

# Monumental Brass Society

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OCTOBER 2019



BULLETIN 142

The *Bulletin* is published three times a year, in February, June and October. Articles for inclusion in the next issue should be sent by 1st January 2020 to:

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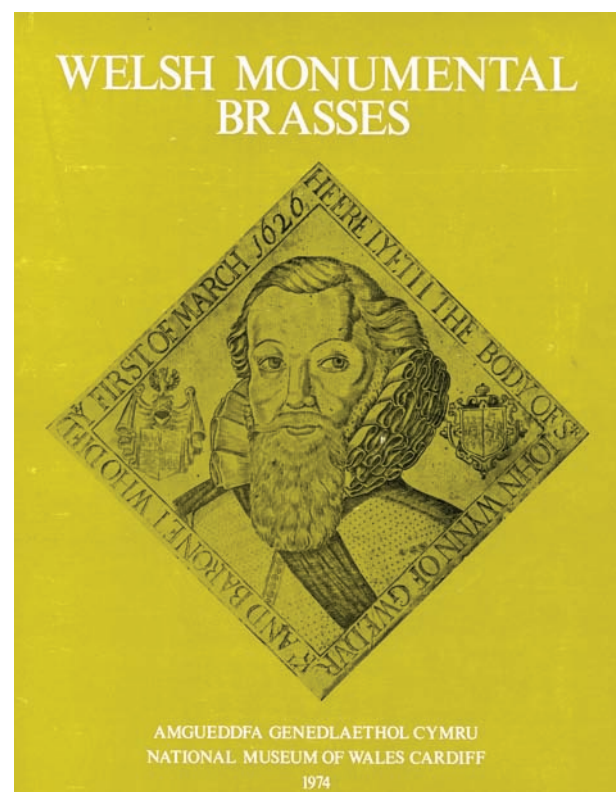
##### Hon. Treasurer's notice

On 1st January all subscriptions for 2020 become due. Please send £25.00 (associate/student £12.50, family £35.00) to the Hon. Treasurer, Robert Kinsey, 4 Pictor Close, Corsham, Wiltshire SN13 9XH. Payment can be made using the *PayPal* system via [mbs\\_brasses@yahoo.com](mailto:mbs_brasses@yahoo.com) or make cheques payable to the 'Monumental Brass Society'. 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. Complete and send in the form that can be downloaded directly from [www.mbs-brasses.co.uk](http://www.mbs-brasses.co.uk). U.S. members preferring to pay in dollars can send a cheque for U.S. \$45.00 to Shirley Mattox at 1313 Jackson Street, Oshkosh, Wisconsin 54901, U.S.A.

## Personalia

It is with very deep regret that we report the death of **Jerome Bertram**, our senior Vice-President, on Saturday, 19th October 2019 immediately prior to going to press. A full tribute will be published in the 2020 *Transactions*.

The Society also deeply regrets the passing of **Brian Kemp** and **David Parrott** who had been members of the Society since 1983 and 1961 respectively.



The death is also noted of John Masters Lewis who passed away on 4th June 2019, aged 92. Lewis was the author of *Welsh Monumental Brasses* (Cardiff, 1974) the only book on the subject that included rubbings or photographs of forty examples, many dating from the 17th to the 19th century, and mostly illustrated for the first time. The book was reviewed by Richard Busby in *Bulletin 7* (October 1974) and with equal enthusiasm by F.A. Greenhill in *M.B.S. Trans.*, XI, pt.6 (March 1975).

Cover: 'In Memoriam' – seated figure of St. Jerome forming the initial letter on the palimpsest inscription to Thomas Humfre of London, goldsmith, and wife Joan, engraved c.1510, at Great Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire (LSW.IX).

(photo.: © Martin Stuchfield)

## Diary of events

**Saturday, 28th March 2020**

### GENERAL MEETING

#### **ROTHWELL, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**

The first meeting of 2020 will be held at Rothwell, described by Pevsner as 'one of the most attractive towns in Northamptonshire'.

The programme will commence at 11.00a.m. with an optional short walk conducted by **Ann Rowlett**, a local historian, focusing on Thomas Tresham's Market House and the Jesus Hospital. The latter was founded in 1591 by Owen Ragsdale who is commemorated with a brass (M.S.III).

The formal meeting will commence at 2.00p.m. in Holy Trinity church with **Jane Houghton** speaking on *William de Rothewelle, priest and quartermaster*. **Ann Rowlett** will follow with *Owen Ragsdale and the Jesus Hospital*. Tea and an opportunity to view the brasses and monuments will follow. The afternoon will conclude with a talk by our member, **Doreen Agutter** on *Edward Saunders, his brass and family*.

A rare opportunity will also be afforded to visit the chanel house. This small chamber is crammed with the bones of at least 2,500 people!



*Medieval charnel house at Rothwell, Northamptonshire.  
(photo: © Sheffield University)*

*The church of Holy Trinity is situated in Squires Hill, Rothwell. The postcode for satellite navigation is NN14 6BQ. The nearest station is Kettering (served from London: St. Pancras) which is 9 miles distant representing an approximate journey of 10 minutes by taxi. Please contact Penny Williams, Hon. Secretary (email: penny7441@hotmail.com) if you wish to share a taxi or are travelling by car and are prepared to pick someone up.*

**Saturday, 18th July 2020**

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

#### **SAFFRON WALDEN**

The Annual General Meeting will be held at 11.00a.m. The afternoon session, commencing at 2.00p.m., will provide an opportunity to view twelve brasses and twenty-two indents with at least two relevant talks. Further details in the next issue.

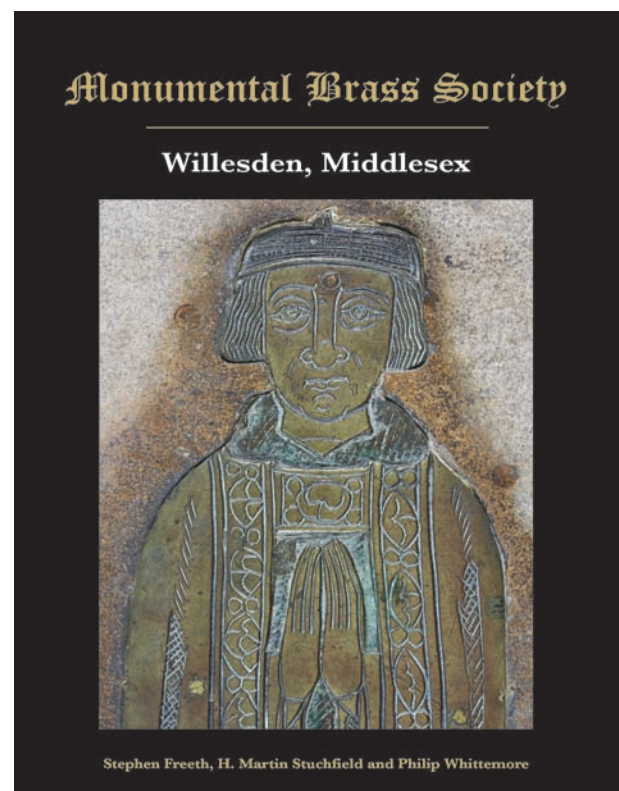
**Friday-Sunday, 25th-27th September 2020**

### CONFERENCE

#### **KING'S LYNN, NORFOLK**

Advance notice is given of a Conference, arranged jointly with the Church Monuments Society, to be held at King's Lynn in September 2020.

An excursion is being organised for the Saturday that will include visits to the churches at Oxborough, Narborough, Rougham and South Acre. Further details and a booking form will be included with *Bulletin* 143 (February 2020).



Copies of this comprehensively illustrated 16-page booklet (provided free to members who attended the meeting at Willesden and subject to availability) may be purchased at a cost of £7.50 (including postage and packing) from Martin Stuchfield (see p.822 for contact details).

## Annual General Meeting

### Oxford – 13th July 2019

Following the format last year at Rochford, Essex, the A.G.M. was held in the morning allowing time in the afternoon for visits. We were hosted by **Jerome Bertram** at the Oxford Oratory, conveniently situated at the city end of Woodstock Road. Not only had Jerome prepared a beautiful publication relating to the churches and brasses at St. Cross and St. Peter-in-the-East, he also had on sale his scholarly and comprehensive account of all the monumental brasses and incised slabs extant or formerly extant in the University and City of Oxford. Moreover he had laid out some of his large collection of books and pamphlets on brasses for people to help themselves and had displayed his first (1961) and last (July 2019) brass rubbings.

The first on yellowing paper in grey heelball (purchased for 1s. 3d. a stick) was of a man in armour of the Culpeper family, engraved c.1520, to be found in the Bedgebury Chapel at Goudhurst, Kent (M.S.II). The last rubbing, produced the previous day at Westminster Abbey, was of the very large brass to John de Waltham, Bishop of Salisbury and Lord High Treasurer, 1395 (M.S.III). An impressive work, the whole slab was shown with almost invisible indents but very many rivets. Jerome had discerned a previously unknown indent of one shield near the left shoulder adding to the composition of the whole, which had wide side columns – of which only three empty niches remained, with a lost triple canopy. How rubbings have changed over 58 years.

Before the business of the A.G.M. we remembered Jonathan Ali and William Lack who both died on 30th May. William Lack had conserved more than one thousand brasses and had edited this *Bulletin* for over eight years; Jonathan Ali had done much work and research in Lancashire. Our President, Martin Stuchfield, thanked Jerome for hosting the A.G.M. at the Oxford Oratory.

**Jerome Bertram** and **David Meara** had arranged visits to St. Cross Church and to St. Peter-in-the-East. Both buildings are now redundant and have been skilfully converted to college libraries; St. Cross for the archives and

historic volumes of Balliol College, and St. Peter-in-the-East for the library of the adjacent St. Edmund Hall. Both churches are fortunate to be used in this way and be structurally maintained.

St. Cross, squat and away from the City centre, had double ranks of east-west shelving, and displayed historic books including a copy of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* printed by Caxton. The first of three brasses (M.S.II) lay in the nave by the chancel arch. An appropriated slab, still with lettering on the stone, contained a rectangular plate of 1625 to Agnes and Jane Hopper, mother and daughter, in distinctive Oxfordshire Prideaux style. The brass, normally covered, was seen for the first time in fifty years by Jerome Bertram.



*St. Cross church, Oxford.*  
(photo: © author)

Other brasses were to Howard Francis Leigh, vicar of St. Cross, Holywell 1892-1906. This is a portrait of an ecclesiastic in surplice and scarf with a scroll above, *In the Lord I put my trust*. It is a fine simple brass, using the medium without resort to aping the past, nor succumbing to the exuberances of its period. It is situated on the wall of the south aisle behind stacks. The third brass, to Eliza Franklin, 1622 (M.S.I), who died in childbirth of her fourth child showed her in bed with three shrouded infants and one swaddled infant. She resigns herself to death looking towards



*The late Jerome Bertram (seated left) pointing out salient features of the brass commemorating Agnes, wife of Thomas Hopper, and daughter, Jane, both died 1625, at Oxford, St. Cross, Holywell (M.S.II). (photo: © Janet Whitham)*

a sunburst saying *Thy will be done*, from which come mottoes including *Receive thy crown, thy prayer is heard*. Oxford is a city for non-standard brasses, each of these three being individual and designed for those commemorated. Our thanks to Balliol College and **Amy Boylan**, the Early Career Librarian, for permitting access.

St. Peter-in-the-East, accessed through its churchyard, is a Romanesque church much rebuilt and altered with lovely plain glass in the 14th-century windows. It is now the main and working library of St. Edmund Hall with 40,000 books. The principal brass is on an altar tomb aligned north-south just inside the chancel arch to Richard Atkinson and two wives, 1574 (M.S.IV). This is palimpsest, and was reset on plaster in the 1920s. The librarian listened carefully as our President described the brass, explained the signs of palimpsests and the need for conservation. The large figures and inscription

were all cut from a large mid-16th-century Flemish rectangular plate revealing a double canopy, central pillar and flat-topped arches with a shield and lozenge charged with *a tower* and *a tower impaling a fess* respectively. Parts of the same brass have also been discovered at Isleham, Cambridgeshire (LSW.XI) and possibly West Lavington, Wiltshire (M.S.III). The children have been cut from a Flemish inscription in raised letters engraved c.1490, parts of which are at Isleham (LSW.XI) and Harlow, Essex (LSW.V). It would therefore appear that quantities of old brasses were exported to London, either as ballast, or as scrap metal – a reminder that 16th-century religious upheavals were greater on the continent even than in England resulting in the desecration of tombs.

Following time to explore the church and its memorials, including the north chapel and the decorated coffin lids in the chancel, the librarian,

**James Haworth**, took us into the remarkable crypt extending under the whole building. Large, with two rows of piers giving a five-bay crypt with western deep recesses. Its Romanesque origins may have been to house a relic of St. Peter. Some of the capitals of the piers were covered in Romanesque carvings.

The group was then taken to see the ancient college dating from 1670 and occupying one narrow range of the quad. The library, on the first floor, was the last in Oxford to use chains on its books, selling these for scrap metal in 1783. Perhaps because of the narrowness of the range it was one of the first libraries to have its shelves lining the walls, and to have a gallery. Today the books are in the same places as when catalogued in 1700 by Thomas Herne; the library is used as a Senior Common Room.

## A.G.M. formal business

The 2019 Annual General Meeting was held at The Oratory, 25 Woodstock Road, Oxford OX2 6HA on 13th July. Apologies were received and the minutes of the last Annual General Meeting held on 14th July 2018 were approved by the meeting and signed. The Report and Accounts for 2018 were also approved. Our member, Michael Boon, F.C.A., F.C.M.I., was elected as Independent Examiner.

The meeting proceeded to elect the Hon. Officers *en bloc*: Martin Stuchfield as President; Jerome Bertram, Paul Cockerham, Nigel Saul, Nicholas Rogers, David Meara and Stephen Freeth as Vice-Presidents; Penny Williams as Hon. Secretary; Robert Kinsey as Hon. Treasurer; and David Lepine as Hon. Editor.

The President made a presentation to Janet McQueen who retired as Hon. Secretary and thanked Hugh Guilford and Matthew Sillence as the retiring members of the Executive Council. Jon Bayliss and Caroline Metcalfe, as duly nominated members, were elected to fill the vacancies created.

A number of issues were raised by members under Any Other Business. These included the

Tea was taken in the college Hall before members were afforded the opportunity to visit Christ Church Cathedral to look at the large collection of brasses there.

Whether the brasses so rarely seen, the architecture we experienced, or the enlightened reuse of church buildings for libraries was the most memorable it is difficult to say. It was a most enjoyable and worthy Society event.

Thanks to Jerome Bertram for organising the day, to the librarians of Balliol College and St. Edmund Hall, to the ladies who prepared tea, and to our President, Martin Stuchfield, for his explanation of the brasses.

**Rosalind Willatts**

Society's new website that had cost £5,000. Sally Badham felt this was very reasonable and there was much praise of the new website, which was clearer, easier to access and could be updated instantly. The *Portfolio of Brasses* (Brass of the Month) had yet to be transferred but would have a useful search facility. Sally Badham questioned whether there should be an M.B.S. twitter account. The Society is aware of the importance of social media especially where younger members are concerned and was keen to recruit a volunteer to take this forward.

At the Executive Council meeting held on 12th October 2019 the following appointments were approved:

*Hon. Assistant Secretary:* Caroline Metcalfe

*Hon. Bulletin Editor:* Vacant

*Hon. Conservation Officer:* Martin Stuchfield

*Hon. Heraldic Adviser:* Thomas Woodcock,  
Garter Principal King of Arms.

*Hon. Technical Editor:* Matthew Sillence

**Penny Williams, Hon. Secretary**

## The fixing and unfixing of monumental brasses

There is in Canterbury Cathedral much evidence of lost monumental brasses in the large stone slabs from which the metal has been torn; all that remains are the indents in which the brass was once set, and the rivets which held them in place. There are three places where these despoiled slabs can be seen, the Martyrdom, the cloisters and the crypt.

Their present state allows us to see how these monuments were assembled. There are but two components, a stone slab, usually Purbeck marble, and pieces of metal called latten, a medieval alloy of copper, zinc and tin. Marrying them together was a very skilled operation. Unlike continental, especially Flemish, monuments, where brass sheets were joined to form a rectangle which was engraved overall and laid in a simple rectangular matrix, English brasses comprised individual cut-out engraved elements such as effigies, canopies and inscriptions. For these to lie flush with the surface of the slab, corresponding indents had to be cut.

This required a high degree of precision both in the shape and depth of cut. As for the metal, medieval brass was cast in stone moulds and the maximum size was around 30 inches (760mm) square. So large figures would be made from two or three sheets. In the earliest monuments, dating from around 1300, the sheets were joined by backing plates which rivetted the pieces together, so the indent had to make room for these plates as seen in the example from Hever (Fig.2) These early brasses were not fixed to the stone but simply laid in the indent on a cushioning bed of pitch and held in place only by their considerable weight. Inscriptions were made up of individually cast letters in their own indents, as can be seen in the Hever marginal inscription.<sup>1</sup>

Inevitably this method had its problems so later in the 14th century the brass plates were joined together by solder wipes, again laid on a bed of hot pitch and the whole was rivetted to the stone.



*Fig.1. The Martyrdom (left to right): indents of Prior William Selling, 1494; Archbishop Henry Dean, 1503; Archbishop John Stafford, 1452; and Prior John Finch, 1391. (photo: © author)*



Fig.2. Indent for a priest in mass vestments, crown over his head (?), canopy with marginal inscription in Lombardics, c.1320-30, at Hever, Kent.  
(photo: © Julian Luxford)

The rivets were set in a drilled hole within a lead plug, often with the liquid lead poured along a runnel (Fig.5).

For added security the bottom of the rivet ended in either a blob, splay or hook (Fig.3). How they functioned can be seen in an original rivet which was reused in a Victorian restoration of a

16th-century monument at Ash-next-Sandwich, Kent (Fig.4).

A large brass with multiple elements obviously required many fixings, so let us look at the slab which lies in the Martyrdom for Archbishop Henry Dean who died in 1503. In his will Dean asked ‘. . . to be buried in my Cathedral church of Christchurch, Canterbury, in that place where the Blessed Martyr Thomas, formerly Archbishop of the same church died from the swords of wicked men, as near as possible to the same place’.<sup>2</sup> As an indication of his devotion to Becket the birds on the slab are choughs, an allusion to Becket’s arms (not to be confused with Prior Finch who lies nearby).

The metal was secured by 119 rivets, in a complex, time-consuming operation which required great skill to create a completely smooth surface of metal and stone.

Unfortunately, unfixing the brass was quite simple. With a ready will and a crowbar, it would have been quick, although it does seem to have been carried out quite carefully, as there is little collateral damage to the stone. It is not certain when the metal was removed. When John Weever published his *Ancient Funerall Monuments* in 1631 he records the inscriptions on all four of the brasses in the Martyrdom.<sup>3</sup> However Somner, in his *Antiquities of Canterbury; The History of Christchurch in Canterbury*, published only nine years later in 1640, states that: ‘Henry Dean lies under a flat Marble-stone in the Martyrdom: The Brass is torn off’, but Weever has ‘preserv’d the Epitaph that was upon it’. Somner can only quote Weever for the other Martyrdom monuments. This seems to imply that, between the time of Weever recording the inscription and Somner’s publication in 1640, the metal was removed from all the Martyrdom brasses. This rules out the usual suspects, the Reformation and the Civil War, and perhaps points to the time of Laud. But why were the Martyrdom gravestones singled out? Many monuments to archbishops and others survived in the nave until the mass clear-out of 1787.<sup>4</sup>

Indeed, Dart illustrates the tomb chest of Archbishop Islip, complete with brass,<sup>5</sup> and the 1787 plan indicates the survival of many monuments which appear to have retained their metalwork.





Fig.3. Blob, splay and hook rivets.  
(photo: © author)

The repaving of the nave resulted in the wholesale loss of all the monumental brasses, so now we have only the despoiled slabs of these fine monuments scattered around the cloisters to indicate how much we have lost. This is symptomatic of the disregard for our past that was prevalent in the 18th century. As Cobb says: ‘The veneration we now feel for our medieval cathedrals was non-existent in the 17th and 18th centuries among the intelligentsia, whose chief regard was for Roman and later Greek architecture . . . This utter indifference to the



Fig.5. Indent of Archbishop Henry Dean, 1503,  
in the Martyrdom at Canterbury Cathedral  
showing position of rivets.  
(photo: © author)

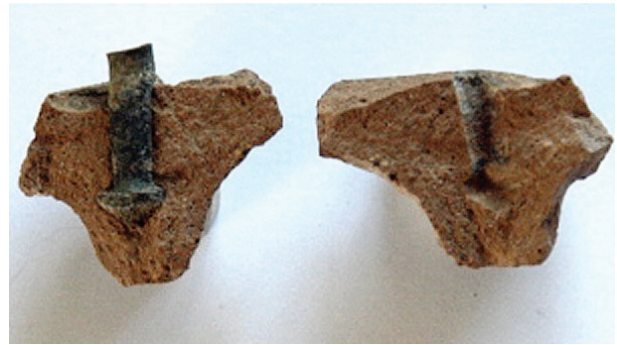


Fig.4. Reused rivets in cement from Ash-next-Sandwich.  
(photo: © author)

worth of our medieval heritage and its subsequent neglect led to a great deal of interesting and valuable remains – architecture, painting, sculpture, stained glass and so on – being destroyed or covered up . . . it seems that, on the whole, more damage was done by the early “restorers” in their zeal for “neatness” and for removing “Gothic rudeness” . . . so as to render the interiors of these great churches more “up-to-date”.<sup>6</sup>

Canterbury Cathedral was not immune. This total disregard became very apparent during the nave excavations in 1993 when chunks of Purbeck and ragstone table tombs were found as backfill for the 1787 floor, including a complete but broken indent for Sir William Lovelace (d.1577).

### Leslie Smith

This article was primarily written for a Canterbury audience, but these indents have a personal resonance because they were the subject of my first article to be published in the *Bulletin* (no.11 (February 1976), namely a report of the Mill Stephenson Revision survey of Canterbury Cathedral that took place in 1975).

- 1 P. Binski, ‘The Stylistic Sequence of London Figure Brasses’, in *The Earliest English Brasses: Patronage, Style and Workshops 1270-1350*, ed. J. Coales (London, 1987), pp.125-6 and fig.132, p.127.
- 2 ‘Sede Vacante Wills’ in *Kent Records*, III (Kent Archaeological Society) pp.93-100; *Arch. Cant.*, XXXI, p.39; *M.B.S. Bulletin* 136 (October 2017), pp.706-7.
- 3 J. Weever, *Ancient Funerall Monuments within the United Monarchie of Great Britaine, Ireland, and the Islands adjacent* (London, 1631), p.228 (Archbishop Stafford), p.232 (Archbishop Dean), p.236 (Prior Finch), p.237 (Prior Selling).
- 4 K. Blockley, M. Sparks and T. Tatton-Brown, *Canterbury Cathedral Nave: Archaeology, History and Architecture* (Canterbury, 1997), fig.60.
- 5 J. Dart, *The History and Antiquities of the Cathedral Church of Canterbury and the Once Adjoining Monastery* (Canterbury, 1726), p.151.
- 6 G. Cobb, *English Cathedrals: The Forgotten Centuries, Restoration and Change from 1530 to the Present Day* (London, 1980), p.11.

## The rape and restoration of a Surrey brass

The person who reads Victorian travel literature for pleasure and profit often finds references to monumental brasses. As a rule, these are either desultory or included to evoke nostalgia and the oblivious tramp of time over the things of man. Typical of the latter is a scene-setting description of old Norfolk in Clement Scott's best-seller, *Poppy-Land*: 'Now you come across a church tower, ivy grown and picturesque, surrounded by forgotten gravestones and the matrices of old brasses, the last relic of the parish church . . .'.<sup>1</sup> Written in 1886, this suggests a popular idea of monumental brasses current in the period when the M.B.S. was founded. It is not at all scientific, but interesting enough in what it shows of the brass as a literary symbol.

Of course, all travel writers were not equal in this respect. The journalist Louis John Jennings (1836-93) was among the more diligent in pursuit of brasses, and other monuments, during his rambles in Derbyshire and the south-eastern counties.<sup>2</sup> He was naturally drawn to old churches and deplored the great Victorian restoration project in various shades of sarcasm and frustration. But he was also healthily ironic about his own interests, reporting, for example, how a man whom he told of his wish to visit churches 'looked at me curiously, as if I were an escaped lunatic'.<sup>3</sup> If Jennings is easy to warm to, it is hard to share all his prejudices. On his way through Bletchingley, a Surrey village between Redhill and Godstone, he visited the parish church and was captivated by the magnificent Baroque tomb which Richard Crutcher sculpted for Sir Robert Clayton (d.1707), a Lord Mayor of London. But not in a good way: Clayton, he said, 'never could have done anything bad enough to deserve this terrific monument. The figures, the "angels", the inscription, – everything about it is like a fearful nightmare.'<sup>4</sup>

A formally simple brass to a priest in the same church attracted more benign attention, although for what had happened to it rather than what it was. Jennings was interested in a story he learned from the incumbent about its theft and recovery. He thought this intrinsically curious and an exhibition of local character worthy of detailed



*Priest, c.1510, in mass vestments,  
Bletchingley, Surrey (M.S.II).  
(M.B.S. Trans., VI, pt.8 (October 1913), p.335)*

record. Because what he wrote adds to the known history of the brass and contributes to the rarefied but important topic of brass loss, which has always been of interest to the M.B.S., it is reproduced in full below. A few words on the brass itself are in order first.

The effigy, a product of the London F workshop, represents a priest in mass vestments with his hands clasped in prayer. It is approximately 560 mm long.

The face is economically delineated and has the grave cast of features which, rightly or wrongly, Malcolm Norris called ‘stupid’.<sup>5</sup> Everything about its handling suggests the convention and basic competence that has proven so disappointing to historians of late medieval English art. Currently, it is set in the pavement to the north of the altar, but supposedly comes from a place in the nave near the font, perhaps its original position.<sup>6</sup> The cream-coloured slab it occupies is modern. Mill Stephenson dated this brass to c.1510, which is clearly preferable on the basis of style to the alternative suggestion, offered in the church guide-book, that it dates from c.1480 and commemorates a rector of Bletchingley named Hugh de Hexstall (d.1476).<sup>7</sup> He also drew attention to a shield set over the effigy’s head, emblazoned with a chevron between three unidentified birds close. This may be associable with the Ward family of Cuckfield in West Sussex: there is a brass to Thomas Warde (d.1541) and his wife Joan in the north chapel of Bletchingley church (M.S.IV).<sup>8</sup> The shield is engraved in a different style and probably does not belong with the effigy. However, Stephenson observed that what he took to be the original tombstone, then lying in the churchyard, had matrices for a shield as well as an effigy and foot inscription. This slab is said (in the guidebook) to have been brought into the church tower, although I could not find it there when I visited in October 2019.<sup>9</sup>

In short, this is not the sort of brass that would normally attract much scholarly attention. However, is just the sort of thing that someone might try to steal, for it is historically evocative, publicly inconspicuous and of a size that would make it easy to hide under clothing and carry off. Jennings tells the story as it emerged in conversation with the ‘very melancholy’ parish clerk. The events recorded are undated, but took place before 1871, when the effigy is said to have been back in the church, ‘having been taken out’.<sup>10</sup>

‘You see that brass? Well, a very strange thing happened about that. It used to be over there by the belfry, partly hidden under a seat. One day a gentleman in a carriage called at my house to see the church. I happened to be away from home, and he said to my missis, “You have no occasion to come down – we are only going to look over the church.” So, being in a carriage,



*Priest, c.1510, in mass vestments,  
Bletchingley, Surrey (M.S.II).  
(photo: © author)*

she gave him the keys, and thought no more about it. The next time I went in the church, that brass was gone!’

‘And I suppose you were pretty well scared?’

‘Well, I did not like it at all, but I did not know what to do. I often thought about the stolen brass, but could get no trace of it. At last, one day, a gentleman came here, and he looked down and saw the traces of the brass in the stone. Said he, “Why, good gracious, I think I know where that brass is.” “Do you?” said I, – “where?” “Why, in my house in London. I bought it not long ago in Soho Square. If you like I will send it to you.” Of course I said I should like it very much, but I thought it was all idle talk. But he really did send it down, and the moment I set eyes on it I knew it again directly, but the inscription was gone. We never got that back. The gentleman said he went to Soho Square to see if he could find it, but it was not there. Very likely some descendant of the family had taken it away. Since then I never let anybody come to the church alone.’

‘And quite right too,’ said I. I wonder whether the gentleman who returned the brass had ever, by any chance, seen or met the gentleman who took it away?’

The old clerk only shook his head. ‘How long have you lived here?’ I asked him. He said seventy-five years! Seventy-five years of life in Bletchingley, near that monument. Nothing will kill some people.<sup>11</sup>

While one is often induced to consider the vast odds against the survival of any given piece of medieval art, one does not tend to factor in coincidences like that which led the purchaser of the brass to Bletchingley and caused him to notice a nude matrix of generic form lurking in the shadow of the pews. The return of stolen inscriptions with proper nouns one can easily understand, but the restoration of this figure seems almost like divine intervention.<sup>12</sup> For this, the story is as thought-provoking as it is entertaining. It is also interesting for what it suggests of the subterfuge employed by the thieves (more than one is indicated), and their assumptions about their quarry. Given their disposal of the brass to some sort of London dealer, they evidently stole for money (unless perhaps for the fun of it) and knew the sort of thing worth stealing. How one

squares this with the notion that they were gentlemen is a matter of personal conscience. It is, at least, unlikely that they were antiquaries compelled either by a brass-fetish or some milder acquisitive instinct. If they had been then they would presumably not have disposed of the effigy. Otherwise – and very regrettably – there would be room for doubt about this, for Jerome Bertram has shown that brasses were often stolen in this period ‘by the very people who claimed to have an interest in ecclesiastical art’.<sup>13</sup> One thinks of parallels among 19th-century bibliophiles, and indeed, more recent malefaction.

Jennings’s tale reinforces the impression that brasses and other things of the past have never been safe from greed and ingenuity, as well as ignorance, low cunning and lumpen vandalism. It reminds one not to be too cross on encountering a locked church. More positively, it is a pleasing reminder of how history can colour a brass regardless of its status. This is no revelation, of course, but it is in any case nice to know that there is more to the priest at Bletchingley than his ‘stupid’ expression reveals.

**Julian Luxford**

- 1 C. Scott, *Poppy-Land: Papers Descriptive of Scenery on the East Coast*, 2nd edn. (Norwich, 1894), p.21.
- 2 As witnessed by his two travelogues: *Field Paths and Green Lanes in Surrey and Sussex* (London, 1877; 5th edn. 1907); *Rambles among the Hills in the Peak of Derbyshire and the South Downs* (London, 1880).
- 3 *Field Paths and Green Lanes*, 4th edn. (1884), p.169.
- 4 *Field Paths and Green Lanes*, 4th edn. (1884), p.201.
- 5 M. Norris, *Monumental Brasses: The Memorials* (London, 1977), I, p.168.
- 6 G.W. Leveson-Gower, *Bletchingley Manor and Church* (London, 1871), p.35.
- 7 M. Stephenson, ‘A List of Monumental Brasses in Surrey’ [pt.1: Addington – Burstow], *Surrey Archaeological Collections*, XXV (1912), pp.33-100 (at p.80); *M.B.S. Trans.*, VI, pt.8 (October 1913), pp.334-6; [No specified author], *St. Mary the Virgin, Bletchingley, Surrey* (no place or date of publication), p.ix.
- 8 The Ward connection is suggested in the guidebook at p.ix. If these are Ward arms then the chevron should have annulets, but these might perhaps have been painted on. The birds are shallowly and doubtfully engraved.
- 9 Nothing is recorded at Bletchingley in A.G. Sadler, *The Indents of Lost Monumental Brasses in Surrey & East Sussex* (Ferring-on-Sea, 1975).
- 10 Leveson-Gower, *Bletchingley Manor and Church*, p.35.
- 11 *Field Paths and Green Lanes*, 1st edn. (1877), pp.241-3; 4th edn. (1884), pp.201-02. ‘That monument’ means, of course, the one to Sir Robert Clayton.
- 12 For restored inscriptions see e.g. J. Bertram, *Lost Brasses* (Newton Abbot, 1976), pp.37-8; C.E.D. Davidson-Houston, ‘Sussex Monumental Brasses, Part I’, *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, LXXVI (1935), pp.46-114 (at p.93).
- 13 Bertram, *Lost Brasses*, pp.37-8.

## Major-General James Wolfe: the Captor of Quebec, 1759

On a recent visit to the National Trust's Quebec House at Westerham in Kent, General Wolfe's childhood home, I was surprised to see some rubbings of coffin plates, hung in the stairwell leading up to the second floor.

On examination, these proved to be those of Wolfe himself, and of his parents. Below them was hung a framed account of their history. From the rubbings, James Wolfe's plain rectangular plate measures 425 x 345 mm (Fig.1). His parents' plates, both of a more irregular and decorated design, have extreme measurements of 315 x 234 mm (Edward) (Fig.2) and 313 x 234 mm (Henrietta) (Fig.3).

Wolfe, it will be recalled, together with Vice-Admiral Charles Saunders – and with the future Captain James Cook doing much of the navigation – conducted a brilliant amphibious operation on 12th/13th September 1759 whereby Wolfe's army landed at night under the foot of a cliff, climbed a narrow, unguarded path to the top of the Heights of Abraham in time to deploy by dawn before the walls of the city of Quebec,

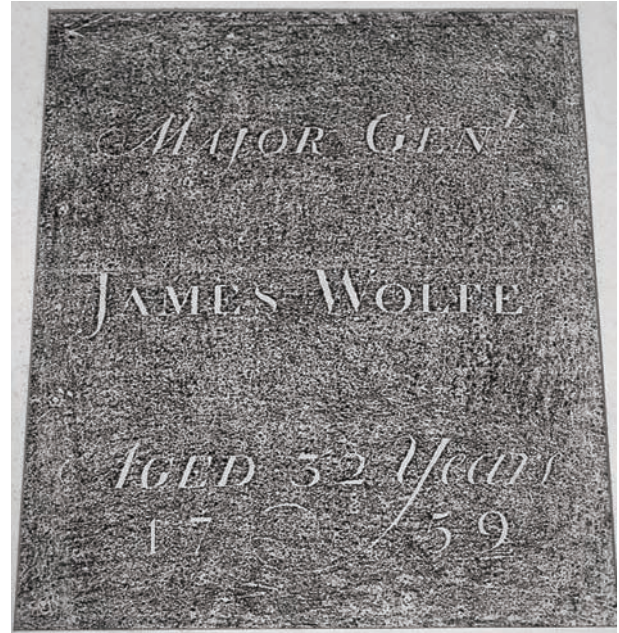


Fig.1. Rubbing of coffin plate for Major-General James Wolfe, 1759, aged 32.  
(photo: © author)

and defeated the defending French army under the Marquis de Montcalm, thus opening Canada to British domination.



Fig.2. Rubbing of coffin plate for Lieutenant-General Edward Wolfe, 1759, aged 74.  
(photo: © author)



Fig.3. Rubbing of coffin plate for Henrietta Wolfe, 1764, aged 60.  
(photo: © author)

Both generals were killed in the battle, and Wolfe's body was brought home in H.M.S. *Royal William*, arriving at Portsmouth on 17th November, whence it was taken to Greenwich for burial three days later in the family vault in the parish church of St. Alfege, with only five mourners present. Why Greenwich? The family had moved there from Westerham in 1738, when young James was eleven. His father was also in the army and, with war brewing, it was closer to sources of military patronage in Whitehall, added to which the Rev. Samuel Swinden had recently started a school for the sons of the army and naval officers who lived there. James attended it and, in his turn, Mr. Swinden attended his pupil's funeral twenty-one years later.



Fig 4. Portrait of Major-General James Wolfe.  
(photo: © Bonhams)

Wolfe's father, Lieutenant-General Edward Wolfe had died in March 1759, so it was only eight months later that the family vault was opened again for his interment: his mother died five years later, and her body was placed in the vault with theirs.

All remained quiet for a century until in 1859, following a series of Burial Acts, the main thrust of which was to prohibit burials within buildings, it was decided to fill in the Wolfe family vault with 'earth and powdered charcoal', even if the filling in of old vaults did not seem to be required by the Acts.

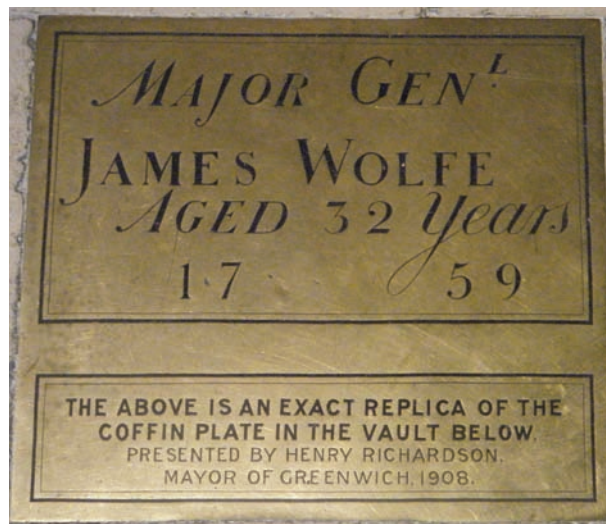


Fig 5. Replica coffin plate for  
Major-General James Wolfe, 1759, aged 32.  
(photo: © author)

Fortunately for posterity the churchwardens of the day possessed enough sense of history to have the Wolfe coffin plates rubbed before they were finally buried for ever. Indeed, one of them, Henry S. Richardson, actually made the rubbings himself. Below them in Quebec House is hung a framed account of the 1859 activities, including a piece of black cloth and a page of the *Quebec Mercury* newspaper dated 21st November 1839 found on James's coffin. One assumes that the rubbings and the framed account remained in the possession of the churchwardens of St. Alfege until they were presented to Quebec House by a John Daw, of Sidcup, in 1930.

A so-called 'exact' replica dated 1908 is set in the floor in the north-west corner of the nave (Fig.5). It is exact only in the sense that the style of each individual line is copied, although the alignment is poor, and the shape of the plate different. So, unusually, when the *County Series* volume for Kent is published, the existence of the rubbings can be noted as well as the probable existence, though they cannot be seen, of the coffin plates at Greenwich, which conveniently still lies in Kent for publication purposes.

I would like to acknowledge the help of Kirsty Haslam, the National Trust's Duty House and Garden Manager at Quebec House, in the compilation of this article.

**Mike Harris**

## The brass rubbing exploits of T.E. Lawrence

T.E. Lawrence (Lawrence of Arabia) is one of the 20th century's greatest enigmas, known variously as an archaeologist, scholar, intelligence officer, guerrilla leader, major player in the fight for Arab nationalism, writer, soldier and aircraftman, the junior rank in the R.A.F. Numerous books, articles and films have appeared about his life, with many of his biographers mentioning his interest in brasses. One such by H.T. Kirby in the July 1938 issue of *Apollo* magazine<sup>1</sup> concentrated more on the brasses that accompany the article than on T.E.'s involvement with the rubbing of them. More recently, Jerome Bertram contributed a paper at the bi-annual symposium of the T.E. Lawrence Society held at Oxford in 1996.<sup>2</sup> Since that date more evidence has been forthcoming about Lawrence's participation in his hobby, including the single-mindedness he went to on occasions to obtain an impression.

Thomas Edward Lawrence, or 'Ned' as he was known to his family, was born at Tremadoc in Caernarvonshire, Wales, in August 1888, the second of four sons to Sarah Lawrence and Thomas Robert Tighe Chapman (who later took her surname, although they never married). The family lived in Scotland, the Isle of Man, Jersey, Dinard in Brittany, and Fawsley Hampshire, before finally settling at No.2 Polstead Road, Oxford, in 1896. T.E. went to Oxford High School for Boys, a private day-school with high academic standards. Many of its brighter pupils went on to university, as Lawrence did. In 1910 he gained a First Class honours degree in Modern History with his thesis *The Influence of the Crusades on European Military Architecture – to the end of the XIIIth Century*.

Oxford at the turn of the 19th century was a quiet place, with hansom cabs, coaches-and-four, college barges, private fire brigades, milkmen with handcarts, but above all, bicycles. T.E.'s father was a great cyclist, and, this was their method of transport for their brass rubbing tour of East Anglia in 1905.

It was while he was at school that T.E. developed a passion for the Middle Ages. He read voraciously on all manner of subjects connected with the

medieval period, heraldry, architecture, armour and costume, historical romances, etc. The obvious extension to this interest was brass rubbing which, according to his mother, he took up at the age of nine and a half in 1897. The first brass he rubbed was in the church at Witney, Oxfordshire,<sup>3</sup> to Richard Wenman and two wives, 1500 (M.S.I).

A number of school friends and acquaintances often accompanied T.E. on expeditions in search of brasses. T.W. Chaundy,<sup>4</sup> recalls one such expedition, to Waterperry, Oxfordshire, where one of the brasses was inaccessible due to it being behind some pews. Lawrence merely broke the surrounding woodwork away in order to make the rubbing.<sup>5</sup>

C.F.C. (Scroggs) Beeson supplies information concerning Lawrence's brazen activities, writing, 'At the age of fifteen he had acquired a fine series of rubbings from churches in the eastern and southern counties. Cut out and pasted on the walls of his bedroom were life-size figures of knights and priests with Sir John d'Abernon and Roger de Trumpington, a Crusader, in pride of place. Under his tuition my first brass was rubbed at Wytham in October 1904 . . . from that date . . . we made excursions by cycle to nearly every village in the three counties and to many places farther afield. It was no collector's hobby. There were experiments in the technique of rubbing with different grades of heelball and paper, assisted by friendly advice from shoemakers and paperhangers whose shops supplied our raw materials'.<sup>6</sup>

Beeson infers<sup>7</sup> that by 1905 most of the accessible examples near to Oxford had been rubbed, but this was not the case. Lawrence came up to Jesus College in 1907, with a fellow student W.O. Ault, who later had a successful career as an historian in Boston, U.S.A.<sup>8</sup> They went cycling through the countryside to visit churches in search of brasses, without much luck. He recounts how on occasions a screwdriver would form part of the equipment. Ault would stand guard at the church gate, while inside the church, Lawrence would remove any brass that was fixed to the wall to see if it was palimpsest, that is it had been reused and had earlier

engraving on the reverse. Charles Ffoulkes, Curator of the Tower Armouries, met Lawrence at Oxford in 1910, and mentions that on one occasion the heelball was inadvertently left behind in college. A discussion ensued as to whether it would be possible to remove the brass, take it home, rub it, and then return it to the church. Thankfully the brass appears to have been left in the church.<sup>9</sup>

In the summer of 1905 T.E. embarked on a cycling tour of East Anglia with his father (the weepers from the Hastyngs brass at Elsing were rubbed on this tour). In a letter to his mother, written from the Fleece Hotel, Colchester, he writes that he had to overlook the brasses at Acton, Suffolk because of the weather, but he had high hopes of visiting Pebmarsh in Essex. He also visited Wivenhoe on this tour and rubbed the brasses.

Little is known of the whereabouts of his collection of rubbings. Three examples<sup>10</sup> were accepted by the Ashmolean Museum as they were considered better than those already in the collection. One showing two figures from niches in the canopy from the brass to Sir Hugh Hastyngs, 1347, Elsing, Norfolk (M.S.I.), is on display at Clouds Hill, Lawrence's Dorset home. A number were cut out and stuck to the wall of his bedroom at Polstead Road – which included the effigy of Sir John d'Abernon II at Stoke d'Abernon, Surrey (M.S.I.), and Sir Roger de Trumpington II, at Trumpington, Cambridgeshire (LSW.I), now re-dated to c.1327 and c.1326 respectively. His younger brother Arnold later recalled sleeping in the room that had been 'papered with his black rubbings of knights . . .'<sup>11</sup>

Lawrence was not a member of the Monumental Brass Society or the Oxford Historical Society, although he did attend meetings of the Oxford Archaeological Society with Beeson. The two were frequent visitors to the Ashmolean Museum where they soon acquainted themselves with the Assistant Keeper of the Department of Western Antiquities, E.T. Leeds. It was not long before Lawrence's knowledge of brasses was put to good use, when he was allowed to re-label part of their collection of rubbings.<sup>12</sup>

It is not known who showed T.E. how to rub. It may have been Rev. H.T. Inman, a friend of Lawrence's

father, and author of *New Oxford*, a popular handbook to over one hundred places of interest (mainly churches) within a radius of about fifteen miles of the City of Oxford. Brasses and monuments are frequently mentioned in the text, and that to Anthony Forster, 1572, at Cumnor, Berkshire (LSW.I) is illustrated. A short note about brasses in general is added as an appendix. H.W. Macklin's *Monumental Brasses*, first published in 1890, had by 1905 reached its 5th edition. Macklin (p.47) outlines improvements that can be made to rubbings by cutting them out and mounting them, something T.E. often did. His rubbings are well executed, and show an even blackness over the paper. Subsidiary parts, such as canopies, shields, etc. are in the main omitted. Macklin also produced county lists, and these would have helped T.E. find many brasses near to Oxford.

Lawrence went on other cycling tours. In the summer of 1906 he visited northern France and in his letters home he describes, in some detail, many of the monuments he saw in the churches. At St. Lunaire at Dinard he notes the stone monuments, often comparing them with the brass rubbings he had hanging in his bedroom.<sup>13</sup> In the church at Lehon he mentions in great detail the effigy of Tiphaine du Guesclin, 1417. This was shown in armour which Lawrence names using the terminology of the day, and the accompanying shields in heraldic terms. He also lists a number of other effigies in the church.<sup>14</sup> One of the two 'granite' effigies in the Priory at Montfort, near Dinard, was similar to the brass of Sir William de Setvans, engraved c.1323, at Chartham, Kent (M.S.I). He could not describe the other one in detail, 'owing to the location of a wasp's nest beneath it'.<sup>15</sup> No further monuments were mentioned in his letters home later that year. In 1907 his cycling tour took him to France again where he spent his time exploring castles for his thesis. Churches and monuments seem to have passed out of his life.

Following his involvement with the Arab Revolt during World War I, and with the Peace Conference at Versailles, Lawrence never returned to the study of archaeology in any form, although at the time of his death his library contained several books of medieval



romances. Ronald Storrs<sup>16</sup> relates that, by the end of 1934, both Eric Kennington and Lawrence had decided to produce an illustrated volume of examples of effigies and brasses. Kennington started to collect one hundred photographs of the best examples, to which Lawrence was to contribute the text. If this project had come to fruition, given Lawrence's interest in printing and book production, one wonders just how lavish a publication this would have been.

With Lawrence's death in 1935, Kennington put the idea aside, and diverted his attention to producing a recumbent effigy of Lawrence. This showed him lying full length, in Arab dress wearing an *aba*, while on his head was a flowing *kuffiya*, secured by a knotted *agal*. His right hand clasps a Meccan dagger or *hangar*. His sandalled feet rest on a piece of Hittite sculpture that represents his archaeological digs at Carchemish before World War I. His head rests against a camel saddle, or *maklufa*, and three untitled books which traditionally represent *The Oxford Book of English Verse*, Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, and *The Greek Anthology*, which were his constant companions during the desert campaign. It was placed in the church of St. Martin, Wareham, Dorset. What better monument could there be for a man so versed

in medievalism, than a memorial in the style of the 14th century.<sup>17</sup>

### Philip Whitemore

- 1 pp.18-19.
- 2 See Jerome Bertram, 'Brass Rubbing' in *The Journal of the T.E. Lawrence Society*, VI, no.2 (Spring 1997), pp.6-12.
- 3 T.E. Lawrence, *Crusader Castles* (New York, 1937), preface.
- 4 A.W. Lawrence (ed.), *T.E. Lawrence by his Friends* (hereafter *Friends*) (London, 1937), p.41.
- 5 Probably Waterperry (M.S.III). See Mill Stephenson, *A List of Monumental Brasses in the British Isles* (London, 1926), p.424. See also H[erbert] H[aines], *A Manual for the Study of Monumental Brasses, with a Descriptive Catalogue . . .* (Oxford, 1848), p.74. Illustrated in *M.B.S. Trans.*, XVI, pt.5 (2002), fig.1, p.476.
- 6 *Friends*, pp.52-3.
- 7 *Ibid.*
- 8 J.E. Mack, *A Prince of our Disorder* (London, 1976), p.61.
- 9 *Friends*, p.65.
- 10 Two illustrations are reproduced in *Apollo* (July 1938), pp.18-19. They are the brasses rubbed in 1905 at Wisbech, Cambridgeshire (LSW.I) and Wivenhoe, Essex (LSW.I). Other examples of his rubbings that survive are Wotton-under-Edge, Gloucestershire (LSW.I) and Ewelme, Oxfordshire (M.S.XII).
- 11 *Friends*, p.585. Arnold also remembered being taken on brass rubbing trips by T.E. He was placed in a carrier behind the bicycle.
- 12 *Friends*, p.49.
- 13 T.E. Lawrence, *The Home Letters of T.E. Lawrence and his Brothers* (Oxford, 1954), p.6.
- 14 *Op. cit.*, p.11.
- 15 *Op. cit.*, p.25.
- 16 See E. Kennington, *Drawing the R.A.F.* (London, 1942), p.26.
- 17 See Richard Knowles, 'Tale of an Arabian Knight: The T.E. Lawrence Effigy', in *Church Monuments*, VI (1991), pp.67-76; also Richard Knowles, 'Tale of an Arabian Knight: The T.E. Lawrence Effigy', in *The Journal of the T.E. Lawrence Society*, II, no.1 (Summer 1992), pp.69-83. The latter article includes a number of additional illustrations that did not appear in *Church Monuments*. See also Jonathan Black, 'A Tale of Two Effigies: Eric Kennington and T.E. Lawrence', in *The Journal of the T.E. Lawrence Society*, no.2 (Spring 2003), pp.65-98.



Recumbent effigy of Colonel T.E. Lawrence, C.B., D.S.O. (1888-1935) at Wareham, St. Martin, Dorset.  
(photo: © Alamy)

## Where is it now?

I came across the attached advertisement in a copy of the *Clergy List* for 1915. It was part of a two-page advertisement for William Morris & Co. of 60-66 Rochester Row, Westminster, London. The photograph is of 'A repoussé tablet in antique brass' and commemorates ten men lost on 28th August 1914, when H.M.S. *Arethusa* was attacked and badly damaged during the Battle of Heligoland Bight.

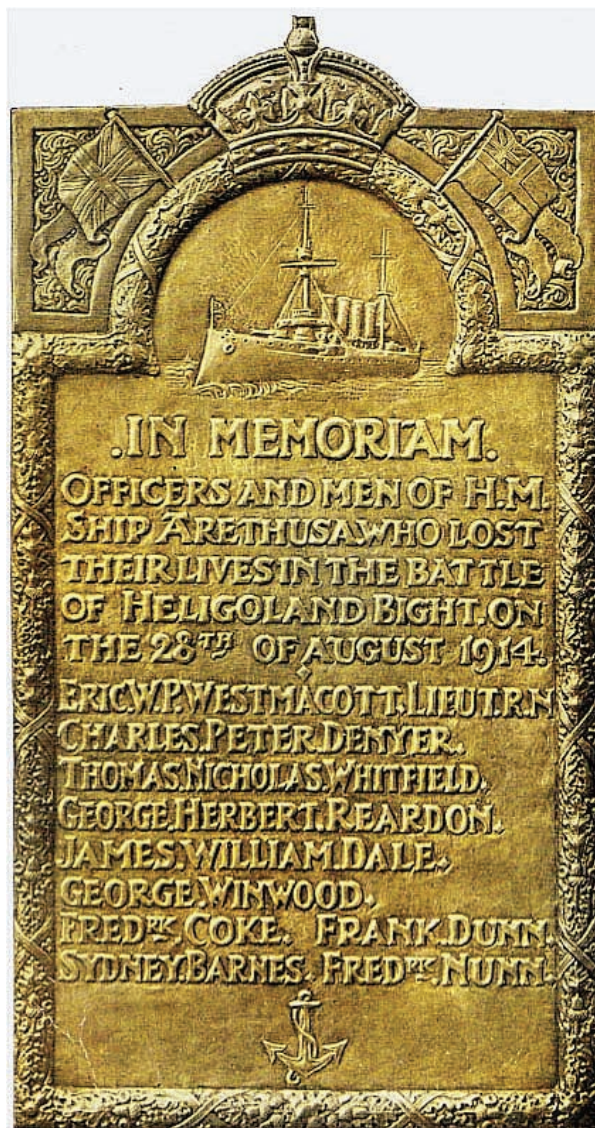
Details of the battle can readily be found on World War I websites and in published works, so I will not repeat it here. Suffice to say the *Arethusa* was a brand-new light cruiser based at Harwich, and was under the command of Commodore Reginald Tyrwhitt. After being hit, the ship had to leave the battle and was towed back to port. Subsequently she hit a German mine on 11th February 1916, just off the Suffolk coast, and ran aground on Cutler Shoal after attempts to retrieve her failed, and was abandoned.

The brass shows the *Arethusa* above the names of those lost, and is decorated with naval ensigns and the traditional foul anchor. Whilst the tablet names ten men, an eleventh man died later of his wounds, so is omitted, suggesting the memorial was commissioned very soon after the event. Lt. Eric Walter Poyntz Westmacott, R.N. (1887-1914) who is named first, has a memorial brass at St. Andrew, Heybridge, Essex (LSW.V) where he was buried.

Having trawled through much of the Imperial War Museum's on-line collection of photographs of war memorials, I cannot find one of this brass.

Possibly it has not survived? Has any member come across it by any chance?

Richard Busby



## Notes on books, articles and the internet

**Reinhard Lamp.** *'The Brass to John Rudyng in Biggleswade, or How a Mutilated Monument Rebirthes in its former splendour'* Pegasus-Onlinezeitschrift, XVIII (2019), pp.82-110; 15 illus./photos; refs.

The first part of this complex paper takes much of its information from the combined publications of Ralph Griffin (1939); F.W. Kuhlicke (1955);

Nigel Saul (2008) and Neil Cartledge (2015), all except that by Prof. Saul (in *Bulletin* 108) to be found in *M.B.S. Trans.*

The text is well supported throughout by a mixture of rubbings (by the author) and excellent photographs by Kevin Herring. They highlight surviving parts and details of this unique brass, with its lengthy verses and the armed skeleton

symbolising Death. What was on the large missing plate above the main composition still remains largely unanswered, though the author has one theory (see p.91).

The paper principally examines, translates and analyses in detail the long inscription under the main figure in true philological fashion. The text is basically a poem of sixteen Latin hexameters of script in *textura*, with lines being alternatively ‘engraved and cut in relief’. The same form is also used in the border inscription and prayer scroll (both partly missing). Each part of the scroll, border inscription and foot inscription is transcribed direct from the original (and printed in Gothic text), followed by a ‘plain text’ version and then a translation into English. The large inscription makes many references to Death and his weapons, e.g. ‘I carry terrible spears’ [line 9], and to Death’s inevitable victory, ‘Death finishes off everything’ [line 16], reinforced on the brass in the form of a skeleton. Lamp has high praise for the originator of the verses and suggests Rudyng may well have had some part in the overall design of these and of the brass itself. He is saddened by the many losses the memorial has sustained over the years. Whilst this short note cannot do justice to such a detailed and original article, it must rank as a major contribution to the literature of this brass.



*Left to right: Michael Ruprecht (University archivist), Reinhard Lamp and Kevin Herring examining some of the donated rubbings. (photo: © Campus-Halensis)*

Reinhard Lamp’s large collection of over 600 rubbings, mainly of British and German brasses and incised slabs, together with approximately 200 rubbings produced by Kevin Herring, were handed over to the Martin-Luther-University, Halle-Wittenberg on 26th June 2018.

**M.J. Leppard & C. Whittick.** *‘The Nelond family, Lewes Priory and East Grinstead’* Sussex Archaeological Collections, 156 (2018), pp.137-45; 5 illus. (2 in colour) incl. map & roof plans; refs.

To brass enthusiasts, the name Nelond is exclusively associated with Thomas Nelond, Prior of Lewes 1414-32 (d.1433) and his fine brass at Cowfold, Sussex (M.S.I). A colour photograph of the upper part of Thomas’ figure is on p.138. Whilst the brass is not the main focus of the study, it is briefly described on pp.143-4. The main part of the paper concerns the buildings at Neyland Farm, East Grinstead, which in the last decade of the 13th century was owned by Geoffrey atte Nelonde. It then passed down the Nelond family to William and his wife Joan, and then to John Nelond (d.1437), probably their elder son and a lawyer, who was to become very wealthy. John was also most likely to have been Prior Thomas Nelond’s elder brother, and John’s will is analysed in detail. His bequests included monetary ones to the brothers of Lewes Priory, to which he had also acted in a legal capacity for some years; he also wished to be buried next to his brother Thomas. Prior Thomas had in turn initiated a building programme on the priory’s ‘decaying manors’ and almost certainly included two big projects in his native church (p.141).

Interestingly, the authors suggest that it was John Nelond who commissioned and paid for Thomas’s brass (p.143). What still remains unexplained is how, why and when the brass was moved to Cowfold (although the authors offer one possible explanation, p.144), despite there being no obvious connection, family or otherwise, with that village.

A paper that also has some connection to Lewes Priory is a recent entry in the Oxford D.N.B. on **Robert Peterson (c.1495-1555), name in religion Crowham**, by Christopher Whittick [published online 17th September 2015]. Shortly before the formal dissolution of the priory in 1537-8, in which Crowham was a ‘willing participant’ (he had been appointed Prior of Lewes in 1525), he and the priory’s patron, the Duke of Norfolk, agreed to salvage ‘from the chapter house the funerary monument attributed to Richard Fitzalan (II), 3rd Earl of Arundel and

his wife Eleanor'. The monument is now in Chichester Cathedral. This act could also have set a precedent for the removal of other monuments from the dissolved priory, yet still begs the question about the removal to Cowfold of Thomas Nelond's brass.

**Kirsten Harvey & Andrew Watkins.** *John Fenton: a sixteenth century vicar of Coleshill.* *Midland History*, 44:1 (2019), pp.3-20; 1 b/w photo. of his brass (p.9); refs; appendix [with copy of John's will and inventory of goods (pp.16-20)].

Examines in detail the life and career of John Fenton, LL.B, vicar of Coleshill, Warwickshire 1538-66 (d.1566). His unusual brass on the chancel floor (M.S.III) shows him in a Geneva gown, holding a Bible under his left arm inscribed 'Verbu[m] dei' on the cover, signifying his learning and adherence to the word of God. The figure's most unusual feature is that his right hand has six fingers, the long index finger pointing to



*John Fenton, LL.B. vicar, official of Coventry, 1566, Coleshill, Warwickshire (M.S.III).  
(photo: © Rex Derby)*

the Bible. The brass, say the authors, 'is indicative of his awareness of his religious and social status' and was probably commissioned (from a London rather than local workshop), and engraved and paid for in his lifetime (p.4).

Born in Duffield, Derbyshire in 1490 into a 'peasant family', John's elder brother William became a prosperous farmer. When William died in 1559, his estate passed to his daughter Margaret, then aged only 15, and described in the words of the time as 'an idiot' since birth. Her guardianship then passed to her uncle John Fenton and she moved to Coleshill, where he had been vicar since November 1538, although he had no licence to preach. Unusually for his class, Fenton had university education, attaining a degree of Bachelor of Law, a subject on which he also acquired many books in Latin and English.

As a person, Fenton was not always easy to deal with. His reputedly stubborn and confrontational character often brought him into dispute with local churchwardens and parishioners, but also with the church authorities. His repeated absences from the parish caused his parishioners and others much annoyance, yet beyond that he was well connected both socially and professionally. He also managed to run a local farm producing crops and livestock, and in addition, as his brass states, became an official of Coventry, a duty he allegedly carried out with great diligence and sometimes legal force. Unusually for his time, he was 'as distinct from his contemporaries as he was like them'. His brass deserves more attention, say the authors, not just because he is shown with an extra finger!

**John S. Lee and Christian Steer (eds.),** *Commemoration in Medieval Cambridge*, published following the Society's Conference at Cambridge in 2013 (see *Bulletin* 139 (October 2018, p.780) has recently won an award from the Cambridgeshire Association for Local History (C.A.L.H.) having 'made a substantial contribution to the history of the city and county'.

I am very grateful to Sally Badham, John S. Lee, Nigel Saul, Christian Steer and Martin Stuchfield for information or copy received.

**Richard Busby**