

A LOST CHALFONT ST. PETER MEMORIAL BRASS

JOHN E. G. BENNELL

DESPITE the fact that its fabric is entirely of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Parish Church of Chalfont St. Peter possesses some remains and fittings from its earlier building. Amongst these are seven memorial brasses which are now fixed to the north wall of the chancel, whilst the matrices of several of them are preserved elsewhere in the church. It is certain that some of these brasses once had associated monuments which have since disappeared. For instance, the surviving brass to George Brudenell (died 1522), sometime rector of Drayton Beauchamp and of Quainton, was once part of a monument which was referred to in terms of a "Stone inlaid with brass, with particulars of Gentleman in Bachelor of Laws robes".¹ Another example, since lost to us, consisted of a brass with the effigy of a priest "in surplice with scarf and rosette, c. 1510", which is known to have been at one time in the Chantry House, Newark²: if the dating allows any latitude, this may have been the one made to commemorate Robert Wakefield, a chantry-priest of Chalfont St. Peter, who died in 1470.³

One of the most interesting of the items now lost to us was a brass of which a representation is preserved amongst the collections of the Society of Antiquaries. This record is in the form of a "squeeze" (not a brass-rubbing) produced as a direct impression by the use of printer's ink, which renders the picture in reverse. A copy of this is reproduced herewith (Plate 1). The memorial shows a bearded figure in furred gown, ruff, doublet and breeches, with laced shoes tied with a bow, standing on a plinth, with shield of arms below. In view of the reversal, this reproduction will be described in terms of "left" and "right" rather than the customary "dexter" and "sinister".

The arms on the right (i.e., dexter side on the original brass) present no problem. These are the "Argent a chief vert charged with a tau cross between two pierced molets or" attributed to the Drury family,⁴ which provided the lords of the manor of Chalfont St. Peter from 1540 to 1626, as under:

Sir Robert	..	..	..	..	..	(d. 1577) ⁵
Robert	..	..	..	..	..	(d. 1592) ⁶
Sir Henry	..	..	..			(b. 1545; d. 1617) ⁷
William	..	..	..			(b. 1597 ⁸ ; d. ?)

Both Robert and Sir Henry are represented by memorials in the Church here: the former by a brass, inscription only (reproduced as Plate 2), the latter by a ledger stone in the south chapel.

As indicated above, the brass in question has disappeared without trace. Moreover, very little information has been found in connection with it. A published history of the Drurys⁹ makes no mention of either the brass or any reproduction of it; again, the British Museum has several collections of brass-rubbings,¹⁰ but no record of this is included, although, surprisingly enough, a drawing of the effigy and a copy of the “squeeze” of the arms are included in a volume in the Museum’s Map Room.¹¹

One authority supposes Robert Drury to be depicted, but without indicating which of the name is meant,¹² but, in the absence of other information, the impalement in the arms is obviously the best means for identifying the particular Drury in question. Unfortunately, the arms of the wife on the left (sinister on the original brass) have yet to be identified. It is known that Robert and Sir Henry married Ann Boorman and Susan Stewkley,¹³ respectively, but neither the Boorman nor the Stewkley arms (as shown in the Harleian Society’s volumes of heraldic visitations, or any of the other standard works) resemble the device we seek. The writer considers that these (Between three blackamoors’ heads, a chevron charged with three estoiles) may have been arms used by the Brudenell family, but this remains to be proved. Since the Brudenells were of high standing in Buckinghamshire, memorials to them survive in the churches of Amersham and Stoke Mandeville¹⁴ (in addition to the one of George Brudenell in Chalfont St. Peter Church to which reference has already been made).

The usual arms of the (local) Brudenells would seem to have been “Argent a chevron gules between three hats azure turned up with ermine”,¹⁵ and this is confirmed by the “chevron between three hats of estate” displayed on a former Brudenell property, namely, Wellwick Farm, near Wendover.¹⁶ The grounds for supposing that the “squeeze” in question relates to the marriage of a Drury and a Brudenell may be stated as follows:

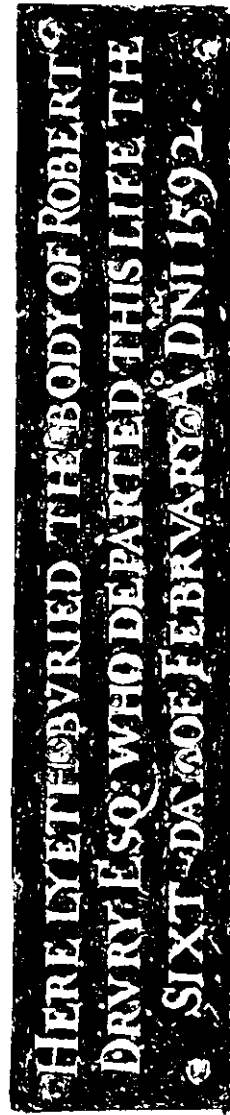
- (1) The main device of the Brudenells was almost always a chevron between three “somethings”.
- (2) It would be quite feasible to confuse “black moryns” (sc. black(a)moors) with “black morions”, especially in less cautious days, and we know that some of the Buckinghamshire Brudenells sported black morions, in place of the other charges mentioned.¹⁷
- (3) A manuscript in the British Museum shows five shields with Brudenell impaling others (including two different coats for Bulstrode), but not the one we seek. However, it does give the inscription which would have accompanied such a shield:

“On a tombe.

*Here lieth the bodye of Sr Robert Drewrye knight and Elizabeth his wife which Elizabeth deceased the 29 daye of December in the yeare of our Lord 1542 and the said Robert deceased the 21 daye of Maye in the yeare of our Lord 1577.”*¹⁸

The costume on our brass would accord reasonably well with such a date (1577), though it might be a little later.

It would be pleasant to think that the armigerous gentleman of our attention was indeed that “venerable man Robert Drury knight lord of the manor and



(b)

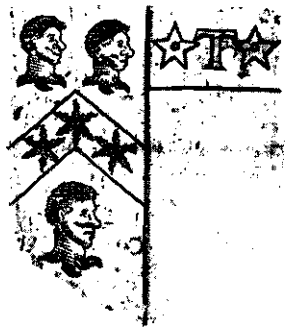


PLATE IV (a)

(a) The lost brass, formerly in Chalfont St. Peter Church (from a squeeze in the possession of the Society of Antiquaries of London). (b) Rubbing of a memorial brass inscribed to Robert Drury (d. 1592) in Chalfont St. Peter Church.

patron of this church",¹⁹ who purchased the manors of Chalfont St. Peter, Hedgerley and Temple Bulstrode, after having acquired the Brudenells manor by marrying its heiress.²⁰ Although the Drurys cannot be said to have established themselves in Buckinghamshire as strongly as they did in Norfolk and Suffolk, their period of residence within our county might well repay further study. Of more than local interest is the fact that "Drury lane (is) so called for that there is a house belonging to the family of the Druries".²¹ That this was our family there can be no doubt, since the inquisition post mortem of Sir Henry refers to "the Drury house and other houses in Drury lane in the parish of St. Clement Danes",²² and we may hope that, in time, the necessary evidence may be forthcoming to verify the identification of our lost brass as given above.

LIST OF SOURCES

(N.B. References to "VCH" denote the *Victoria County History of Buckinghamshire*.)

- ¹ Gough MS. Bucks. 5 (Bodleian Library).
- ² Mill Stephenson: *List of Monumental Brasses* . . . (1926), 588.
- ³ Harleian MS. 6072, f.8 (B.M.).
- ⁴ A. Campling: *History of the Family of Drury* . . . (1937), *passim*; Fox-Davies: *Armorial Families* (1929), 570.
- ⁵ Will P.C.C. 26 Daughtry (Somerset House).
- ⁶ Memorial brass, Chalfont St. Peter Church.
- ⁷ Chalfont St. Peter parish registers; Chanc. I.p.m. (Ser. 2), ccclxxvi, 97 (P.R.O.).
- ⁸ Campling, *op. cit.*, 73.
- ⁹ Campling, *op. cit.*
- ¹⁰ E.g., Add. MSS. 32, 478 and 32, 490.
- ¹¹ King's Topl. Colln., viii, 27a, c.
- ¹² VCH iii, 197.
- ¹³ Campling, *op. cit.*, 102.
- ¹⁴ VCH iii, 153; ii, 364.
- ¹⁵ VCH iii, 279. See also, *int. al.*, Add. MS. 32, 490, f.EE36 (B.M.); *Burke's General Armory* (1884), 137.
- ¹⁶ VCH iii, 21.
- ¹⁷ *Visitation of the Co. of Buckingham made in 1634* . . . (Harl. Soc., 1909), 17, 153.
- ¹⁸ Harleian MS. 6072, f.8 (B.M.).
- ¹⁹ Entry of burial (Englished), Chalfont St. Peter parish registers.
- ²⁰ VCH iii, *passim*.
- ²¹ Stow: *Survey of London* (Everyman ed.), 399.
- ²² Chanc. I.p.m., *ut supra*.