

# Monumental Brass Society

---

JUNE 2026



BULLETIN 162

The *Bulletin* (ISSN 0306-1612) is published three times a year, in February, June and October. Articles for inclusion in the next issue should be sent by 1st September 2026 to:

Caroline Metcalfe, Hon. Assistant Secretary  
51 Court Crescent, East Grinstead  
West Sussex RH19 3TP  
Email: cspearie@gmail.com

#### Useful Society contacts:

#### General enquiries, membership and subscriptions:

Penny Williams, Hon. Secretary  
15 St. Brides Road, Aberkenfig  
Bridgend, South Wales CF32 9PY  
Email: membership@mbs-brasses.co.uk

#### Contributions for the *Transactions*:

Lucia Diaz Pascual, Hon. Editor  
Email: transactions@mbs-brasses.co.uk

#### Conservation of brasses (including thefts etc.):

Martin Stuchfield, Hon. Conservation Officer  
Pentlow Hall, Cavendish, Suffolk CO10 7SP  
Email: martinstuchfield@pentlowhall.uk

#### Hon. Treasurer's notice

On 1st January all subscriptions for 2026 became due. Our volunteer bookkeeper, Judy Hodgett (accts.mbs2024@gmail.com), will be very grateful if members can pay their subscriptions online and not by cheque. Many members already pay by Standing Order. Online payments of £25.00 (associate/student £12.50, family £35.00) should be made to: Monumental Brass Society, Barclays Bank PLC, sort code 20-41-41, Account no. 10660957. When doing so, please give your surname as a reference. Payment can also be made using the *PayPal* system via [mbs\\_brasses@yahoo.com](mailto:mbs_brasses@yahoo.com). Many thanks to all those members who have completed Gift Aid forms. Any U.K. tax-paying member can enable the Society to reclaim tax on their subscription. The appropriate form can be downloaded directly from [www.mbs-brasses.co.uk](http://www.mbs-brasses.co.uk).

## Editorial

Highlights in this issue of the *Bulletin* include the report on an excellent meeting at Amersham in April; the discovery of a new indent slab at Preston-next-Faversham in Kent; and a brass to a Royal Navy midshipman killed in the Great War, found in a church in Germany. I hope you enjoy reading them.

The mystery rubbing flagged on p.1215 of the last *Bulletin* was identified immediately by two members. Philip Whittemore was the winner, followed a few hours later by Jane Houghton. The man in armour is Sir Griffith Ryce, d.1522, from the brass showing him, his wife and children in Worcester Cathedral. The whole brass is illustrated in David Meara's *Victorian Memorial Brasses* (pl.76). It was engraved c.1860 by Hardmans of Birmingham. The owner of the rubbing was so pleased to have it identified that she sent an extremely generous donation to the Society.

In what must be a first for the M.B.S., I am delighted to report that on 8th May 2026, the 'Missing Words Round' of the B.B.C. comedy programme *Have I Got News for You* featured the *Bulletin* as its guest publication! The missing words were revealed as being about Caroline Metcalfe's wonderful cakes (twice) and Nicholas Rogers' being splashed by a passing car. Steph McGovern was the host, and Dame Sheila Hancock was astonishingly alert and witty at the age of 94. The programme can be found on I-Player as Series 71, episode 6, 24:30 minutes from the start.

This is not our only moment of glory. See under 'Notes and news' for a Matt cartoon!

Stephen Freeth

## Personalia

We welcome as new members:

**Bethan Sommers**, 4B St. Philip's Way, London N1 7AJ

**Camilla Hoitenga**, Peter-Bauer-Str. 7, D-50823 Cologne, Germany

**Kevin Thurston**, 2 Cranbrook Road, St. Leonards-on-Sea, East Sussex TN37 6RU

Cover: Upper part of the figure of Sir William Pyrton, 1490, at Little Bentley, Essex (LSW.I) (see pp.1236-7).  
(photo: © Martin Stuchfield)

## Diary of events

**Saturday, 11th July 2026**

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING STOKE D'ABERNON, SURREY

The Annual General Meeting will take place in the Hall room in the morning at 11.00a.m. The General Meeting, which is free and open to all, will start in the church at 1.30p.m. **Please note the earlier time.** We will hear talks from local historian **Stephen Chater** about the church building, and from our Vice-President **Nigel Saul** about the brasses. There will be an opportunity to view the church and the brasses during tea.

The church contains two of England's finest and earliest military brasses, for Sir John d'Abernon, d.1327 (with considerable remains of original enamel on the shield) and for his son, another Sir John. There are also several later brasses, an incised inscription in Lombardic letters for Richard le Petit, dated c.1280-1305, and many other points of interest.



*Fig.1. Upper part of the figure of Sir John D'Abernon II, 1327, at Stoke D'Abernon, Surrey (LSW.I).  
(photo: © Martin Stuchfield)*

*The church shares the site with Parkside School. The postcode for satellite navigation is KT11 3PX. Local car parking is available. The nearest station is Cobham & Stoke d'Abernon (on the Surbiton to Guildford line from London Waterloo), just under a mile from the church. Turn right out of the station and walk along Station Road until you reach a T Junction with Stoke Road. Turn right and walk over the railway bridge, past the Chelsea F.C. Training Ground entrance on the right and then, opposite the Garden Centre, turn right into the entrance of Parkside School. Walk down the drive and then turn left. The church is to the right of the main school buildings.*

*Squire's Garden Centre nearby does lunches, for those with cars, but members may prefer to bring their own lunch. If you plan to attend, please email Caroline Metcalfe, [events@mbs-brasses.co.uk](mailto:events@mbs-brasses.co.uk) so that she knows how much cake to bake!*

**Saturday, 12th September 2026**

### GENERAL MEETING

#### ST. OLAVE HART STREET, LONDON EC3

This meeting will include talks by our Vice-President **Nicholas Rogers**, 'But the plates of memory are gone': visualising the church of St. Olave Hart Street on the eve of the Reformation', and **Mike Harris**. The churchwarden **Penny Ritchie Calder** has also agreed to speak about the restoration of the Capponi monument, which includes a recycled incised slab. This restoration was partly funded by the M.B.S.

**2027**

Provisional plans are as follows:

Saturday, 17th April, General Meeting at Morley, Derbyshire. For safety reasons this meeting will be limited to a maximum of thirty people

Saturday, 10th July, A.G.M. and General Meeting at Ludford, Herefordshire.

Saturday, 11th September, General Meeting at Sawston, Cambridgeshire.

There are many other interesting churches and brasses to explore or even revisit. If you know of a church that would be suitable for the M.B.S. to visit, please let Caroline Metcalfe know about it.

## General Meeting

### Amersham, Buckinghamshire – 11th April 2026

About seventy people met at St. Mary's church. Our first speaker was **Martin Pounce** of Amersham Museum. He outlined the history of Amersham and posed the question – in the past, was it a town or a village? Old Amersham is on the road from London to Aylesbury, set in the valley of the river Misbourne. Originally there were eight manors. Although primarily agricultural, Amersham was granted a market charter c.1200, during the reign of King John. This meant that there were traders coming through with money, so that Amersham sometimes displayed features of a town. In Tudor times there was a fraternity of St. Katherine, whose members paid a chantry priest to say masses for the dead and whose funerals were attended by fraternity members. Between 1511

and 1521, long before the reign of Queen Mary (1553-8), the Amersham Lollard Martyrs, who wanted to read the Bible in English, were burned, and there is a memorial to them. Amersham-on-the-Hill only grew up in the early 20th century, around the railway station.

Our second speaker, **Barney Tyrwhitt-Drake**, began his talk with the Spanish Armada in 1588, which was successfully repelled by Sir Francis Drake and other famous seamen. Richard Drake of Ashe (1535-1603), who came from the Axe valley in Devon, was possibly a godson of Sir Francis, but not closely related. He became an equerry to Queen Elizabeth I and was paid £4 a week to look after Armada prisoners, taken when Sir Francis



*Fig 1. Hugh Guilford addressing the meeting.  
(photo: © Stephen Freeth)*

captured the ship the *Rosario*. The family line continued with a marriage into the Churchill family, and another marriage to Ursula Stafford, descended from Margaret Pole, daughter of George, Duke of Clarence, one of the last Yorkists with a claim to the throne. William Drake (1606-9) was the founder of the family fortunes in Amersham, purchasing land from the Russells. He has a memorial in the chancel. He was a scholar, who eventually went blind. He founded almshouses in the 1650s, built a market hall and restored the church.

Further down the family tree a little boy, John Drake, died aged four and has his own memorial brass, now in the Tyrwhitt-Drake Chapel. Mary Drake married John Tyrwhitt, which eventually led to the Drake-Tyrwhitt family name, and for a time, even the triple-barrelled name of Drake-Tyrwhitt-Drake. Montague Garrard Drake (1692-1728) caused the building of

what is now known as the Tyrwhitt-Drake Chapel, to be a family mausoleum. William Drake (1724-96) knocked down and rebuilt the family's Tudor manor house, Shardeloes. Another William Drake served with Wellington in the Peninsular War and at Waterloo. He had the Union Workhouse built in Amersham. The Drake family owned one of two versions of the Armada Portrait, showing Elizabeth I with ships in the background, after the victory over the Spanish. This picture is now in the National Maritime Museum at Greenwich. The talk combined the history of the family and their monuments with important works of art.

Our third speaker **Hugh Guilford** (Fig.1) began his presentation with a musical flourish, a *Basse Danse* from a collection of French music of c.1530, roughly contemporary with one of the brasses. There are six surviving early brasses: Henry Brudenell, 1430, and his wife Eleanor. Style: London D (LSW.I)



Fig.2. General view of the Tyrwhitt-Drake Chapel showing brasses LSW.II and V mounted on boards.  
(photo.: © Stephen Freeth)

Thomas Carbonell, 1439, and his wife Elizabeth, 1438. Style: London B (LSW.II)

Inscription to Richard Champneys, draper, 1439. Style: London D (LSW.III)

An unknown (headless) civilian, c.1450. Style: London D (LSW.IV)

John de la Penne, 1537 (date added), and his wife Elizabeth, 1521. Style: London G (LSW.V)

John Drake, 1623, aged four. Style: London (LSW.VI)<sup>1</sup>

The church was restored from 1775 and then by Frederick Preedy in 1870. At that time, or maybe in 1888, many of the brasses were taken from their slabs and fixed directly to the church walls. In 1973 the brasses were repaired by Bryan Egan, who

removed them from the walls and laid most of them in the floor of the north transept, LSW.I in its original slab and the others in new slabs. However the transept was later turned to new uses as St. Andrew's Chapel, and the brasses disappeared under carpet! In 2018 William Lack, Martin Stuchfield and Hugh Guilford moved most of the brasses to the Tyrwhitt-Drake Chapel where they remain, mostly mounted on wood. LSW.I remains on the floor of St. Andrew's Chapel.

A number of further brasses at St. Mary's have been lost over time, and we had a glimpse of one of them, the inscription to rector Robert Allerton, 1437, thanks to a photograph of a rubbing, kindly supplied from the Society of Antiquaries by Derrick Chivers.

We then had refreshments, the chance to view the brasses in the Tyrwhitt-Drake Chapel (Fig.2),



*Fig.3. Risborough Early Music Group playing for the meeting  
(photo: © Stephen Freeth)*

and a performance of music from the 14th to the 17th centuries, played by Risborough Early Music Group (Fig.3). The pieces were chosen because they would have been familiar to those commemorated on the brasses. They included *The Agincourt Carol*, first played in London in 1415 at the triumphant entry of Henry V after Agincourt; a *Basse Danse*, c.1530; and *Es ist ein Ros entsprungen*, first published in 1599 and still heard at Christmas. Programme notes were supplied by Liz Wager of the Music Group.

There are many people to thank: the clergy and churchwardens of St. Mary's, for allowing us to hold our meeting; Martin Pounce for helping to make the church and chapels ready, both on Friday night and after the morning recital in the church on Saturday; and Mr. and Mrs. Barnard and their friends for preparing and serving the teas and coffees. Rosemary and I baked the cakes, and a huge thank-you goes to Rosemary for her lovely selection of cakes. Martin Stuchfield provided photographs of the brasses in various stages of conservation for Hugh's talk. My husband, Steve Metcalfe, helped to prepare Hugh's presentation and supervised the technology on the day. Our second speaker, Barney Tyrwhitt-Drake, organised the splendid large screen.

Our three speakers gave us three excellent talks. The Risborough Early Music Group then provided a wonderful selection of early music, a strong connection to the past. We are grateful to them for sharing their time, talent and love of period music. Above all, Hugh Guilford should be thanked for his research and presentation about the brasses and their conservation, and for his role within the Music Group.

**Caroline Metcalfe**

### The Allerton inscription

One of the brasses lost from Amersham church is known from a 19th-century rubbing, in the collection of the Society of Antiquaries (LSW.18). It commemorated a former rector, Robert Allerton, d.1437, and was already slightly damaged when it was rubbed, because the end of the plate is missing. It has never been illustrated before, so I take the opportunity to do so and explain the inscription (Fig.4). The text is in Latin and reads as follows:

Hic iacet magist(er) Rob(er)tus Allerton in decretis Bacallar[ius]/ Quonda(m) Rector isti(us) Eccl(es)ie qui obiit xix<sup>o</sup> die Ap(ri)lis A(nn)o d(omi)ni [M(illesim)<sup>o</sup>]/ CCCC<sup>o</sup> xxxvii<sup>o</sup> pro cui(us) a(n)i(m)a caritatis intuitu dicetis Pat(er) & A[ve Ame(n)]

*Here lies Master Robert Allerton, Bachelor in Decrees,<sup>2/</sup> formerly Rector of this church who died the 19th day of April/ 1437 for whose soul out of regard for charity may you say an Our Father and Hail Mary Amen.*

The rubbing is undated, but must be earlier than 1902, when C.A. Bradford, presumably a local historian, wrote upon it that no matrix was visible in the church.

G.P. Lipscomb's *History of Buckinghamshire*, published in 1847 (II, p.164) states that Allerton was presented to the living of Amersham by the King on 29th October 1420. Shortly before, on 26th April, he had also been made Prebend of Cropredy in Lincoln Cathedral.

**Stephen Freeth**

- 1 Details from W. Lack, H.M. Stuchfield, and P. Whittemore, *The Monumental Brasses of Buckinghamshire* (M.B.S., 1994), pp.1-4.
- 2 A medieval university degree in canon law.

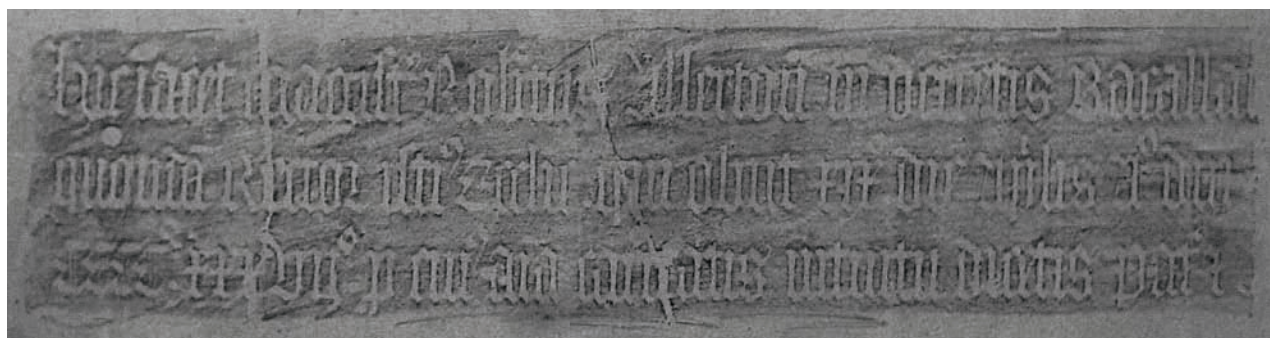


Fig.4. *Inscription to Robert Allerton, rector, 1437, at Amersham, Buckinghamshire (LSW.18). (rubbing: © Society of Antiquaries of London)*

## The Anglican church of St. Thomas à Becket at Hamburg



Fig.1. Anglican church of St. Thomas à Becket at Hamburg.  
(photo: © Wikimedia Commons)

Some years ago, when I took my ship into Hamburg, I was immediately impressed by the Anglophilia of this 'Free and Hanseatic City', which had granted the Merchant Adventurers the right to worship according to the rites of the Church of England in 1612 – a most unusual privilege in that strictly Lutheran city. An English church has been in existence there ever since excepting only during the period of Napoleon's rude incursion, and both World Wars. The building itself survived World War I, but the R.A.F. bombed it in World War II, followed by repair by the Royal Engineers during the subsequent Occupation (Fig.1).

I attended church to find a brass inscription (90 x 300 mm) to a young British naval Assistant Clerk (Midshipman) who was killed at the Battle of Coronel on 1st November 1914 (Fig.2). Charles Gustav Cook had joined the Royal Navy four months earlier, aged seventeen, as war loomed. He was unfortunate enough to be appointed to the

cruiser H.M.S. *Good Hope*, flagship of Rear Admiral Cradock. On that unhappy day, Cradock met a greatly superior German force off the coast of Chile and conducted the naval equivalent of the Charge of the Light Brigade. *Good Hope* was sunk almost at once, with the loss of all hands.

But why was Cook's memorial erected in a German church in the first place? It appears that his mother, Emma, came to Hamburg and paid for a new pulpit to commemorate her son. She was married to Charles Cook, a Commissioned Boatswain in the Royal Navy; but she was born Emma Geritzlehner, daughter of a Hamburg publican. She had emigrated in 1885 to San Francisco as the maid to the wealthy Baron Schröder and his family. Five years later the British warship H.M.S. *Warspite* paid a visit to San Francisco. Among her crew was Petty Officer Charles Cook, and the two of them were married in Plymouth in 1893. Their only child, Charles Gustav, was born on 18th February 1897. He later attended Plymouth College where his name appears on their war memorial. He, and his 925 shipmates are commemorated on the Naval Memorial on the Hoe at Plymouth. Unusually, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission has no record of his parents: sad for a 17-year-old boy, but something that we can now put right.

Much of the research for this article was done by Madeleine Resühr, historian and member of St. Thomas à Becket church, Hamburg, to whom I am most grateful.

**Mike Harris**



Fig.2. Inscription to Assistant Clerk Charles Gustav Cook, R.N., d.1914, engraved c.1921, at Hamburg, Germany.  
(photo: © Mike Harris)

## A Precursor of the ‘Memorial Bench’, at St. Mary Abchurch, London in 1468

When Thomas Salle, citizen and draper of London, came to make his will (TNA, PROB 11/5/396) on 25th May 1468, he had a definite view as to where he was to be buried and how he was to be commemorated. He requested burial in the churchyard of his parish church of St. Mary Abchurch ‘in’ (that is, next to) the south wall of the church by the entrance to the churchyard. His executors were instructed to arrange for the erection of ‘*a stone of marbill to be leyd vppon my body of suche an height from the ground that twoo or thre personnez may sit theruppon with their ease and a Remembraunce to be graven in laton and to be set rounde aboute the same stone of the day and yer of my deth*’. By securing a place passed by all parishioners and providing an opportunity for them to linger there, Salle increased the chance that he would be remembered in their prayers.

Salle’s will provides interesting details of various items of plate and jewellery. His sister Margaret Salle was to have a little silver covered cup with scenes of the Passion in niello. Dame Philippa Joyscelyn (the second wife of Ralph Josselyn, draper, Lord Mayor in 1464 and 1476) was to receive silver and gold fittings for a girdle. Several bequests were made to John Porter, draper, and Margaret his wife: a gold ring set with a point diamond; the lesser of his two pairs of rosary beads; and a gold Agnus Dei with an image of St. George engraved in mother of pearl. John and Margaret’s daughter Margery Shukborough was also remembered, with a bequest of gold and silver fittings for a girdle and a silver gilt ‘standing pece’ with a cover.

Morgan Buttiller was bequeathed a gold ring ‘*with in enameled*’ (that is, decorated with a twisted pattern) in russet and black. William Bray, draper, was to have ‘an Antony Crosse’ (a tau-shaped cross) set with three diamonds, a ruby and a pearl. Another gold Agnus Dei, this time with an image of Christ in the Sepulchre, was to go to Robert Spayn, while Robert’s wife Johanne was to have a gold Antony cross ‘*to hang vppon hir bodie*’. Mawde Awmyner was bequeathed another silver gilt ‘standing pece’ with a cover. Mawde Wotton,

now living in Greenwich, was to have various pieces of plate and William Chattok a great flat gold ring set with four point diamonds.

The next bequest suggests that Thomas Salle traded in jewellery. He left to John Wiltay, jeweller of Bruges, two rings of gold with two diamonds ‘*of thos Rynges that I bought of hym*’. John Fabyan, draper (the father of the chronicler Robert Fabyan) was to receive a gold ring set with an emerald and a ruby. Juliana, the wife of John Warde, was to receive a ‘flat pece’ of silver, a maser with silver mounts and other household goods. Finally, in the main list of bequests, Grace de Beleygner, widow, was to receive a gold ring set with a diamond.

As executors Thomas Salle appointed Master Henry Sharpe, clerk (Rector of St. Mary Abchurch and Canon of St. Paul’s), Henry Eburton, draper, John Mathewe, linen draper, and Robert Spayne, scrivener, who were instructed to dispose of the residue of his goods to poor people most in need and to other charitable works for his soul and the souls of his friends and ‘good doers’. Then, almost as an afterthought, he left an annuity to Isabelle Staunton, the daughter of his late wife Isabelle, and forty shillings to his stepdaughter’s son John, ‘called in disport’ John Salle. This speaks of an expectation of an inheritance which did not materialise. There followed a few further bequests of small pieces of plate – ‘the secund notte’ and ‘oon of my least maseres’ – before Thomas Salle set his seal to his will. Probate was granted to Robert Spayne on 9th November 1468.

**Nicholas Rogers**



Fig 1. Interior of the present-day church of St. Mary Abchurch.  
(photo: © David Iliff)

## The discovery of an unknown indent at Preston-next-Faversham, Kent

Andy Linklater of Canterbury Archaeological Trust Limited has been a helpful contact in the past. (See *Bulletin* 159 (June 2025), for his report on High Halden, Kent.) He has since reported a new discovery in the church at Preston-next-Faversham. Alterations in the south aisle in 2025 (Fig.1) uncovered two memorial slabs, one a ledger stone for George Boyer, who died 29th June 1675 aged 33, and the other the indent of a late-16th-century brass showing a kneeling lady.

Preston church, originally medieval, was heavily restored by Hussey in 1855-7. The nave is now substantially 19th-century, including the arcade between the nave and the south aisle. Much of interest seems to have been destroyed or moved in the process, and drawings by Thomas Fisher

of c.1810 show two 15th-century brasses which no longer survive.<sup>1</sup>

This new indent (Figs.2 and 3) appears never to have been noticed before. It is of Purbeck marble, and bears very clear and well-preserved indents for a lady kneeling in prayer at a prayer desk, with puffed sleeves and with a mouth scroll, above a foot inscription. It can be dated fairly exactly to c.1570. Curiously, the slab appears to have been recycled from an earlier brass, long since destroyed: at its foot is part of another indent which cannot have been part of the lady's brass. It was surely intended for an inscription plate, although all traces of rivets have been cut away. This inscription was clearly wider than the existing slab, which must have been cut down,



*Fig 1. Alterations in 2025 in the south aisle of Preston-next-Faversham, Kent.  
(photo: © Andy Linklater)*



*Fig.2. The newly-discovered indent at Preston-next-Faversham, Kent.  
(photo: © Andy Linklater)*

and is likely to have been accompanied by at least one brass figure and possibly two. This earlier brass is likely to have been 15th or early 16th century. It will have been arranged in the opposite register to the kneeling lady, i.e. facing the other way. Brasses are often positioned in the upper part of a slab, with the lower part left blank. In this case, the indent for the kneeling lady has been added to the blank lower part of the original medieval memorial, and much of the earlier slab cut away to form a new, smaller memorial.

A brass of c.1570 ought to be identifiable, but the identity of the lady remains elusive. The brass appears to have been lost prior to John Lewis' *History and Antiquities of the Abbey and Church of Favresham* (1727); he makes no mention of it in his account of the memorials in Preston church. The Bodleian Library contains a copy of Lewis' book with many additional illustrations and manuscript additions of the later 18th century.<sup>2</sup> None of them make any mention of this slab. If the brass inlays had already been lost by then, the indents are surprisingly clear and well preserved. Perhaps the slab was in a protected space, such as against a wall or in a corner, or was covered, perhaps under box pews. Despite its small size, the slab is surely too heavy to have been a mural monument.

We do not know exactly where the lady's brass was originally sited in Preston church. It currently faces east, which makes it theoretically possible that it has never been moved, but on balance it is unlikely to still be in its original position. Its location under the flooring of the 19th-century pews, next to the slab for George Boyer, d.1675, and surrounded by 19th-century brick dwarf walls for the wooden flooring of the pews, looks much too neat. Also, the 18th-century manuscript additions in the Bodleian's copy of Lewis record the Boyer slab 'in the Middle of the Church on a black stone', that is, in the nave. It is therefore likely that both slabs have been moved.

I am grateful to Andy Linklater for bringing this indent slab to our attention, and for his excellent photographs and measured drawing, and to Martin Stuchfield for advice about its likely date.

**Stephen Freeth**

- 1 For full details, and for Fisher's drawings of the surviving medieval brasses in Preston church, see the account by Ralph Griffin in *M.B.S. Trans.*, VI, pt.5 (April 1912), pp.181-200. Fisher's drawings can also be seen in the 'Collections' section of the Society of Antiquaries' website.
- 2 Bodleian Library, Gough Kent 5, available online at [https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=zHdbAAAAQAAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs\\_ge\\_summary\\_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=zHdbAAAAQAAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false).

Stone dimension  
 Length: +1.19m - 1.21m  
 Width: 640mm - 650mm  
 Thickness: +70mm

Indent max dimensions  
 Length: 500mm  
 Width: 560mm  
 Depth: 6mm

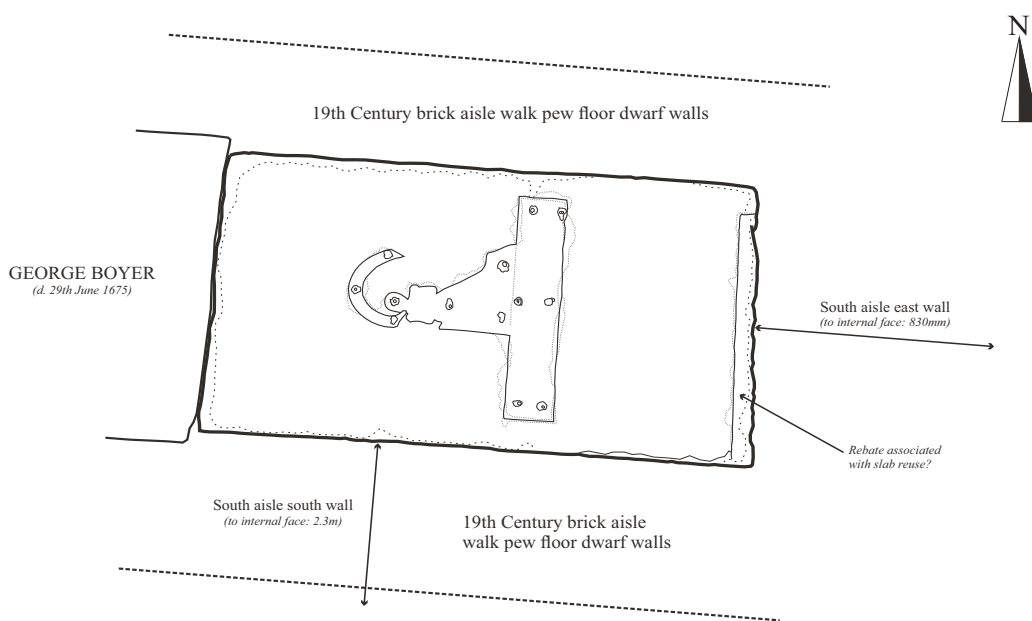


Fig.3. Measured drawing of the newly-discovered indent at Preston-next-Faversham, Kent. (drawing: © Andy Linklater)

## The tomb of Cardinal Luciano Bonaparte (1828-95)

What constitutes a monumental brass? This question not infrequently arises in connection with post-medieval monuments, especially those created in regions without a tradition of brasses. Need the monument be made of latten? There are numerous examples, particularly in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, of plates made of enamelled copper. More recently, Christopher Ironside has made use of stainless steel. A 'brass' can be a component part of a monument of which other elements are sculpted or in relief.

These thoughts are prompted by the tomb of Cardinal Luciano Bonaparte on the north wall of Santa Pudenziana in Rome (Fig.1). The main element is a bronze tablet with an inscription in raised capitals surrounded by a decorative border. This is signed 'G. Nisini. Roma, 1902'. The foundry of Giovanni Nisini is best known for its classicising statuettes, often direct copies of antique models. Above the tablet is a coat-of-arms in low relief, also in bronze, and the white marble arch within which the tablet is set has bronze capitals, bases and other decorative elements. The inscription reads:

HEIC IN PACE CHRISTI QUIESCIT/  
LVCIANVS BONAPARTE/ PRESBITER  
CARDINALIS/ TITVLI SANCTÆ  
PVDENTIANÆ/ ET SANCTI LAVRENTII  
IN LVCINA/ OBIIT XIX NOVEMBRIS  
MDCCCXCV/ ANNOS NATVS LXVII./  
MISERERE EIVS DEVS/SECVNDVM  
MAGNAM MISERICORDIAM TVAM./  
MARIA MATER MISERICORDIÆ/  
ORA PRO EO.

*Here in the peace of Christ rests Luciano Bonaparte, Cardinal of the title of Saint Pudenciana and Saint Laurence in Lucina. He died on 19th November 1895 aged 67. Have mercy on him O God according to Thy great mercy. Mary mother of mercy pray for him.*

Luciano Luigi Giuseppe Napoleone (or Lucien-Louis-Joseph-Napoléon) Bonaparte was born in Rome on 15th November 1828, the son of the ornithologist Charles Lucien Bonaparte and his

wife Zénaïde, after whom he named the mourning dove *genus* Zenaida.<sup>1</sup> His parents were cousins: Charles Lucien was the son of the Emperor Napoleon's younger brother Lucien, and Zénaïde the daughter of Napoleon's elder brother Joseph. Luciano was baptised by his great-grandmother's half-brother Cardinal Fesch, and his godfather was the future Napoleon III. Despite this network of family connections the young Luciano showed no interest in politics but instead a vocation to the religious life. This was nurtured by his devout mother and his aunt Costanza, who later became a nun of the Society of the Sacred Heart in Rome. Another formative influence was the Cistercian Abbot Tommaso Mossi (1778-1861), to whose memory Luciano erected a marble wall monument in San Bernardo alle Terme. On being ordained



Fig.1. Tomb of Cardinal Luciano Bonaparte (1828-95), at Santa Pudenziana, Rome.  
(photo: © Alamy)

priest in 1857 he renounced his title as Prince of Canino and Musignano and was appointed parish priest of Santa Maria in Via Lata, near the Palazzo Bonaparte. In acknowledgement of his noble origins he was created a papal chamberlain. The French statesman Émile Ollivier, in his monumental history of the Second Empire, characterised him thus: *'jeune prêtre, a la belle figure napoléonienne, doux, humble, d'une intelligence fine, paralysé par une timidité presque maladive'*.<sup>2</sup> Luciano lived at the Villa Paolina, the charming residence



Fig.2. Cardinal Luciano Bonaparte.  
Carte de visite photograph by  
Fratelli D'Alessandri, Rome (c.1868).  
(photo: © Musée Carnavalet, Paris, PH47499)

formerly occupied by Pauline Bonaparte, where he entertained friends as varied as the Roman dialect poet Giuseppe Gioachino Belli, the composer Franz Liszt and the historian and bibliophile Gaetano Moroni.

Luciano's elevation to the cardinalate in 1868 (Fig.2) came about because Pius IX wished to appoint a French cardinal, as a way to thank Napoleon III for the military support which had enabled Papal forces to defeat Garibaldi at the battle of Mentana in 1867. However Napoleon's candidate, Archbishop Darboy of Paris, was unacceptable to the Pope, who proposed Luciano instead. At the Consistory Court on 13th March 1868 Luciano was created Cardinal Priest of Santa Pudenziana. He undertook the restoration of this important early Christian basilica out of his own funds. Those brave enough to penetrate the Vatican Museums may find in the Carriage Museum another souvenir of Cardinal Bonaparte: the berlin (a type of enclosed four-wheeled coach) presented to him by the Emperor on his elevation, and bequeathed by him to Pope Leo XIII.<sup>3</sup>

Following the death of the Prince Imperial in Zululand in 1879, Cardinal Bonaparte became the genealogical senior member of the Bonaparte family (though not the inheritor of the Bonapartist claim, which passed to Prince Victor Napoleon). Consequently the coat-of-arms above the tablet (Fig.3) shows the undifferenced Bonaparte imperial arms (*Azure an eagle displayed or, head facing to the sinister, holding in its talons a thunderbolt or*) surmounted by a prince's crown above which is a cardinal's galero. It may have been that event which prompted Pope Leo XIII to create Cardinal Bonaparte additionally Cardinal-Priest of San Lorenzo in Lucina on 19th September 1879. The title was one which had been held by Cardinal Joseph Fesch from 1822 until his death in 1839.

After the fall of Rome in 1870 Cardinal Bonaparte, saddened by anti-clerical protests, retired to an apartment in the palace of his brother-in-law Prince Gabrielli on Monte Giordano, where he died of a heart attack at 12.20p.m. on 19th November 1895, attended on his deathbed by Cardinal Oreglia. After a lying-in-state and funeral at Santa Pudenziana, his remains were

interred in the Primoli family tomb at Campo Verano Cemetery, from which they were returned to the church once the monument had been constructed.<sup>4</sup>

The tomb of Cardinal Bonaparte has only a doubtful place among monumental brasses but is worthy of record as commemorating ‘*il più bello e il più buono*’ of the Bonaparte family, as his sister Giulia, Marchesa di Roccagiovine described him in her unpublished memoirs.

### Nicholas Rogers



Fig.3. Coat-of-arms on the tomb of Cardinal Luciano Bonaparte.  
(photo: © Maria Anna Rogers)

- 1 On Cardinal Bonaparte, see D. Angeli, *I Bonaparti a Roma* (Roma, 1938), pp.140-1, p.143, p.175, pp.245-7; F. Bartocchini, ‘Bonaparte, Luciano’, in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, XI (Roma, 1969), pp.559-60.
- 2 E. Ollivier, *L'Empire libéral, X, L'agonie de l'Empire autoritaire* (Paris, 1905), p.276.
- 3 <https://www.museivaticanova/content/museivaticani/en/collezioni/musei/padiglione-delle-carozze/berlina-del-cardinale-luciano-luigi-bonaparte.html>.
- 4 The Cardinal's sister Carlotta (1832-1901) had married Count Pietro Primoli (1821-93).

## How to ‘read’ a church – Little Bentley, Essex

I recently visited the church at Little Bentley in Essex, to see the brass in the north chapel of Sir William Pyrton, d.1490, and his wife (Fig.1). Lawrence James has shown that Pyrton was a distinguished soldier in the wars against France, and from 1436 until 1450 was Lieutenant of Guisnes, one of the castles which protected the edges of the Calais pale.<sup>1</sup> James however said little about the brass itself, so here are some thoughts off the top of my head, Sherlock-Holmes-style, about what I noticed. They may help members to make similar observations in other churches.

First, the slab is lying the wrong way round, facing west instead of east. People are normally buried facing east. The slab has therefore been moved, though not necessarily very far. Apparently there is a large vault beneath the north chapel, the burial place of the Bayning family who occupied Bentley Hall in the 17th century, long after the Pyrtons. The brass and its slab must have been moved to one side for the vault to be dug – unless, that is, the vault was originally constructed for Pyrton himself and his family. The current flooring around the brass of large unglazed tiles is probably 18th-century, so not helpful here.

Second, was the north chapel intended to be Pyrton’s chantry chapel? Historic England’s Official List entry dates the chapel to the 13th century, long before Pyrton, but with 15th-century entrance arch, east window and north windows. There are also traces of 15th-century glass. The chapel has clearly seen better days, but is finely proportioned, and in the north-east corner is a charming 15th-century canopied stone niche for a saint’s image. We know from Newcourt that the Pyrtons were patrons of the living from 1466 until 1589 inclusive.<sup>2</sup> Newcourt adds that the church contained a chantry founded in the late 14th century which at its suppression after 1547 was endowed with lands and tenements worth £8 5s. 4d. That sounds pretty wealthy. Was this chantry in the north chapel? Did Pyrton add to the endowment of this chantry and ask to be buried in it? If so, he may have introduced the fancier

windows and stained glass into his burial chapel. This might also explain why as patron of the living he did not seek burial in the chancel.

Third, the brass itself. If this was a chantry, we might have expected the brass to be part of a raised tomb, whose sides and plinth are long since destroyed. The heraldic achievement formerly above the figures, now lost but known from an old rubbing of 1869, was certainly large and flashy.<sup>3</sup>



Fig.1. The remains of the brass of Sir William Pyrton, 1490, and widow Katherine, at Little Bentley, Essex (LSWI).  
(photo: © Martin Stuchfield)

However the edges of the slab, although barely accessible, show no signs of chamfering or other decoration. The slab may always have been set in the floor. It has also weathered rather oddly. One end is heavily decayed, while the other end (the lower end) is almost pristine. How come? The usual enemies of Purbeck marble are water, frost damage or impact. It is hard to see what might have caused such damage to one end of the slab but not the other. We know that the lower part of the slab was recently covered by the organ, but this is unlikely to be relevant. The slab also has a large diagonal crack across its upper end, but this does not match the pattern of disintegration of the surface. The way in which the slab has partially decayed remains a puzzle.

Fourth, various brass components are now missing: most of Sir William's figure; the heraldic achievement above and between Sir William and his wife; a foot inscription; a group of daughters; and three shields. (The one remaining shield, in the top left of the slab, is damaged. It bears the Pyrton arms, *Ermine on a chevron engrailed three leopards' faces or*). The current condition of the indents of the lost components varies greatly.



Fig.2. Shield from the brass of Sir William Pyrton, 1490, and widow Katherine, at Little Bentley, Essex (LSW.I).  
(photo: © Martin Stuchfield)

Those in the upper part of the slab, the decayed part, are virtually effaced, including almost all of Sir William's figure; but lower down they are much better preserved. However here too there are differences: the indents for the foot inscription and the shield in the bottom right have been neatly smoothed over with cement, while those for the group of daughters and the shield in the bottom left are empty of cement and also pristine, as if they had been chiselled yesterday. This suggests that the brass daughters and shield might have still been in the slab when the cement was added. This was indeed the case. The shield and the daughters have left the slab comparatively recently, the shield not long before 1948, and the daughters since then.<sup>4</sup> The current condition of the indents thus matches the gradual disappearance of those components from the slab.

Fifth, Little Bentley church has various alterations in Tudor brick, and I wondered whether Sir William might have been responsible for these. However the Historic England Official List dates them to the early 16th century, long after Sir William's death. It also dates the font as 'c.1500', which suggests that an exact date is not possible. The font bears the Pyrton arms, and Sir William only died ten years before 1500. It would be good if he paid for it.

**Stephen Freeth**

- 1 See Lawrence James' biography of Pyrton at *M.B.S. Trans.*, XI, pt.2 (1970), pp.82-7.
- 2 Richard Newcourt, *Repertorium Ecclesiasticum Parochiale Londinense*, II (1710), p.50.
- 3 It is illustrated in W. Lack, H.M. Stuchfield and P. Whittemore, *Monumental Brasses of Essex* (M.B.S., 2003), p.59.
- 4 *Monumental Brasses of Essex*, by Miller Christy, W. Wade Porteous and E. Bertram Smith, ed. by R.H. D'Elboux, pt.1 (1948), p.43.



Fig.3. Group of sons from the brass of Sir William Pyrton, 1490, and widow Katherine, at Little Bentley, Essex (LSW.I).  
(photo: © Martin Stuchfield)

## Notes and news

### 'Brass rubbing' in the news

The Matt cartoon in *The Daily Telegraph* on 16th June 2026, prompted by the proposed ban on social media for the under-16s, mentioned brass rubbing! It is republished here with permission:



### Rubbings in Worcester Cathedral Library

Two recent blogs by Diana Westmoreland of Worcester Cathedral Library celebrate its collection of over 100 brass rubbings made between 1943 and 1952 by John Lewis, Senior Science Master at Malvern College. It is good to see the joys of brass rubbing emphasised once more, and for brasses to be celebrated as stunning works of art. See

<https://worcestercathedrallibrary.wordpress.com/2026/02/03/glimpses-of-the-past/>

<https://worcestercathedrallibrary.wordpress.com/2026/02/18/more-glimpses-of-the-past/>.

**Nigel Saul, 'Recording and Listing: Mill Stephenson and his List of Monumental Brasses in the British Isles', *The Antiquaries Journal*, CV (2025), pp.165-89.**

2026 is the centenary of the publication of Mill Stephenson's *List of Monumental Brasses in the British Isles*, a work that is still the sole complete inventory of all British monumental brasses. In this article, written to coincide with the centenary, Nigel Saul looks afresh at Stephenson's career, about which hitherto little has been written, looking especially at his private life and the range of his acquaintances, his *List* and the role of the Society of Antiquaries in its creation. Saul also attempts an evaluation of Stephenson's scholarly achievement, considering both his strengths and weaknesses as a scholar, and concludes with some reflections on how the listing of brasses has evolved since Stephenson's time.

**John Jenkins, 'The Vyne Chapel Frieze: a photographic record of the carvings', 24pp; ISBN 978-1-0369-7206-6.**

Hilary Wheeler writes: Due to their location, on the front edge of canopies above the north, west and south choir stalls, the frieze carvings are difficult to see. John Jenkins' photographs allow the early Tudor carvings to be studied and enjoyed. The motifs, entwined in trailing foliage, include the Sandys crest, cherubs engaged in various activities and an owl beating a drum. For further details of this and of his comprehensive history of the Chapel of the Holy Ghost, Basingstoke, email John Jenkins at [j.jenkins904@btinternet.com](mailto:j.jenkins904@btinternet.com).

### Hudson's *Brasses of Northamptonshire* now available online

Northamptonshire Record Society has recently digitised its copy of Franklin Hudson's *Brasses of Northamptonshire*. This magnificent volume, published in 1853 by a local surgeon, contains attractive illustrations of brasses printed in 'tinted lithography and bronze'. These must have been highly desirable in their day, and are still very pretty, if not to modern standards.

Unfortunately a word of warning is needed. Hudson arranged his book by deaneries, not



Fig.1. John Colt, rector, 1440,  
at Tansor, Northamptonshire (M.S.I).

(© *Brasses of Northamptonshire* by Franklin Hudson (1853))

parishes, and the final deanery in the sequence, Weldon Deanery, is mentioned in the index but completely absent from the digitised version. Perhaps the Society's copy was defective. Weldon Deanery included the churches at Geddington and Newton-by-Geddington.

This is a timely reminder that digitised versions, while convenient and accessible, cannot always be relied upon. The book itself is also mistitled online as *Brass Rubbings from Northamptonshire*.

### Walthamstow, Essex

A recent issue of SALON, the Society of Antiquaries online newsletter (no.576, 3rd June 2026), mentions a drawing of a lost brass from Walthamstow by Thomas Fisher, the early-19th-century artist who made many extremely accurate scale drawings of brasses. The new drawing (Fig.2) shows the lost inscription for Margery, daughter of Marmaduke Fairbarne of Darlington in the Bishopric of Durham, and wife of Bryan Nycolles, who died in 1561. It has been presented to the Antiquaries by our member John Blair. Its catalogue reference is LDSAL2026.13.

This inscription was recorded in the south chapel at Walthamstow by William Holman in the early 18th century. In Holman's day Margery's figure and a mouth scroll were already lost. Since then the inscription plate and slab have disappeared too. It was therefore listed in Lack, Stuchfield and Whittemore's *Monumental Brasses of Essex* as Lost Brass 39 at Walthamstow. No image of the brass has been known till now, so Fisher's drawing is especially valuable. It shows the lettering of the inscription very clearly, along with a sketch of the slab. This sketch shows the indent of the scroll, and also some careful hatching suggesting that the indent of Margery's figure was already effaced. The scroll was close to the inscription plate, so Margery's figure was probably shown either kneeling or as a half-effigy.

The subsequent issue of SALON (no.577, 17th June 2026) contains a comment about the text of the inscription by our member Diarmaid MacCulloch. The inscription finishes with a prayer to the Trinity, *O blessed trinyte have m[er]cy o[n] her soule ame[n]*. Professor MacCulloch describes this as 'an interesting way of presenting a soul-prayer in the middle of Elizabeth I's Protestant Reformation: the reference to the Trinity would have been unusual earlier, but it was a dedication popularised by Henry VIII for his new Cathedral and college foundations, and continued to be used frequently by Protestants. So all this is a deliberate effort to find a way through rapid religious change and keep a soul-prayer in 1561, as the daughter of a conservative gentleman of the Prince-Bishopric might be expected to do.'

Fisher has included two other memorials on the same sheet of paper. Beneath the Nicolles inscription, separated by a divider, are sketches of two indents. They are not labelled as from Walthamstow, but we can confidently assume so. One shows a scroll above a shield above an inscription plate; the other shows what may be the figure of a lady, full face and wearing a mob cap, above an inscription plate. Both were probably early 16th century. Neither indent appears to be listed in Lack, Stuchfield and Whittemore, nor can they easily be matched with any of the known lost brasses. This makes this drawing even more important.

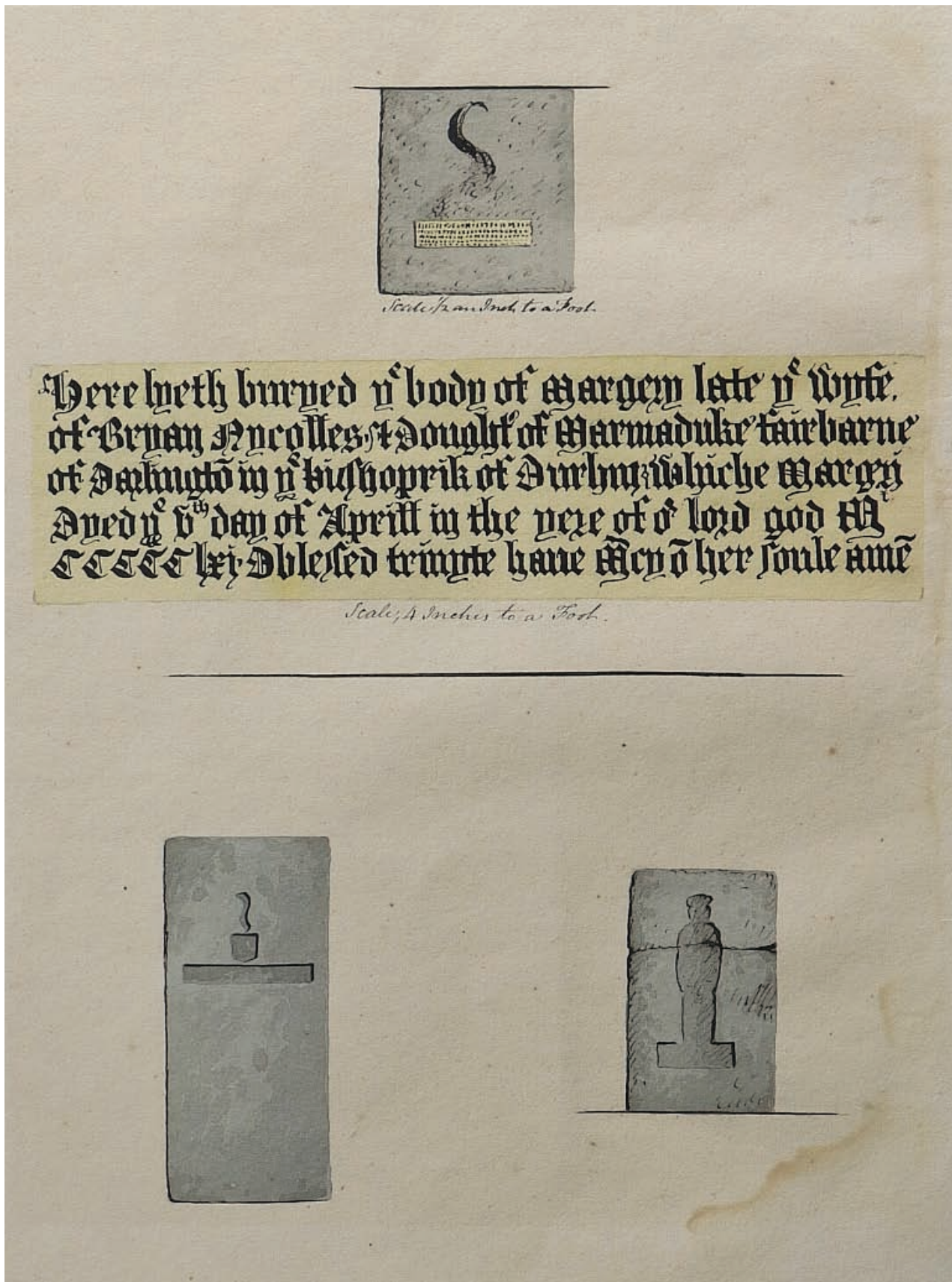


Fig.2. Thomas Fisher's drawing of the lost brass to Margery, dau. of Marmaduke Fairbarne of Darlington, County Durham, wife of Bryan Nycolles, 1561, at St. Mary the Virgin, Walthamstow, Essex (LSW.39).  
(drawing: © Society of Antiquaries of London)