

THE LOST AND MUTILATED MEMORIALS OF THE BOVILE AND WINGFIELD FAMILIES AT LETHERINGHAM

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The sadly mutilated fragment of a former priory church which today serves the parish of Letheringham has been visited so regularly during the last four hundred years by collectors of church notes that the decay of the building and the monuments it housed has been unusually well documented. The many written accounts here collated help to trace the vicissitudes through which the building has passed; and make possible a detailed study of the fine series of brasses and monuments which before their destruction commemorated each of the Wingfields holding the lordship of the manor of Letheringham from Sir Thomas (died 1378) to Sir Anthony (died 1605). Each of the surviving indents in the church is illustrated and identified and several other pre-Reformation brasses now lost will be described as far as records permit. The relationship of successive holders of the lordship is shown in a tree at the end of the paper.

THE PRIORY CHURCH

The priory of Austin canons at Letheringham dedicated to the honour of the Blessed Virgin was founded by William de Bovile about 1194. It fell as one of the smaller religious houses after the visit of the Commissioners in August 1536, the site and possessions being granted to Sir Anthony Wingfield. The vault in the chancel of the priory church was the customary resting place of those Boviles, Wingfields (and later, Nauntons) who in succession were patrons of priory and church and held the lordship of the manor of Letheringham. Their monuments in stone, brass and glass, had they survived, would have formed a series almost unique in quality and completeness. The present parish church consists of the west tower and the rebuilt nave of the priory church, the chancel having been demolished at the rebuilding in 1789. How long the church has been in parochial use is not certain. It is thought that another church, the one mentioned in Domesday in 1086, served the parish until its demolition some time in the 17th century. No trace of this building has been found, but numerous skeletons were unearthed near the Mill and Old Hall in the last century.

From the time of the suppression of the priory to that of the rebuilding of the church neither lords of the manor nor parishioners prevented the gradual destruction of the monuments nor the decay

of the fabric of the church itself. This very decay seems to have added to the fascination of the place, for written accounts exist of visits by at least twenty distinguished antiquaries, heralds and men of letters, from William Harvey on his Visitation tour of the county in 1561 to P. C. Rushen whose privately published Letheringham collections appeared in 1901.

The earliest commentators and Dowsing's visit (1561-1690)

We have three accounts which predate Dowsing's visit on 27 February 1643¹ when his agent 'took of [f] three popish inscriptions of Brass and broke down 10 superstitious pictures.' They are those of William Harvey,² taken on his 1561 Visitation and summarised by Weever in his *Ancient Funerall Monuments*, 1631, Weever's own account in the same work,³ and notes by an early 17th century antiquary⁴ (referred to below as Anon.).

Harvey drew 43 coats 'yet remaining in the pishe church at Letheringham'. Unfortunately he did not specify which monuments or windows he copied them from, but it is possible, from the order in which he drew them, to deduce the probable original associations of many. Weever carelessly includes the Dennington Wingfields amongst those commemorated at Letheringham and remarks that the monuments were 'all foully defaced'. There is plenty else in Anon. to show that considerable damage had been done to the monuments even then. It is most interesting to compare these early notes with those taken c. 1660, thereby to deduce which inscriptions offended Dowsing and suffered in consequence.

William Blois,⁵ before 1660, John Borret⁶ in 1660, and Matthias Candler⁷ the following year described the monuments with varying

¹ R. Loder (ed.) and J. Nichols (publ.), *Journal of William Dowsing, 1643-4* (Woodbridge 1786), p. 10.

² W. Harvey, Certain Collections of Arms in Norfolk and Suffolk, B.M. Add. MS 4969, ff. 65v to 67v. See summary in J. Weever, *Ancient Funerall Monuments* (London 1631), p. 781. Soc. Antiq. MS 676 is Harvey's fair copy.

³ Weever, *op. cit.*, p. 755.

⁴ Anon. MS Church Notes on 47 parishes, c. 1600. Earliest known version in Vol. 9 (p. 300) of Suffolk Collns. in College of Arms from which a copy made in 1722 by Thomas Allen for P. Le Neve is in Hengrave MS 10 f. 91. The style of the notes identifies them as part of the lost MS Chorography of Suffolk, 1602. See C. M. Hood (ed.), *The Chorography of Norfolk* (Norwich 1938). In her introduction Mrs. Hood discusses both works and gives evidence for her conclusion that John Norden was their author.

⁵ W. Blois, Church Notes, pp. 116-7. In S.R.O., Ipswich.

⁶ J. Borret, Church Notes, pp. 26-36. MS Gough Suffolk 7 in Bodleian Library. Transcript in Crisp Collection, Ipswich Borough Library. Borret lived at Griston, Norfolk, and died in 1698.

⁷ M. Candler, Church Notes, pp. 226-7. B.M. Add. MS 15520.

degrees of accuracy without general comment on their condition or that of the church. It is worth noticing that Borret gave 10 pages to Letheringham and only 60 to the other 40 places he visited.

Nathaniel Fairfax⁸ in a single sheet of MS first copies Candler (who did little more than transcribe Weever) and then follows what appears to be his own eye-witness account of 1690, worth quoting for what it adds to our very slender knowledge of the arrangement of the priory buildings.

'The Abbey [*sic*] stood close to y^e N. side of the Church, having a low door into it by y^e Steeple & 2 doors upstairs, into y^e Chancell. The Abbey is s^d to have bin burnt down [in about 1610 according to Hawes⁹] y^e middle of the roof of y^e Church bears y^e marks of it still, being burnt black. There are no ruins of y^e Abby left save only y^e foundation of a Seller, & a distant gatehouse of Brick-work, wth an heap of stone & Mortar & rubbish by y^e steeple. Y^e Surface of the ground plot now plowed up is full of stones & brickbatts. The Churchyard (like Rumborough) is onely on y^e S. side of y^e Ch : & W end of the Steeple. The Church is Small, y^e Chancell larger than y^e Church & has a fair larg E. Window, in it a great many Mon^{ts}. & Coats taken very imperfectly by Wee[ver].'

Eighteenth-century visitors during the worst period of neglect

Robert Hawes, steward of the Framlingham Estate, in his MS History of Loes Hundred⁹ was the most careful and detailed commentator of all and his drawing of the church (Plate XIV) shows it still to have been structurally sound in 1712.

Tom Martin paid two visits to the church. In 1723 he copied inscriptions¹⁰ and sketched some of the heraldry and brasses. Twenty-one years later¹¹ he was clearly appalled by the changes he saw:

'On Saturday the 23^d Feb : 1744 I was again to view the Old Priory church there, now in the utmost decay, being shorn up and supported both withinside & without, and in dayly Expectation of Falling. Oh! that I had but Leisure & art Sufficient to Draw the Tombs and Monuments contained

⁸ N. Fairfax, Note on f. 93 of Hengrave MS 10. For Fairfax see L. Dow, *Proc. Suff. Inst. Arch.*, xxv (1952), p. 288. His Church Notes were cut up into separate parishes while *penes* P. Le Neve and many are now in the Hengrave MSS.

⁹ R. Hawes, History of Loes Hundred, pp. 507-521. B.M. Add. MS 33247. His original sketches for the illustrations are scattered in B.M. Add. MS 8987.

¹⁰ T. Martin, Church Notes, ff. 1-16 on f. 96 of Hengrave MS 10.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, ff 17-18.

in this Fabrick. I have neither seen, nor Read of any place (except Westminster Abbey) so fully adorn'd with such Noble Remains of Antiquity, as are to be met with here. And to Relate the Condition of these Perishing Curiosities to our Society and Implore their aid to send down some person to take draughts &c before it is too late!'

In August 1755 Horace Walpole¹² made a peregrination into Suffolk in search of the curious. He went to Letheringham to see the 'house built by Secretary Naunton' (called Letheringham Abbey) and the church:

'While we waited for leave to see the house, I strolled into the churchyard, and was struck with a little door open into the chancel, through the arch of which I discovered cross-legged knights and painted tombs! In short there were no less than eight considerable monuments, very perfect, of Wingfields, Nauntons, and a Sir John Boynet¹³ and his wife, as old as Richard the Second's time . . . The Church, which is scarce bigger than a large chapel, is very ruinous, though containing such treasures! Besides these, there are brasses on the pavement, with a succession of all the wonderful head-dresses which our *plain virtuous* grandmothers invented to tempt our rude and simple ancestors – I don't know what our nobles might be, but I am sure the milliners three or four hundred years ago must have been more accomplished in the arts of crising, curling, frizzling, and frouncing, than all the tirewomen of Babylon, modern Paris, or modern Pall-Mall. Dame Winifred Boynet, whom I mentioned above, is accoutred with the coiffure called piked horns, which, if there were any signs in Lothbury and Eastcheap, must have brushed them about strangely, as their ladyships rode behind their gentlemen ushers!'

It must have been during the decade after Walpole's visit that the watercolour¹⁴ (Plate XV) was painted showing the interior of the church looking west. It is neither titled nor signed, but as it shows the nave open to the sky, the walls standing to their full height, and the monuments in reasonably good order, it must have been painted c. 1765. Oddly, no roof props are visible.

¹² P. Cunningham (ed.), *Letters of Horace Walpole* (Edinburgh 1906), II, p. 463. Walpole was writing to Richard Bentley.

¹³ Walpole took the south canopied tomb for the monument of the founder, called John Boynet by Speed, Weever and Kirby.

¹⁴ B.M. Add. MS 8987, f. 88. Collected by Craven Ord for his Suffolk Illustrations.

Two visitors came in 1768. William Latham made heraldic notes¹⁵ in the January of that year. In September the Revd. Sir John Cullum, Bt.¹⁶ found 'some of the inscriptions are partly obscured by props that support the roof of the chancel.' The inscriptions only partly recorded in his notes are those of the brasses of Indents V (nave) and VI (chancel). A later visitor remarked that the props themselves were rotting. Cullum tried (with very limited success) to put the monuments in chronological order. A careful comparison of the notes of Blois and Borret (1660) with those of Latham and Cullum shows that very little loss or damage occurred to the brasses in over a century; at most a shield or two disappeared together with a few fragments of marginal inscription.

From this time onwards the destruction of the church and its treasures proceeded very rapidly. William, the last Naunton, died in 1758 and when three years later his widow died too the next heir to the estate, William Leman, was forced to maintain his right by a tedious and expensive lawsuit against some who claimed descent from a branch of the Nauntons in France.¹⁷

Richard Gough, friend and companion of Cullum and the young Craven Ord on their tour of East Anglia on horseback taking printer's ink impressions of monumental brasses, visited Letheringham in the autumn of 1780. On that visit impressions were taken of two figure brasses, three shields and two inscriptions, and these are now in the Douce¹⁸ collection in the British Museum. Gough is likely to have been the friend Cullum referred to (in a MS footnote)¹⁶ as having visited the church on 3 October 1780 finding:

'the Roof of it, and much of the Walls, entirely down. The Roof of the Chancel was standing, but all the statues and monuments so broken and battered to Pieces, that the Havock must have been purposely committed. The stones that had been inlaid with Brasses were taken up, and the Brasses gone, and nothing but the smallest Fragments of Glass remained in the Windows'.

Gough drew attention to the plight of Letheringham in the Suffolk section of his edition of Camden's *Britannia*.¹⁹

'The handsome old house, of which the South wing with the hall and gallery remained, were pulled down about the

¹⁵ W. Latham, Church Notes, p. 47. In private possession. Latham was F.S.A. from 1775 and read papers to the Society in 1796 and 1805.

¹⁶ J. Cullum, Church Notes, II, pp. 42-59. S.R.O., Bury.

¹⁷ J. Nichols, *History of Leicestershire* (London 1795-1815), III, p. 513* and plates LXII, LXIII and that facing p. 516*.

¹⁸ B.M. Add. MS 32479, ff. 9-12.

¹⁹ W. Camden, ed. R. Gough, *Britannia* (London 1789), II, p. 86. Drawings of the house c. 1712 and c. 1850 reproduced in *Proc. Suff. Inst. Arch.*, xx (1928), p. 9.

year 1770 . . . About the same time, the adjoining church was suffered to run to ruin; the painted glass, consisting of figures and arms, taken down and dispersed about; and all the antient and curious monuments of various kinds . . . were effaced and destroyed. Mere neglect and exposure to the weather for a few years by the fall of the roof could not have reduced them to that state of complete desolation in which they appeared in Autumn 1780. In 1768 (and perhaps later) they were in a good, though not in so clean a condition as they deserved. Perhaps it was for the interest of some of the parties who lately disputed the estate to destroy every record preserved in this place'.

Rescue operations – Antiquaries take action

In 1785¹ John Nichols commissioned Isaac Johnson 'that ingenious and modest artist of Woodbridge'²⁰ to make eight drawings of the Letheringham monuments, for which he paid one and a half guineas. These drawings Nichols communicated to the Society of Antiquaries of London. Another set of ten prepared for H. Parry, Esq. in a larger collection of Suffolk drawings are now in the Suffolk Record Office, Bury.²¹

The Reverend John Pridden, vicar of Heybridge, Essex, had a hand in securing the last of the brasses for his father-in-law John Nichols, publisher of Gough's works, so that some very unusual illustrations could be provided for *Sepulchral Monuments*²⁰ and *History of Leicestershire*.¹⁷ Four plates for these works were prepared using the brasses themselves as blocks in an intaglio process. On 17 October 1786 Pridden drew a ground plan of the church (no earlier visitor, alas, had done so) and he alone recorded for posterity the existence of the wall painting in the nave showing the martyrdom of St. Erasmus. In a single day he covered 23 quarto sheets²² with drawings, lists of arms and inscriptions. The words 'in my possession', 'taken by me' and 'got' appear by his sketches of the brasses, impressions of which later appeared in Gough's great work. We have to thank Pridden for what he did that day, for one figure and a shield he took came back to the church in 1966. As late as 1813 the Revd. Richard Turner of Yarmouth took away the fine figure of Sir John Wingfield, 1389, finding it detached from its stone, but this was replaced in the church in 1842 by the Marquis of Northampton and Dawson Turner, nephew of the rescuer.

²⁰ R. Gough, *Sepulchral Monuments of Great Britain* (London 1786-96), II, pt. 2, p. 27, and plates IX-XI, IX* and XI*.

²¹ I. Johnson, *Monumental Remains of Letheringham Church taken (in 1785) before their Demolition in 1789*. The original drawings of 1785 are in the Joseph Sim Earl Colln. in Lib. Soc. Antiq.

²² J. Pridden, *Top. Coll. Relating to Suffolk*, ff. 116-137. Ipswich Borough Library. There is an article on Pridden in the *D.N.B.*

In 1789 the Church authorities directed the parishioners to put the building into decent order, but instead of repairing it, the churchwardens gave the contractor, Thomas Aldus of Woodbridge, the entire fabric of the chancel and its contents to dispose of as he would, in return for which the nave was to be rebuilt and closed with a new east wall. The monuments crushed for sale as road making ballast at three shillings a pound brought the contractors 80 guineas.²³ The fine font probably went with the monuments.

It must have been very shortly before the demolition and rebuilding that William Johnson made the painting a copy of which is illustrated in Plate XVI.²⁴ It must have been intended more as an allegory than as a strict record of the state of the church at that time since the artist took several liberties to heighten the feeling of Wingfield glories lost. He shows the 'Abbey', entire, to the north of the church although it stood to the south-west, and in 1770 had been partly dismantled. The large wall monument with two standing figures is transposed from the south-west to the north-east corner of the chancel, and on the tombstone on the left of the foreground is the inscription 'MEM. SACRŪ J. WINGFIELD DEPOSIT'.

The Vicar of Brandeston, the Revd. William Clubbe, son of the Revd. John Clubbe who wrote the facetious *History and Antiquities of Wheatfield*, was eccentric enough to rescue and set about a hundred fragments of the monuments into a pyramid over 10ft high which he built in his vicarage garden. On this he set up four inscriptions^{17, 23} of which the most amusing follows:

FUIMUS.
INDIGNANT READER!
THESE MONUMENTAL REMAINS
ARE NOT
(AS THOU MAYEST SUPPOSE)
THE RUINS OF TIME,
BUT
WERE DESTROYED IN AN IRRUPTION OF THE GOTHES
SO LATE IN THE CHRISTIAN ÆRA
AS THE YEAR 1789
CREDITE, POSTERI!!!

²³ Gough, *op. cit.*, II, pt. 1, p. cccxxiii.

²⁴ The original by William Johnson the portraitist, younger brother of Isaac, is untraced. Isaac's copy is in B.M. Add. MS 8987, f. 87, recopied anonymously for Suffolk Illustrations, III, Fitch Collection in Ipswich Borough Library. The latter is reproduced in Plate XVI.

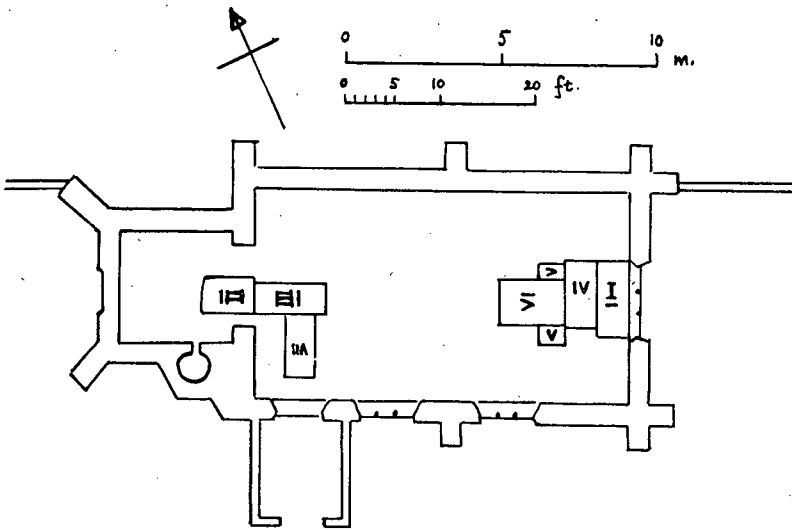


FIG. 51.—Plan of church showing present positions of stone slabs bearing brass indents.

At John Nichols' request, Isaac Johnson made drawings²⁵ of the pyramid, one side of which is shown in Plate XVII. This curious pile survived well into the present century but is now no more. Among four sculptured fragments from it which have found their way to Brandeston Church there is the alabaster head of a lady *c.* 1450, part of the effigy of Elizabeth Gowsell. The head can be seen embedded in the pyramid in Plate XVII and in its proper place, the South canopied tomb (see below) in Plate XVIII. In about 1825 Mrs. Ann Mills made important drawings of some of the pyramid fragments (to which reference will be made below), in her MS *Heraldic Monumental Remains*,²⁶ correctly placing them under the heading *Letheringham*.

At the rebuilding in 1789, most of the despoiled slabs were used to pave the nave, and there they have remained ever since, some partly covered by wooden platforms. It is clear from Darby's MS *Church Notes*²⁷ taken in 1826 that the indents visible today are as he found them, with the single exception of the earliest and best of them, visible then but now half covered by the slate dais on

²⁵ Isaac Johnson's three drawings of the pyramid and a letter to John Nichols (21 March 1793) are in Bodley MS Top. Suffolk d. 14.

²⁶ Ann Mills (*née* Barnardiston), *Heraldic Monumental Remains*, III, pp. 69–71. In private possession.

²⁷ J. W. Darby, *Church Notes*, Loes Hundred, pp. 89–91. Ipswich Borough Library.

which the altar stands. It is quite likely that the pews and platforms hide more indents of interest. Rushen, a great grandson of Isaac Johnson, in his book²⁸ on Letheringham managed to reconstruct a plan showing the positions of monuments before 1770, but did not record the new locations of the surviving indents or identify them. Their present positions can be seen labelled I–VII in Fig. 51. The indent illustrations, with the exception of that in Fig. 52, are scale drawings made by the author, not from rubbings, but by the use of a grid laid on the slabs.

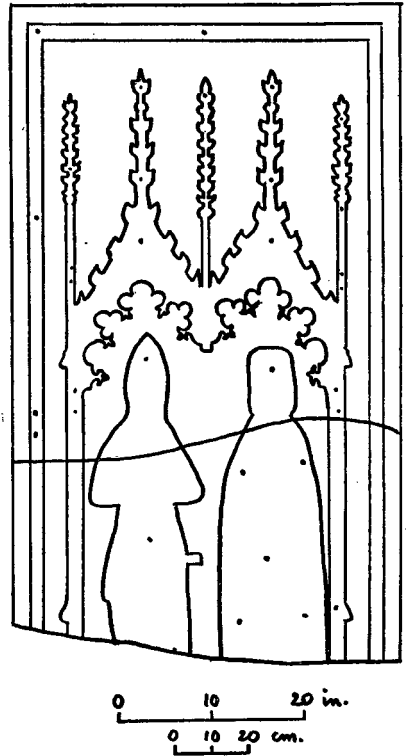
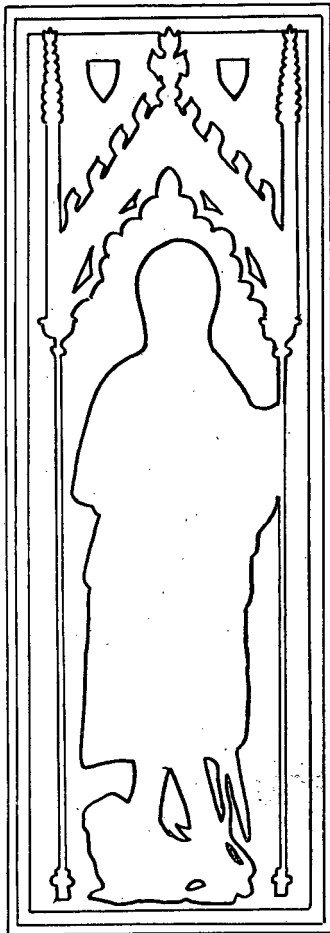


FIG. 53.—Indent II. Sir Thomas Wingfield and Margaret his wife.

FIG. 52.—Indent I. Sir William de Bovile.

²⁸ P. C. Rushen, *Transcripts of the Parish Registers of Letheringham* (London 1901), facing p. 116.

THE BOVILE AND WINGFIELD MONUMENTS

Indent I. Sir William de Bovile, patron of the Priory, and great grandson of Sir William the founder, died 1320 (Fig. 52).

The fine Purbeck slab, 13cm thick, retains much of the original pitch which secured the brass. Half the design is obscured by the slate altar dais (placed on it since 1928) but the whole is known from drawings in the Church Notes of Martin (Plate XIX) and Darby. Another sketch by Hawes has recently been published.²⁹ The indent illustration in Fig. 52 is based on an unpublished woodcut drawn from a rubbing made by the Reverend Charles Boutell on 29 April 1847. Anon. and Blois give the complete inscription and its arrangement on the marginal fillet of brass. In 1660 Borret found only the first eight words in place. By Hawes' time the missing parts seem to have been replaced but in his words 'they are mixed upon the gravestone as I suppose'. Between the visits of Martin and Cullum the moveable pieces again disappeared, this time permanently.

+SIRE : WILLIAM : DE : BOVILE : SEI / GNOVR :
 DE : LETHERINGHĀ : E : PATROVN : DE : CIENS :
 GIST : ICI : DIEV : DE : SA : ALME : EN : FACE :
 VERROIE : ME / RCI : ET : VOUS : QE : CEST :
 LV : HONV / RETZ : PVR : LALME : DE : LVI :
 PAR : CHARITE : PRIETZ : ET : QARANTE : IOVRS
 : DE : PARDOVN : AVERETZ

The cross-legged figure in surcoat and mail held a shield bearing the arms of *Bovile*, quarterly Or and Sa. in the first quarter a lion passant Gu. The dexter shield above the straight-sided canopy had a martlet Gu. in place of the lion passant. This differencing of the *Bovile* arms is of interest. Blois drew two *Bovile* coats from the windows of the chancel with their memorial inscriptions:

1. Under a plain quartered shield:
Prie pur Sire John Bovile et sa femme.
2. Under a quartered shield with a lion passant in the first quarter:
Prie pur Sire William Bovile et sa femme.

The Sir William of the brass (and probably the second window) was the son of another William whose elder brother, Sir John, died without issue. Sir William succeeded his uncle in the title and the lordship c. 1302. It seems quite likely that the two Williams, father and son, adopted the differences (a martlet and a lion respectively) in the lifetime of Sir John. Certainly the evidence from the Letheringham windows and the brass are consistent with this suggestion.

²⁹ D. MacCulloch, 'Suffolk Brasses', *Suffolk Fair*, 3, No. 11, p. 12.

The sinister shield, lost by 1723, was drawn and blazoned by Hawes in his original sketch as Quarterly Arg. and Gu. a cross engrailed counterchanged, for *Heydon*, but blazoned by Blois as simply Or a cross engrailed Vert, presumably for *Noone*. As Harvey noted *Bovile* impaling *Ufford* (in glass almost certainly) it is far from clear who the mother of this Sir William was.

The indent and drawings show that in style the figure resembled the brasses of the elder Sir John of Stoke D'Abernon and Sir Robert de Bures at Acton.

Indent II. Sir Thomas Wingfield, died 1378, and Margaret his wife (Fig. 53).

The names were lost from the marginal inscription of this brass before 1600, so that Weever who listed Thomas and Margaret as buried here must have guessed the attribution from the heraldry. After him only Blois correctly identifies those commemorated by this slab.

Anon. says that the pair 'garnished and arched with brasse' had the incomplete inscription:

top: vous qi par ici passez

sinister side: sa feme . . . prietz qe lours almes a Dieu soyent
recommander

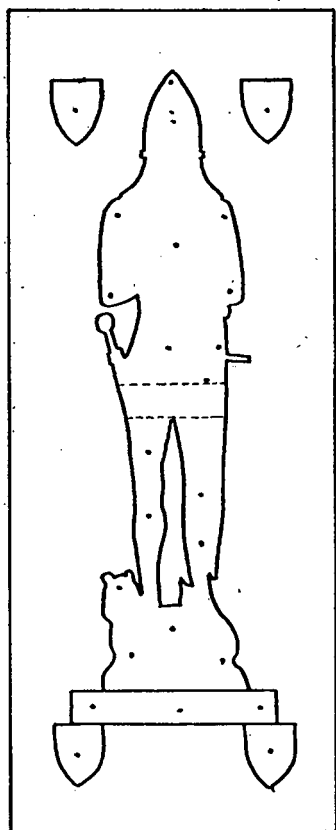
Blois found three words fewer: 'ici passez' and 'prietz' had gone. Surely Dowsing would have been more thorough.

Hawes mentions two pedestals on which the figures stood; they were 'replenished with the arms of *Wingfield* and *Bovile*'. Martin gives the additional evidence that the lady was 'at his left hand' (compare *Indent IV*) and that his feet rested on a lion and hers on a dog. Oddly, although Anon., Blois and Martin state the sinister shield to have been *Bovile*, Borret specifies *Vere* and Cullum draws a mullet in the first quarter. There is certainly a possibility that the shield may have borne a charge, perhaps only partly legible, and Margaret's father (another Sir John, grandson of the Sir William of *Indent I*) might have adopted the mullet.

All these details are consistent with what can be seen on the upper portion of the slab which remains, especially as any heraldry displayed must have been below the figures, a rather unusual arrangement. The missing part of the slab, worn flat and serving as the south doorstep, shows that the original length was 2.35m.

In his Will,³⁰ Thomas left no less than £44 13s. 4d. for his funeral and £20 for the church with instructions that he should be buried in the choir of the Priory under the lower step before the high altar. At Dowsing's visit orders were given to 'level the steps in 20 days'.

³⁰ Norwich C.C. 154 *Heydon. Norf. Rec. Soc.*, xvi (1945), p. 399.



0 10 20 in.
0 10 20 cm.

Fig. 54

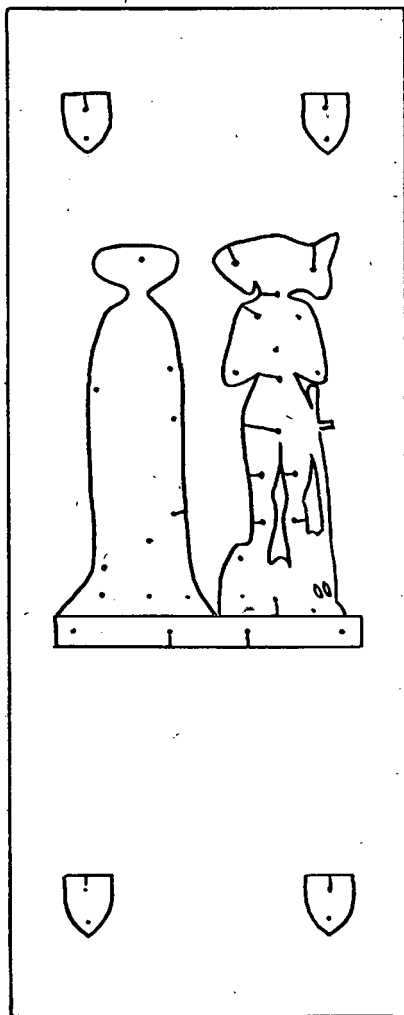


Fig 56.

FIG. 54.—Indent III. Sir John Wingfield. The figure brass and one shield remain in the church.

FIG. 56.—Indent IV. Sir Robert Wingfield and Elizabeth his wife.

Indent III. Sir John Wingfield, died 1389 (Fig. 54).

The brass figure from this indent, only very slightly mutilated at the top, showing Sir John in bascinet and jupon bearing the arms of *Wingfield*, Arg. on a bend Gu. cotised Sa. three pairs of wings conjoined in lure Arg., is fastened to a board on the N. wall of the church.

Only Harvey found more than the top sinister shield in position. In his time there was also one bearing just *Wingfield* and this was probably the dexter upper shield. It was gone before 1600, but the other, bearing *Hastings* impaling *Wingfield*, remained until Pridden took it ('got') and the mutilated foot inscription ('Inscription got by me') in 1786. Both are illustrated by impressions in *Sepulchral Monuments*.²⁰ In 1966 the shield came back to the church from the Bodleian Library together with the figure of a knight c. 1500 from Indent V. Unfortunately they are mounted together on a board near the altar, and also appear on one plate in the *Portfolio of the Monumental Brass Society*.³¹ The arrangement of the charges on the shield is puzzling. John Wingfield married Margaret, daughter of Sir Hugh Hastings of Elsing so that the *Hastings* coat, Or a maunche Gu., should take the sinister side.

Anon. gives the inscription complete c. 1600:

Hic jacet dn̄s Johes de Wyngefeld, miles, q̄dm̄ dn̄s de
Letheringhm cuī ane pptr̄ deus Amen

but Borret in 1660 found it broken; the last four words were missing. It must have been Dowsing who removed the prayer by breaking off a piece of brass 25cm by 4 to 5cm (as shown by the impression in Gough). The initial letter is of that superb quality associated with brasses classified by J. P. C. Kent³² as Style A. It is here illustrated by reversing the Gough impression (Fig. 55).

Lost Indent 1. Margaret, wife of Sir John Wingfield. Hawes wrote:

'Upon a gravestone southward,' [of her husband's gravestone] 'which bears an aspect of great antiquity by its being very much worn, and bearing the portrait of a woman delineated on brass with hands conjunct, reposing her head upon a chequered cushion and her feet on a dog with bells about his neck, there remains part of an inscription round the verge.'

³¹ vi (1966), plate 48, on which the date 1481 copies Harvey's error (see note 2 above). William Wingfield the Sewer died in 1491.

³² J. P. C. Kent, 'Monumental Brasses: A New Classification of Military Effigies', *Jour. Brit. Arch. Assn.*, xii (1949), p. 94.



FIG. 55.—First word of inscription to Sir John Wingfield. From impression in Gough, full size, reversed.

Anon. gives the fullest details of the marginal inscription:

top and sinister side: Hic jacet / Margareta Wingfield
quondam uxor Johannis Wingfield quorum animabus
dexter side: Margareta Russel domini Johannis Russel
militis de com. Wigornensis

Most of this was still there to be recorded by Blois in 1660, so this brass did not suffer from Dowsing's visit. Hawes found less; just Hic jacet . . . Marg . . . uxor . . . quorum an . . . remained.

Of the four shields at the corner of the slab only the upper pair survived the 16th century. Anon. specifies:

dexter: *Russel*³³ impaling *Hastings*
sinister: *Wingfield* impaling *Hastings*

By Cullum's time the dexter was lost.

Margaret Hastings married Sir John Wingfield and after his death married Sir John Russel of Strensham, Worcestershire (where he has a brass). She died about 1398. Her Will³⁴ directs that she should be buried next to her first husband:

' . . . die Aug 1397. Ego Margareta Russell . . . lego corpus meum sepeliendum in choro prioratus de Letheringham juxta sepulturam dñi mei dñi Johis Wyngfeld nuper defunct.'

Harvey² listed Anne Russel, first wife of Sir John, amongst those buried here, but only because he misread the dexter side inscription on Margaret Wingfield's brass as 'Anne Russel . . .' He indicates the arms *Russel* impaling *Hastings* for 'Anne' Russel which confirms that he was misled. Elizabeth, the daughter of John and Anne

³³ *Russel*, Arg. a chevron between 3 cross crosslets fitchy Sa.

³⁴ Norwich C.C. 243 Harsyk.

Russell was commemorated in the brass whose description follows:

Indent IV. Sir Robert Wingfield, died 1409, and Elizabeth, daughter of Sir John Russel and Anne his wife (Fig. 56).

The 13cm thick slab has sharp indents of the missing figures, a foot inscription and four shields 'all reaved' by the time of Anon., but a set of four drawn by Harvey seem appropriate:

1. *Wingfield* impaling *Hastings*
2. *Russel* impaling *Hastings*
3. *Wingfield* impaling *Russel*
4. *Wingfield* quartering *Russel*

The man's feet rest on a lion and his head (no doubt armed) rests on a helm, which from its shape appears not to have included a crest. The lady is shown in a mantle and a head-dress of a type to be found elsewhere only in the brass to an unknown lady *c.* 1420 at Horley, Surrey (Fig. 57). The veil, if any, did not hang down to

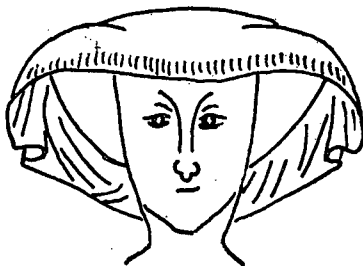


FIG. 57.—Head of a lady, *c.* 1420, from a brass at Horley, Surrey.

the shoulders. Martin states that the woman was 'at his right hand' and that she had a talbot at her feet. The inscription was complete at the time Anon. wrote but Borret found the words in brackets gone; no doubt Dowsing's man cut off the right hand end of the plate.

Hic jacet dominus Robertus Wingfield miles et Elizabetha
[uxor eius qui quidem Robertus] obiit tertio die mensis maij
anno Dni MCCCCIX

[quorum animabus propicietur Deus. Amen]

The canopied Altar Tomb Chests

For the next two generations the lords of Letheringham rose temporarily above the provision of mere brass memorials, and had instead magnificent stone monuments, almost identical in their architectural details, facing each other on the north and south chancel walls. Pridden tells us their dimensions were the same.

The South Tomb. Sir Robert Wingfield, died 1454, and Elizabeth Gowsell his wife.

The armed figure of Sir Robert with his wife's effigy behind lay on the tomb chest. Both figures are shown in the drawing made in 1785,²¹ but the Basire plate (Plate XVIII), which must have been engraved after a later drawing, shows the man's figure broken off and only that of the woman in place. Our illustrations show that the mourners in canopied niches surrounding the tomb chest suffered severe losses during the twenty years before 1785. The lady's head, 33cm long, (which, as has been stated above, survives in Brandeston Church) wears the horned headdress, and rested on a cushion supported by angels. At her feet there were three dogs. The knight's bare head rested on a helmet with a bull for crest and there was also a bull at his feet. Slender pillars supported the ogee-headed canopy and the stops for the outer mouldings were lions sejant.

Around the arch mouldings *Wingfield* wings conjoined alternated with a device consisting of five small charges arranged in saltire on a rectangle. Blois, Cullum and Gough all described this as an Ermine coat, but Pridden suggested escallops. These small charges also surround the *Wingfield* wings in the spandrels above the arch, and fortunately Mrs. Mills made a careful drawing²⁶ of these long after the monument had been destroyed. Two spandrel stones, one from each canopied tomb, can be seen built into Clubbe's pyramid in Plate XVII. Ann Mills' drawings clearly show ermine spots, not escallops. Anon. states that none of the stone shields above the canopy bore arms, and certainly no inscription on the monument survived long enough to be recorded. All that remains to help identify the pair commemorated is the style of armour and headdress (both of c. 1450) and the Ermine coat alternating with wings conjoined. The most sensible conclusion is that the sculptor took the wings from the coat of *Wingfield* as one motif, and the Ermine canton from the *Gowsell*³⁵ arms as the other, and alternated the two to represent the marriage. Both this and the monument opposite had the Bovile bull as crest on the achievement high up on the canopy, which explains why Borret, Walpole and even Gough were misled into attributing them to an earlier century and the founders of the priory. Blois on the other hand gives the south tomb to a later Wingfield, Sir John, died 1509, grandson of the Robert of this monument, but in the margin beside the suggestion is the word 'Query'. The costume would be quite different if this were an early 16th-century tomb.

Elizabeth Gowsell was the daughter and coheir of Robert Gowsell by Elizabeth, daughter and coheir of Richard FitzAlan,

³⁵ *Gowsell*, Barry of 6 Or and Gu. a canton Erm.

Earl of Arundel (died 1397) and widow of Thomas Mowbray, created Duke of Norfolk in 1397 and died two years later; so that the Wingfield family fortunes may well have risen by her marriage to Sir Robert.

The North Tomb. Sir John Wingfield, died 1481, and Elizabeth FitzLewis his wife.

We must assume that Sir John or his heir had this tomb and the last built to match, but on this one there were no effigies or mourners and the wings conjoined round the arch and in the spandrels were alternate with the arms of *FitzLewis*, Sa. a chevron between three trefoils slipped Arg. The tomb slab had a chamfer inscription, incomplete in the Anon. transcription, which lost a further five words by 1630 but then suffered no further damage in the next 140 years. Here some of the words missing in 1600 are supplied in brackets to make sense of the whole:

[Hic jacet Johannes Wyngfeld miles filius Roberti Wyngfeld militis et Elizabethæ filia] domina Elizabethæ Arundell ducisse Norf. et Johannis Gowsell militis, qui quidem Johannes obiit undecimo die mensis maij anno Dñi millesmo CCCCLXXXI ac domina Elizabetha Wyngfeld uxor predicti Johannis filia [Lodewici Johannis militis et] Anne Montague ducisse Exon et . . .

In its fragmentary state the inscription misled some as to those commemorated. Blois, for example, suggested that while the tomb canopy was for John Wingfield, 1481, the altar slab was for his grandmother, the former duchess of Norfolk. It is in any case known that she was buried at Hoveringham, Notts. with her second husband, Sir Robert Gowsell, who died 1403. The name John Gowsell in the inscription is an engraver's error for Robert. Weever read Gowsell as Paulett; visualised in black letter this misreading is understandable.

On the tomb slab there were four brass shields and Anon., Hawes and Martin agree that they showed

1. *Bovile* quartering *Wingfield*
2. *Wingfield* impaling *FitzLewis*
3. *Wingfield*
4. *FitzLewis*

On the south front of the chest there were three brass shields which Anon. describes:

5. *Wingfield* impaling *Gowsell*
6. *FitzAlan*³⁶ quartering *Warren*³⁷ impaling *Gowsell*

³⁶ *FitzAlan*, Gu. a lion rampant Or.

³⁷ *Warren*, Chequy Or and Az.

7. *Montague*³⁸ quartering *Monthermer*³⁹ impaling *FitzLewis*

Shield 7 was lost by 1712, and only shields 1, 2 and 5 remained in 1768.

Elizabeth FitzLewis was the daughter of Sir Lewis John and his second wife Anne, daughter of John Montague, earl of Salisbury. Anne later married John Holland, earl of Huntingdon and duke of Exeter, who died in 1447.

John and Elizabeth Wingfield had, according to Harvey's 1561 Visitation,⁴⁰ 12 sons and 4 daughters, and all the marriages of these children, the senior grandson and four later matches, were shown by arms painted on the stone shields on the canopy frieze. Only Harvey drew them; by Hawes' time they were 'much defaced'. It is not clear how 21 coats were accommodated. Only 12 stone shields are shown in drawings and prints (as on the south tomb, Plate XVII) but perhaps eight coats were painted in the eight niches. The Wingfield half of each shield, or the whole of it for those unmarried, in every case bore Quarterly 1 and 4. *Wingfield* 2. and 3. quarterly 1st. and 4th. *Gowsell* 2nd. and 3rd. *Warren*.

Hawes gives interesting details of further embellishments of the monument:

'Over this tomb fronting eastward is the figure of S. Catherine with a book in one hand and sword pointing to the horizon in the other. Near her feet is visible part of the wheel whereon she suffered martyrdom (as the Romanists pretend) for her magnanimous perseverance in their religion. And fronting southward has been painted our Saviour's crucifixion as appears by INRI which seems to have been fixed on the top of the cross'.

Indent V. Sir Thomas Wingfield, died 1471, Richard Wingfield, esq., died 1509, and William Wingfield, esq., died 1510, 4th, 3rd and 6th sons respectively of Sir Robert Wingfield and Elizabeth Gowsell his wife (Fig. 58).

Only two small portions of this 'spacious gravestone' (Hawes) are visible, the remainder being hidden by pews. It must have been broken at the time of the reflooring of the rebuilt nave and the pieces laid separately in their present positions. Darby's church notes show the same portions only to have been visible in the 1820's. The similarity of the brownish stone in both portions and all possible measurements strongly support the reconstruction of the slab to show, as described by several visitors, the most unusual and

³⁸ *Montague*, Arg. 3 fusils in fesse Gu.

³⁹ *Monthermer*, Or an eagle displayed Vert armed Gu.

⁴⁰ W. C. Metcalfe (ed.), *The Visitation of Suffolk* (Exeter 1882), p. 80.

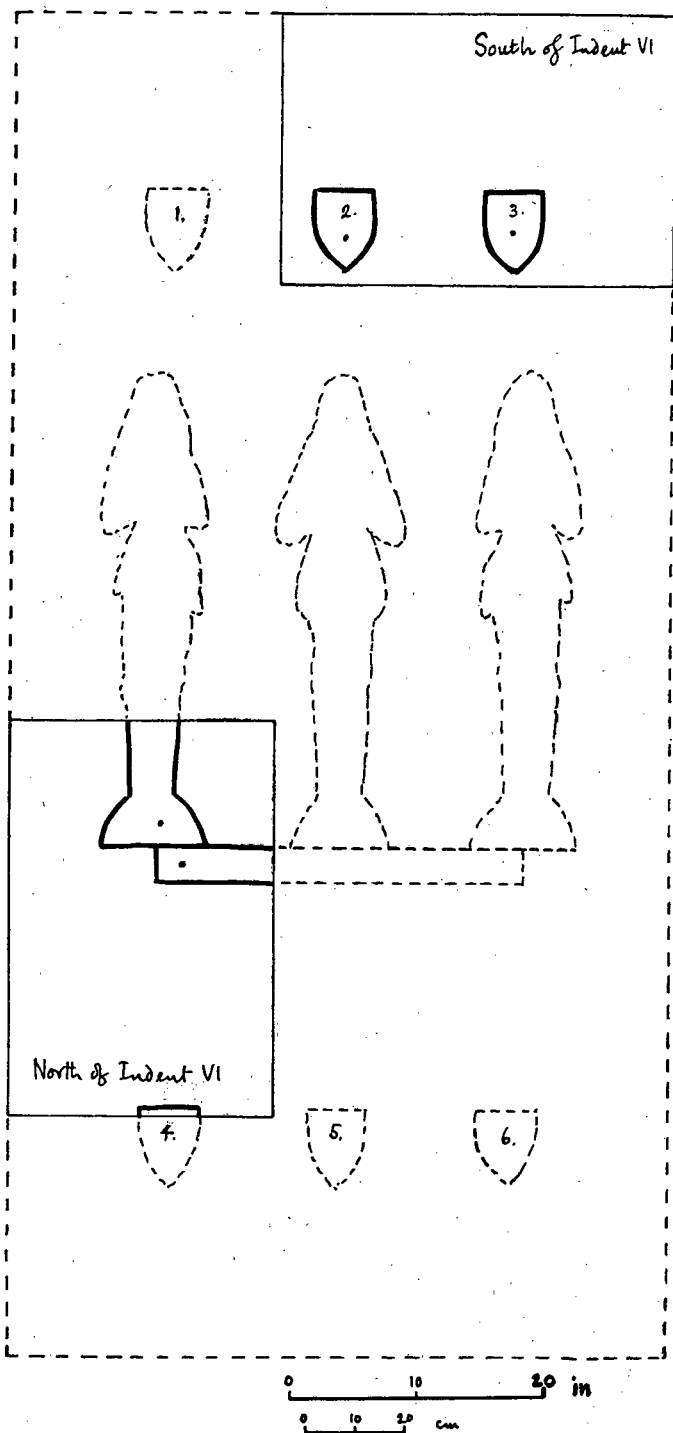


FIG. 58.—Indent V. Sir Thomas Wingfield and his brothers Richard and William. The dexter figure remains in the church.

probably unique composition, three men in armour, a foot inscription and six shields.

The dexter figure survives, returned to the church from the Bodleian Library in 1966. The illustration of this figure in the *Portfolio of the Monumental Brass Society*⁴¹ attributes it tentatively to William Wingfield, sewer to Henry VII, (see below, Lost Indent 3.) but John Nichols who gave Cullum an impression of the brass in 1787 labelled it more credibly 'Sir Thomas Wingfield'.⁴¹

Gough illustrates two lost components, the inscription, broken across the rivet holes into three pieces, measuring 74cm by 6.2cm, and one shield, 11.4cm by 14.6cm, which probably bore *Wingfield* quartering *Warren*, although the dexter side is illegible. This was the first shield; Pridden took it ('No. 1 in my possession') and the inscription ('3 Inscrip bits of taken by me') as well as the figure brass for Nichols.

Shields 2 and 6 were missing before 1600, but Harvey drew the 6th bearing *Wingfield* impaling *Baynard*⁴² of Spexhall quartering *Amoundevile*⁴³. Copinger⁴⁴ mentions that Margaret, daughter and co-heir of Robert Baynard married a Wingfield after her first husband died in 1462. She died 1504, and probably married the Richard of this brass. The remaining four shields lasted another century but Pridden found only 1 and 3, both of them showing *Wingfield* quartering *Warren*. Five observers agreed that the 4th was *Wingfield* impaling *Gowsell* but only Harvey and Blois deciphered the 5th. They drew it as *Wingfield* impaling—three water bougets—. This could have been for *Roos*, as Sir Thomas married, secondly, Phillipa, widow of Thomas, 10th Lord Roos of Helmsley.⁴⁵ Phillipa outlived Sir Thomas Wingfield to marry a third time.

The inscription wrongly described Elizabeth Gowsell as *sister* to the duke of Norfolk:

Her lith Sr Thomas Wyngfeld, Knyght, Rychard Wyngfeld
and William Wyngfeld squyres, sonns of Sr Robt Wyngfeld,
knyght, and of Lady Elizabeth his wif, systre to the Duke of
Norff.

William's Will made 28 February 1509 and proved 30 April 1510 shows that it was he who chose this unusual monument:

'my body to be buryed w^t the p^ory of Letheringhm aforseyd
by my brod^s Syr Thome Wyngefeld knyght and Richard

⁴¹ B.M. Add. MS 32478, f. 160.

⁴² *Baynard* Sa. on a fess between 2 chevrons Or an annulet Sa.

⁴³ *Amoundevile* Az. fretty Or.

⁴⁴ W. A. Copinger, *Manors of Suffolk* (Manchester 1908), II, p. 158.

⁴⁵ J. W. Clay, *Extinct and Dormant Peerages of the Northern Counties of England* (London 1913), p. 184.

Wingfeld esquier and that the stoone beyng in the seyde p'ory the which I Bowght be layd and cowchyd on me and my sayd Broders.⁴⁶

Lost Indent 2. William Wingfield, esq. died 1491 and Elizabeth his wife, daughter of Sir Thomas Waldegrave.

Anon. gives the full inscription which lay under a shield bearing *Wingfield* impaling *Waldegrave* Per pale Arg. and Gu:

Here lieth Willm Wingfeld, squier, sumtyme Sewer to our Soveraigne Lord Kyng Henry the VII, and the sonne of Sr. John Wyngfeld Knt. and Dame Elizabeth his wyfe, which Willm dyed the IIII day of December in the yere of our Lord MCCCCLXXXI on whose soule God have mercye.

Borret found 'the inscription broken' or as Hawes wrote 'torn off', and he and Cullum give all but the six words of the prayer. This, then, was Dowsing's third 'popish inscription'.

William Wingfield was the fifth son of Sir John, died 1487. The father of Elizabeth his wife was presumably the Sir Thomas Waldegrave who died in 1500 and was buried at Bures St. Mary.

Lost Indent 3.

Blois wrote 'A stone without the name of brass. The coats *Wingfield* impaling *FitzLewis*'. Gough gives an impression of a shield 10.8cm by 13.9cm with these charges. It was too small to fit any existing shield indents and probably came from this slab. Borret mentions 'Another Gravestone. Thereon Wingfield's Armes with an Annulet difference. Impaled with ffitz-Lewis. The Inscription likewise broken'. The Gough impression shows a rivet hole just where an annulet would be placed on the *Wingfield* coat, and doubtless Borret mistook this for a mark of difference.

This could have been for Sir John Wingfield, died 1509, and Ann his wife, daughter of John Touchet, Lord Audley, the only generation of Wingfield heirs for whom there is no definite record of a memorial, and as the inscription seems to have been lost before 1600 it is unlikely that evidence for or against this suggestion will be forthcoming.

Indent VI. Sir Robert Wingfield, died 1596, and Cecilia his wife, died 1573 (Fig. 59).

⁴⁶ Norwich C.C., 257-8 Spyltymbre. I am grateful to Mr. J. Roger Greenwood for drawing my attention to the will, and for pointing out that the figure brass, which is of Norwich workmanship, has strong stylistic links with figures in the window at East Harling Church, Norfolk, where Sir Robert Wingfield, elder brother of the three men, is commemorated in glass. The window was made for Sir Robert's widow before her third marriage in 1492, possibly by the same artist as the brass.

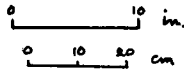
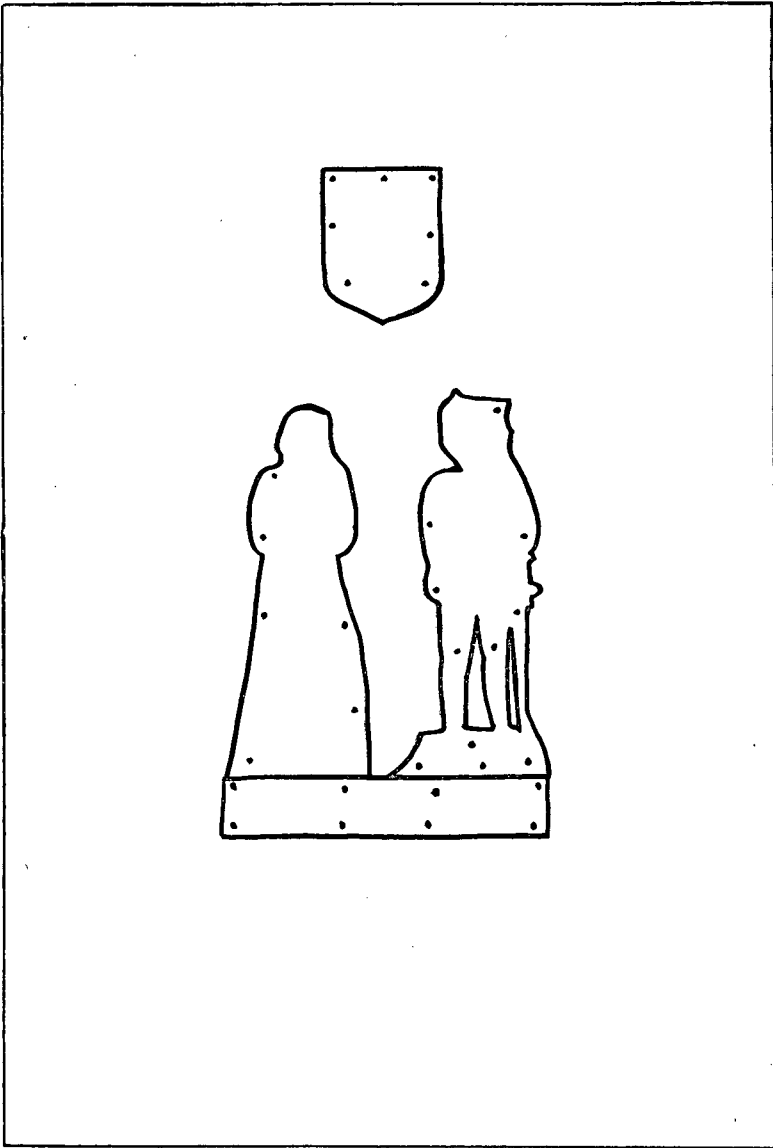


FIG. 59.—Indent VI. Sir Robert Wingfield and Cecilia his wife.

This large slab shows indents for a man in armour and a woman in the costume of *c.* 1600, a foot inscription and a large shield. Hawes recorded the inscription:

Here lyeth Sr Robert Wingfield Knt. and Dame Cicely his wife daughter of Thomas Lord Wentworth which said Sr Robert died the 19th of March 1596. And the said Dame Cicely died the 22nd, of August Ano. 1573.

Hawes stated that the shield bore the same 26 quarterings of *Wingfield* as a shield on the mural monument to Sir Anthony Wingfield, 1st. baronet, died 1638, impaling *Wentworth*, Sa. a chevron between 3 leopards' faces Or, and the 18 quarterings of *Wentworth* (detailed by Borret). Latham and Pridden also gave the 26 quarterings on the 1638 shield and from a comparison of the three lists it is possible to suggest the families most likely to have been represented on the dexter side of the shield of this brass:

1. *Wingfield* 2. *Honeypot* 3. *Bovile* 4. *Carbonell* 5. *Caston* 6. *Gowsell* 7. *Glanvile* 8. *Ufford* (though the blazon-Or a cross engrailed Az.—is misleading) 9. *FitzAlan* 10. *Blundeville* 11. *Lupus* 12. *Hamlyn Plantagenet* 13. *Warren* 14. *Bigod* 15. *Marshall* 16. *Macmorrough* 17. *Vere* 18. *Bulbeck* 19. *Samsford* 20. *Badlesmere* 21. *Sergeaulx* 22. *Howard* 23. *Scales* 24. *Playse* 25. *Stafford* and 26. *Lichfield*.

Indent VII. Lady Ann Wingfield, died 1626, widow of Sir Anthony Wingfield, died 1605, and afterwards wife of Thomas Clench (Fig. 60).

Sir Anthony's monument stood before the altar, a table tomb surrounded by iron railings. It can be seen in Plate XV. His widow's brass was further westward and was described by Hawes: 'Contiguous to the south side of the last', (the slab of Sir William Bovile, died 1320), 'a black marble stone plated with brass having the form of a woman with hands in praying posture delineated thereon, and under her feet an inscription:

Here lieth the body of Lady Anne Wingfield daughter of William Bird of Denston in the County of Suffolk, Esquire, first married to Sir Anthony Wingfield of Letheringham in the said County, Knt, and secondly to Thomas Clench of Holbrook in the said County, Esquire. She died the Second of August. Anno Domini 1626 Ætatis suae 69'

This indent is indeed of black marble, and the figure brass must have been quite similar to that at Stoke-by-Nayland to Dorothy Mannock, 1632.

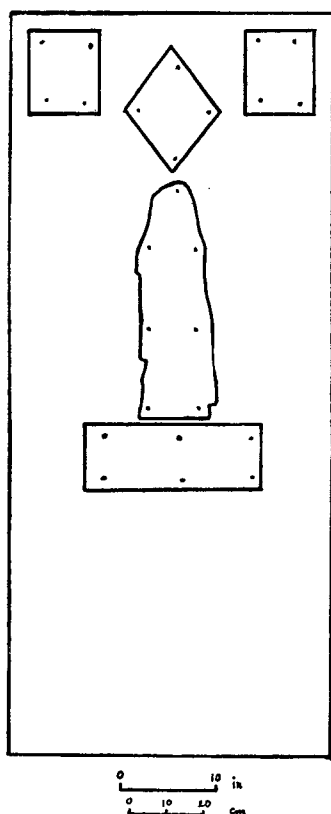


FIG. 60.—Indent VII. Lady Anne Wingfield, widow of Sir Anthony Wingfield.

Hawes' reading of the heraldry was confused but Latham details the quarterings of *Bird*⁴⁷ clearly. The three brass plates above the figure bore:

1. *Wingfield* impaling *Bird*. Crest: A bull passant. 2. On a lozenge, quarterly: 1. (Arg.) a cross moline between four martlets (Gu.) a canton (Az.) for *Bird* of cos. Cheshire and Suffolk. 2. (Per pale Arg. and Or) an eagle displayed (Sa.) for *Bird* of Co. Cheshire. 3. Quarterly (Gu. and Or), in the first quarter three fleurs de lis (Arg.); in fess point a trefoil slipped for difference for *Massey* of Co. Cheshire. 4. (Arg.) two trefoils slipped and a chief (Sa.) for *Rode* of Co. Cheshire.
3. *Clench*, Gu. six annulets conjoined in pairs two in chief

⁴⁷ *Visitation of Cheshire, 1580*, Harl. Soc., xviii, pp. 24–5.

and one in base and a chief Or; a martlet for difference, impaling *Bird*. Crest: out of a Saxon crown Or, an arm erect vested Gu. cuffed Arg. holding in the hand proper a club Vert, spiked of the first.

Postscript on the Canopied Altar Tombs

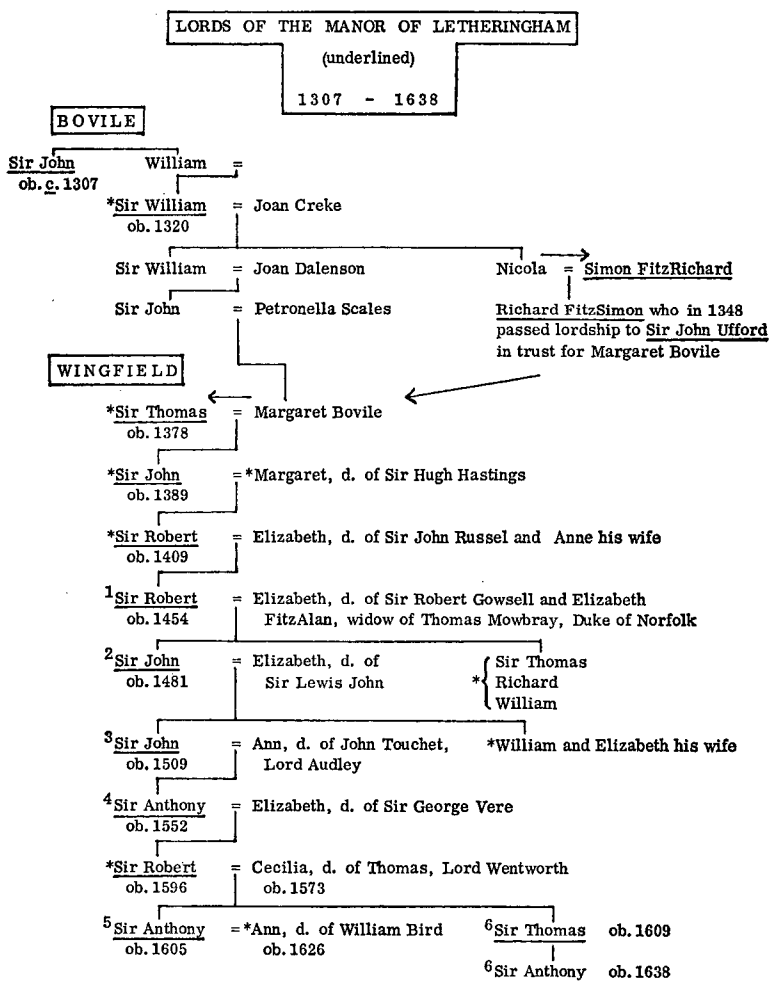
Miss Gwen Dyke has located the will of Sir John Wingfield, dated 10 May 1481, in S.R.O. Ipswich (HA 30 : 50/22/1.8(16)) and its contents confirm the attributions of the North and South Tombs suggested above. In commending his soul Sir John includes St. Katherine 'meo sp[ec]iali advocatrici' which explains the figure Hawes saw above the tomb. His executors were to have made for Sir John and his wife a grave called 'A Toumbe' on the north side of the chancel opposite the grave of his father (the south tomb).

CONCLUSION

After Sir Anthony Wingfield, died 1605, the next inheritors were Sir Thomas, died 1609, brother of Sir Anthony, and Sir Thomas' son Sir Anthony, 1st baronet, who died in 1638. They had mural monuments, to be seen in Plate XV on either side of the south-west chancel window. Here at Letheringham then, in one small chancel, were the memorials of eleven holders of the lordship between 1307 and 1638, as well as others to their kin. This series must have had few rivals, and several monuments show signs of being the best London work. It is interesting that children were not portrayed, the family tradition providing memorials for the lord of the manor and his wife only. Such a small community of canons as this was seems not to have afforded memorials for its Priors.

It is worth taking stock of the damage done by Dowsing's man. He removed just enough from three foot inscriptions to excise two Latin prayers and one in English (Indents III, IV and Lost Indent 2) in all less than half a square foot of brass. He must have been under severe constraint to do so little harm. Was he not told how to recognise the prayers in Norman-French on the brasses from Indents I and II, the former offering 40 days' pardon? We may be forgiven for enjoying charging Dowsing or his agents with linguistic ignorance.

The pedigree table (Fig. 61) shows the relationship of successive holders of the title, and summarises the findings of this paper about all the monuments.



Notes

*Known to have been commemorated by a brass in Letheringham Church.

1. South canopied tomb chest with effigies.
2. North canopied tomb chest with brass shields and marginal inscription.
3. May have had a brass here.
4. Buried at Stepney, 21 August 1552 (Henry Machyn's Diary).
5. Table tomb with effigy in Chancel.
6. Sculptured wall monument.

FIG. 61.—Pedigree table.

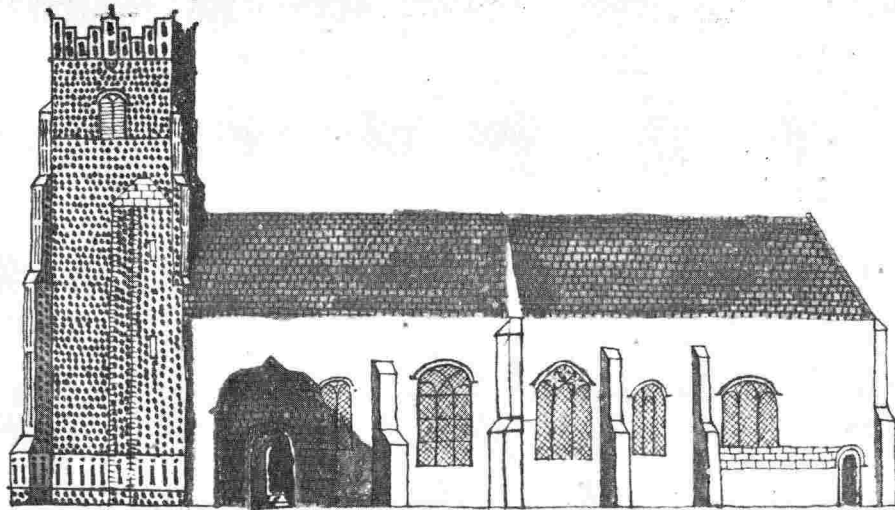
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My thanks are due to those who gave permission for the reproduction of illustrations from their collections, namely, for Plate XIV, the Master and Fellows of Pembroke College, Cambridge; for Plate XV, the British Library Board; for Plate XVI, Ipswich Borough Libraries Committee; for Plate XVII, the Curators of the Bodleian Library; and for Plate XIX, the University Library, Cambridge.

I am also grateful to Mr. Diarmaid MacCulloch who drew my attention to MS sources at Bury and Cambridge, thus adding substantially to the information I was able to collect, and to Mr. Peter Northeast for assistance with will transcripts. Most of all I would like to thank Miss Joan Corder, F.S.A., without whose knowledge, constant help and encouragement the clues could never have been fitted together.

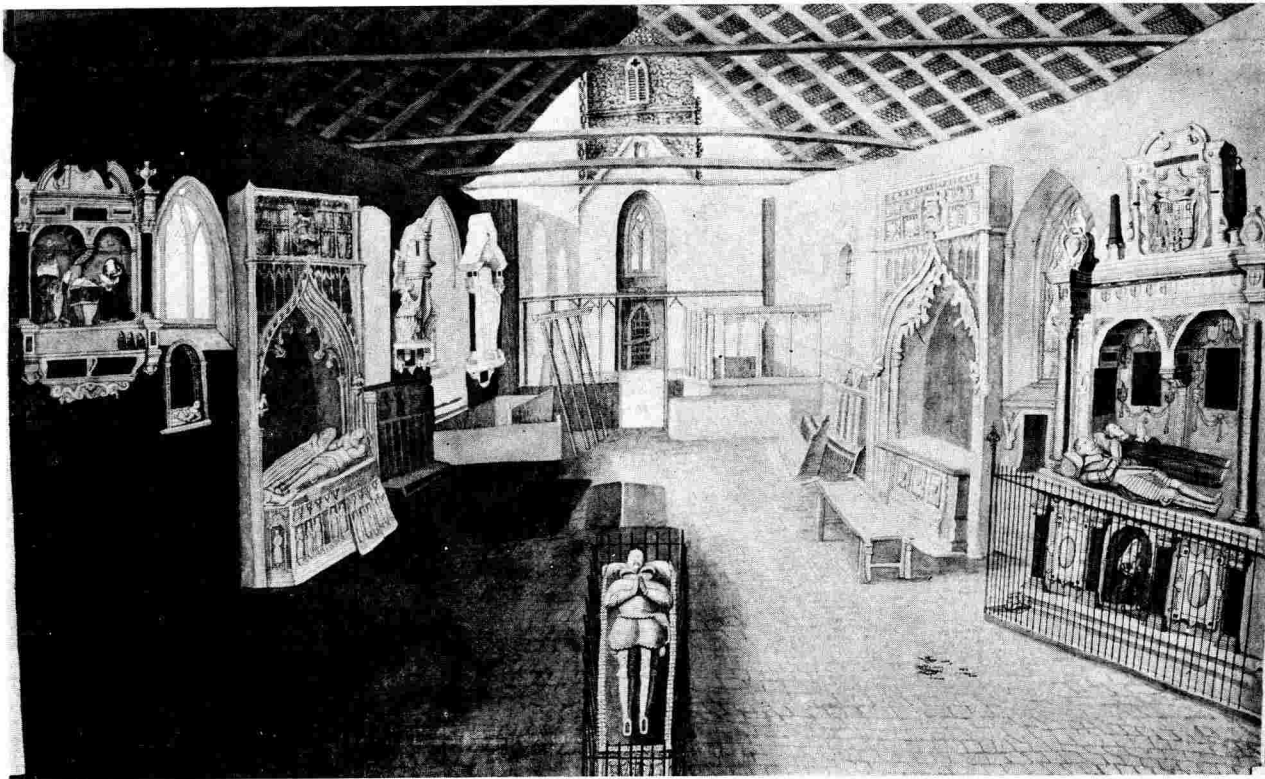
This article is published with the aid of a generous grant from the Marc Fitch Fund.

Images representing Dogs sedant. And the South Prospect of the
Whose is as followeth.



The Principal Ornaments within this Church are the Remains of
Stained Glass & the great Variety of Monuments & Gravestones

PLATE XV

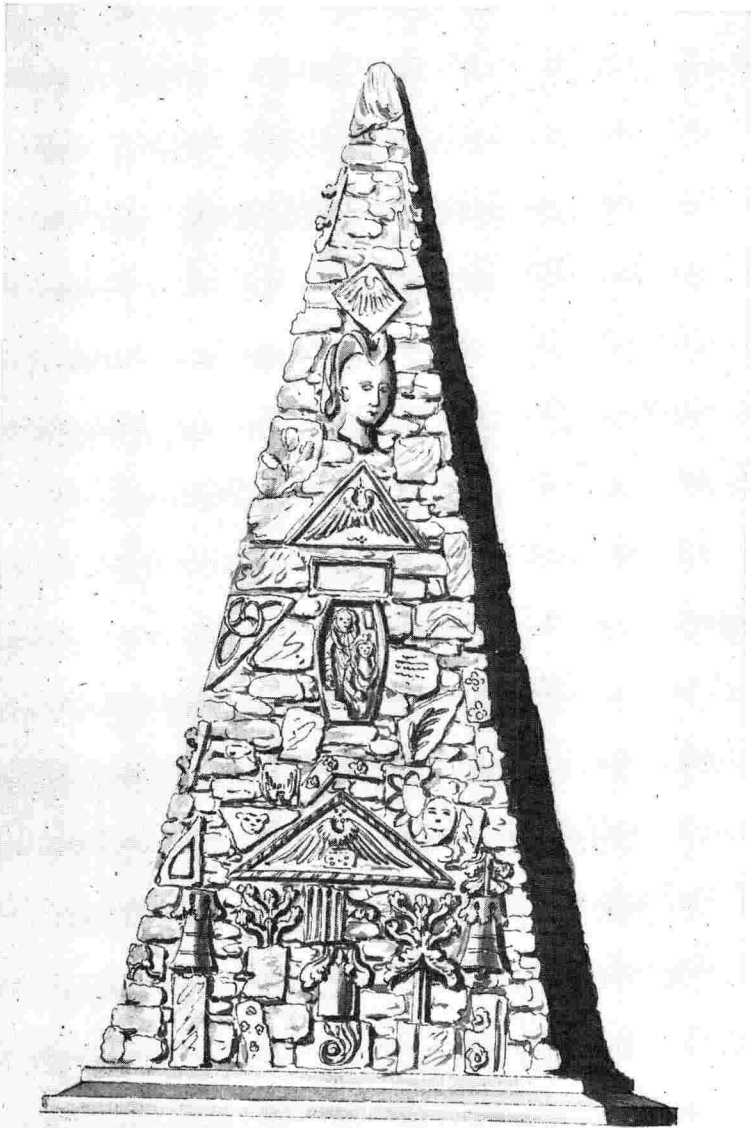


Interior of Church looking west, c. 1765.

PLATE XVI



Letheringham Church from the south, c. 1789. Copy of a painting by William Johnson.

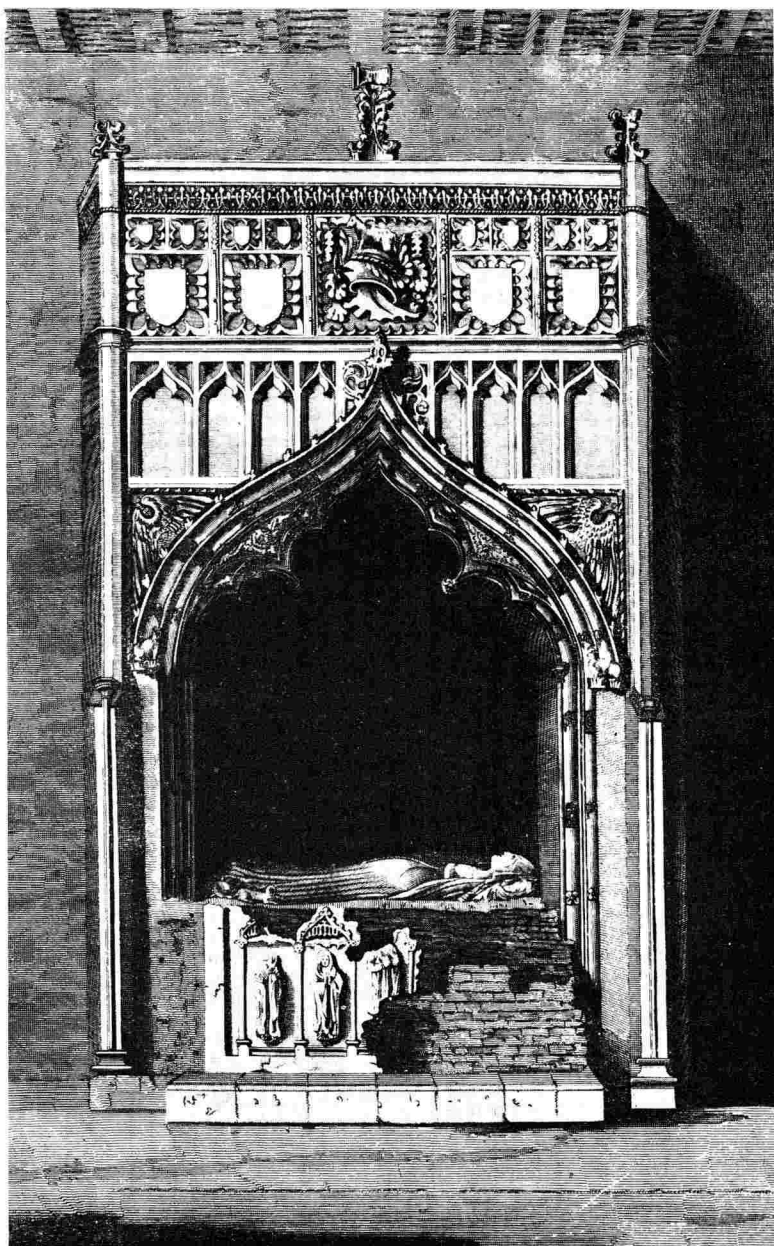


Pyramid in Vicarage Garden, Brandeston.

Built from the Monumental Remains, ^{in Chapel in} Lethringham Church.

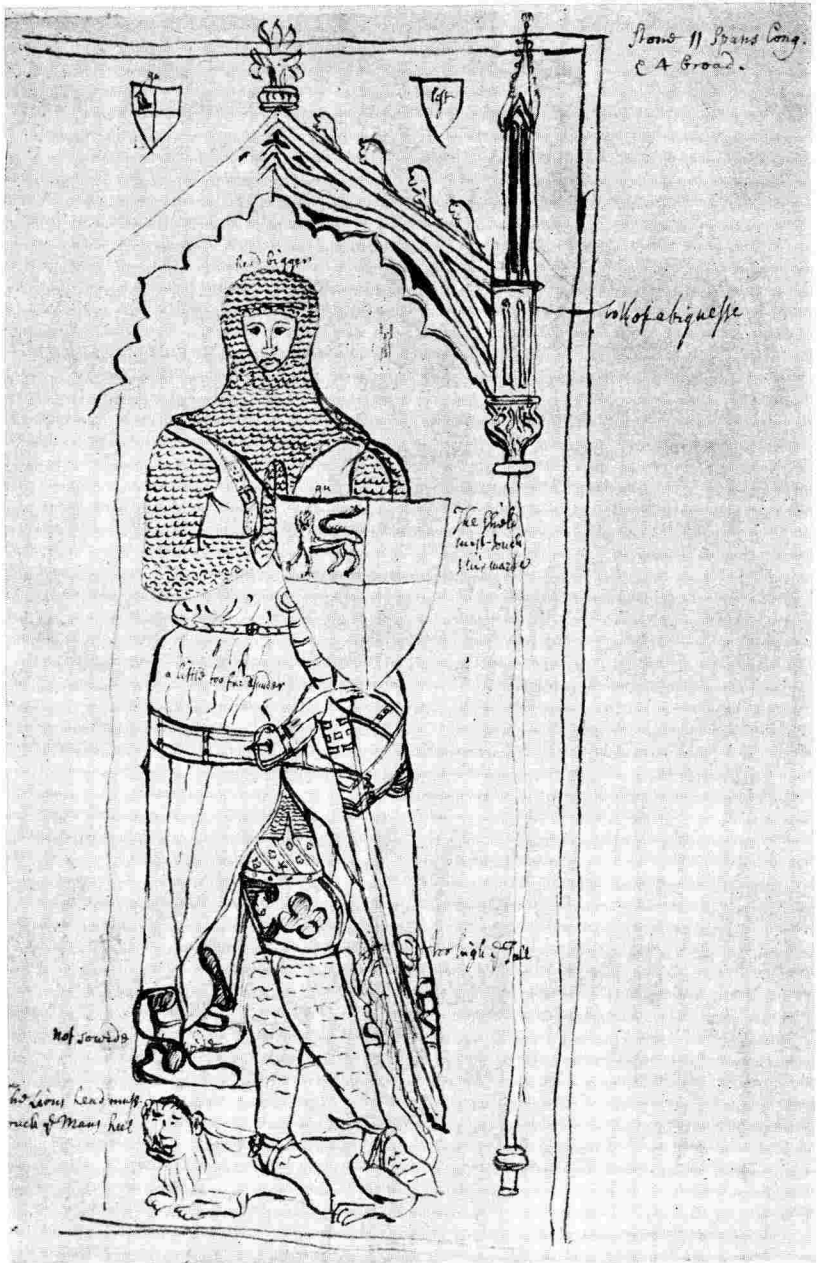
Pyramid in Vicarage Garden, Brandeston. Drawing by Isaac Johnson.

PLATE XVIII



The South Canopied Tomb, engraved after Isaac Johnson.

PLATE XIX



Drawing of the brass of Sir William de Bovile, by Thomas Martin.