

THE LEMAN MONUMENT BY THE CHRISTMAS BROTHERS IN ST STEPHEN'S CHURCH  
IPSWICH

*by John Blatchly*

When for a year or more a redundant medieval church has been used by builders as a site office its treasures are at risk. Luckily, Birkin Haward made the measured drawing illustrated here (Fig.45) in August 1984. Less fortunately, when the protective casing was removed it was found that the skull which formerly adorned the dexter side of the broken pediment had been lost, and that the pediment had suffered damage also.

Various things about this monument are noteworthy; first and foremost its quality (Pl. XIII). John and Matthias Christmas followed their father Gerard (1575–1634) as carvers to the Royal Navy and worked on the great ship 'The Sovereign of the Seas'. Some have suggested Colchester origins for the Christmas family, but certainly Gerard and his seven siblings were taken by their father John to be christened at the church of St Botolph without Aldgate, as John and Matthias took their children to St Giles, Cripplegate. What a sharp tool the IGI can be, now available on microfiche at all Record Offices.

Elsewhere in Suffolk we have Gerard's monument to Elizabeth Drury at Hawstead (1613) and at Chilton that of Sir Robert Crane (made in 1626, though he did not die until 1643). By the sons, there are at Ampton the front-facing demi-figures of Sir Henry Calthorpe (died 1637) and his wife Dorothy holding hands. Work by the brothers most enjoyable in its originality is at East Barsham in Norfolk for Mary Calthorpe (died 1640), put up by her husband James, nephew of Sir Henry. On the Ipswich monument the brothers' signature appears in a separate lower rectangle of black marble as 'Johan & Math:/Christmas:/Fratres Fecerunt./



PLATE XIII – The Leman monument: detail (photo: Birkin Haward).



FIG. 45 – The Leman monument in St Stephen's church (drawn by Birkin Haward).

Robert Leman was the second son of William Leman, Fenreeve of Beccles in 1580 and Portreeve in 1590, and nephew of Sir John Leman, founder of the Free School in Beccles, and Lord Mayor of London in 1616. Too often Sir John and Robert, both free of the Fishmongers' Company, have been confused. Robert was never Lord Mayor; he was chosen as Sheriff of London, but never served the office. The Worshipful Company still contributes to the cost of maintaining the monument in sound condition, including its colouring and gilding. Robert's wife Mary was daughter of William Cooke Esq. of Broome Hall in Loddon Hundred in Norfolk. Perhaps enviably, Robert and Mary died on the same day, 3 September 1637, as the inscription shows: 'The same sunne that closed Her eyes in the morning shutting up His in the evening'. It is perhaps significant that Blomefield (X, 109) makes a connection between the Cookes of Broome and the Calthorpes of Cockthorpe from whom the two Calthorpes who patronised the Christmas brothers were directly descended. Choice of monumental workshop often went in families. Although there are figures on the monument for one son and four daughters, only two daughters, Alice and Mary, survived their parents as their coheireses. Robert held property in Brightwell and Nettlestead, and for his Ipswich house he was allowed by the Headboroughs in May 1630 'to make a table of brick for a foundacon of a bay window into the street, during pleasure, at one penny rent'. The only sizeable mansion in the parish of St Stephen was that formerly of the Rush and Alvard families in Upper Brook Street (described in these *Proceedings* in 1986). With the ten pounds Leman subscribed to the Town Library, possibly by will, but that is lost, a ten-volume set of the complete works of Francisco Suarez was purchased, on the cover of the first of which was gilt-stamped IPSWICH in a most decorative cartouche.

