

Skillington Lack

Accredited Conservator - Restorers of Monumental Brasses

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MONUMENTAL BRASSES IN ST. AGATHA'S, BRIGHTWELL-CUM-SOTWELL, OXON

Referring to them by their 'LSW numbers' (those used by William Lack, H. Martin Stuchfield and Phillip Whittemore in *The Monumental Brasses of Berkshire*, published in 1993, the three brasses are:

LSW.I. John Scolffyld, 1507.

LSW.II. Robert Court, 1509, and wife Jane.

LSW.III. Richard Hampden and wife, 1512.

1. Condition

H. Martin Stuchfield, Hon. Technical Advisor to the Monumental Brass Society, visited the church on 13 October 2015 and met Mr Roy Thorpe (Verger). He found that the brasses were poorly secured and bedded, and that two plates were already detached from their slabs and kept locked in the church safe. He described the condition of the brasses in his report of 25 January 2016 and recommended that they be removed from their slabs, cleaned, re-riveted, repaired as necessary and relaid in their slabs. We provided a quotation for this work on 23 March 2016. This was subsequently accepted and Simon Nadin and Richard Hammond removed the brasses on 4 January 2018.

2. Bibliography and history

The brasses were described and two of them illustrated by H.T. Morley in 1924 (*Monumental Brasses of Berkshire*, pp. 57-9) and they were noted and illustrated by Lack, Stuchfield and Whittemore (pp. 27-9). They were engraved by London workshops, LSW.I in the 'series G' style and LSW.II and III in the 'series F' style (see for example Malcolm Norris, *Monumental Brasses: The Memorials* (1977), chapter 12).

3. Description and measurements

LSW.I. John Scolffyld, 1507. This brass, comprising an effigy in mass vestments with chalice and wafer (466 x 138 mm, mean thickness 4.8 mm (varying from 4.5 to 5.0 mm)) and a three-line Latin inscription (75 x 273 mm, mean thickness 4.9 mm (varying from 4.6 to 5.5 mm)), was removed from the original Purbeck slab (1380 x 670 mm) in the south aisle (photo 1).

LSW.II. Robert Court, 1509, and wife Jane. This brass, comprising a civilian effigy (505 x 161 mm, mean thickness 3.7 mm (varying from 3.3 to 4.5 mm)), a female effigy (491 x 167 mm, mean thickness 3.9 mm

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(varying from 2.2 to 4.7 mm)) and a three-line English inscription (98 x 669 mm, mean thickness 4.5 mm (varying from 4.2 to 4.8 mm)), was removed from the original Unio-Purbeck marble slab (2050 x 930 mm) in the nave (photo 5). There is an indent for a lost son (195 x 75 mm). The male effigy had come loose previously and was kept in the church safe. Photo 5 shows the male effigy temporarily replaced in the slab.

LSW.III. Richard Hampden and wife Jane, 1512. This brass, comprising a civilian effigy (389 x 120 mm, mean thickness 4.0 mm (varying from 3.6 to 4.8 mm)), a female effigy (390 x 147 mm, mean thickness 3.7 mm (varying from 3.1 to 4.8 mm)) and a three-line English inscription (78 x 545 mm, mean thickness 4.4 mm (varying from 4.0 to 4.7 mm)), was taken up from the original Purbeck slab (1610 x 865 mm) at the west end of the nave (photo 8). The male effigy had come loose previously and was kept in the church safe. Photo 8 shows the male effigy temporarily replaced in the slab. The inscription proved to be palimpsest, the reverse showing eight almost complete Latin verses, probably wasted work (photo 9).

4. *Conservation*

The plates were cleaned by soaking in white spirit, after which dirt and corrosion were removed from the obverses with a glass fibre bristle brush. The reverses were cleaned by scraping and abrasion as necessary. The rivets described below were of two types. In most cases the original rivet-holes were tapped with the smallest possible thread (M7, M8 or M10) and then 40 mm lengths of brass studding with machined heads were run down into the holes until the heads were flush with the brass. A brass nut and washer were fitted, tightened and locked with polyester resin. The rivet-holes of the male effigy of LSW.III had been countersunk and 38 mm long brass rivets were machined with tapered-heads to fit the countersinks. Again these were secured with brass nuts and washers locked with resin. In all cases the rivet heads were patinated before fitting.

LSW.I. The brass is shown before conservation in photos 1 and 2. After cleaning new threaded studs were fitted, three M8 to the effigy and one M7 and two M8 to the inscription (photos 3 and 4).

LSW.II. The brass is shown before conservation in photo 5. After cleaning new threaded studs were fitted, one M7 and two M8 to the male effigy, two M7 and two M8 to the female effigy and three M7 to the inscription. A small hole in the lower part of the male effigy was blanked with a soldered backing-plate. The new rivets and repair can be seen in photos 6 and 7.

LSW.III. The brass is shown before conservation in photo 8. After cleaning a resin facsimile was made of the palimpsest revers. New rivets were fitted to the brass, three tapered-head to the male effigy, two M8 threaded to the female effigy and two M8 and two M10 threaded to the inscription (photos 10 and 11).

5. *Relaying*

The brasses were returned to the church and relaid in the slabs on 8 November 2018. 12 mm diameter holes were drilled 50 mm deep in the slab for the new rivets and undercut. After satisfactory dry-fits had been obtained, the reverses of the plates and the surfaces of the indents were coated with bituminous mastic, the holes filled with *General* resin from Stonetools and the plates relaid (photos 12, 13 and 14). It has been proposed that the resin facsimile of the palimpsest reverse be mounted on a cedar board together with a commemorative plate and that the board be securely mounted on the wall close to the brass. This work would be carried out at Mr Stuchfield's expense.

6. *Maintenance*

The brasses have been waxed with *Renaissance* micro-crystalline wax and this treatment should be repeated sparingly at regular intervals, ideally every three or four months. Any corrosion on the brass should be removed by vigorous rubbing with a white spirit-soaked rag followed by *Renaissance* wax after the white spirit has dried.

7. Acknowledgements

The conservation work was out by Simon Nadin, Richard Hammond and myself. We are very grateful to Martin Stuchfield for his considerable assistance with this project. The work has been assisted by generous grants from the Francis Coales Charitable Foundation and the Monumental Brass Society.

William Leal.

3 January 2019.





2



3



4



pray for the soules of Robert Count Guichart Audito to pryncesse
Artois and Jane his wyfe the whiche Robert decessed the xxvij day of
June the yere of o lord m^o cc^o lxxv on whose soules ihu have mercy amen



6



7



8



9



10



11





pray for the soules of Robert Comte d'Anjou d'Artois & de France
Seigneur and Jeanne his wyfe the whiche hadt decessed the xxij day of
June the year of o lord m c cc lxxvii Amen



man for the Colles of Anched bewp den and name his wyfe
the which name deceyd the xxv day of february the yere of our
lord m^o cccc xxv on Isles Colles the name caru A as s a