filled with 'Pictures of many of the Kings of *England*, with Verses underneath their Effegies':[89]

> In a large & high Bow window in the Great hall – The pictures of many of ye Kinges of England, but much mangled & defaced; ye Inscriptions for ye most part gone, yet here & there something to be read, Viz't.,
>
> *Willm'us Bastard regnavit annis 21.*
>
> (William the Bastard reigned for 21 years)
>
> And of William Rufus, noe great freinde to ye Clergy, this spitefull Distich:

88 Wolffe, *Henry VI*, 367.
89 BL, Harley MS 6829, pp. 45–6; *Holles Lincolnshire Church Notes*, ed. Cole, 52–3.

Fig. 14. Alnwick's arms (argent a cross moline sable) *and motto* (Delectare in Domino) *in the great chamber at Lyddington, Rutland.*
(photo © author)

Grata sagitta fuit Willelmum que perimebat,
Dira morte perit, qui dira frequenter agebat

(Happy was the arrow that slew William
He who often did dreadful things died a dreadful death)

Henrici Regis discretio summa patrabat
Neglecte legis…… dum reparabat.

(The prudence of King Henry brought about the highest things
While he repaired the ... of the neglected law.)
With other such fragments.

Was it mere coincidence that the first three Norman kings were called William and Henry, or did Alnwick, in commissioning this glazing, choose to concentrate on those kings who shared their names with himself and his royal patrons?

The Lincoln palace glass is now largely lost but fragments have been found there that are identical to glass surviving in the old episcopal palace at Lyddington, Rutland, a favourite house where Alnwick often spent Christmas.[90] It seems likely that Alnwick commissioned the glass for these two (and maybe more?) residences at the same time. The existing glass in the great chamber at Lyddington has numerous depictions (Fig. 14) of his arms and his motto '*Delectare in domino* (Delight in the Lord)', which

90 David King kindly showed me his drawings of glass found at the Lincoln palace. They are clearly the same design as at Lyddington. Alnwick seems to have spent Christmases 1438–43 at Lyddington and 1444–8 at Sleaford, perhaps indicating when his building there was complete.

was also on a processional cross he gave to Lincoln cathedral.[91] The window containing a portrait of the bishop praying to his '*digna patrona*' probably conveys a good idea of the lost glass of the Lincoln palace chapel (Fig. 15). As he is depicted kneeling, this portrait is perhaps more in keeping with the portraits of him on his seals than that of the lost brass. There are also some glass fragments in the churches of Buckden and Lyddington, indicating just how much has been lost.[92] Evidence for Alnwick's patronage in Lincolnshire, beyond his manors, was recorded in the 1630s, when his arms were still to be found in the churches of St Peter Eastgate, Lincoln, Coningsby, Crowland Abbey and Stoke Rochford.[93] These arms no longer survive.

The extant remains, discussed so far, apart from his birthplace, have all related to Lincoln, Bishop Alnwick's second diocese. Nothing remains of his other favoured residences there, at Nettleham, Lincolnshire, and Bishops' Wooburn, Buckinghamshire. Moreover, he appears to have left no mark on Lincoln cathedral itself, although historians of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries claimed that he built the, much earlier, south porch, and the wooden spires that once adorned the cathedral.[94] He bequeathed Lincoln cathedral's fabric fund only £20.[95] He was startlingly more generous to his first diocese, with which this study concludes.

*Fig. 15. Possible portrait of William Alnwick, praying to his '*digna patrona*', in the glass of the great chamber at Lyddington (perhaps originally in the palace chapel). (photo © author)*

Unlike at Buckden and Lyddington, nothing survives of any changes Alnwick may have made to his favourite country residences at

91 W. Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum*, ed. J. Caley, H. Ellis and B. Badinel, 6 vols in 8 (London, 1817–30), VI, 1280. The base to this cross, like Alnwick's Lincoln seal, had images not only of the Blessed Virgin but also of Saints Hugh and George. A blue velvet cope that he gave had images of both the Trinity and Mary (*ibid.*, 1283).

92 While the Lyddington church glass is very fragmentary, the south aisle of Buckden has an almost complete coronation of the Virgin. I am grateful to David King and Gordon Plumb for examining photographs of these fragments and confirming that they seem to come from the same workshop as that in Lyddington and Lincoln.

93 BL, Harley MS 6829, pp. 56, 182, 239, 272; *Holles Lincolnshire Church Notes*, ed. Cole, 59, 139, 180, 202. St Peter's was destroyed by royalist troops and the arms have since disappeared from the surviving churches.

94 Willis, *Survey*, III, 32, 56; T. Allen, *The History of the County of Lincoln* (London, 1834), 149, 157, 159.

95 LPL, Reg. Stafford, f. 179. This bequest was omitted from *Visitations*, ed. Thompson, I, xxiv–xxx.

Fig. 16. The gatehouse of the bishop's palace, Norwich. The shields held Bishop Alnwick's arms, c.1736. (photo © author)

Thorpe by Norwich and Thornage, Norfolk, Hoxne, Suffolk and Terling, Essex, although his accounts indicate that 10s. 10d. was spent on a great new table and nearly £5 on roofing the bake-house and hall at Thorpe (1428–9). All surviving buildings are in Norwich itself. There are only hints in his receiver-general's accounts of work done at the palace, where £52 16s. 4d. was spent on furnishings for the bishop's chamber (1428–9).[96] However, it is known that he built the palace's principal gateway (Fig. 16). In Blomefield's day (*c.* 1736) Alnwick's arms survived in the shields above the entrance, alternating with crowned M's signifying his devotion to the Virgin Mary.[97] Perhaps the painted corbels at the base of the gate's internal arch, portray the boy king, Henry VI, and his confessor-bishop, William Alnwick. The bishop depicted in the central boss of the arch is another possible portrait of Alnwick (Fig. 17) – perhaps the closest one we have to the lost brass. The shape could almost fit into the brass's indent.

Unlike Lincoln, there is plenty of evidence to connect Alnwick with work completed at Norwich cathedral during and after his episcopate. The cathedral priory's historians remembered that the cloister (Fig. 18) was completed during his reign, without saying whether he contributed to it.[98] Nevertheless, they recorded that, 'of his grace he commissioned

96 NRO, EST 15/1/1, mm. 5, 6.

97 F. Blomefield, *An Essay towards a Topographical History of the County of Norfolk*, 11 vols (2nd edn, London, 1805–10), III, 531.

98 NRO, DCN 29/2 (*Liber Misc.* 2), f. 10: '*et sic completum fuit opus claustr' famosissimi AD 1430 tempore Willelmi Alnewick tunc Episcopi*'.

Fig. 17. Possible portrait of Bishop Alnwick on the central boss of the bishop's palace gatehouse, Norwich. (photo © author)

Fig. 18. Norwich cathedral cloister completed during Alnwick's episcopate (1426–37). (photo © author)

the great western doorway with the window over it in Norwich cathedral church (*fieri fecit ex sua gratia majus hostium occidentali cum fenestra supereminente in Ecclesia cathedrali Norwicensi*)'.[99] Alnwick instructed his executors to 'cause to be made at my costs a great window of fit sort above the western entrance in the church of Norwich for the adornment and enlightening of the same church, in stone-work, iron-work, glass workmanship and every other needful material' (Fig. 19),[100] described recently as 'one of the most ambitious west windows of its day'.[101] It seems likely (in the absence of any documentary evidence) that the most active executors here would have been John Wygenhale, and Thomas Ringstede.[102] This munificent bequest to the house of God surely qualifies him to be described as '*edificator domuum preciosarum*'. It contrasts markedly with the £20 Bishop Alnwick left to Lincoln, as does his bequest of a silver-gilt goblet to the prior of Norwich, compared with nothing for the dean of Lincoln. This preference for an earlier diocese is very unusual, if not unique, among late medieval bishops.[103] The doorway (Fig. 20), situated at the western entrance to his first cathedral, as Alnwick's brass was to be in his second cathedral, was well placed to play a similarly commemorative role. Like the Lincoln brass, the door itself contains the arms of both the see of Norwich – *Azure three mitres labelled or* – and the bishop. In the entrance's spandrels, on the north side, the Norwich arms are repeated next to a figure that is probably the Virgin Mary; on the south side (Fig. 21) are

Fig. 19. Norwich cathedral west front. (photo © author)

Bishop Alnwick's personal arms, surrounded by the legend '*Orate pro anima domini Willelmi Alnewyk*', next to a kneeling figure that may represent him. He seems to be wearing the *pileus quadratus* or 'doctor's cap'.[104] Before nineteenth-century changes, there was another figure, probably of Henry VI. Blomefield claimed

99 *Anglia Sacra*, ed. H. Wharton, 2 vols (London, 1691), I, 417.

100 *Visitations*, ed. Thompson, I, xxvii.

101 F. Woodman, 'The Gothic Campaigns' in *Norwich Cathedral: Church, City and Diocese, 1096–1996*, ed. I. Atherton, E. Fernie, C. Harper-Bill and H. Smith (London, 1996), 158–96, at 182–5.

102 At the time of Alnwick's death, Wygenhale was dean of St Mary in the Fields, Norwich, vicar general of the bishop and soon to be archdeacon of Sudbury. Ringstede's roots were in the diocese of Norwich before moving with Alnwick to Lincoln (Emden, *BRUC*, 499–500, 655).

103 J.T. Rosenthal, 'The Fifteenth-Century Episcopate: Careers and Bequests', in *Sanctity and Secularity: The Church and the World*, ed. D. Baker (Oxford, 1973), 117–27, at 126.

104 See Lepine, 'Pause and pray', 39.

Fig. 20. The 'great western doorway' of Norwich cathedral (the two large statues at either side are modern depictions of Julian of Norwich and St Benedict).
(photo © author)

Fig 21. Detail from the west door of Norwich cathedral: 'pray for the soul of Lord William Alnewyk'.
(photo © author)

that it represented the bishop 'receiving the instrument of his confirmation' from the king.[105]

As at Alnwick, Buckden, Lyddington and Lincoln, it is the arms that most closely indicate Alnwick's connection with the building. It is well known that the main purpose of medieval memorials, including the brasses on which this journal concentrates, was to elicit prayers for the souls of the dead. Unlike Alnwick's lost brass, the monument of the great western doorway of Norwich cathedral contains a direct appeal for the onlooker to 'Pray for the soul of Lord William Alnewyk'. It is an eternal reminder of the prayer of the composer of his lost brass epitaph that this 'builder of costly houses', even if most of them are now lost, may share in the joys of the 'halls of Heaven'.

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105 Blomefield, *Norfolk*, III, 532.

A Survey of Monumental Brasses of Late Medieval Vowesses

Laura M. Richmond

The vowess – a woman, usually a widow, who had taken a vow of chastity in an episcopal ceremony without necessarily retreating to a convent – remains an obscure figure, in spite of the popularity of this vocation amongst gentry and merchant class widows in England during the later Middle Ages. Although individual vowed women's brasses have been known and written about for some time, they have yet to be considered collectively and in context. This article explores how one might identify and interpret monumental brasses of vowed women. It presents the various ways in which vowesses were depicted in brass during the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, and proposes grouping them into five categories: those appearing alone in their habits; those in lay clothing beside their husbands; those in habits beside their husbands; those in habits below their parents; and those depicted variously on multiple brasses. It examines the implications of these commemorative choices, and what they indicate about vowed women's lives and identities as well as the vowess vocation itself.

During the later Middle Ages, it was not unusual for English widows to take a vow of chastity, an act which had powerful implications for these women's social and religious identity. They were known as vowesses, or as widows who had 'taken the mantle and the ring' – an allusion to the ring and mantle bestowed by the bishop at the vowing ceremony. The tradition of veiled widowhood has its origins in the Early Church, although these ceremonies appear to have been a peculiarly English phenomenon. They date back to at least the seventh century and continued until the 1530s. Married women also occasionally vowed. Having taken one of the three monastic vows, vowesses were distinctively quasi-religious. They were free to select their own position on the continuum between enclosure and integration, between contemplative and active piety. They could own property, live where they chose, and dictate their own patterns of religious observance. Subsequently, vowed lifestyles varied considerably.[1]

It is difficult to judge how many women took these vows, but Patricia Cullum has demonstrated that vowing was 'relatively common' among the late medieval gentry and urban elites.[2] She also argues for a 'peak' in the popularity of widows' vows in the 1480s, falling away gradually after 1500. She cites the rise of cults such as that of St Anne and the influence of royal vowed women such as Lady Margaret Beaufort and Cecily, Duchess of York, as contributing factors.[3] The theory is convincing, and although it is not clear to what extent the 'peak' may be a trick of inconsistent record keeping and document survival, more vows are recorded at the end of the fifteenth century than for any other time. The vowess vocation may seem obscure to the modern

1 For more about the nuances and complexities around veiled widowhood, see L.M. Wood, 'In Search of the Mantle and Ring: Prosopographical Study of the Vowess in Late Medieval England', *Medieval Prosopography*, 34 (2019), 175–205; M.C. Erler, 'English Vowed Women at the End of the Middle Ages', *Medieval Studies*, 57 (1995), 155–203; S. Steuer, 'Identifying Chaste Widows: Documenting a Religious Vocation', in *The Ties that Bind: Essays in Medieval British History in Honor of Barbara Hanawalt*, ed. L.E. Mitchell, K.L. French and D.L. Biggs (Burlington, VT, 2011), 87–105; and P. Cullum, 'Vowesses and Veiled Widows: Medieval Female Piety in the Province of York', *Northern History*, 32 (1996), 21–41.

2 Cullum, 'Vowesses and Veiled Widows', 41.

3 Cullum, 'Vowesses and Veiled Widows', 27–9.

reader, but in late medieval England it was widely recognised and acknowledged.[4]

When a woman became a vowess, she was transformed into a quasi-religious figure, and this often influenced how she was commemorated in brass. To date, a list of surviving vowess brasses has yet to be compiled and so it is difficult even to estimate how many there are. The task is complicated considerably by the fact that it is not possible to identify vowesses from their brasses without additional evidence from other sources unless the inscription on the brass alludes to a vow. Nonetheless Kelcey Wilson-Lee mentioned several vowesses in her article on the commemoration of female religious in late medieval England.[5] This article will explore how vowess status is reflected in memorial brasses, consider Wilson-Lee's examples in more depth and add other contemporary examples, in order to illustrate the variety amongst these brasses and how they might be categorised.

One such brass is that of Joan Braham (d. 1519) on the floor of the nave of the thirteenth-century church of St Andrew at Frenze, Norfolk (Fig. 1). Joan is depicted alone and facing forwards with her hands raised in prayer. She wears a wimple around her head, the plaited 'barbe' or chin cloth over her chin and neck, and a long veil covering her shoulders like a cape. The long, tasselled ends of her girdle reach almost to the ground. Below her portrait are three brass shields bearing arms. The inscription reads:

> *Hic iacet tumulata d[omi]na Johanna Braham vidua ac deo dicata*
> *olim uxor Joh'ns Braham Armiger que obijt xviijo die Nove[m]bris*
> *A[n]no d[omi]ni millimo CCCCC^{o} xix^{o} cuius a[n] i[m]e p[ro]picietur deus*
> *Amen*
>
> (Here lies buried Dame Joan Braham, widow and dedicated to God, / formerly wife of John Braham, Esquire, who died the 18th day of November / in the year of our Lord 1519, on whose soul may God have mercy, Amen).

The phrase '*vidua ac deo dicata*' in Joan's inscription refers to the fact that she was a vowess. Her costume might also be considered a clue. However, although Joan's clothing resembles that of a nun, it is also what was then known as 'widows' weeds' – worn by vowed and non-vowed widows alike. Since widows' weeds are also effectively religious habits, vowesses are often posthumously mistaken for nuns. Yet vowesses depicted in this garb are similarly indistinguishable from women who may have adopted this clothing as widows without taking any public, or indeed private, chastity vow.

Furthermore, depiction of these women in brass varies, both in terms of their clothing and whether they appear alone or alongside their families. Vowesses depicted in lay clothing beside their husbands appear identical to women who never vowed. One must rely,

4 See *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. L. Staley, *TEAMS Middle English Texts*, 1996 <https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/publication/staley-the-book-of-margery-kempe> [accessed Jan 2015-Jan 2017], I, 773–83; M-F. Alamichel, *Widows in Anglo-Saxon and Medieval Britain* (Bern, 2008), 194; The Squire of Low Degree, ed. E. Kooper, TEAMS Middle English Texts, 2005 <https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/kooper-sentimental-and-humorous-romances-squire-of-low-degree> [accessed 10 Nov 2017], 955–6. Chaucer's reference to the mantle and the ring in connection with anchoresses is a light-hearted touch: the lady is muddling her religious vocations.

5 K. Wilson-Lee, 'A Fifteenth-Century Brass at Swithland, Leicestershire, and the Commemoration of Female Religious in Late-Medieval England', *TMBS*, 18:1 (2009), 25–35.

Fig. 1. The brass of Joan Braham (d. 1519), Frenze, Norfolk.
(rubbing © Lack, Stuchfield and Whittemore, The Monumental Brasses of Norfolk (forthcoming))

then, upon inscriptions, which sometimes – but not always – mentioned the vow, and on manuscript sources, to indicate reliably which women were vowesses. Nonetheless, when one spots a woman in a habit on a brass, one can note that there is a decent chance that she might have vowed, and this can be followed up in episcopal registers and family wills. Due to the patchy survival of such documents, it often remains a mystery, and, if a woman privately resolved upon a chaste life without formalising her intention, this would naturally have gone unrecorded.

However, all is not lost. Monumental brasses are a rich source of information about how individual women, and their families and communities, understood the widows' vow in the decades before it was abolished. The variety amongst vowesses' brasses reflects the variety of their day-to-day lives, their public and private identities. Although this variety has contributed to vowesses collectively being obscured and subsequently neglected, these women and the vocation they embodied were a fundamental part of the social and spiritual fabric of pre-Reformation England. To consider the various ways in which vowesses were depicted in brass during the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, they will be grouped into five categories: those appearing alone in their habits; those in lay clothing beside their husbands; those in habits beside their husbands; those in habits below their parents; and those depicted variously on multiple brasses. Examples of each will be used to consider the implications of these commemorative choices, and what they indicate about vowed women's lives.

Vowesses in habits depicted alone

The brass of Juliana Anyell at St Margaret's church in Witton, Norfolk, (Figs 2 and 3) closely resembles that of Joan Braham. The

Fig. 2. The brass of Juliana Anyell (c.1502–6), Witton, Norfolk.
(photo © Martin Stuchfield)

long girdle is absent in the image of Juliana but both women stand alone, shrouded in fabric with little more than face and hands visible. The inscription beneath Juliana's image reads:

> *Orate p[ro] a[n]i[m]a d[omi]ne Juliane Anyell*
> *votrias cui[us] a[n]i[m]e p[ro]piciet[ur] de[us]*
>
> (Pray for the soul of Dame Julian Anyell / vowess, on whose soul may God have mercy [blank space for dates]).

The word *votrias* is an unusual one, although its meaning is clear. Vowesses were not usually described in this way: the preferred Latin term in manuscript sources seems to have been *vidua velata* (veiled widow). The fact that the vowess state is mentioned at all is noteworthy, as some contemporary inscriptions omit this detail,

Fig. 3. Detail of the brass of Juliana Anyell showing the wimple around her head, the plaited 'barbe' or chin cloth and a long veil over her shoulders. (photo © Martin Stuchfield)

but on the brasses of both Joan Braham and Juliana Anyell the fact is emphasised as it is communicated in unconventional language amidst a brief and otherwise unremarkable inscription. Juliana's date of decease is missing, suggesting that the brass was constructed whilst she was still alive and presumably according to her own instructions. Greenwood and Norris date its production to 1502–6, which fits with its similarity to the brass of her contemporary Joan Braham.[6] Surviving source material for the lives of both women is sparse, and all that testifies to Juliana's existence, besides the brass, are the will of her husband (dated 1479) and two late fifteenth-century chancery documents showing her to have been involved in disputes over property in Suffolk.[7]

These two brasses might usefully be compared with an earlier example: that of Joan Clopton at Quinton, Gloucestershire (*c.*1430) (Fig. 4).[8] Her costume is a little different, in that her veil is thrown over side cauls to resemble the shape of the horned headdress which was fashionable in the early fifteenth century. She is surrounded by a canopy with shields of arms, and a curved prayer-scroll above her head quotes Psalm 40:14:

Complaceat tibi d(omi)ne · uti · eripias me
d(omi)ne ad · adiuvandu(m) me respice

(May it please you, Lord, to rescue me / Lord, consider helping me)

The inscription is considerably more elaborate than that on the brasses of Joan Braham and Juliana Anyell. It is arranged around the canopy with the symbols of the Evangelists in the corners:

C[h]riste nepos Ann[a]e Clopton' miserere Joh[ann]e
Que tibi sacrata · clauditur hic vidua

6 R. Greenwood and M. Norris, *The Brasses of Norfolk Churches* (Woodbridge, 1976), 10.

7 Ipswich, Suffolk Record Office, EE2/E/3/I; TNA, C 1/184/14 and C 1/235/32.

8 A detailed description of this brass appears in C.T. Davis, *The Monumental Brasses of Gloucestershire* (London, 1899; repr. Bath, 1969), 30–3; W. Lack, H.M. Stuchfield, and P. Whittemore, *The Monumental Brasses of Gloucestershire* (London, 2005), 354; and Wilson-Lee, 'A Fifteenth-Century Brass at Swithland, Leicestershire', 33–4. Wilson-Lee stated that Joan Clopton was an anchoress, perhaps a more literal interpretation of '*clauditur*' (enclosed) as referring to Joan herself rather than her image on the brass which is surrounded by the inscription. Since Joan is depicted wearing the 'barbe' traditionally associated with widowhood (and veiled widowhood), cited as superfluous in the *Ancrene Wisse*, her costume would be unusual for an anchoress. No other surviving evidence suggests that Joan was an anchoress, so it is – statistically speaking – far more likely that she was a vowess.

Fig. 4. The brass of Joan Clopton, Quinton, Gloucestershire (c.1430).
(rubbing © Lack, Stuchfield and Whittemore, The Monumental Brasses of Gloucestershire, 2005)

Milite defuncto sponso · pro te [Jesus] fuit ista
Larga libens miseris · prodiga et hospitib[us]
Sic ven[er]abilibus templis · sic fudit egenis
Mitteret ut c[a]elis · quas sequeretur opes
Pro tantis meritis · sibi dones regna beata
Nec premat urna rogi · s[ed] beet aula dei

(Christ, have mercy on Joan, grandchild of Anne Clopton, / Who, consecrated to you, is enclosed, widow / Of the deceased knight, her spouse. For you, Jesus, she was / Gladly generous to the unfortunate and magnanimous to strangers. / Just as to the venerable churches, she poured out her riches to the needy, / Sending them to the heavens for her to follow them there. / For such great service, may you grant her the blessed realm / And may the funereal tomb not weigh her down, but may the palace of God delight her.)

This, again, refers to the chastity vow, and it emphasises her charity as the primary expression of the religious life she pursued in a worldly context. Her adaptation of the vowess' veiled garb to reflect the fashions of the day illustrates her quasi-religious identity. She also wears a ring with a jewel on the second or third finger of each hand. One of these is probably the ring she would have been given at her vowing ceremony, symbolic of her chastity and status as a bride of Christ.[9] These rings were highly-valued and often bequeathed in wills.[10]

9 Erler has described the proceedings of such an event in detail, as outlined in an early sixteenth-century pontifical, 'Three Fifteenth-Century Vowesses', in *Medieval London Widows, 1300–1500*, ed. C.M. Barron and A.F. Sutton (London, 1994), 165–84 at 165–6. The pontifical cited is reproduced in F.C Eeles, 'Two Sixteenth-Century Pontificals Formerly Used in England', *Transactions of the St Paul's Ecclesiological Society*, 7 (1911–15), 69–90.

10 For examples, see London Metropolitan Archives [LMA], Commissary Court of London Wills, 9171/9, f. 5v-6; TNA, PROB 11/14/662 and 11/4/212; H. Harrod, 'On the Mantle and the Ring of Widowhood', *Archaeologia*, 40 (1866–7), 307–10.

At the end of each line of the poem is a small pear, the charge on the Besford arms and a punning allusion to 'Pearsford', a reference to her natal family. Joan was the second daughter and co-heir of Alexander Besford (alias Pearsford) of Besford, Worcestershire.[11] The shields of arms inside the canopy are those of the Besford and Clopton families. Joan's worldly connections of birth and marriage are further emphasised in the inscription, demonstrating her continued integration into her family and community after her vow.

Joan Clopton is, nonetheless, depicted alone rather than beside any family members and the brass is recognisable as conforming to the same 'type' as those of Joan Braham and Julian Anyell: that of a solitary female figure, veiled with the widows' barbe, and distinctly nun-like in appearance. This may have been what these women wore on a daily basis, or the clothing may be symbolic of the vowess state. Brasses which depict vowesses in this way are unsurprisingly more likely to refer to a vow in the inscription. They make a powerful statement about the vowess' identity as an independent woman whose autonomy is sanctioned by the Church.

Vowesses in habits depicted beside their husbands

Other vowesses depicted in religious dress appear alongside their husbands and sometimes with children too, integrated into the family unit. This renders a woman's vowed state less obvious, but her costume can still be an indicator, particularly the barbe of widowhood or the presence of a ring. These do not, however, constitute proof that a woman was vowed as they could be worn by any widow. If the inscription does not mention a vow, it is still advisable to search for other evidence.

The mid-sixteenth-century brass of John and Joan Cooke at St Mary de Crypt, Gloucester, is one such example (Fig. 5).[12] John Cooke was an alderman and four times mayor of Gloucester, who died in 1529.[13] In his will, he left his wife a large fortune and extensive property in the city and county to use 'as she doo know my full mynde'.[14] It had been John's wish that Joan should found a school and so, at the Dissolution, she purchased a large part of the estate of Llanthony Secunda Priory with which she built and endowed the Crypt School, positioned adjacent to St Mary de Crypt church.[15] The school, which was completed by the end of 1539, is still operational today, despite several changes of site. Joan Cooke's will, proved in February 1546, made elaborate provision for the celebration of her husband's obit, as well as leaving £40 for distribution to the poor and making numerous bequests to relatives and godchildren.[16]

The brass depicts the figures of John and Joan in semi-profile, as if looking at one another, with their hands raised in prayer. Joan stands to the right of her husband, wearing the veil headdress, stiffly-pleated barbe, and a plain mantle that is partially looped under her right arm and pulled up slightly by her left. Underneath is a simple dress with cuffed sleeves. On the index finger of her left hand she, too, wears a ring with a jewel.

11 Davis, *Monumental Brasses of Gloucestershire,* 33.
12 Davis, *Monumental Brasses of Gloucestershire*, 154–8; Lack, Stuchfield, and Whittemore, *Monumental Brasses of Gloucestershire*, 224, 227.
13 C. Litzenberger, 'Cooke, John (*d.* 1528)', in *ODNB* [https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/94981], accessed 23 August 2018.
14 TNA, PROB 11/22/615.
15 N.I. Orme, *Education in the West of England, 1066–1548* (Exeter, 1976), 137–41.
16 TNA, PROB 11/31/182.

Fig. 5. The brass of John Cooke (d. 1529) and his wife Joan, St Mary de Crypt, Gloucester. (rubbing © Lack, Stuchfield and Whittemore, The Monumental Brasses of Gloucestershire, 2005)

The figures are placed beneath an elaborate triple canopy, of which the side shafts have been lost. The central pediment contains a figure of St John the Baptist, bearded with long hair, bare feet, and a long gown, part of which is raised by his left arm. In his left hand, he holds a book upon which the Lamb of God holds a cross. The raised index finger of St John's right hand points to the Lamb. The presence of St John here may simply have been chosen because of the couple's Christian names, or perhaps it illustrates a particular devotion they may have shared.

Cut in stone above this rather magnificent canopy is a surprisingly minimalist inscription:

> *Johannes Cooke, fundator scholae juxta hanc ecclesiam obijt Anno Domini Mo CCCCC^{o} xxix^{o}*
> *Johanna uxor eius obijt Anno Domini Mo CCCCCo xl^{o} iv^{o}*
>
> (John Cooke, founder of the school next to this church, died / in the year of our Lord 1529. / Joan, his wife, died in the year of our Lord 1544)[17]

This inscription does not mention Joan's chastity vow, but documentary evidence about her widowed life, together with her costume on the brass, suggests that it is likely that a vow took place. John Cooke's will had urged her to refrain from remarrying and after his death she devoted herself entirely to the fulfilment of his wish for the foundation of a school.[18]

The brass creates a strong impression of the couple as a unit: they would have appeared enclosed by the side shafts, beneath the canopy with one shared name-saint, facing one another. Joan's clothing does not detract from this but rather enhances it: the vowess garb is, after all, widows' weeds, and the profession ring is reminiscent, in this case, of Joan's wedding ring to John. This reflects her decision to vow as honouring a promise to her husband, in keeping with the specifications in his will. As one of the latest vowess brasses, it also mirrors a general shift in emphasis at the beginning of the early modern period, wherein chaste widowhood became less about spiritual merit and more about spousal memory.[19]

The brass of John and Agnes Browne at All Saints', Stamford, Lincolnshire tells a similar story (Fig. 6). John Browne was a wealthy wool-merchant who died in 1476. The couple's brass appears on the wall in the north aisle of the church, beside the monument to John's father. The figures of John and Agnes face forward in identical prayerful poses. John wears a fur-lined gown and mantle, with a large purse hanging from his belt, whilst Agnes wears her widow's – or vowess' – weeds: a long mantle over her kirtle, her head veiled and wimpled, and the distinctive barbe covering her neck (Fig. 7). On close scrutiny, Agnes may also be wearing a profession ring on one of her fingers, although this may just be damage to the brass.[20] Given her costume, the similarities with the other vowess' brasses described in this section, and the reference to her vow in the inscription transcribed below, it is likely that her depiction would have included a ring.

The inscription takes the form of a plea for salvation in the voice of John Browne, in

17 Transcription from Davis, *Monumental Brasses of Gloucestershire*, 156.
18 TNA, PROB 11/22/615.
19 K.C. Walter, *The Profession of Widowhood: Widows, Pastoral Care and Medieval Models of Holiness* (Washington, 2018), 347–98.
20 The brass has been described in more detail by R. Lamp, 'The Browne Brothers, All Saints', Stamford, Lincolnshire' http://www.pegasus-onlinezeitschrift.de/2010_1/erga_1_2010_lamp-2_en.pdf, accessed 28 May 2019.

Fig. 6. The brass of John Browne (d. 1476) and his wife Agnes, All Saints, Stamford, Lincolnshire. (photo © Martin Stuchfield)

Fig. 7. Detail of the brass of Agnes Browne showing the barbe, wimple, veil and possible evidence of a profession ring on the third or fourth finger of her right hand.
(photo © Martin Stuchfield)

five double-lines of Latin verse beneath the couple's feet:

> *Te p[re]cor O [Christe] · matris[-]q[ue] p[at]ris miserere ~ no[n] sim deiectus · nos om[n]es claudito c[æ]lis ~*
> *Est m[eo] nom[in]e idem[-]q[ue] p[a]ri · labor un[us] ut[ri]q[ue] ~ milleno C quat[er] sexageno simul XV ~*
> *Vita[m] mutavi · februar[ii] mensis[-]q[ue] trideno ~ huc ades o coniux Agnes · m[ea] cara fuisti ~*
> *Du[m] mu[n]do vixi · post me sis sponsa[-]q[ue] [christ]i ~ anno milleno C quart[er]*
> *Mensis mundu[m] liquisti c[æ]lestia regna petisti ~*
>
> (I beseech you, O Christ, have mercy on the mother and father. / May I not be cast away. Enclose us all in your heavens. / The work undertaken in my name is one and the same for both of them. / In 1475 / I changed life, on the thirteenth of the month of February. / Come here, o wife Agnes. My beloved you were / While I lived in the world, and after me may you be the bride of Christ. / In the year 14_ / Of the month ____ you left this world behind, bound toward the heavenly realms.)

Although it seems unlikely that John or Agnes penned this personally, the fact that it takes John's voice does suggest that one of them may have approved it, and the missing date of decease corroborates this. The inscription also echoes the instructions in John Cooke's will. It communicates in text what the Cooke brass depicts visually: that the widow's chastity vow was an expression of conjugal loyalty and affection. The phrase 'bride of Christ' only began to be used to refer to veiled widows, rather than nuns, in the later Middle Ages, as the notion that Christ would accept a non-virgin bride could be theologically contentious.[21] This brass takes the widowed bride of Christ one step further: Agnes's two earthly and heavenly marriages are linked, the latter a natural progression from the former.

Brasses which depict the vowess veiled beside her husband might be argued to most accurately reflect her peculiarly quasi-religious state: she is set apart by her clothing, yet she still appears as part of the family unit.[22] They are a sort of compromise. They serve as a reminder that, as Mary Erler has observed, one of the advantages of the vowess vocation was that a woman could pursue a religious calling without leaving her family behind as a nun would have done. The vowing ceremony marked the beginning of a new life and identity without demanding that the vowess sever herself from everything that had gone before.[23]

These brasses also present the widow's chastity vow as an expression of marital devotion. They suggest that Joan Cooke and Agnes Browne vowed in deference to their husbands' wishes, and that this was in keeping with their Catholic piety rather than a competing motivation.[24] This emphasis upon spousal memory would

21 For more on the vowess as a bride of Christ, see L.M. Wood, 'Vowesses in the Province of Canterbury, *c.* 1450–1540' (unpub. Ph. D. thesis, Royal Holloway, University of London, 2017), 91–128.

22 A further example of such a brass from this period is that of Margaret and John Croke at All Hallows, Barking-by-the-Tower (1477). The brass is now lost, but it was described in Stow's *Survey of London* (1598). The couple were depicted kneeling at prayer desks with their thirteen children beneath them.

23 Erler, 'English Vowed Women at the End of the Middle Ages', 157.

24 In reality, material incentives could also play a part in the decision to vow. If a husband had stipulated in his will that he wished his widow to remain chaste and that this was to be a condition of inheriting money, land or goods, the vow served as a vehicle for formalising the intention to abide by this and satisfying executors in order to inherit. This was, however, not incompatible with genuine conjugal affection. For more on such cases, see Wood, 'In Search of the Mantle and Ring', 194–7.

continue to develop over the subsequent century into the image of the pious widow as forever in mourning, a living monument to her husband.[25]

Vowesses in lay clothing depicted beside their husbands

Another vowess is commemorated in brass at All Saints', Stamford: Margaret Browne, the wife of John Browne's brother, William (Fig. 8). In fact, the two Browne wives were sisters as well as sisters-in-law. Daughters of John Stokke, they were originally from Warmington, Northamptonshire, where the Browne brothers' father, also John Browne, was a landowner. This is presumably how the families were introduced.[26] William Browne founded an almshouse at Stamford, Browne's Hospital, whilst his brother commissioned a church tower and spire at All Saints'. William died in 1489 and his will appointed Margaret as executrix, although she also died within a year.[27]

William and Margaret's brass lies on the floor of the church, against the south-eastern corner of the chapel beside the chancel. It is not complete: the entire left-hand half of the double canopy, the top of the remaining one, and the shields are now lost. The figures of William and Margaret stand facing forward, with hands folded in prayer, and above each is an arched prayer scroll. William's reads: 'me spede,' with a cross as a symbol for Christ – a reference to the Browne family motto. Margaret's reads: 'Der lady help at need,'. The Brownes' heraldic emblem, a stork, appears in the canopy gable.

25 Walter, *The Profession of Widowhood*, 347–98.

26 A. Rogers, *Noble Merchant: William Browne (c.1410–1489) and Stamford in the Fifteenth Century* (Bury St Edmunds, 2012). I am indebted to Prof. Rogers for sharing with me his research on the Browne family.

27 TNA, PROB 11/8/322; 11/8/525.

William wears a fur-lined gown and mantle as he stands upon two woolsacks, indicating his trade. Margaret's costume is clearly that of a laywoman. She wears a gown and mantle, with a short veil over her horned headdress, and no barbe: her neck and half her shoulders are exposed. At her right foot is a small pet.

Fig. 8. The brass of William Browne (d. 1489) and his wife Margaret (d. 1489), All Saints, Stamford, Lincolnshire. (rubbing © Martin Stuchfield)

Beneath the figures is inscribed twelve lines of Latin verse, arranged in two blocks of six. Two storks stand on woolsacks between the blocks of text, with the Brownes' motto in miniature script above:

Rex regum d[omi]n[u]s d[omi]nantum tu quia solus ~
Velle tuo suberit om[n]e quod est vel erit ~
Intravit terram corpus [sed] sp[irit]us ad te ~
Currere festinat tu deus accipe me ~
In[ ]te sperantem fili deus et pater alme ~
Altitonansq[ue] deus sp[irit]us accipe me ~

Peccavi mala multa tuli me p[æ]nitet huius ~
Ad te clamantem tu deus accipe me ~
Non intres d[omi]ne iudicare mi[c]hi nisi primo ~
Digneris veni[æ] reddere quod satis est ~
Et q[uia] pro nostris a[n]i[m]abus suscipiendis ~
Rex terrenus eras tu deus accipe me ~[28]

(King of kings, Lord of lords, because of you alone, / All that is and will be shall be subjected to your will. / My body entered the earth, but my spirit to you / Hastens to proceed – you, God, receive me. / Trusting in you, God the Son and kind Father, / And God the Spirit, thundering on high, receive me. / I sinned, I bore many wrongs – I repent of this, / Calling out to you, God, receive me. / Do not enter into judgement, Lord, unless first to me / You see fit to grant me what is sufficient of your forgiveness. / And because, in order to receive our souls, / You were an earthly king, you, God, receive me.)

Like the inscription on John and Agnes' brass, this text takes the form of a plea to Christ for salvation, but it is generic rather than specific to William and Margaret. There was presumably an additional inscription with the couple's names and dates of death which has now been lost.

Nothing about the brass hints that Margaret was a vowess; this is only known because her will survives, in which she bequeaths 'my mantell that I was professed in' to the subprioress of St Michael's, a house of Benedictine nuns in Stamford.[29] One wonders how many vowesses' brasses have not been identified as such because the vowess is depicted without her widows' weeds, the vow is not mentioned in the inscription, and manuscript evidence has not survived. A vowess might have been portrayed in this way because she, or her family, did not consider the vow to be particularly important, or simply because the brass was constructed during her husband's lifetime or after his death but before the vow was taken. In the case of Margaret Browne, who was vowed for such a short time and whose date of death is not recorded on her brass, it seems likely that the brass predates the vow. The brass reflects the fact that Margaret's career as a vowess was only a brief footnote at the very end of her life, and the couple are commemorated as they were while they were together: Margaret appears as the wife of a living husband rather than a widow and vowess.

Vowesses in habits depicted below their parents

Vowesses' brasses do not always depict these women neatly at a particular point in the distinctively female life cycle of maiden-wife-widow. Alice Hampton is commemorated beneath her parents and alongside her siblings

28 Lamp offers a lengthy commentary on this verse in 'The Browne Brothers, All Saints', Stamford, Lincolnshire'.

29 Similarly, Katherine Colman of Little Waldingfield, Suffolk, can be identified as a vowess from her will, proved in 1532, but this is not indicated on her brass (TNA, PROB 11/24/176). She appeared at St Lawrence's, Little Waldingfield, beside her husband, John, a wealthy clothier, and above her six sons and seven daughters, but her image is now lost and so her costume cannot be considered.

on the family brass at Holy Trinity church, Minchinhampton, Gloucestershire, yet she is clearly in religious dress, even down to the rosary hanging from her girdle (Fig. 9). The Hamptons were a local gentry family, and the early deaths of many of Alice's siblings resulted in her becoming, quite unexpectedly, the heiress of both her father and her uncle, William Hampton, mayor of London, who died *c.*1483.[30] She is the only vowess known never to have married, and she was evidently drawn to religious life as she lived in custom-built accommodation at Dartford Priory, funded by her uncle, then later at Halliwell Priory, Middlesex. She also became a benefactress of Syon Abbey, and toward the end of her life handed over her entire Gloucestershire estate to that community.[31] In her will, she bequeathed her profession ring to Holy Trinity church, though no evidence of this ring survives.[32] There is, however, a bell, inscribed with her name and dated 1515, which was originally hung at one of the town's market-houses before being transferred to the parish church.[33]

The Hampton family brass is affixed to the north wall at the west end, as recorded by Davis in 1899, although Rudder's *History of Gloucestershire*, published a century earlier, described the monument as laid on a flat stone in the north aisle: it was presumably moved to prevent its being further worn away by footsteps.[34] The brass depicts Alice's parents, John and Ellen Hampton, on the left and right respectively, as a pair of cadavers in shrouds, with their hands folded in prayer and their

Fig. 9. The brass of John Hampton (d. 1461) and his wife Ellen, Michinhampton, Gloucestershire. (rubbing © Lack, Stuchfield and Whittemore, The Monumental Brasses of Gloucestershire, 2005)

heads tilted slightly to face one another. Their children stand beneath them, with hands folded and likewise facing inwards: six sons beneath their father and three daughters beneath their mother. One son and one daughter, probably

30 For more on the circumstances of the Hampton family during this period, see Wood, 'In Search of the Mantle and Ring', 183–5.

31 For a fuller biography, see L.M. Richmond, 'Hampton, Alice (d. 1516)', in *ODNB* [https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/102118], accessed 28 May 2019.

32 LMA, Commissary Court of London Wills, 9171/9, f. 5v–6.

33 A.T. Playne, *A History of the Parishes of Minchinhampton and Avening* (Gloucester, 1915), 70.

34 Davis, *Monumental Brasses of Gloucestershire*, 110–13, and Lack, Stuchfield, and Whittemore, *Monumental Brasses of Gloucestershire*, 282, 286.

the eldest, are larger than the others. The larger son is dressed as a monk, with the tonsure and closely-cropped hair, a large hood or cowl, and a long vestment with long open sleeves. The larger daughter, who is Alice, wears the long veil headdress, a cape, barbe, mantle, and a loose hip girdle from which hangs a rosary (Fig. 10). She has been described as dressed 'as a nun', although in fact she was not a nun but a vowess.[35]

A brass plate below the effigies reads:

> *Of yo[ur] charite pray for the soules of John Hampton gentilman Elyn his wife*
> *all their children specially for the soule of dame Alice Hampton his daugh*
> *ter whiche was right beneficiall to this church p[ar]ish whiche John decessed*
> *in the yere of o[ur] lord mccccclxj on whose soules [Jesus] haue mercy amen.*

The date must be incorrect, as family deeds testify that John Hampton died in 1461. Davis noted that the letters '*clxj*' were added later and suggested that the brass was engraved *c.*1510.[36] It is interesting that the inscription refers to Alice's benefactions to the church and parish, since her will and the bell are dated 1514 and 1515 respectively. There may have been other gifts which predated these, or perhaps a closer estimate for the construction of this brass would be around the time of Alice's death in 1516. It is tempting to conclude that Alice commissioned the brass herself, both to commemorate her deceased parents and in preparation for her own death. However, she would have no reason to leave her father's date of death blank and so the later addition of an inaccurate date remains a mystery.

Fig. 10. Detail of the Hampton brass showing Alice Hampton, Minchinhampton, Gloucestershire. (photo © Martin Stuchfield)

The confusion around the date of the brass reflects the ambiguity it communicates: Alice is portrayed both as the Hamptons' daughter, part of the family unit, and as a religious figure and benefactress in her own right. As she was an unmarried vowess, a situation which seems to have been unique, this brass might be interpreted as equivalent to those in which

35 Lack, Stuchfield, and Whittemore, *Monumental Brasses of Gloucestershire*, 282, 286. See also *The Buildings of England: Gloucestershire: The Cotswolds*, ed. D. Verey and A. Brooks, 3rd edn (London, 1999), 480. The antiquarian Canon J.M.J. Fletcher was the first to correctly identify Alice as a vowess (Exeter University Library, MS 95, Canon Fletcher's MS, vol. 10). I am indebted to Dr Virginia Bainbridge, who kindly provided a copy of this manuscript.

36 This is supported by Lack, Stuchfield, and Whittemore, *Monumental Brasses of Gloucestershire*, 282.

vowesses are depicted in religious dress beside their husbands. However, she is not the only vowed woman to appear in her habit below her parents and this reflects a conscious choice, whether her own or that of someone acting on her behalf. She might just have readily been commemorated alone. Alice's natal family were essential to her status as a vowess and benefactress: it was their support, and then their inheritance, which made her unusual life possible. Whether or not Alice commissioned this brass herself, it suits her history perfectly.

Vowesses depicted variously on multiple brasses

It has so far become evident that different vowesses were depicted in brass at different stages of their life-cycle of daughter, wife, widow, and sometimes at multiple stages at once. This is less surprising since some individuals were commemorated on more than one brass. It would have seemed logical for a woman to appear as a daughter on her parents' brass and simultaneously as a wife on her husband's. Women who were widows for many years or took vows of chastity, or indeed both, are more likely to have been commemorated alone as well, or instead. Of course, this is not to say that every woman originally appeared on three brasses – one with her parents, one with her husband, and, if she survived him, one as a widow – but rather that a woman or her representatives would have made conscious, informed decisions about how and where and with whom she was commemorated. These decisions reflect individual lives and priorities, but the picture they provide is incomplete: the patchy survival of monumental brasses from this period renders it likely that many vowesses would have had additional brasses which are now lost.

One vowess known to have been commemorated on more than one brass is Katherine Langley. Formerly the wife of Henry Langley of Rickling, Essex, she divided her time between London, Stepney, and Rickling, and was also involved in a religious and intellectual circle which centred around the Cambridge theologian William Chubbes. She died in 1511, leaving a lengthy and distinctive will, as well as a collection of confraternity letters and papal indulgences.[37] The will reads: 'If that I decese and dy in london or at Stepney or within iii myle of London then I will that my body be Buried in the Gray ffriars in london...'. She specifically requested burial in a chapel shared with Sir Richard Hastings, baron Welles, and his wife, Joan Welles, ninth baroness Willoughby de Eresby, adding that John Cutler, warden of Greyfrairs, 'knowith the place in the said Chapell which I have assigned for me'.

Charles Kingsford, in 1915, recorded Katherine's monument, now lost, in All Hallows' chapel of the London Greyfriars. Although he did not specifically state that it was a brass, the fact that he gave only the inscription and no further description of its features suggest that it was not an effigy or a tomb chest like the others he described.[38] A further brass

37 For a fuller biography of Katherine Langley, see L.M. Richmond, 'Langley, Katherine (d. 1511)', in *ODNB* https://doi.org/10.1093/odnb/9780198614128.013.90000380781, accessed 17 April 2022. The will is in the register of Bishop Richard FitzJames, LMA, MS 9531/9, ff. viii to x (3d ser.). I am indebted to Dr Christian Steer and to Dr Angela Clark, both of whom have shared with me their thoughts on Katherine.

38 C.L. Kingsford, *The Grey Friars of London* (Aberdeen, 1915), 76. Kingsford also described the chest tomb and brasses of vowess Joan Danvers (d. 1457) and her husband at Greyfriars on p. 94. Thanks are due to Dr Christian Steer for directing me to these and to Katherine's brass at Rickling.

at Rickling, depicting Henry, Katherine, and their three daughters, was recorded in John Weever's *Ancient Funerall Monuments* (1631). This was inscribed:

> *Here lyeth Henry Langley Esquyr, and Dame Katherin his wyff, which Henry departyd this lyff, 11 April M.cccc,lxxx. viii. and Dame Katherine died the yere of our Lord God, M. on whos.*[39]

The only surviving image of Katherine, however, is on the brass on her parents' tomb at the church of St Peter and St Paul, Dagenham, Essex (Fig. 11). Katherine's father was Thomas Urswick, chief baron of the exchequer and recorder of London, knighted for his part in resisting Fauconberg's assault on the city in 1471.[40] The Urswick brass depicts Thomas in his judicial robes, with a lion at his feet, and beside his second wife, Isabel, the daughter of Richard Riche, sheriff of London. She wears an elaborate headdress and flowing sleeves, and has a small dog at her heels. Two of the original four coasts of arms remain.

Beneath Thomas and Isabel are nine daughters and the indent of four sons, now lost. The eldest daughter is dressed in a religious habit, whilst behind her two of her sisters have headdresses like their mother and the other six have flowing hair, symbolic of maidenhood. Five of these nine daughters were the surviving heirs of their father. In 1893, a descendant of the family listed the children of Thomas Urswick on this brass, describing each of them in turn.[41] He wrote: 'of the eldest (the nun) we can, of course, say nothing, as her name was buried with her when she took the veil' and went on the identify the second daughter as Katherine.

However, although Thomas Urswick died in 1479, at which time Katherine was 'aged twenty-one years and more… for some time married to a Mr Henry Langley', the brass may have been constructed later, perhaps funded by Katherine or another of the Urswick daughters. Katherine was widowed and took her vow in 1487, when she was still only around thirty years old. This, combined with abundant evidence to suggest that nuns in the fifteenth century were not rendered anonymous or wholly severed from their families, suggests that the supposed nun is more likely to be the vowess Katherine herself.[42]

The only known vowed woman from this period for whom more than one brass survives intact is Susan Kyngeston, upon whose life significant research has already been published.[43] Susan's husband, John Kyngeston, died in 1514 – when he was only twenty-three years old – leaving Susan all his goods and appointing her sole executrix. Susan then lived at Syon Abbey for most of the rest of her life, though the varying sums entered for board in the monastic accounts suggest her presence there was not continuous. She appears in the accounts from 1514 to 1537 with some breaks, and 'Lady Kyngeston's chamber' is mentioned in a post-Dissolution inventory.[44] Her sisters, Dorothy and Eleanor, were nuns at Syon and she was

39 J. Weever, *Ancient Funeral Monuments* (London, 1631), 627–8.

40 H. Summerson, 'Urswick, Sir Thomas (*c.*1415–1479)', *ODNB* [https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/28025], accessed 28 May 2019. Coincidentally, William Hampton was knighted at the same time and for the same reason.

41 *Records of the Family of Urswyk*, ed. T.A. Urwick and W. Urwick (St Albans, 1893), 63–80.

42 For some examples of nuns being included and remembered by their families, see Wood, 'Vowesses in the Province of Canterbury, *c.*1450–1540', 201–2.

43 M.C. Erler, *Women, Reading, and Piety in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge, 2002), 85–99.

44 Erler, *Women, Reading, and Piety*, 86, 179.

Fig. 11. Detail of the brass of Sir Thomas Urswick (d. 1479), Dagenham, Essex, showing his daughters at his feet. (photo © Martin Stuchfield)

addressed alongside them in the prologue to a sermon by St Cyprian, translated by her stepbrother, Thomas Elyot. Her grandmother, Alice Beselles, was also resident at Syon as a vowess, and appointed Susan executrix of her will.[45] Susan had probably left Syon before the nunnery was surrendered on 25 November 1539, and she died less than a year afterwards.[46]

The first of Susan's brasses is at the church of St Mary the Virgin, Childrey, Berkshire, on the floor of the chancel north of the altar (Fig. 12). Here she appears with her husband beneath an image of the Holy Trinity, although without the dove signifying the Holy Spirit, and two coats of arms: the Kyngeston arms on the left and the Kyngeston arms impaling the Fettyplace arms (those of Susan's natal family)

45 TNA, PROB 11/22/150.

46 TNA, PROB 11/28/484.

Fig. 12. The brass of John (d. 1514) and Susan Kyngeston, Childrey, Berkshire.
(rubbing © Lack, Stuchfield and Whittemore, The Monumental Brasses of Berkshire, 2005)

on the right. The brass has lost two shields and parts of each of the two mouth scrolls.[47] These appear to read: '*O Jhesu, dulcedo omnium te amancium* (O Jesus, the delight of all who love you)' from John Kyngeston's mouth, and '*Et semper adjutor ad te proclamancium* (And always the helper of those who call upon you)' from Susan's.[48] John and Susan are depicted turned toward one another in semi-profile with their hands raised in prayer. John wears armour and is clean-shaven, with hair falling to his shoulders. Susan appears fashionably attired, with a pedimental headdress. Her dress has a close-fitting bodice, a full skirt trimmed with fur, and a long decorative belt buckled loosely in front with one end hanging almost to the ground. The inscription at the foot of the brass reads:

Of yowr Charite pray for the sowle of John Kyngeston Esquier sonne & ayer sumtyme to John Kynge
ston the wyche forsayd John dep[ar]tyd from thys transytory lyfe the xvj day of apryle in the yer of ower lord
god mvxiiij & for the sowle of Suzan his wyfe the wyche dep[ar]tyd from thys transytor[y] lyfe the
the yere of ower Lord mv and on whoys sowlles [Jesus] hawe mercy Amen

The fact that the date of Susan's death was never completed on the inscription is in keeping with the depiction of the young couple as they were in 1514, and it is likely that the brass was constructed shortly after John Kyngeston's death. This is in keeping with the fact that Lack, Stuchfield, and Whittemore date the brass to *c.*1510.

Susan was buried, and commemorated in brass again, at the church of St Edward the Confessor, Shalstone, Buckinghamshire (Fig. 13); the image of her there contrasts sharply with that at Childrey. Like the brasses of Julian Anyell and Joan Braham, the Shalstone brass depicts a solitary figure in a mantle, barbe, and long veil, with a ring on the third finger of her right hand. The likeness is wonderfully detailed, with all elements of her costume clear and distinct, hanging realistically in folds on her body. Her face is expressive, gazing into the distance. This may have been engraved with Susan's features in mind, as the broad face and dimpled chin have been observed to resemble those of other members of the family.[49] Beneath her image is inscribed:

Here lyethe buryed dame Susan Kyngeston vowes the el -
dyst dowghtr of Rychard ffetyplace of E[a]st shyfford in the
County of berks[hire] Esquier decessyd & late the wyfe of John
Kyngeston of Ch[il]drey in the said Countye of berks[hire] Esquier

47 John and Susan Kyngeston's brass was the MBS 'Brass of the Month' in February 2010 http://www.mbs-brasses.co.uk/index-of-brasses/john-kyngeston-and-wife-susan, accessed 17 April 2022. The author notes that, on the back of the Trinity and one of the remaining shields are two parts of the figure of a lady, similar to Susan's figure. Although there is nothing to indicate a mistake was made by the engraver, it is possible that this was meant for Susan's figure until an engraving error caused it to be turned over and reused. See also E. Ashmole, *The Antiquities of Berkshire*, 3 vols, (London, 1719), II, 211–12; W.N. Clarke, *Parochial Topography of the Hundred of Wanting* (Oxford, 1824), 75–7; and W. Lack, H. M. Stuchfield, and P. Whittemore, *The Monumental Brasses of Berkshire* (London, 1993), 38–9.

48 Ashmole read the text from Susan's mouth scroll as '*Et semper adjutor ad te perorantium* (And always the helper of those who finish you)', but this makes very little sense, and, even in its current partial state, the last word clearly ends '*clama[n]c[iu]m*'.

49 A rubbing of Susan Kyngeston's brass at Shalstone appears in Erler, *Women, Reading and Piety*, 92. See also VCH, *Berkshire*, IV (London, 1924), 225 and W. Lack, H.M. Stuchfield, and P. Whittemore, *The Monumental Brasses of Buckinghamshire* (London, 1994), 184–5. The observation regarding Susan's features is cited by Erler as BL, Add. MS 42763, f. 360v.

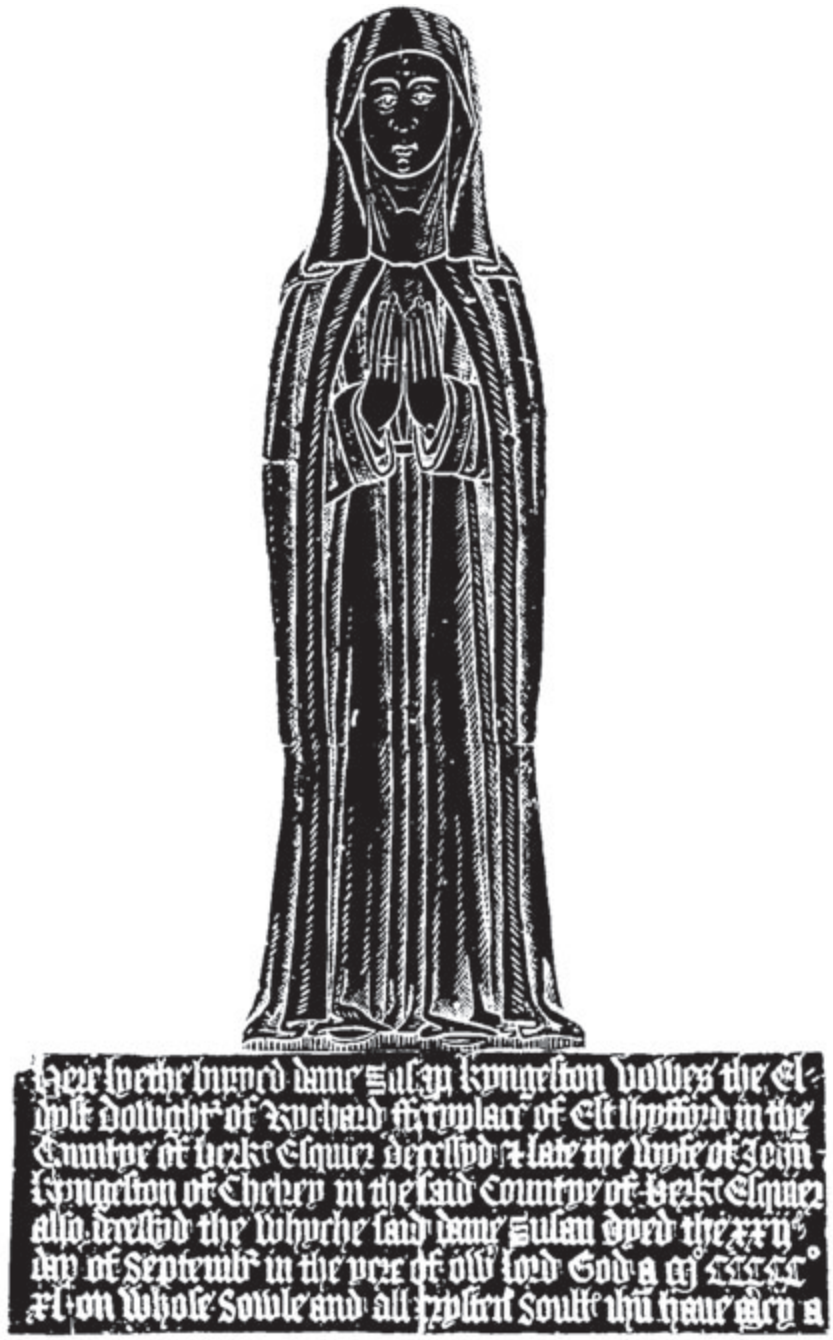

Fig. 13. The brass of Susan Kyngeston (d. 1540), Shalstone, Buckinghamshire.
(rubbing © Lack, Stuchfield and Whittemore, The Monumental Brasses of Buckinghamshire, 2005)

also · decessyd the wyche said dame Susan dyed the xxiith
day of Septemb[e]r in the yere of ow[r] lord God a m^{o}ccccc^{o}
xl · on whose sowle and all [Chris]tien souls [Jesus] have m[er]cy a[men]

It reads almost like a miniature biography, combining explicit reference to Susan's chastity vow with emphasis upon both her marriage and her natal family. The image of Susan in her habit contrasts with the young, fashionable, married woman she was in 1514, but it seems to more completely and accurately reflect who she was for most of her life.

Conclusion

As well as being designed to invoke prayers for an individual's soul and hasten their passage through Purgatory, monumental brasses are a visible, tangible expression of public identity. This identity could incorporate family lineage, marital status, social rank, religious interests and potentially other attributes as well, according to individual preference. This also depends on who commissioned the brass and when, details that we can rarely ascertain, although dates of decease left blank or added later offer tantalising clues. As such, there is always an element of mystery.

This is heightened in the case of vowesses' brasses because of the striking variety amongst them. Some vowed women are depicted alone, others with their husbands and children or their parents and siblings. Some include family arms on their brasses and refer to their husbands or parents in the inscription; others do not. Some wear lay clothing, others are indistinguishable from nuns in their religious costume. This reflects the variety amongst the lives of the women themselves and the flexibility of the vocation to accommodate different preferences and identities.

The choices that were made in terms of how a vowess was depicted in brass have powerful implications. The existence of brasses upon which widows stand alone in religious dress suggests that some women, or their representatives, perceived the vow as an essential component of a woman's whole life, not just her widowhood. These women may have considered their vocation to define them more completely than did vowesses who made different commemorative choices, and they may have felt themselves to be of greater significance and influence in their own right after their husbands' deaths. They sought to be known and remembered, first of all, as vowesses, or others pursued this aim on their behalf.

Vowesses depicted simply as wives in lay clothing on their brasses may have felt or been seen very differently, although equally the brass may have predated the vow. If they were constructed before the vow was taken or intended or, indeed before the husband's death, this, too, was a deliberate choice. These brasses commemorate a family as it was during one season of the woman's life, and who she became subsequently is unrecorded. She is, in a sense, perpetually the wife of a living husband rather than a vowess.

Women depicted in religious dress beside their husbands assimilate both roles of wife and vowess; they seem to have understood or portrayed their vow as a continuation of marriage and an expression of loyalty to their spouse, or others did so on their behalf. The two figures – husband and wife – are chronologically out of step: he appears alive and yet she is veiled as a widow. The vow is not a vehicle of independence; rather the husband is ever-present and beside his widow in her vowed life. Death has rendered time irrelevant.

Vowed women who appear in habits alongside siblings, below their parents, combine different seasons of life within one image even more markedly. For Alice Hampton, this choice seems to have been a result of both the absence of a husband and the fact that it was her family's inheritance and support which enabled her to embark upon such an unusual life. Katherine Langley seems likely to have commissioned the Urswick brass at Dagenham personally, in order to honour her parents when she was already a widow and vowess, but the decision to be depicted in this way was probably influenced by the fact that she was also commemorated elsewhere. Other vowed women who were depicted in brass only once made a deliberate choice – or others chose on their behalf – about which chapter of their lives was most significant and defining.

The limited survival of brasses in general suggests that numerous women would have appeared on more than one brass, especially vowesses for whom a quasi-religious life could serve as a 'second career' after raising a family.[50] Since brasses usually present the dead as if they were living, it seems natural for a woman to be depicted at differing points in her life-cycle of daughter, wife, and widow. To be commemorated variously in this way encapsulates that the vowess, in life, embodied multiple identities at once. She was simultaneously lay and religious, the wife of a man and the bride of Christ. Each woman navigated this dual life in her own unique way, and commemoration in brass offered vowesses the opportunity not only to attract intercession and prayer, but to give their multi-faceted identity a visible, permanent form.

Acknowledgements
The author is most grateful to Martin Stuchfield for supplying the illustrations for this article.

50 S. Steuer describes vowed life in this way in 'Widows and Religious Vocation: Options and Decisions in the Medieval Province of York' (unpub. Ph. D. thesis, University of Minnesota, 2001), 33.

‘A memory on whose soule Jesu have mercy’: John Fuller (d. 1526) of Norwich, a benefactor and his brass

Christian Steer

John Fuller died on 1 October 1526. His will does not refer to a brass and the antiquarian evidence is likewise silent on whatever tomb monument he may have had. Yet for almost ninety years an inscription brass, hitherto of unknown provenance, has formed part of a collection of detached brasses in a Cambridge museum. In this article this ‘Norwich 6’ memorial is attributed to John Fuller of the parish of St Clement Colegate, Norwich. It will also consider the broader forms of memory and commemoration in England which were used by testators such as John Fuller on the eve of the Reformation.

John Fuller, a merchant of the parish of St Clement Colegate (also known as St Clement Fye Bridge) Norwich, made his will on 15 June 1526. By the autumn he was dead and on 17 October probate was granted to his executors by the commissaries of Archbishop William Warham of Canterbury. Fuller’s will is modest in length, at some fifty-one lines, and, as in many other late medieval wills, the testator was concerned with the care of his soul and the wellbeing of his widow, Elizabeth.[1] Again, like many other wills of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, it is silent about instructions concerning his memorial brass, although a number of bequests reveal a little of Fuller’s commemorative wishes and his intention to remain in the memory of the parish, and of the city, for generations to come. It is the purpose of this short article to consider the extent of John Fuller’s commemorations – both testamentary and discretionary – and to associate this citizen of Norwich with a modest inscription brass, detached long ago from its tomb-slab, and now stored in the collection of a Cambridge museum.

John Fuller was born about 1486 in Bodham, a small village approximately six and a half miles west of Cromer, in north Norfolk. He was the son of John Fuller, the elder, a maltster by trade, and his wife Joan. They had five surviving children of their own: Henry, John, Edmund (a priest), Robert and Joan.[2] There was another daughter, the issue of Joan’s first marriage, Agnes Sonde, who married William Estlyn. John Fuller the elder died on 30 March 1512 and he was buried in All Saints’ church, Bodham, where his grave was marked by a two-line inscription brass from the ‘Norwich 6’ workshop of William Harmer (Fig. 1) which recorded (in expanded form):

> *Orate pro anima Johannes fuller qui obiit xxx / die marcii Anno domini millesimo v^c^ xii cuius anime propicietur Deus*

The brass is a straightforward inscription and the lettering suggests it was from the ‘6a’ period of 1506 to 1513 and therefore made shortly after his death.[3] It was made on the instructions given by Fuller in his will: ‘Item I will there be bought for me a marbill stone to lye over my

1 TNA, PROB 11/22/217.

2 Edmund Fuller was possibly the same one who was admitted to Cambridge as a questionist in Michaelmas Term 1501 (A.B. Emden, *A Biographical Register of the University of Cambridge to 1500* (Cambridge, 1963), 246). Nothing further has been found on Sir Edmund.

3 R. Greenwood and M. Norris, *The Brasses of Norfolk Churches*, Norfolk Churches Trust (Holt, 1976), 26. I am grateful to Jon Bayliss for generously sharing information on William Harmer, freemason and marbler, of Norwich, who died in 1539.

Fig. 1. Inscription brass of John Fuller the elder (d. 1512), All Saints, Bodham (Norfolk).
© Matthew Sillence

grave w*ith* my name graven in scriptur*e* of brasse'.[4] His executors were his widow Joan and John Aleyn and they evidently took their responsibility seriously and commissioned the required memorial soon after Fuller's death. He also left bequests for repairs to the church, to the rood light, the guild of St John the Baptist, and the guild of Holy Trinity. A priest was to celebrate for Fuller's soul in Bodham church for one year after his death. Joan outlived her husband and was still alive in 1526 when she received an annuity in their son John's will. The younger John also left 20s. to Bodham church on condition that they kept an obit for him and for his father (and all Christian souls) twice a year, to be celebrated at Christmas and on Easter Monday.[5]

John Fuller the younger went to Norwich to learn his craft. He was recorded as a grocer but, like merchants elsewhere, he had his fingers in many pies including the mercery of Norwich. He was admitted a freeman of the city on 17 January 1520 on payment of 33s. 4d.[6] He was

4 Norfolk Record Office (hereafter NRO), Norwich Archdeaconry Court, Reg. Gloys, ff. 51–52.

5 TNA, PROB 11/22/217.

6 NRO, Norwich City Records, 16D/2, Assembly Proceedings, 1491–1553, f. 123 (pencil foliation). There were several men called 'John Fuller' who were active in Tudor Norwich. The most likely explanation for the disappearance of John Fuller, former constable and councillor, from the civic hierarchy, was death, hence his identification with the man who died in 1526. The literature on merchants trading in multiple industries is extensive. See, for example, S.L. Thrupp, *The Merchant Class of Medieval London* (Michigan, 1992 edn), chapter 1.

the aldermanic choice to serve as constable for Colegate ward (where he lived) for the year beginning 3 May 1520 and a year later he was elected during Easter week as a councillor for the whole northern ward.[7] He was evidently a man of promise but died on 1 October 1526 before he could serve as alderman, mayor or sheriff of the city. But his will reveals a little of his life and interests and includes a number of bequests to friends and family such as gifts of clothing and of money to his siblings, and also 20s. to each of his nephews, William and Robert Fuller (probably the sons of his brother Henry).[8] He also left 20s. each to his brother Sir Edmund, priest, their half-sister Agnes and her husband William Estlyn, and a more generous 5 marks (£3 6s. 8d.) to his sister Joan, who was evidently unmarried. He also left a lump sum of £8 to support their mother Joan with an annuity of 20s. His widow Elizabeth was bequeathed all of her wearing apparel, girdles, beads, rings and all the 'lyning' that was in his household but reserving what was in his shop for his estate. She was also left 160 marks (£107 13s. 4d.), which she could claim in either goods or ready money, and his 'litill house' by the bridge.[9] Fuller included a provision whereby should Elizabeth sell this property to his executors within twelve months of his death then they – his executors – were to pay her 40 marks for the property and allow her to live in it throughout this twelve-month period. Only then could they sell it. Other bequests included 5 marks each to Thomas Wolf and his sister, Elizabeth. They were the children of Ralph Wolf, also of St Clement's parish in Norwich, who had died in 1523, and his wife Elizabeth: it seems that Fuller married widow Wolf and became stepfather to these two children.[10] The executors of Fuller's will were his brother Henry together with Thomas Necton and John Carre, and the supervisor was his brother Sir Edmund: all four men were to receive 5 marks for their trouble.

In his will John Fuller requested burial in his parish church of St Clement Colegate, Norwich, in the north of the city (Fig. 2). The church is very near to Fye Bridge and suggests that Fuller's 'litill house' would have been adjacent to the churchyard (Fig. 3). He made no provision for any memorial brass, but few testators did.[11] There are several indents which survive at St Clement's but none have been identified with a lost brass for Fuller, and nor is there a record of any such brass in Francis Blomefield's *An Essay Towards a Topographical History of the County of Norfolk*.[12] Benjamin Mackerell's unpublished account of Norwich's parish churches is also silent on a possible brass for John Fuller.[13] But this does not mean one did not exist. A-three-line inscription brass for a John Fuller, who had died on 1 October 1526, was given to the Museum of Archaeology and

7 NRO, Norwich City Records, 16D/2, Assembly Proceedings, 1491–1553, ff. 125 (as constable for Colegate ward) and 131v (as councillor for the northern ward). Although he was sworn in as councillor he may not have served as councillor as 'non' is entered against his name.

8 TNA, PROB 11/22/217.

9 In his will John Fuller left a handsome 30s. to the bridge for repairs.

10 NRO, Norwich Consistory Court, Reg. Herman, f. 45. One of Wolf's executors was Robert Perys, a merchant of Yarmouth, who died in 1529 (TNA, PROB 11/23/192). Perys was also an associate of Fuller who bequeathed him a coverlet.

11 N. Saul, *English Church Monuments in the Middle Ages: History and Representation* (Oxford, 2009), 96.

12 F. Blomefield, *An Essay towards a Topographical History of the County of Norfolk*, 11 vols (London, 1805–10), IV, 453–62. I thank Martin Stuchfield for providing me with the entry on St Clement's from the forthcoming County Series volumes for Norfolk.

13 Typescript extracts from Benjamin Mackerell's manuscript *History of the City of Norwich* made by J. Roger Greenwood, 1974/5 (in private possession).

Fig. 2. The parish church of St Clement Colegate, Norwich, by Joseph Stannard, early 19th century.
© Norfolk Museums Service (Norwich Castle Museum & Art Gallery).

Anthropology, Cambridge, in 1935 (Fig. 4).[14] It is cracked along the centre but still legible. The inscription is in English and reads (in expanded form):

> Of your charite praye for the soule of John ffuller the / wiche departed the firste day of octobre in the yere of / our lorde God m^{o} v^{c} xxvi of whose soule Jhesu have mercy

It is, like his father's brass, a product of the 'Norwich 6' workshop, which remained active until the 1530s and, again like his father's brass in Bodham church, it is a straightforward request for prayers although in this case with a request for intercession from Jesus. There seems little doubt that this brass can be identified with the John Fuller of St Clement Colegate in Norwich for whom probate was granted to his executors a fortnight or so after his death.

14 W. Lack, H.M. Stuchfield and P. Whittemore, *The Monumental Brasses of Cambridgeshire* (London, 1995), 44 (illus. at 43). The Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge, accession number 1935.984. I am grateful to Imogen Gunn at the museum for her help in securing an image of this brass.

Fig. 3. The parish church of St Clement Colegate, Norwich, on the left with what may have been Fuller's house on the righthand side before the bridge, from, The Cosmographical Glasse conteinyng the pleasant Principles of Cosmographie, Geographie, Hydrographie, or Navigation (1559) by W. Cunningham.

The exact circumstances which led to its loss from St Clement's are now unknown, but it serves as an important reminder of the mania for collecting brass from (perhaps) as early as the seventeenth century. The Fuller brass was, as noted above, gone by the time Mackerell and Blomefield visited the church in the early eighteenth century: it may have become loose and was stored in the parish chest before it was lost, stolen or sold on at a later date. It would eventually be acquired by Cecil Brent a prosperous civil servant who died in 1902 for his private collection. It passed into the hands of other collectors before it was presented by Ralph Griffin of the Inner Temple, London, to the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology in 1935.[15]

The identity of this inscription brass for John Fuller of Norwich enables a better understanding of the benefaction and commemorations arranged in his will. It also reveals a little of the discretion of Fuller's executors when it came to distributing the residual balance of the estate in acts of charity and pious works. The extent of Fuller's wealth is suggested by a very generous 5 marks bequeathed to the high altar for his forgotten tithes: comparable bequests at the time were for nothing more than a few pence or shillings.[16] This suggests a close devotion to his parish church which is made all the more striking when compared to an almost miserly 12d. bequeathed to Norwich cathedral.[17] Wealth led to benefaction and John Fuller continued in his generosity to his parish church with a gift of a red and green altar cloth of Bruges embroidered with flowers of gold to every altar in St Clement's with 'a memory on whose soule Jesu have mercy'. Whether or not this 'memory' was Fuller's initials or his merchant's mark (or both) is unclear, but what was important was the use of this gift, with a mark of his identity, which was to be associated in the celebration of masses at each altar of his parish church for as long as it endured. He also provided two curtains for every altar which were to be made of green sarcenet embroidered with Roman letters in gold with silk fringes. The inference of this bequest is that these curtains also contained Fuller's initials but this time he specified the script which was to be used. Other gifts were left to St Clement's: two silver candlesticks valued at

15 Lack, Stuchfield and Whittemore, *Monumental Brasses of Cambridgeshire*, 44.

16 N.P. Tanner, *The Church in Late Medieval Norwich 1370–1532* (Toronto, 1984), 127. Tanner notes that it was rare for the citizens of Norwich to bequeath more than £1 for their forgotten tithes.

17 This was the period in which the longstanding and often acrimonious despite between the cathedral priory and the city reached its bad-tempered conclusion (1524/5); many of the citizens had scant regard for the priory (N. Tanner, 'The Cathedral and the City' in *Norwich Cathedral: Church, City and Diocese, 1096–1996*, ed. I. Atherton, E. Fernie, C. Harper-Bill and H. Smith (London and Rio Grande, 1996), 255–80, at 267.

Fig. 4. The inscription brass for John Fuller (d. 1526).
Reproduced by permission of University of Cambridge Museum of Archaeology & Anthropology (1935.984).

£10, a lamp worth 4 marks (£2 13s. 4d.) and a candle to be maintained and which was to burn for seven years after Fuller's death. He also left a banner of green sarcenet, with a gold silken fringe and an image of St George, to his parish church. Fuller had been a member of the guild of St George since 1524 and this is a notable example of how membership of a city guild influenced the choice of image in a bequest to the parish church.[18] A second banner, valued at 33s 4d. was bequeathed to the college of St Mary in the Fields of Norwich, but this was to belong to the Mercers' Guild. The banner was to include another 'memory upon it on whose soule Jesu have mercy' for John Fuller and to remember him to the dean and canons.

His brass is distinctive in its concluding sentence for, unlike other comparable texts which seek the mercy of God the Father, he instead asks for the mercy of God the Son, Jesus. Such requests may be found on other brasses of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, for example, Robert Cobbe, tailor of London who died in 1516, and the brass for Thomas and Agnes Wayte at All Saints, Oxford, 1521.[19] The phrase was also used on other Norfolk brasses: John Borough (1529), also at St Clement's Norwich, John Underwood, former prior of Bromham Abbey and titular bishop of Chalcedon, at St Andrew's Norwich, (d. 1541), Richard Vensent (d. 1544) of Honingham, and Geoffrey Stuard, gentleman (d. 1547), at Guestwick. It is striking that Fuller, on two occasions in his relatively short will, included the request 'on whose [his] soule Jesu have mercy'. This suggests a close devotion to the Holy Name of Jesus which grew from early

18 *Records of the Gild of St George in Norwich, 1389–1547*, ed. M. Grace, Norfolk Record Society 9 (1937), 124, 125. It is to be noted that the guild was closely connected to civic government with which Fuller was associated.

19 *Mediaeval Inscriptions: The Epigraphy of the City of Oxford*, ed. J. Bertram, Oxfordshire Record Society 74 (2020), 258 (palimpsest of Cobbe) and 227–8 (Wayte).

private devotion in the thirteenth century to a national cult from *c.*1450. The devotion was often manifest through a Jesus Mass, a named altar within the parish or in the foundation of fraternities dedicated to the Holy Name, most notably that at St Paul's cathedral in the city of London.[20] Dr Tanner has noted that Norwich was no different and that the feast of the Holy Name of Jesus grew in popularity in the city from 1450.[21] John Fuller's devotion to this popular cult was such that it was specifically through Jesus that he sought divine intervention.

John Fuller was commemorated in brass and remembered in the prayers of his parish and by those of the brethren of St Mary in the Fields. His gifts of altar cloths, curtains, candlesticks, lamps, lights and banners were not only good works but also associated his memory with the celebrations held in both church and chapel. However, his benefactions ranged more widely than in these religious institutions alone and the silence of his will provides an important example of the discretion of executors and the trust that was often placed in their hands. Fuller, as noted earlier, had appointed his elder brother Henry, with Thomas Necton and John Carre, as executors of his estate and it was they who arranged for a portion of the residual balance to be used towards the glazing of the four-light east window of the city's Guildhall in Fuller's memory. His merchant mark was incorporated into light 'd' together with the arms of the city and the guild of Mercers' arms. It is notable that another prominent donor to the glazing scheme was none other than Fuller's executor, Thomas Necton, alderman for South Conesford, and sheriff in 1530.[22] The important role of the executors in the care of their dead friend could not be any clearer.

Conclusion

There can be little doubt that the three-line inscription brass for John Fuller, who died on 1 October 1526, which is now in the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology in Cambridge, can be for no one other than John Fuller, merchant of St Clement Colegate, Norwich, whose will was proved in London on 17 October 1526. The circumstances which led to its removal from the church are now unknown as is the complete history of its ownership. This article has not only identified the brass and its church of origin but has also revealed that

20 H. Blake, G. Egan, J. Hurst and E. New, 'From Popular Devotion to Resistance and Revival in England: The Cult of the Holy Name of Jesus and the Reformation' in *The Archaeology of the Reformation 1480–1580*, eds R. Gaimster and R. Gilchrist (Leeds, 2003), 175–203, esp. 177 and 180–1, and E. Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400–1580* (New Haven and London, 1992 edn), 113–116. See also E.A. New, 'The Jesus Chapel in St Paul's Cathedral, London: A Reconstruction of its Appearance before the Reformation', *The Antiquaries Journal*, 85 (2005), 103–24, and *The Records of the Jesus Guild in St Paul's Cathedral, c.1450–1540*, ed. E.A. New, London Record Society 56 (2022 for 2021).

21 Tanner, *The Church in Late Medieval Norwich*, 103; V. Morgan, 'Theology to liturgy: the material culture change in Norwich and beyond, *c.* 1450–1640' in *Of Churches, Toothache and Sheep: Selected Papers from the Norwich Historic Churches Trust Conferences, 2014 and 2015*, ed. N. Groves (Norwich, 2016), 15–49 at 25–6.

22 C. King, *Houses and Society in Norwich 1350–1660: Urban Buildings in an Age of Transition* (Woodbridge, 2020), 151; D. King, 'Glass-Painting' in *Medieval Norwich*, eds C. Rawcliffe and R. Wilson (London, 2004), 121–36 at 134. E.A. Kent, 'The Stained and Painted Glass in the Guildhall, Norwich', *Norfolk Archaeology*, 23 (1929), 1–10; CVMA, Norfolk: Norwich, Guildhall, Mayor Council Chamber: https://www.cvma.ac.uk/publications/digital/norfolk/sites/norwichguildhall/history.html, accessed 3 Jan., 2021. On Necton see *An Index to Norwich City Officers 1453*–1835, ed. T. Hawes, Norfolk Genealogy, vol. 21 (1989), 111. It is possible that Fuller's executors were acting on verbal instructions but the point to emphasise is their trustworthiness in commemorating the memory of their dead brother and friend.

neither the material evidence – in the form of surviving indents – nor the important written accounts of past antiquarians, are complete and that the evidence for lost brasses is but a percentage of a much richer commemorative legacy. The evidence, however, for John Fuller reveals how the brass was only one piece of a larger commemorative arrangement which involved his parish, St Mary's college and the Guildhall, each of which provided a venue for memory with a different audience who would remember his good deeds. John Fuller was thus remembered for generations to come in multiple places. Both brass and benefaction also reveal his devotion to the cult of the Holy Name of Jesus and the importance of the Son of God when ascending the stairway to Heaven.

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'*Aere Perennius*': Monumental Brasses in Literature, Art and Film

David Meara

This article sketches the outline of a 'reception history' of memorial brasses, and the way in which brasses and brass-rubbing have become a recognised part of our cultural history, especially as reflected in works of literature, in art and in film across eight centuries. Beginning with Dante's Divine Comedy the article examines scattered references in the medieval period, when brasses were not valued for their own sake, but as 'performative objects', part of the apparatus of commemorative strategies current at the time. A more objective approach gained momentum after the Reformation with the introduction of Renaissance ideas about human personality, and this led to the beginnings of serious study of brasses in their own right, and also their use as metaphors in contemporary poetry. From the eighteenth century brasses began seriously to be studied as works of art, and in the nineteenth century this expanded with the renewed interest in the Middle Ages, the growth of brass-rubbing as a hobby, and the revival of memorial brass production. This stimulated a renewed academic interest in the subject which bore fruit in numerous textbooks and the formation of the Monumental Brass Society. The serious study of brasses continued into the twentieth century, and was popularly reflected in novels and films of the period. With the decline in brass-rubbing in the late twentieth century interest in brasses has declined, although scholarly study continues and brasses remain a powerful cultural icon, Horace's 'Aere Perennius', even in the largely secular twenty-first century.

The history of the study of memorial brasses has been fully researched and documented, and will be familiar to most readers. Specialist interest in the subject gathered momentum in the mid-nineteenth century, stimulated both by the Gothic Revival, and by the attraction of brass rubbing which rapidly developed into a major late nineteenth century hobby. Soon volumes by Charles Boutell, the Waller brothers, Herbert Haines, and others were laying the scholarly foundations for the serious study of brasses. In the early years of the twentieth century outstanding books by Herbert Macklin, The Revd W.F. Creeny, Herbert Druitt and Mill Stephenson expanded the horizons of scholarship still further. And the brass rubbing boom of the 1950s, 60s and 70s produced a fresh crop of manuals, county lists, and beginners' guides, culminating in the magisterial survey of the subject by Malcolm Norris in three volumes, *The Craft, The Memorials I and II* (Faber & Faber, 1978), John Page-Phillips two volume survey of *Palimpsests* (M.B.S., 1980) and F.A. Greenhill's two volume study of *Incised Effigial Slabs* (Faber and Faber, 1976). Alongside all this the Monumental Brass Society itself has encouraged scholarly research and publication through its *Transactions*, *Portfolio* and *Bulletin*, as well as promoting the conservation of the brasses themselves.

In this way memorial brasses, and in particular brass rubbing, have become a recognised part of our cultural and artistic history, and so it is not surprising that references to brasses and brass rubbing can be found scattered across works of literature, in art, and in film. The purpose of this article is to draw attention to some of these references and to sketch the outline of what might be called the 'reception history' of monumental brasses, a topic that has been implicit in much of the literature on brasses, but never fully explored. In what follows I shall proceed roughly chronologically, and as the scope of this paper covers eight hundred years, my treatment of the subject will inevitably be something of an overview.

The earliest references to memorial slabs and brasses in literature, as has often been noted,

appear as early as the fourteenth century.[1] Dante Alighieri (1265–1321) in the second part of his *Divine Comedy*, *Purgatory*, describes the ascent of the Mountain of Purgatory, and in *Canto 12* writes:

'… Cast your eyes down
For it will help you and ease your journey
To see the bed your feet are treading on

As, to preserve the dead in memory,
The lids of tombs laid flat upon the ground
Are carved to show them as they used to be

Which means we often have to weep again
Because of recollection's poignant sting ...'[2]

Dante may well have seen tomb slabs with incised or low-relief effigies and inscriptions in churches such as Santa Reparata and Santa Croce in Florence, and as such memorials were a relatively recent phenomenon in Italy, they may have particularly caught his eye. In England the unknown author of *Pierce the Ploughman's Crede*, an anti-fraternal satire written between 1393 and 1401, had clearly noticed the presence and the vulnerability of floor slabs in churches:

'And in beldinge of tombes
Thei travaileth grete
To chargen ther chirche flore
And chaungen it ofte'.[3]

He cynically notes that the church authorities charge heavily for internal burials, and their accompanying memorial slabs, and then resell the same graves some years later.

References to memorial slabs and brasses are relatively rare in medieval literature, mainly because medieval people did not look at such artefacts as objects in their own right, but as 'performative objects', intended to fulfil a range of functions as part of a commemorative strategy for the salvation of individual souls. Tombs and monuments were the final stage of this process, in human terms, and were often highly elaborate creations, although there were some contemporary writers who questioned whether costly memorialisation was either necessary or desirable to speed the soul's progress through Purgatory. The writer of *Pierce the Ploughman's Crede*, in lines 181–4, commented ironically on:

'Tombes upon tabernacles tyld opon lofte
Housed in hirnes harde set abouten
Of armed alabaustre [alfor] for the nones
Made upon marbel in many maner wyse ...'[4]

But such references were included to make a point, and not to appraise the monument or memorial brass as a work of art in its own right.

Medieval writers had absorbed the Platonic way of 'seeing', which involves active participation rather than detached observation. For instance, a predominantly pre-literate age saw no reason to 'observe' a great medieval building such as Salisbury Cathedral, with its tombs and memorials, from a safe distance. They looked at the building and its contents as participants, being prepared to become part of the drama it represented, and being moved and challenged by what they were experiencing in front of them.

1 See for instance, *Brasses as Art and History*, ed. J.F.A. Bertram (Stroud, 1996), Chapter 2.
2 Lines 13–20, Dante, *The Divine Comedy, Purgatory*, trans. J.G. Nichols (Richmond, 2021), 222.
3 Lines 501–2, *Pierce the Ploughman's Crede*, in *Six Ecclesiastical Studies*, ed. J.M. Dean, TEAMS Middle English Tests Series (Kalamazoo, 1991), 23. See the discussion in S. Badham, *Seeking Salvation* (Donington, 2015), 64, 218 and 237–9.
4 *Pierce the Ploughman's Crede*, ed. Dean, 13. See the discussion in Badham, *Seeking Salvation*, chapter 12.

As Jerome Bertram has noted, art for its own sake was not a medieval concept, and artists and craftsmen were oblivious to the value of what they replaced or destroyed.[5] It is only when we reach the seventeenth century that people began to value relics of the past for themselves and because of their age. Bertram notes that before that period the literary evidence for memorial brasses and other monuments is largely composed of the writings of genealogists and heralds whose primary interest was in establishing family pedigrees. Heralds such as William Camden (1551–1623) Clarenceux King of Arms, and Sir William Dugdale (1605–86) Garter King of Arms, recorded church monuments in their writings, and topographers such as John Stow (1525–1605) in his *Survey of London*, published in 1598, also recorded church monuments and brasses.

By the early years of the sixteenth century we see the beginnings of a more objective interest in memorials and brasses. Indeed, it could be argued that a change in outlook began to be felt when Renaissance ideas of the sense of self and the human personality began to percolate through society in the sixteenth century. Although, as Colin Morris has shown, humanistic ideas were current on the Continent as early as the twelfth century,[6] there is no doubt that these ideas were rediscovered in the sixteenth century and encouraged in England by the upheaval of the Reformation.

Richard Rex has noted how Renaissance humanism exercised an important influence on the development of the English funeral monument. Although the English Reformation destroyed the sense of a real bond between the living and the dead with the outlawing of the concept of Purgatory, prayers to the saints and memorial obits, as Rex demonstrates, 'Alongside the medieval concept of remembrance as intercession there came in a humanist or Renaissance concept of remembrance as recollection. Where intercessory prayer was effectively outlawed by the Reformation, as in England and Scotland, this Renaissance or classical concept was all that was left.'[7]

We can observe the influence of humanistic ideas and artistic realism particularly in continental brasses, such as the brass to Dr Jacob Schelewaerts (d. 1483), in the church of St Saveur, Bruges, Belgium. The brasses of the Vischer workshop in Nuremberg, which operated between 1460 and 1530, especially the fine memorials in Meissen cathedral to the duke and duchess of Saxony (1500 and 1510), both probably by Hermann Vischer the younger, show a realism and focus on the individual in the context of daily life which is quite different from the brass designs of previous centuries. Such Renaissance influence encouraged people to begin to look at objects such as memorial brasses, if not in their own right, then rather as visual examples and types that could be exploited to make a point.

Shakespeare (1564–1616) makes several references to 'brass' and memorial brasses in his plays. Famously in *Henry V*, Act 4: Scene 3, Shakespeare puts these words into the mouth of the king just before the Battle of Agincourt:

> 'A many of our bodies shall no doubt
> Find native graves: upon the which I trust
> Shall witness live in brass of this day's work:'

5 See *Monumental Brasses as Art and History*, ed. Bertram, chapter 2.

6 C. Morris, *The Discovery of the Individual 1050–1200* (London, 1972), 1–19.

7 R. Rex, 'Monumental Brasses and the Reformation', *MBS Trans*, 14:5 (1990), 376–394.

Shakespeare would perhaps have known of the memorial brasses to those who fought at Agincourt, such as Thomas, Lord Camoys, (d. 1421), who is represented by a fine brass on an altar tomb at Trotton, Sussex, lying beside his wife Elizabeth. Lord Camoys accompanied Henry V on his first expedition to France and commanded the left wing of the army at Agincourt. For his bravery he was created a Knight of the Garter.

Shakespeare gives us other references, such as the phrase 'brass eternal' in *Sonnet 64*, line 4, which takes its inspiration from Horace's *Odes*, 3:30:

> '*Exegi monumentum aere perennius*
> (I have finished a monument more lasting than bronze)'[8]

The durable quality of brass is also referred to in *Measure for Measure*, Act 5: Scene 1: lines 9–13:

> 'When it deserves with characters of brass
> A forted residence against the tooth of time
> And razure of oblivion ...'

And in *Timon of Athens* Shakespeare seems to give us the first reference to brass rubbing when in Act 5: Scene 4 a soldier brings news to the senators of Athens and Alcibiades, that Timon is dead:

> 'My noble general, Timon is dead;
> Entombed upon the very hem o' the sea;
> and on his grave-stone this in sculpture, which
> With wax I brought away, whose soft impression
> Interprets for my poor ignorance.'

The Welsh-born poet George Herbert (1593–1633), who was an Anglican priest, who spent his last years at Lower Bemerton, near Salisbury, published *The Temple* in 1633, which contains nearly all his surviving English poems. It includes several called *The Furniture Poems*, which take artefacts from within the church building such as 'Church Monuments', 'The Church-Floore', and 'The Windows', and use them as metaphors for an exploration of spiritual truths. So, in 'Church Monuments' the gravestones and monuments that he sees on entering a church remind Herbert that his flesh too will become 'crumbled into dust' and warn him to guard against sin and to practice a true humility.

One of the earliest post-Reformation writers to notice brasses and monuments was John Weever (1576–1632), who was both an antiquary and a poet. He published *Epigrammes in the Oldest Cut* in 1599, an erotic poem 'Faunus and Melliflora' in 1600, and *The Mirror of Martyrs* in 1601: but it was at the end of his life, in 1631, that he wrote the work for which he is best known, *Ancient Funeral Monuments*. It begins with an introductory essay, the 'Discourse on Funeral Monuments', which is followed by a survey of over one thousand inscriptions in the dioceses of Canterbury, Rochester, London and Norwich. Weever seems to have been primarily interested in the literary value of memorials, rather than their historical or architectural significance, but his book is valuable because it records many inscriptions subsequently destroyed. Weever's interest in monuments and brasses shows that at this period they were valued for their literary pretensions, rather than as works of art in their own right, although Weever's work was in part stimulated by his distress at the destruction of so many monuments during the Reformation period and the years that followed.

8 Horace, *Odes and Epodes*, trans. N. Rudd (Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge, Ma., and London, 2004), 216–17.

This strategy of using the church monument or memorial brass to make a literary point appears a number of times in the poetry of the seventeenth century. The Royalist poet Abraham Cowley (1618–67), who became a Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, published a book of poems in 1656 which included one 'On the Praise of Poetry' in which he makes the point that literary writings furnish a memorial less perishable than traditional funerary monuments:

> 'Tis not a Pyramide of Marble stone,
> Though high as our ambition;
> 'Tis not a tomb cut out in brass, which can
> Give life to th' ashes of man,
> But verses only: they shall fresh appear,
> Whilst there are men to read, or hear.
>
> When Times shall make the lasting Brass decay
> And eat the Pyramide away,
> Turning that Monument where in men trust
> Their names, to what it keeps, poor dust:
> Then shall the Epitaph remain, and be
> New graven in Eternity.'[9]

This poem contains an echo of the old poetic boast traceable to Horace's Odes, *Exegi monumentu, aere perennius*, which we have noted earlier, 'I have finished a monument more lasting than bronze, And loftier than the Pyramid's royal pile.' The image of a poem as a living stone more durable than brass also appears in the seventeenth-century poet Robert Herrick's *His Poetrie His Pillar*.[10]

An even more striking usage of the image of the memorial brass in seventeenth century poetry is the reference in *Absalom and Achitophel*, published in 1681 by John Dryden (1631–1700). In lines 550–681 of the poem Dryden pillories the individuals or factions who supported the parliamentarian earl of Shaftesbury, Anthony Ashley Cooper, in his campaign to exclude the Catholic duke of York, James Stuart, from the succession. This section of the poem culminates in a brilliant portrait of Titus Oates whose discovery of a 'Popish Plot' in 1678 unleashed an anti-Catholic frenzy. In lines 632–5 Oates, here called Corah, and his actions, are placed on record:

> 'Yet Corah thou shalt from oblivion pass:
> Erect thyself, thou monumental brass,
> High as the serpent[11] of thy metal made,
> While nations stand secure beneath they shade.'

Dryden's characterisation of Titus Oates as a 'monumental brass' evokes the medieval brasses in churches which he must himself have noticed. As Kathryn Walls has observed, 'Since extreme Puritans regarded effigies as akin to idols this characterisation turns Oates' own values against himself. To antiquaries, however, effigies were a valuable record of the history and achievements of those commemorated, usually well-born or prosperous. Dryden's description thus pretends to flatter Oates, while insinuating he was a social climber. Oates' shallow, two-dimensional effigy, projects the falsity of his carefully crafted public image, while remaining a true representation of him as an utter imposter.'[12]

Such a bold use of the monumental brass as a literary metaphor suggests that brasses were

9 *Abraham Cowley: Poetry and Prose*, ed. L.C. Martin (Oxford, 1949), 2. See also R. Terry, *Poetry and the Making of the English Literary Past, 1660–1781* (Oxford, 2001), 70.

10 *The Poetical Works of Robert Herrick*, ed. L.C. Martin (Oxford, 1956), 85.

11 A reference to the bronze serpent used by Moses in the desert in *Numbers*, 21: 8–9.

12 K. Walls, 'Titus Oates as Monumental Brass in '*Absalom and Achitophel*'', *Studies in English Literature 1500–1900*, 50:3 (2010), 545–56.

still regarded as objects of interest in the late seventeenth century, even at a time when the engraving of brasses as memorials had all but died out. That church monuments and brasses were being noticed and recorded for their own sake is clear from the evidence of the earliest extant brass rubbing, found amongst the papers of the seventeenth century antiquary Edmund Gibson (1669–1748), who worked on the revision and enlargement of *Camden's Britannia* which appeared in 1695. The rubbing is of the Legh brass of 1506 from Macclesfield, Cheshire, with its representation of the Mass of St Gregory. The rubbing is accompanied by a letter from Henry Prescott to the bookseller Abel Swall of St Paul's Churchyard, London, dated 2 December 1693, saying that it was made by the minister of Macclesfield, Samuel Hume, who had been appointed to the living in 1689.[13]

This early example of brass rubbing, probably using powdered graphite, can be paralleled by evidence on the Continent, as we know from mid-seventeenth century oil paintings of Dutch churches, first noticed by John Page-Phillips.[14] An oil painting of the old church at Delft made in 1656 by Hendrik van Vliet shows a group of children gathered round a boy who appears to be taking a rubbing of a brass or incised slab. The same artist records a similar scene taking place in the new church at Delft. Such activity is a sign not just that the populace in general were attracted to brass rubbing but that men of learning in particular were becoming increasingly interested in historical evidence and primary documentation.

Historians began to use the evidence of coins, inscriptions and manuscripts in composing their narratives, and increasingly turned to the emerging body of people interested in antiquity for its own sake – the antiquaries. The seventeenth century interest in amassing an undiscriminating collection of objects to form a 'cabinet of curiosities' slowly turned, in the eighteenth century, into a more systematic and analytical discipline.[15]

The artefacts with which the antiquary was most commonly interested included monumental inscriptions and memorial brasses. The earlier interest of the heralds in genealogical information evolved into the study of monuments in their own right, and as Sweet has noted,[16] gained currency because of the well-developed cult of the tomb in eighteenth century society: 'Joseph Addison's meditative reflections upon the tombs in Westminster Abbey must have been one of the most frequently cited of all the essays in the Spectator,' with his celebration of their gloomy melancholy and solemnity, and provoked wider curiosity about the nature of commemoration and those commemorated.

The Society of Antiquaries was formed in 1707 to encourage those who delighted in antiquity for its own sake, and the antiquary Richard Gough (1735–1809) played an important role in establishing the systematic study of architectural history, as well as being the founding father of the modern study of monumental brasses, publishing his *Sepulchral Monuments of Great Britain* in 1786.[17] As Sally

13 J. Blair, 'The Earliest Brass Rubbing?', *MBS Bulletin*, 15 (June 1977), 11, illustrated in *Brasses as Art and History*, ed. Bertram, 171.

14 J. Page-Phillips, *Macklin's Monumental Brasses* (London, 1969), chapter 13, illustrated on the dust jacket.

15 R. Sweet, *Antiquaries: The Discovery of the Past in Eighteenth Century Britain* (London, 2004), chapter 1.

16 Sweet, *Antiquaries*, 273.

17 S. Badham, 'Richard Gough's Papers Relating to Monumental Brasses in the Bodleian Library, Oxford', *MBS Trans*, 14:6 (1991), 467–512.

Badham has noted, 'With the advent of Richard Gough and his circle, brasses came to be studied as works of art, and attention switched to the figures, the armour and costumes depicted, and the architectural accessories.'[18]

With Sir John Cullum and Craven Ord, Gough went about the country making copies of brasses by smearing printers' ink on the surface and pressing a dampened sheet of paper on top, touring East Anglia in 1780 making these reverse impressions, some of which are in the British Library and the Bodleian Library, and many of which were used to illustrate his *Sepulchral Monuments*. This antiquarian interest of Gough, William Stukeley (1687–1765), John Nichols (1745–1826) and others, was part of a more general awakening of interest in the Middle Ages which stimulated the literary antiquarianism of a wider range of people, including the poets Thomas Gray and Thomas Chatterton, and the dilettante collector Horace Walpole. Chatterton (1752–70) was a poet who as a child became fascinated by the medieval architecture of St Mary Redcliffe in Bristol, and spent his hours in the muniment room above the porch living in a medieval world of his own and writing poetry. Despairing of his prospects, he committed suicide in 1770.

Thomas Gray (1716–71) was an English poet and classical scholar, best known for his *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*, published in 1751, which is a meditation on death, decay, loss and remembrance. His friend Horace Walpole was at the time using the artist Richard Bentley to help him remodel his mansion Strawberry Hill at Twickenham, and commissioned Bentley to create illustrations for the 1753 edition of Gray's poems (Fig. 1). They became an instant success, and the frontispiece shows a view of a churchyard and village church built from the remains of a ruined abbey, framed by a decaying arch from the ruins, overgrown with weeds.

This book was Horace Walpole's first attempt to explore the power of Gothic architecture and exhibits the picturesque bringing together of the broken objects of religious iconoclasm, the half-broken rose window in the church tower, the tomb on the left of the archway, and the shadow of the antiquary leaning on his stick, which creates the impression of the indent of a memorial brass on the ground. Thus, the brass indent becomes a symbol of loss and destruction, while the whole composition points forward to what Walpole wanted to do at Strawberry Hill by reassembling the scattered objects of a glorious medieval past.

Walpole (1717–97) was the youngest son of Britain's first prime minister, Sir Robert Walpole, and a passionate medievalist. He wrote what is generally regarded as the first Gothic novel, *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) and he was a collector of medieval and other antiquities for his 'little Gothic castle' at Strawberry Hill. Walpole filled his house with antiquities, and even laid a memorial brass in his 'winding cloister' to an ancestor Bishop Ralph Walpole, which Walpole said he copied from a print in Dart's *Westmonasterium* (1723–42) of the tomb of Robert Dalby, bishop of Durham (Fig. 2). In fact, the brass is based on that to Robert Waldeby, archbishop of York (d. 1397). It was engraved by Johann Heinrich Müntz (1727–98), a Swiss painter employed at the house, whom Walpole eventually dismissed.[19]

18 Badham, 'Richard Gough's Papers', 467.

19 A. Wagner and R.H. Delboux, 'A Commemorative Brass to Bishop Ralph Walpole', MBS *Trans*, 8:3 (1945), 99–102; T.S. Watts, 'Müntz, Johann Heinrich [John Henry] (1727–98)', *ODNB*, online edn, ref:odnb/19552 accessed April 2022.

Fig. 1. Richard Bentley's drawing for the Frontispiece to Gray's Elegy Written in a Country Church Yard, 1753.

Fig. 2. Brass to Bishop Ralph Walpole, bishop of Norwich and Ely 1299–1302. The brass was engraved c.1758 for Horace Walpole by Johann Heinrich Müntz (1727–98) and laid in the winding cloister at Strawberry Hill, Middlesex. The brass is based on that to Robert Waldeby, archbishop of York (d. 1397).

This dilettante literary-cum-antiquarian passion for all things medieval, in which ruins and rococo were the order of the day, gradually gave way to a more serious attempt to celebrate the beauties of the past. The antiquary and topographer John Britton (1771–1857) produced a nine-volume series *The Beauties of England and Wales* between 1801 and 1814, *The Architectural Antiquities of Great Britain* in nine volumes, and *Cathedral Antiquities of England* in fourteen volumes between 1814 and 1835. He was one of the first real topographers, an advocate of the preservation of ancient monuments, and on his death in 1857 was commemorated by a memorial brass in Salisbury Cathedral designed by J. Hardman and Co. The inscription records that 'he revived the admiration of Englishmen for the venerable monuments of the taste and piety of their Forefathers ...'.

The most influential populariser of medieval art and life in the early years of the nineteenth century was the novelist Sir Walter Scott, the man who in John Henry Newman's words, 'turned men's minds in the direction of the Middle Ages.' In his wake the medieval revival spread to art and architecture, and was enlisted as a desirable social policy by writers such as Thomas Carlyle and William Cobbett who criticised the evils of a newly-industrialised society and lamented the loss of the age of faith.

Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin (1812–52) was strongly influenced by these ideas, and combined his artistic talent with biting satire in his book *Contrasts*, first published in 1836, to show that medieval designs emanated from true Catholic beliefs. In the plate 'Contrasted Episcopal Monuments' the figure on the memorial brass of an austere medieval prelate contrasts with a podgy and worldly Georgian divine whose bust is flanked by his two wives.

Fig. 3. Examples of modern costume suitable for revived memorial brasses, from An Apology for the Revival of Pointed or Christian Architecture in England (1843) by A. W. N. Pugin.

The comparison is crude, but Pugin's point is graphically made. In his later work *An Apology for The Revival of Christian Architecture in England*, published in 1843, Pugin includes a section on 'Sepulchral Memorials', illustrated with two plates showing 'Revived Sepulchral Brasses' Fig. 3). The accompanying text makes the point that contemporary female costume was suitable to be represented on brasses, although the cross was still the most appropriate emblem. Pugin in his writings, which were both literature and polemic, used memorial brasses as one element in his crusade to critique contemporary artistic taste and promote the revival of the High Medieval style in almost every aspect of life. As part of this neo-medieval outlook, he was keen to promote the revival of memorial brasses and wrote an article about medieval brasses in the *Orthodox Journal*.[20] Pugin, in a letter to his printer John Weale, was particularly anxious

20 A.N.W. Pugin, 'Monumental Brass of the Fifteenth Century', *Orthodox Journal*, 6 (12 May 1838), 289–92.

that the plates in his *Apology* should be coloured yellow, in imitation of the illustrations in John Sell Cotman's *Engravings of Sepulchral Brasses* in Norfolk and Suffolk, first published in 1819. Pugin's library contained numerous books with illustrations of brasses,[21] and he was able to combine this detailed antiquarian knowledge with the creative ability to design 'modern' brasses, joining his design skills to those of John Hardman of Birmingham to create a 'medieval manufactory' turning out ecclesiastical and domestic metalwork to satisfy the prevailing passion for all things Gothic.[22]

Other designers were soon following suit, notably the Waller brothers,[23] and it was not long before commercial firms were being established, such as Heaton, Butler and Bain, to meet the growing demand. A number of prominent nineteenth century architects designed brasses as well as buildings, including George Edmund Street, William Butterfield, and George Gilbert Scott.[24] Thus the growing interest in recording medieval memorial brasses and appreciating them as works of art in their own right stimulated a new desire to record them by making a collection of rubbings, and also to use them as patterns for a new generation of revived memorial brasses as a fitting way of commemorating the dead.

There are occasional references in the writings of early nineteenth century antiquaries to brass rubbing. The Wiltshire antiquary Richard Colt Hoare in his *Hints on the Topography of Wiltshire* (1818) lists the objects of interest to be noted, including monuments and brasses. In a footnote he explains 'a very quick and correct method of taking off impressions from brasses of any size ... Cover the figure or inscription with paper, and then rub it over with some shreds of black shoemaker's leather, which leaves a most perfect impression on the paper.'[25]

Although a number of artists and engravers were making drawings of brasses from the late eighteenth century onwards, this is an early example of a writer giving instructions for the rubbing of brasses. Richard Busby has given an account of the development of methods of illustrating brasses, from drawings, engravings and lithographs to photo lithography and direct photography.[26] Alongside these more sophisticated techniques, brass rubbing remained a popular method of taking impressions throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, because in the late 1830s Francis Ullathorne, Sons. and Co., of Long Acre, London, manufactured the first heelball, or cobblers' wax, specifically for taking rubbings of brasses. Albert Way in the *Archaeological Journal* of September 1844 calls them 'the sole manufacturers of heelball supplying small pieces and cakes for the keen rubber.' This easy and clean method of making copies of brasses quickly superseded previous methods, and contributed to the rising popularity of brass rubbing, which in turn stimulated a more academic interest in the subject, and the publication of a series of textbooks over the next fifty years. The Revd Charles Boutell (1812–77), in his book *Monumental Brasses and Slabs*

21 D. Meara, *A. W. N. Pugin and The Revival of Memorial Brasses* (London and New York, 1991), chapter 2.
22 Meara, *Pugin and The Revival of Memorial Brasses*, *passim*.
23 P. Whittemore, 'Waller Fecit', *Church Monuments*, 16 (2001), 79–125.
24 For an account of the nineteenth century revival of brass manufacture see D. Meara, *Victorian Memorial Brasses* (London, 1983).
25 J.A. Goodall, 'When Brass Rubbing was New', *MBS Bulletin*, 10 (October 1975), 15.
26 R. Busby, *A Companion Guide to Brasses and Brass Rubbing* (London, 1973), 78–98.

published in 1847, which attempted to 'reduce the prevalent amusement of brass rubbing into something of a system', described 'the first hasty visit to some brass preserving fabric – the first sweeping away of dust, and spreading out of paper, and manipulation of heelball –', but went on to assert in a more serious tone 'There is an association, or rather an inherent quality, in the engraven plate, the object of the brass rubbers research, which calls forth feelings and sentiments far worthier than those of the most refined curiosity.' He also remarks 'It will be of but little use to look at brasses, if you do not rub them. It is rubbing brasses which leads to the understanding them.'

Perhaps because of this deeper, more academic interest, brass rubbing and the associated study of brasses became particularly popular amongst undergraduates at Oxford and Cambridge. At Oxford Herbert Haines worked on his *Manual for the Study of Monumental Brasses* (1848), the precursor of his *Manual of Monumental Brasses* of 1861, which in Richard Busby's words, 'raised the study of brasses from a hobby into a science'. At Cambridge the Cambridge University Association of Brass Collectors was founded in 1887, eventually dissolved and re-founded in 1894 as the Monumental Brass Society with the Revd H.W. Macklin as its first president, and Mill Stephenson as the honorary secretary and treasurer. Richard Busby has chronicled the history of the M.B.S., which over the past one hundred years has acted as a catalyst for the study and conservation of brasses, and also encouraged those who began brass rubbing as a juvenile pastime to take it more seriously and explore the subject at greater depth.[27] In spite of the fact that brass rubbing was looked down upon by historians and archaeologists, it became a popular middle class hobby, taken up by amongst others the writer and designer William Morris, who as an undergraduate decorated the walls of his rooms in Oxford with rubbings. His friend and fellow artist Burne-Jones wrote in 1856, 'Topsy (i.e. Morris) and I live together in the quaintest room in all London, hung with brasses of old Knights and drawings of Albrecht Durer.'[28]

Towards the end of the nineteenth century the Boer War stimulated popular desire to commemorate the many ordinary soldiers who had died, and the memorial brass became the preferred and patriotic way to express the grief of many families and fellow soldiers.[29] The revived use of memorial brasses was now widespread across the main Christian denominations, and brass rubbing had established itself as a suitably patriotic and seemly pastime for school children as well as undergraduates. The young T.E. Lawrence, when a pupil at Oxford High School for Boys, developed a passion for the Middle Ages, and began rubbing brasses at the age of nine and a half in 1897. Lawrence was soon ranging far and wide over the home counties building up his collection, and he was allowed to re-catalogue part of the extensive collection of rubbings in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford.[30]

In the writer and critic Theodore Watts-Dunton's novel *Aylwin*, published in 1898 to considerable acclaim, the hero young Henry

27 R. Busby, *The Monumental Brass Society 1887–2012: A Short History* (M.B.S, 2012).

28 L. Edwards, 'William Morris as Brass Rubber', *MBS Trans*, 11:4 (1972), 210.

29 D. Meara, 'Sorrow and Pride: Commemorating the Anglo-Boer War in Brass', *MBS Trans*, 19:5 (2018), 477–87.

30 P. Whittemore, 'The Brass Rubbing Exploits of T. E. Lawrence', *MBS Bulletin*, 142 (October, 2019), 835–7.

Aylwin, is encouraged by his father to take up brass rubbing in the midst of a very severe winter, and complains that it might be rather cold:

> "Well," said my father, with a bland smile, "I will not pretend that Salisbury Cathedral is particularly warm in this weather, but in winter I always rub in knee-caps and mittens. I will tell Hodder to knit you a full set at once."
>
> "But, father", I said, "Tom Wynne tells me that rubbing is the most painful of all occupations. He even goes so far sometimes as to say that it was the exhaustion of rubbing for you which turned him to drink."
>
> "Nothing of the kind", said my father. "All that Tom needed to make him a good rubber was enthusiasm. I am strongly of the opinion that without enthusiasm rubbing is of all occupations the most irksome, except perhaps for the quadrumana (who seem more adapted for this exercise), the most painful for the spine, the most cramping for the thighs, the most numbing for the fingers. It is a profession, Henry, demanding, above every other, enthusiasm in the operator. Now Tom's enthusiasm for rubbing as an art was from the first exceedingly feeble."[31]

In the Edwardian era brass rubbing was encouraged as a suitably educational hobby for boys and girls, often featuring in the *Girls Own Paper* and the *Boys Own Paper*. The *Boys Own Paper* for Saturday 18 March 1911, for instance, includes a short story entitled *The Betteswyche Brass* in which a schoolboy Mottram Secundus introduces his friend to the delights of brass rubbing. He begins by describing heelball:

> "Well then, to begin with smell that!" and he held a dark shiny cake of something that gave out a rather decent, scenty sort of smell, under my nose.
>
> "That's a bit of Ullathorne's best," he said. "Gives rubbings clear as day and black as night."

Off they go to rub the fictional brass to Sir Richard Betteswyche at Chaddenthorne, which the author Clifford H. Pye based on the brass to John Bettesthorne (d. 1399), lord of Chaddenwick, at Mere, Wiltshire, disturbing burglars and getting locked in the church in the process. The adventure story was clearly designed to attract young people to brass rubbing, thereby encouraging an understanding of the past that was not merely dug out of books.[32]

An even more delightful insight into the joys of brass rubbing at this period is to be found in Kenneth de Burgh Codrington's memoir *Cricket in the Grass*, published in 1959. Codrington was born in 1899 in India and spent his early childhood there, but as was the custom was sent home for his schooling, spending his holidays with his aunt in a southern English seaside town. With his friend Margaret, they are enlisted by the local vicar to assist his antiquarian researches:

> "Now!" he said. "Do you know anything about church brasses? No? Well, that doesn't matter. All you need is a steady hand, common sense and a good pair of legs. I'm writing a paper on the brasses and funerary inscriptions of South Devon, and my legs won't get me there. So I wondered if you would collaborate with me? It's really quite easy."

31 T. Watts-Dunton, *Aylwin* (Oxford, 1906), 53.
32 M.H.R. Cook, 'The Betteswyche Brass', *MBS Bulletin*, 26 (February, 1981), 10–11.

He produced a roll of paper and a piece of heelball.

"Now, one holds the paper, while the other rubs. Firm, even strokes. All over."

I held the paper and Margaret rubbed, and to our amazement and delight, the rubbing developed under our hands, in clear black and white. We could do it! It was wonderful!

"Is that all right?", Margaret asked.

"Ye-es! Could be a little more even, but that will come with practice. Now let us go to the vicarage and have tea, and plan our campaign!"

During tea, which included raisin cake, which I liked very much and always thought tasted of roses, he lectured us upon the importance of church brasses. The words flowed about us and over us. We did not understand more than a quarter and remembered even less, but it was all right. He was in earnest. Church brasses were important and he had chosen us to collaborate with him. He gave us a roll of paper, two blocks of heelball and a matchbox with round, flat gelatine lozenges in it.

"They're useful for sticking down the paper," he explained, "when you're doing a big brass. But I shouldn't eat them, if I were you. I'm told they're made of horses' hooves."

We liked him more and more, and, when with a very proper show of diffidence he said he would pay our fares and offered us sixpence each for really good rubbings, we were more than delighted.[33]

Two chapters are devoted to their adventures, including a visit to Exeter cathedral, Devon, to rub the brass of Sir Peter Courtenay (d. 1405), standard-bearer to Edward III and captain of Calais. The charming book jacket, designed by Charles Stewart, shows Kenneth and Margaret admiring the Courtenay brass in the south choir aisle of Exeter Cathedral (Fig. 4).

This passion for brasses and church monuments was not universally shared, however, as we know from Jerome's rant against tombs in Jerome K. Jerome's *Three Men in A Boat*, published in 1889, when in chapter 7 Harris wants to get out of the boat to see Mrs Thomas's tomb in Hampton Church, and Jerome objects:

'I don't know whether it is that I am built wrong, but I never did seem to hanker after tombstones myself. I know that the proper thing to do, when you get to a village or a town, is to rush off to the churchyard, and enjoy the graves; but it is a recreation that I always deny myself. I take no interest in creeping round dim and chilly churches behind wheezy old men, and reading epitaphs. Not even the sight of a bit of cracked brass let into a stone affords me what I call real happiness.'

Those who enjoyed antiquarian pursuits such as brass rubbing were also sometimes the object of patronising disdain. In one of the short stories of Saki (Hector Hugh Munro, 1870–1916) in *The Chronicles of Clovis*, published in 1911, entitled *The Secret Sin of Septimus Brope*, there is a Lady Bracknell moment when Mrs Riversedge, the hostess and woman-about-town, is asked who Mr Brope is and 'What does he do?':

"He edits the *Cathedral Monthly*," said her hostess, "and he's enormously learned about memorial brasses and transepts and the influence of Byzantine worship on modern liturgy, and all those sort of things. Perhaps

33 K. de B. Codrington, *Cricket in the Grass* (London, 1959), 36.

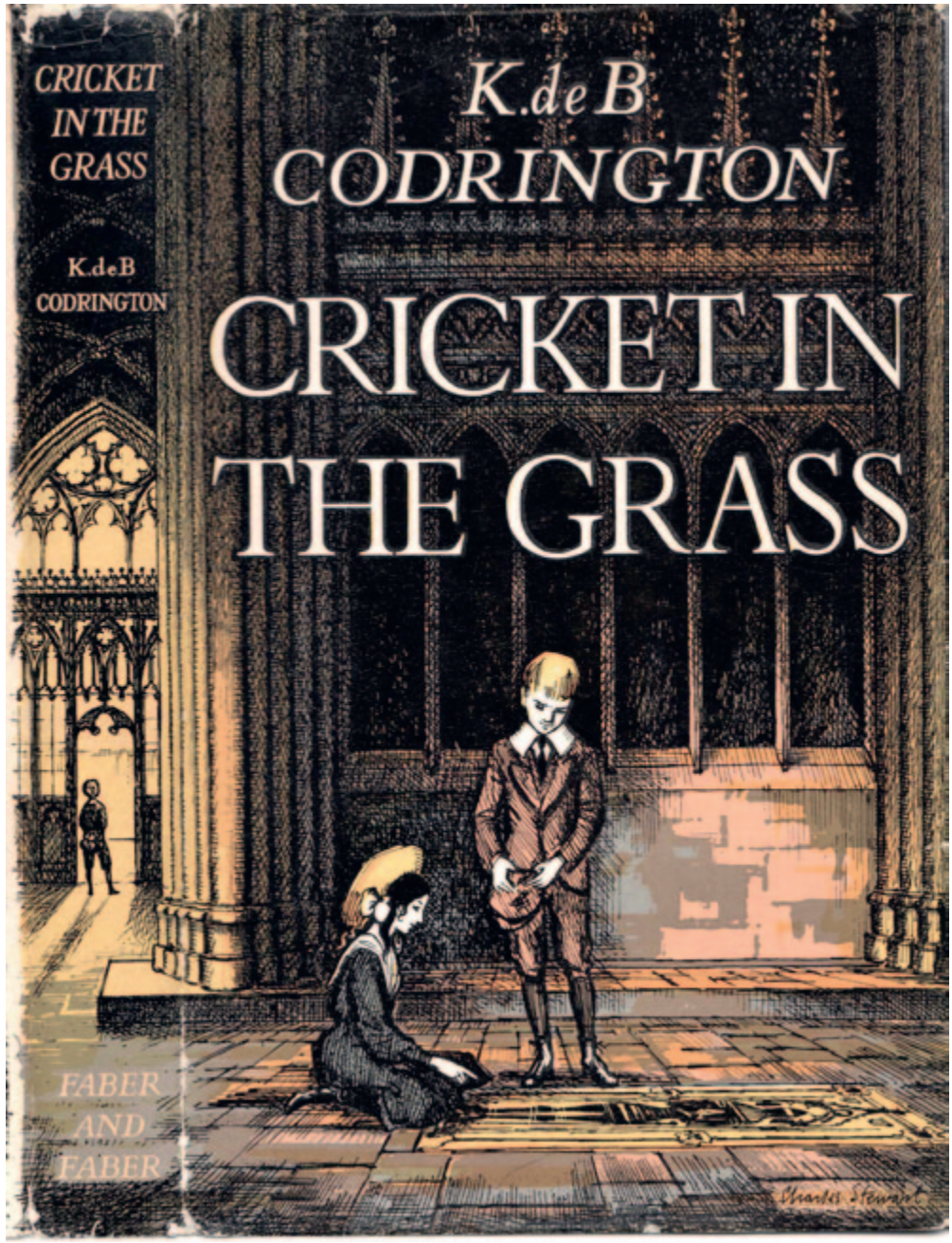


Fig. 4. The book jacket for Cricket in the Grass (1959) by K. de B. Codrington, designed by Charles Stewart, and showing Kenneth and his friend Margaret gazing at the brass to Sir Peter Courtenay (d. 1409) in Exeter Cathedral.
(© Faber and Faber)

Fig. 5. Septimus Wilkinson, the bishop of Matabeleland, played by Dennis Price, with the Revd Lord Henry D'Ascoigne, played by Alec Guiness. The bishop has just been rubbing the brass to an ancestor of the rector's in Chalfont church, from the film Kind Hearts and Coronets (1949).
(Reproduced by courtesy of Studiocanal)

> he is just a little bit heavy and immersed in one range of subjects, but it takes all sorts to make a good house-party, you know. You don't find him *too* dull, do you?"
>
> "Dullness I could overlook," said the aunt of Clovis; "what I cannot forgive is his making love to my maid."

Saki used these acidic short stories to satirise Edwardian society and culture, and here the implication is that dull and dingy people who pursued antiquarian interests and lived in places like Leighton Buzzard were socially beyond the pale of polite and fashionable society.

This attitude of barely concealed contempt was continued in the 1920s by the writer Evelyn Waugh. His novel *Decline and Fall* (1928) charts the fall of Paul Pennyfeather, sent down from Oxford for 'indecent conduct', and taken on as a schoolmaster at Llanabba Castle. Soon after the start of term he receives a letter from one of his four friends at Oxford, Arthur Potts,

who writes to commiserate with Paul, and adds somewhat inconsequentially:

> 'I bicycled over to St Magnus at Little Beckley and took some rubbings of the brasses there. I wished you had been with me.'

Waugh seems to use this aside as a device to highlight Potts's ineffectual unworldliness, implying that he could have spoken up for Paul if only he had had more moral backbone.

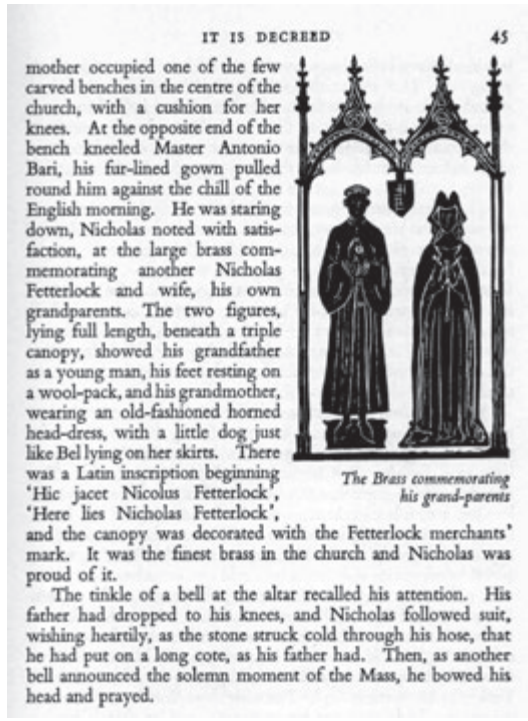
Waugh's friend the poet John Betjeman also shared his jaundiced view of brass rubbers. In a broadcast talk of August 1938 on *How to look at a Church* Betjeman ends:

> 'I only hope I've shown you, in this talk, that a church isn't just an old building which interests pedantic brass rubbers; but a living building with history written all over it and history that, with very little practice, becomes easy and fascinating reading.[34]

And in 1952, writing on 'Antiquarian Prejudice' in *First and Last Loves*, he is still sneering at those who visit churches to rub brasses:

> 'True, the writer of the Guide may have visited the church to rub a brass, but finding no brass, have gone off in a temper as black as his own heelball, pausing to note the piscina to which an antiquarian vicar desperately drew his attention.'[35]

The impression that an interest in memorial brasses was a somewhat eccentric and ineffectual pastime is reinforced both by a reference in a detective novel of 1944, *Jack-in-the-Box*, by J.J. Connington, and by the cameo portrait of the bishop of Matabeleland, played by Dennis Price in the film *Kind Hearts and Coronets* (1949). The 'bishop', in fact Louis Mazzini in disguise, is planning to kill the Revd Lord Henry D'Ascoyne, played by Alec Guinness, and is discovered rubbing the brass in Chalfont Church, a cunning ruse to curry favour with the unsuspecting rector (Fig. 5). We are gently invited to laugh at the fake bishop and his feeble pursuits.



IT IS DECREED 45

mother occupied one of the few carved benches in the centre of the church, with a cushion for her knees. At the opposite end of the bench kneeled Master Antonio Bari, his fur-lined gown pulled round him against the chill of the English morning. He was staring down, Nicholas noted with satisfaction, at the large brass commemorating another Nicholas Fetterlock and wife, his own grandparents. The two figures, lying full length, beneath a triple canopy, showed his grandfather as a young man, his feet resting on a wool-pack, and his grandmother, wearing an old-fashioned horned head-dress, with a little dog just like Bel lying on her skirts. There was a Latin inscription beginning 'Hic jacet Nicolus Fetterlock', 'Here lies Nicholas Fetterlock', and the canopy was decorated with the Fetterlock merchants' mark. It was the finest brass in the church and Nicholas was proud of it.

The Brass commemorating his grand-parents

The tinkle of a bell at the altar recalled his attention. His father had dropped to his knees, and Nicholas followed suit, wishing heartily, as the stone struck cold through his hose, that he had put on a long cote, as his father had. Then, as another bell announced the solemn moment of the Mass, he bowed his head and prayed.

Fig. 6. Illustration from The Wool Pack (1951) by Cynthia Harnett, showing the fictional brass to a Fetterlock in Burford Church.
(© Methuen & Co. Ltd)

Even though the Monumental Brass Society had been re-established in 1934, and serious scholarly work was beginning to broaden the study of brasses, it was not until the post-war

34 J. Betjeman, 'How to Look at a Church', in *John Betjeman: Coming Home*, ed. C. Lycett Green (London, 1997), 76–80.

35 J. Betjeman, 'Antiquarian Prejudice' in J. Betjeman, *First and Last Loves* (London, 1952), 54.

Fig. 7. London Transport Poster, 'Engraved Brasses' (1955), designed by Stella Marsden, which gives a brief introduction to brasses and a brief list of churches to visit in the London area.
(© TfL from the London Transport Collection)

years that interest in brasses once again grew into a widespread cultural phenomenon, boosted by a renewed interest in history amongst a post-war generation, and the influx of American service personnel and their families in the 1950s. Novels, particularly those aimed at children, once again used brasses and brass rubbing as a focal point, as in Ronald Welch's *The Gauntlet* (1951) in which Mr Evans, the vicar of Llanferon, introduces the hero Peter to brass rubbing as a prelude to time-travelling back to medieval times.[36] The prolific children's writer Cynthia Harnett (1893–1981) wrote a number of historical novels, including *The Wool Pack* (1951) in which in Chapter 6 Nicholas Fetterlock visits Burford Church to look at his (fictional) grandparents' brass. There is an illustration on page 45 showing two full length figures beneath a double canopy with a woolpack and a lap-dog as footrests (Fig. 6). Her

36 R. Welch, *The Gauntlet* (Oxford, 1999), chapters 2–4; quoted in D. Meara, *Modern Memorial Brasses*, 1–2.

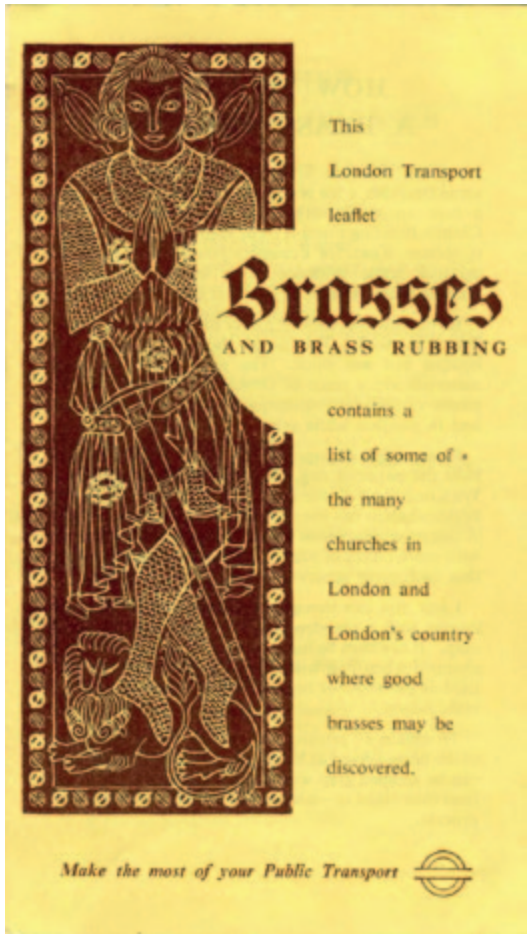


Fig. 8. London Transport Leaflet on 'Brasses and Brass Rubbing' with instructions on 'How to Make a Rubbing', and a list of 'Churches with Good Brasses' around the Greater London area.
(© TfL from the London Transport Collection)

gently didactic books were deliberately written to encourage an interest in the medieval world and its people.

The poet Kevin Crossley-Holland devotes a whole chapter, called *Black Waxworks*, in his memoir *The Hidden Roads* (2009) to an account of his discovery of the joys of brass rubbing as a schoolboy aged eleven in 1952. He grew up in the village of Whiteleaf in the Chiltern Hills, and one day wandered into the church of St Dunstan at Monks Risborough where he saw the brass to one of its fifteenth century rectors, Robert Blundell (d. 1431). His mother encouraged him to rub the brass, bought the materials for him, and he cycled about the Chiltern hills in pursuit of quarry. Together they compiled a guidebook entitled *Church Brasses in Buckinghamshire*, and made some of their rubbings into Christmas cards which nearly became a commercial venture, with outlets in Heals and Harrods, but this came to nothing because suddenly other people began to discover the commercial possibility of brasses.

Increasing post-war prosperity and mobility meant that there was a growing appetite for visiting churches and rubbing brasses. London Transport produced a double poster, *Engraved Brasses*, designed by Stella Marsden in 1955, with a coloured montage of medieval brasses and explanatory text, with a brief list of churches with interesting examples in London and its environs (Fig. 7). A more detailed leaflet with instructions about making a rubbing and a longer list of churches was available on request (Fig. 8). Articles appeared in the newspapers about brasses, as in 1958 in *The Sunday Times* 'Mainly for Children' section, in which the journalist Susan Cooper introduced a reader, Penny, to *The Gentle Art of Brass Rubbing*, with illustrations of the brass to Sir John D'Abernon at Stoke D'Abernon in Surrey, at that time considered the oldest brass in England, but now redated to about 1320.

Alongside this popular interest, and to a degree stirred up by it, the academic study of brasses was developing fast, with new areas of research and a steady stream of publications. Membership of the Monumental Brass Society

Fig. 9. Michael Ramsey, archbishop of Canterbury, from 1961–74, had been a keen brass rubber in his youth, and became Patron of the Monumental Brass Society in 1972. He is seen with a rubbing of Sir Robert de Bures, c.1320, Acton, Suffolk, which he made when he was fifteen years old. (© Times Newspapers)

15-21 SEPTEMBER 1984 A

Monumental brasses are the guardians of the past, ready at the touch of a skilful hand to reveal a wealth of historical detail. Mary Wilson reports on a revival of interest in them

Rubbing along with history

Within the cool atmosphere of peace and spirituality that pervades majestic cathedrals and crumbling Norman churches lies a diary of the past – often overlooked and stepped over by those who pass through.

Whether wall mounted or tucked away in the floor of the chancel, monumental brasses are an indelible memorial to mankind. Many churchgoers and tourists may appreciate their beauty but not fully understand their worth. For students, historians and more inquisitive types they are an invaluable record of our heritage. They do not speak to tell a tale, they are rarely signed by their engravers, but the detail that can be extracted from these flat plates of brass reveals a wealth of information about knights and knaves, elegant ladies and swaddled babes, wealthy merchants and humble clerics.

The origins of monumental brasses can be traced back to the late thirteenth century, when they took the place of commemorative incised stone slabs and sculptured figures. The plate brass (or latten) was originally imported from Flanders where supplies of copper and zinc, the main constituents of brass, were prolific.

The oldest brass in existence is Bishop Yso Wilpe, laid in Verden, Germany in 1231. But in England, in the church of St Mary's, Stoke D'Abernon in Surrey – a parish church extended over the years out of necessity, resulting in a blend of Saxon, Norman, fifteenth and nineteenth-century architecture – lies the earliest full-size brass.

years. It was customary to portray lords and knights armed, and as a result we have a superb record of military dress from the thirteenth to mid-fifteenth centuries. Only six full size figures survive from before the Black Death (1347-51) including the two Sir Johns at Stoke D'Abernon, but from these we can see the change from full chain-mail to half-plate armour.

As brasses became cheaper with increased production in the fifteenth century, they came into the reach of humbler folk who wished to be remembered. Royal servants in the Tudor period, the fruiterer, bedmaker or goshawk-keeper are all recorded. And no section of society is ignored, all evocative of the times.

But there was little portraiture and each craftsman had his own repetitive style for the faces. It is possible to find "twins" in distant parts of the country, purely because one craftsman had made them both.

In the late fifteenth century it became the fashion to depict subjects in a skeletal form to represent the frailty of man. Some are drawn in a state of decomposition, crawling with worms: there is a particularly gruesome example at Oddington in Oxfordshire. A more appealing portrayal was of babies who died in their first month shown in their swaddling clothes, known as "chry-

Fig. 10. 'Rubbing Along with History', a full-page article on medieval and modern brasses in The Saturday Times of 15–21 September 1984, reflecting the continuing popular interest in brasses and brass rubbing. (© Times Newspapers)

rose from a modest number to 400 by 1962, and to well over 1,000 by the end of the decade (Figs 9 and 10). Such an expansion of interest brought its own problems, with regular complaints in the press about bad behaviour in churches, and the pirating of designs from rubbings on consumer goods without any consent or royalty agreement. To meet popular demand commercial brass rubbing centres sprung up around the country using resin-based facsimiles. Richard Busby has chronicled these developments in his *Companion Guide* and in his *History of the Monumental Brass Society*.[37] The brass rubbing boom of the 1960s was satirised by J.B. Handelsman in the magazine *Punch* (13 September 1967) with a cartoon showing a mini-skirted girl rubbing a brass (Fig. 11), with the caption:

37 Busby, *Companion Guide to Brasses*; Busby, *Monumental Brass Society: A Short History*.

KING'S COLLEGE CHAPEL

'Bow, bow, ye lower middle classes!
Bow, bow, ye tradesmen, bow ye masses!
Blow the trumpets! Rub the brasses!
Tantantara, tzing, boom."

— *W. S. Gilbert and J. B. Handelsman.*

Fig. 11. A cartoon from Punch, 13 September, 1967, by J.B. Handelsman, showing a girl rubbing the brass to Robert Hacombleyn (d. 1528) (MS III King's College, Cambridge) with a four-line verse after the style of W.S. Gilbert.
(© Punch Cartoon Library / TopFoto)

Fig. 12. A Post Office First Day Cover for 21 June 1972 featuring the brass to John Peryent and wife, 1415, Digswell, Hertfordshire.
(Author's Collection)

"Bow, Bow, ye lower middle classes!
"Bow, Bow, ye tradesmen, bow ye masses!
Blow the trumpets! Rub the brasses!
Tantantara, tzing, boom."

- W. S. Gilbert and J. B. Handelsman.

This high profile for the gentle pursuit of brass rubbing was reflected in a variety of ways, both commercial, even on a Post Office First Day Cover for 21 June 1972 featuring the brass to John Peryent and wife (*c.*1415), at Digswell, Hertfordshire (Fig. 12);[38] and in the literary work of the time. Patricia Perry in her novel *Deadly Memorial* (1973) makes her story centre on the heroine Liz Grayson, who 'took up brass rubbing to eke out her slender widow's pension', but when her children were threatened 'began to realise that the brasses held the clue to much more than the long dead knights they commemorated.' This book was soon followed by *The Venomous Serpent* by Brian Ball, a horror story involving a brass, a brass rubber and, crucially, a brass rubbing (Fig. 13).

Brasses once again featured in collections of poetry. David Day produced a slim volume entitled *Brass Rubbings* in 1976 (Fig. 14), in which there is a long sequence of poems entitled *Brass Rubbings*, gentle musings on the brasses he and his family were rubbing:

'It is odd we cannot quite remember
when we took the rubbing

38 The First Day Cover was designed by the artist Ronald Maddox who lived at Digswell, from a rubbing supplied by Richard Busby.

Fig. 13. The cover of The Venomous Serpent (1974) by Brian Bale, published in the New English Library, Horror and the Supernatural.
(© New English Library)

of a staring Lord armed cap-a-pie.
It could have been last summer

in a chapel tucked among the Wolds.
Certainly the day was hazy. Sheep were grazing through the graves.
His long frame took up the afternoon ...'

The volume ends with a short poem entitled *A Carefree Rub*, and the book jacket features a smiling lion from a medieval brass.

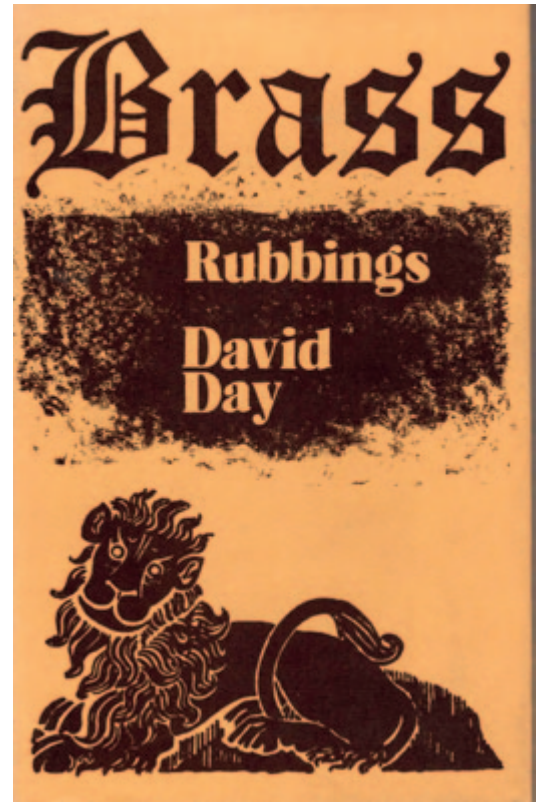


Fig. 14. The cover of Brass Rubbings (1976), a book of poems by David Day, many of which evoke the pleasure and interest of brass rubbing.
(Reproduced by kind permission of the Carcanet Press)

Some years later Clare and Robert Gittings put together a collection of poems inspired by images from brasses, entitled *The Graven Image*. The poet Robert Gittings and his wife Jo Manton used to send out a Christmas card each year illustrated with a brass rubbing taken by their daughter Clare, accompanied by a verse by Gittings. The book collects these together as a tribute to the poet, who died in 1992.[39]

By the late 1980s and early 1990s the popularity of 'hobby rubbing' was on the

39 C. and R. Gittings, *The Graven Image* (Oxford, 1993).

wane, although scholarly interest and research continued apace. Increasingly churches were banning the rubbing of their brasses, and other sophisticated pastimes, including the increasing use of technology, were claiming people's attention. Although membership of the Monumental Brass Society dropped back to around 400–500 it continued to be a stable platform for research and conservation, and the Society was able to celebrate its centenary in 1987 in style, with special publications, an exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum, and a summer conference.[40]

But by the turn of the century it was clear that the glory days of interest in brasses were over (Fig. 15). Rubbing was discouraged, if not actually prohibited, and sophisticated methods of direct photography of brasses rendered rubbing obsolete as the primary means of record.[41] The advantage of these innovations was that brasses were given protection from potential damage from casual rubbing, although not sadly from theft; the disadvantage was and still is that the route into serious and scholarly study from hobby rubbing was denied to a younger generation, and this has undoubtedly reduced the number of those taking a serious interest in the subject. The craft of brass engraving, which enjoyed a revival from the mid-nineteenth century until the Second World War, has died out,[42] so that the relationship between the industry and scholarly research, which pervaded and cross-fertilised the culture one hundred years ago, has withered and died. Interest in brasses and brass rubbing is now seen as something from a bygone age: it even warranted an article in the 'Olden Life' column of *The Oldie Magazine* (Spring, 2019), headed 'Brass Rubbing', in which the journalist Simon Heffer could comment:

> 'Half a century ago, when as a small boy I accompanied my father on church crawls, we once or twice saw those schoolboys – now men in late middle age – arthritically lowering themselves on to kneelers to take another rubbing.
>
> What was rare then is almost unknown now: rubbing a brass wears it out, which is why many churches explicitly ban the practice, hide their brasses under rugs or matting, and ask the ladies on the church cleaning rota not to polish them.'

And Heffer concludes:

> 'Luckily, hundreds survive to connect us with our distant forebears, works of high art that deserve too much respect even to think of rubbing them.'

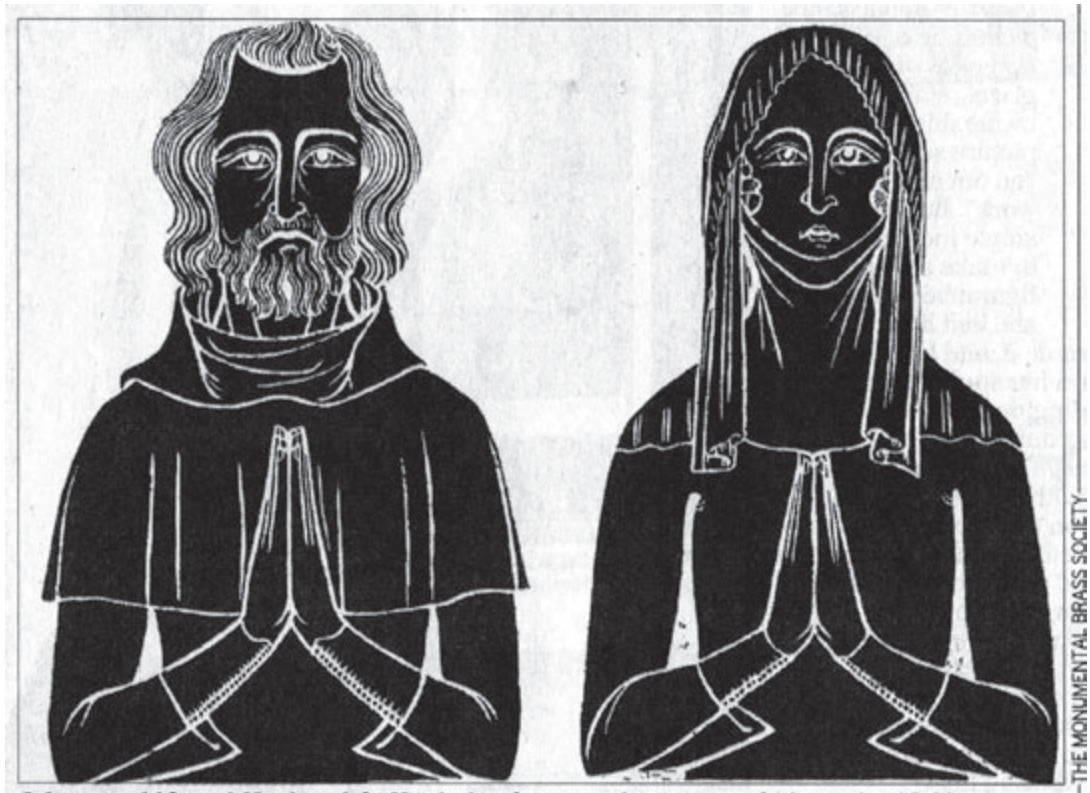
Despite the decline in interest there are still signs that an awareness of memorial brasses is firmly embedded in our cultural consciousness. In 2008 an episode of Agatha Christie's *Hercule Poirot* broadcast on ITV featured a scene with brass rubbing in progress, even though the production company cheated and used facsimiles of the brasses to Sir Edward Warner (d. 1565) at Little Plumstead, Norfolk, and Thomas Coggeshall (d. 1421) at All Saints church, Springfield, Essex.

Finally, brasses still provide poetic inspiration, just as they have consistently done for the past eight centuries. In 2019 a slim volume of poems by Emily Hasler was published by Liverpool University Press, entitled *The Built Environment*,

40 J. Page-Phillips, *Witness in Brass* (London, 1987); see also D. Meara, *The Monumental Brass Society: The Last Fifty Years* (M.B.S., 2012).

41 M.F. Norris and M. Kellett, *Your Book of Brasses* (London, 1974), chapter 4.

42 Meara, *Modern Memorial Brasses*.



A brass rubbing at Upchurch in Kent showing an unknown married couple, 1360

Does anyone still go brass rubbing in churches?

SIR – If the art of making church brasses were lost to us, it would indeed be sad. Christopher Howse's championing of brasses is timely (Comment, January 24).

In visiting more than 1,500 churches over the past eight years, I have not once encountered anyone brass rubbing.

In the 1960s and 1970s, it was a popular enthusiasm, but does anybody actually do it any more?

Simon Knott
Ipswich

Fig. 15. 'Does Anyone Still Go Brass Rubbing in Churches?', from the letters page of The Daily Telegraph, 29 January, 2009, showing the brass of a 'civilian' and wife c.1350 from Upchurch, Kent.
(© Daily Telegraph)

a collection of poems about buildings, structures, artefacts, gender and history. One of them is called *Notes: A Monumental Brass*, which plays with the scholarly textual device of annotation, so beloved of antiquaries, to produce a subtle and powerful poem which challenges the patriarchal manner in which women are depicted in brasses, sculpture and artwork, and by extension in history. The poem is organised as a list of footnotes and

citations, and is based on an essay about the brass of Agnes Oxenbridge (d. 1480) and Elizabeth Etchingham (d. 1452), at St Mary and St Nicholas Church, Etchingham, Sussex, who face each other, an arrangement normally associated with married couples. This has led to modern writers speculating that this brass signifies a particular friendship, which may have been a medieval example of a lesbian relationship.[43] In her poem Emily Hasler uses this brass to hint at our heightened gender consciousness in contemporary society, and thus her poem stands in the long tradition of the symbolic and metaphorical appropriation of the memorial brass for political and cultural purposes which we have noted in the course of this brief reception history of brasses. The memorial brass remains a powerful cultural icon, Horace's '*Aere Perennius*', even in the largely secular twenty-first century. Let the poet Robert Gittings, in his poem Nativity (Fig. 16), have the last word:

'When the lost workman cut
This copper plate,
And with small armour put
His stop to fate,
He could not know that by

Fig. 16. The Adoration of The Shepherds, c. 1500, Cobham, Surrey, used as an illustration in The Graven Image (1993) by Clare and Robert Gittings.
(© Perpetua Press)

Black Innocent art
His gift would multiply
To take our part.'[44]

Acknowledgements
Every effort has been made to secure permission to reproduce the images included in this article. Where this has not been possible we are happy to do so in a future issue of the *Transactions*.

43 J. Bennett, 'Remembering Elizabeth Etchingham and Agnes Oxenbridge', in *The Lesbian Premodern*, ed. N. Giffney, M.M. Sauer and D. Watt (New York, 2011), 131–43.

44 C. and R. Gittings, *The Graven Image*, 11.

Review

English Alabaster Carvings and their Cultural Contexts, ed. Zuleika Murat (Boydell Studies in Medieval Art and Architecture, Woodbridge, 2019), xiv + 349 pp., 12 colour plates, 92 b/w figures and 3 tables; bibliography and index; £60 (hardback); ISBN: 978-1-78327-407-9.

'Some dragons are hard to slay', comments Nigel Ramsey (p. 35) on the persistence of the view that English alabasters consist primarily of relatively low-quality single panels originating primarily in Nottingham workshops. This book, developed from a conference organised by the editor at the University of Warwick in 2014, deploys context as the weapon to vanquish this adversary.

Zuleika Murat's introduction usefully summarises the development of scholarship on alabasters, following which the book is organised into four main groupings, combining authors who have written extensively on alabaster with those bringing insights from other disciplines. MBS members should resist the temptation to go straight to the final section on funerary monuments as the other chapters contain ideas that are equally interesting and relevant to interpreting monumental brasses. Ramsey, for example, demonstrates the impact that the interests of collectors, here Philip Nelson (1872–1953) and Walter Hildburgh (1876–1955), had on the later perception of English alabasters. Aleksandra Lipińska explores the historical understanding of alabaster as a material, and the cultural meanings attached to it, including magical and therapeutic properties. Luca Palozzi, who places alabaster in the context of other light-diffusing materials – polished bone and ivory, but particularly white marble – draws attention to the increasing importance (testified by contracts, as in the ivory altarpiece for Pisa cathedral) given to the polish of the surface.

The second section explores objects in context: Murat reconstructs a now fragmentary polyptych, formerly in the Benedictine abbey of Novalesa, examining it in relationship to other objects in the same liturgical space; Andrew Kirkman and the late Philip Weller provide a fascinating insight on the interplay between sacred music and images; and Jennifer Alexander's survey of alabaster in Lincolnshire focuses on the smaller-scale works that are better represented in documentation and survival, with the county possessing a far lower proportion of alabaster to freestone monuments than did its neighbours.

The third section focuses on three 'Head of St John the Baptist' tabernacles held by the Burrell Collection, combining curatorial and conservatorial expertise (Claire Blakey/Rachel King/Michaela Zöschg and Sophie Philipps/Stephanie de Roemer) to provide an in-depth analysis of making and probable usage. In contrast to small devotional Netherlandish diptychs with painted exteriors, the plain wooden cases of the tabernacles imply that they were stored and that 'the object was actively devotional for a delimited length of time in a place made sacred by its presence' (p. 190).

The final three chapters look at alabaster funerary monuments, asking how they can elucidate the wider picture. Jon Bayliss – the first of these chapters but the last chronologically – provides an instructive picture of alabaster workshops in England from 1550–1660, with the entry of Netherlandish craftsmen leading to the establishment of workshops in Southwark and London, in contrast to the concentration in the alabaster-producing areas of the Midlands during the fifteenth century. Also by contrast to earlier centuries is the prevalence of named sculptors. Unfortunately, the footnotes renumber halfway through

this chapter, perhaps the most noticeable of relatively few proof-reading errors.

Kim Woods, whose book *Cut in Alabaster* (Turnhout, 2018) was published in time to be consulted by most of the other authors in this volume, examines the use of high-status alabaster for the effigial tombs of merchants (effigies and alabaster being atypical for the mercantile class in contrast to the nobility). The wealthy grocer John Crosby (d. 1476) was knighted; he is depicted in armour on his tomb in St Helen's, Bishopsgate, London, and the lost inscription described him as knight, mayor of Calais and alderman of London. It is the material itself that speaks of social aspiration in the other tombs Woods investigates, with the effigies depicted in long robes and most with attributes (purse/wool probe) of merchants, including another now in St Helen's, Bishopsgate, but formerly in St Martin's, Oteswich, where she argues convincingly that the effigies represent John Chircheman (d. 1413) and his wife Emma (d. *c.*1405) and not John de Oteswich (d. before 1375). Social elevation could come from entering the church: William Waynflete (1400–86), bishop of Winchester, and Geoffrey Blythe, bishop of Coventry and Lichfield (reg. 1503–31) and his brother John Blythe, bishop of Salisbury (reg. 1493/4–99), distinguished their merchant fathers by erecting alabaster tombs.

Christina Welch extends the theme she has made her own – of the anatomical verisimilitude of *transis* – to the cadaver effigy of Alice de la Pole, duchess of Suffolk (d. 1475), at Ewelme, Oxfordshire, which is the only extant alabaster cadaver in England. Welch argues that the way Alice's cadaver is carved represents a person in the final stages of dying, a liminal state, symbolic of Purgatory, that she describes by the Hebrew term *goses*. The exceptional use of alabaster, however, is not explained by this, given that Welch considers that the majority of *transi* sculptures in England show a *goses*. One of many interesting aspects about Alice's tomb is the relative privacy afforded the cadaver by the architectural design – Alice's naked body was not exposed to those 'who gazed on her tomb' but rather to those who knelt. In addition, as John Goodall identified in *God's House at Ewelme* (Aldershot, 2001) and Welch acknowledges, curtains would probably have surrounded the tomb.

Inevitably, and beneficially, there is overlap between the chapters, one example being the issue of colour, its extent or its absence. This could be polychromy – Nino Pisano's marble *Virgin and Child* on the main altar of the church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Trapani (Fig. 3.7) retains traces of gilding and dark red lips on both the Virgin and Christ, and fragments of paint show the robe of William Blythe (d. before 1530) was red – or contrasting materials. Alabaster originating from Minehead, Somerset, came in such a variety of colours that it was not originally identified as alabaster (Bayliss, pp. 230–31).

This book is well-priced, with stimulating content, and justifies the editor's decision to add to the growing literature on alabasters.

Ann J. Adams

Monumental Brass Society

(Founded in 1887 as the Cambridge University Association of Brass Collectors)

All communications regarding membership, the general conditions of the Society, etc., to be addressed to the Hon. Secretary, Penny Williams, B.A.(Hons.), 15 St Brides Road, Aberkenfig, Bridgend, Glamorgan CF32 9PY (penny7441@hotmail.com); editorial matter to the Hon. Editor, David Lepine, B.A., Ph.D., F.S.A., F.R.Hist.S., 38 Priory Close, Dartford, Kent DA1 2JE (davidnl1455@gmail.com), who will be pleased to supply Notes for Contributors and to discuss proposed articles.

Cover: Detail from the brass commemorating Sir George Monoux (d. 1543), from Walthamstow, Essex (LSW.II). This image has been chosen to mark the presidency of Martin Stuchfield. Located in the church he was married in, it was one of the first brasses he rubbed, and is one that he helped conserve in 1990. During its conservation a palimpsest of a worn civilian effigy, dated *c.*1400 was discovered. Sir George, who was Lord Mayor of London and Master of the Drapers' Company, was a notable benefactor of Walthamstow – he founded a grammar school and almshouse and rebuilt the tower and north aisle of the church – and has fascinated Martin since childhood. *(photo © Martin Stuchfield)*

Monumental Brass Society

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