

AN HERALDIC PUZZLE AT SOUTH ELMHAM ALL SAINTS

by PAUL D. COCKERHAM

THE ANCIENT STAINED glass which remains in the church of All Saints South Elmham (now vested in the Redundant Churches Fund) comprises a collection of 15th-century fragments filling a two-light window in the south aisle, and two charming 16th- or 17th-century roundels of St Dorothy and St Ursula, possibly of Flemish origin, with other pieces, in a lancet in the north west corner of the nave (Tricker 1989, 3). Additionally, in the east window in the south aisle, of two lights with Y-tracery, there is a shield of arms in the upper part of each light, which is otherwise filled with clear glass. The heraldry has been described as recently as the 1980s (Steward, 15) but this account has inaccuracies and does not reveal the heraldic irregularities discussed below.

The shield in the north light is of four quarters, 1 and 4 bearing, *Gu.* a pall reversed(?) *Or* with a buckle(?) conjoined in chief *Arg.*; quartering 2 and 3, *Sa.* a chevron engrailed *Arg.* between 3 crescents *Or* (Pl.XXI). The shield in the south light also looks at first sight to be quartered, with the first and third quarters as in the other, and the fourth of plain, tinted glass (Pl.XXII). This last, however, merely replaces the lower half of a coat which originally occupied the entire sinister division of the shield as an impalement. The upper portion which remains and looks like a second quarter shows a chevron *Sa.* on a field *Or*, above a fess, voided, on which is a gemel ring *Sa.* If the tinctures are reversed, this is clearly identifiable as the arms of Baynard of Spexhall: *Sa.* on a fesse between 2 chevrons *Or*, a gemel ring *Sa.* (Corder 1965, 343), although in the glass, because of the error in tinctures, the fess *Sable* is in outline in order to highlight the rings. The other two coats, however, which impale Baynard on this shield, and quarter themselves on the other, defy easy attribution; earlier accounts of the glass, made before it was repaired (and also re-arranged?) are therefore useful in attempting to achieve an accurate description and identification.

In 1846 the shields appeared much as they do today. Suckling found one in a north window of the nave, 'with four coats: 1st and 4th, Throgmorton – gules, a pairle [pall] reversed or; 2nd, Baynard – or a chevron sab.; 3rd, De la Spine – sab. a chev. arg., between 3 crescents or'. The second shield 'with Throgmorton and De la Spine, quarterly', together with 'a few rosettes of coloured glass', was also in a window in the north wall of the nave. Suckling attributed the shields to John Throgmorton of All Saints, who married Jane, the daughter and co-heiress of Henry Baynard of Spexhall. 'This John Throgmorton was the second son of Thomas Throgmorton, of Throgmorton in Worcestershire, and left a son, Simon Throgmorton, who settled at Earsham in Norfolk, where he died in 1527, and was the ancestor of the Throgmortons of Bungay' (Suckling 1846, 186–87). The Throckmorton attribution must be questioned as the arms of this well-known Midlands family are almost universally blazoned as *Gu.*, on a chevron *Arg.* three bars gemel *Sa.* (Burke 1884, 1012; Corder 1965, 198).

The condition of the glass was similar at the earlier date of 1814, when D.E. Davy visited All Saints and recorded two shields 'in the large window on the N. side [of the chancel]'.¹ He was, however, hesitant in describing what he saw and uncharacteristically made an incomplete blazon. In fact, for the first quarter of the shield now in the southern light, which he attributed to 'Throgmorton?', he tricked, on a field *Gu.* a chevron *Or* with a bar gemel *Sa.* at the apex of the chevron, and continued the chevron upwards to the chief point with an unidentifiable charge *Arg.* Below this was 'De la Spine . . . sa, a chevron engrailed betwⁿ. 3 cresc^{ts}. or. Impaling Baynard? Or, on a fess betwⁿ 2 chevrons, sa., 2 pair of annulets interlaced. this last much broken, therefore uncertain.' The trick shows that a portion of the lower chevron and the entire fess of the Baynard arms were then present. Davy also attributed this shield to John Throgmorton and his wife Jane Baynard; he went on to describe the second shield as 'Throgmorton? & De la Spine, as above, quartered', for the shield now in the north light.

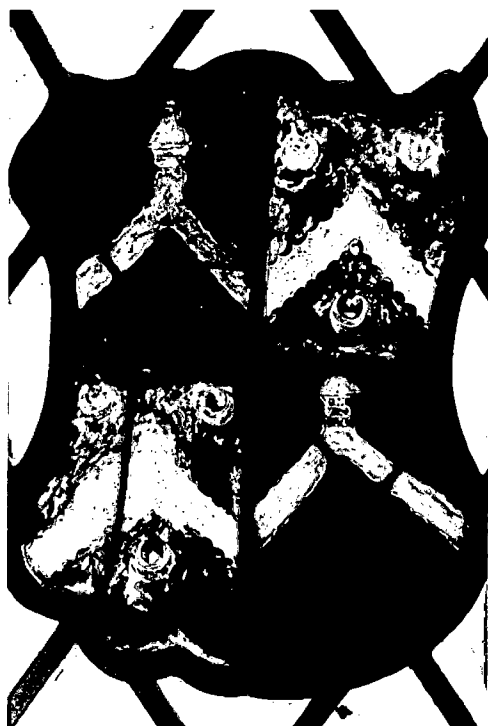


PLATE XXI – All Saints', South Elmham: north light of east window, south aisle.

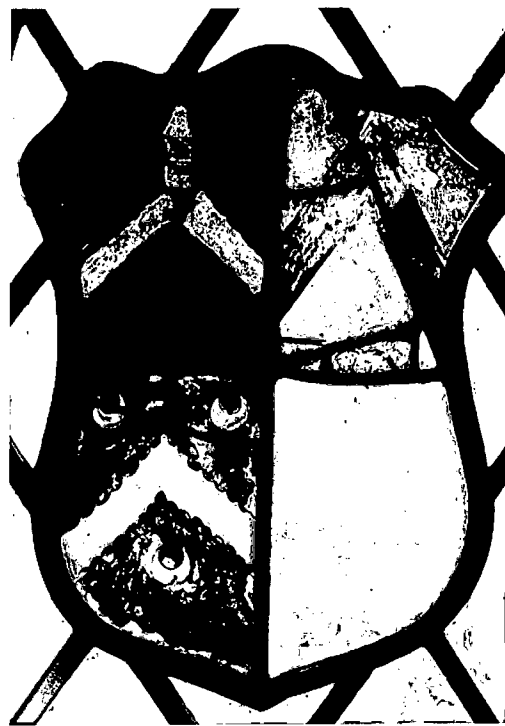


PLATE XXII – All Saints', South Elmham: south light of east window, south aisle.

The earliest and most revealing account, however, is from the mid-17th century, made by William Blois, who sketched a shield which he found 'in a window & on a gravestone for John Throcmorton Ar. et Jana uxor. qui Johan[n]es ob. 1507. His armes qrd wth – & ioynd to Baynard of Spexall'.² The trick shows, Quarterly, 1 and 4, *Gu.* on a chevron *Arg.* 3 bars gemel *Sa.*; 2 and 3, *Sa.* a chevron engrailed *Or* between 3 crescents *Arg.*; impaling, *Or* on a fess between two chevrons *Sa.*, a gemel ring of the last. He added a note, 'ye fess was voyded (like 2 barulets) in y^c glass & y^c anulets *Sa.*: But a whole fess i[n] y^c brass o[n] y^c stone'. The 'whole fess' on the brass shield must be taken as the plain or gilded surface of the metal plate representing *Or*, no doubt with the gemel ring engraved upon it and the lines filled with black mastic. This suggests that the field was cut away and probably also coloured black, leaving the two chevrons like the fess, as a plain or gilded brass surface. These heraldically correct arms with the *Sable* field are those traditionally borne by the Baynards and were recorded at the 1561 Visitation of the county (Corder 1984, 346, 348). The appearance of the Baynard arms in brass and glass was different therefore, although Blois's trick is clearly like those still found in glass, both as an impalement and with the fess indeed 'voyded'. A further comparison of Blois's drawing with the glass shows that the second and third quarters of De la Spine are also quite recognizable, though with the metals reversed; but the first coat, with three bars gemel on a chevron, has little in common with what is seen today. In the first place, the ordinary in the glass is *Or*, instead of Blois's *Argent*, and he drew the three bars gemel distinctly on a chevron, nothing like the peculiar charge on which there is no sign of a bar gemel (albeit Davy tentatively sketched one at the junction of its three limbs). In this instance, therefore, Blois's accuracy might be questioned, but an examination of the Throcmorton genealogy and the monumental evidence remaining in the church proves almost certainly that he was correct.

The death of John Throckmorton esquire on 12 September 1507 was noted in the court rolls of the manor of South Elmham.³ Later, an inquisition post mortem decided that his wife Jane, daughter of Henry Baynard of Spexhall, should remain seised of their jointly held tenements in South Elmham All Saints because their eldest son was under age.⁴ John had moved to Suffolk from the Midlands, being the second son of Thomas Throckmorton of Fladbury, Worcestershire, and grandson of John Throckmorton (Under-Treasurer of England and personal lawyer to Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick) who married Alianora, the heiress of the De la Spine family (Metcalf 1882, 208). It would be logical therefore to expect, in the days before precise rules of marshalling were employed, that the arms of John Throckmorton of All Saints would include Throckmorton quartering De la Spine and impaling Baynard – just what Blois tricked. In addition, the older of the two Throckmorton crests may be found at All Saints: an elephant's head, couped, forms part of an achievement sculpted in relief over the entrance door to the tower staircase (Pl.XXIII). So much for John's associations with All Saints and the date of his death; but what of the 'gravestone' that Blois saw?

On the floor at the west end of the nave is a large slab of buff-coloured oolitic limestone (Badham 1985, 481) with clear indents for the brass figures of a man in armour on the dexter side, inclined slightly towards a lady in a pedimental headdress; below are rectangular indents for two groups of children and two inscription plates, and by each corner was a brass shield (Fig. 59). The use of this type of stone, the outlines of the effigies and the composition in general, are features common to others of the 'Norwich style 4' series of brasses, which ran from 1505 to 1522 (Greenwood and Norris 1976, 32–34). In particular there is a resemblance to a brass at Rougham, Norfolk, dated *c.*1510, the outlines of the male figures being particularly close (Cotman 1839, pl.34). The stylistic evidence suggests that Blois's date of 1507 fits well with what might be expected for this slab; two other brass indents in the church are on small stones and for

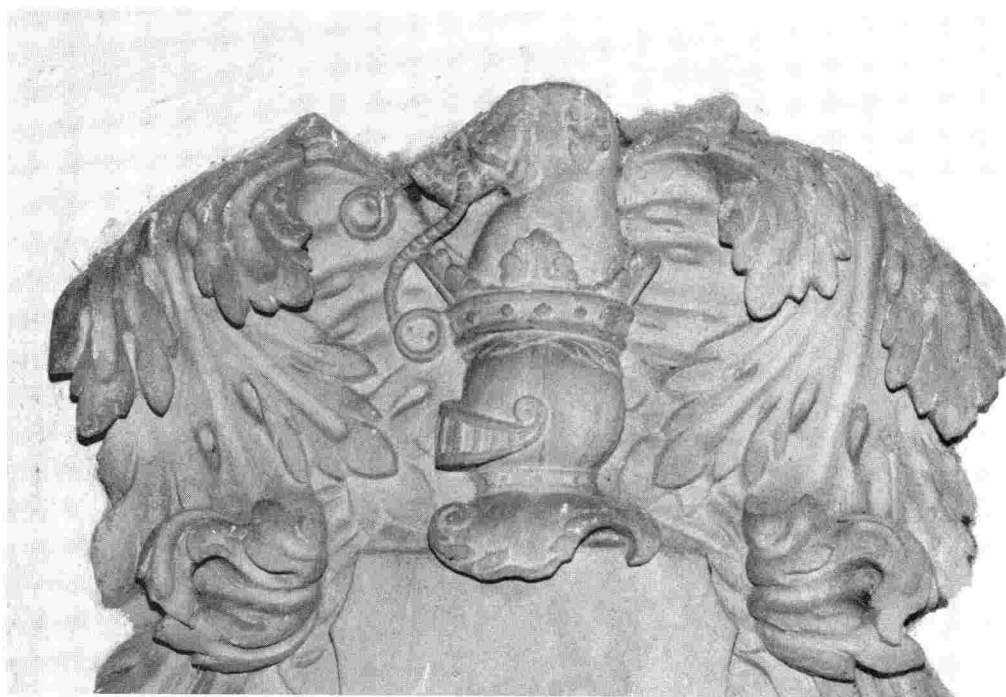


PLATE XXIII – All Saints', South Elmham: Throckmorton crest above tower staircase door.

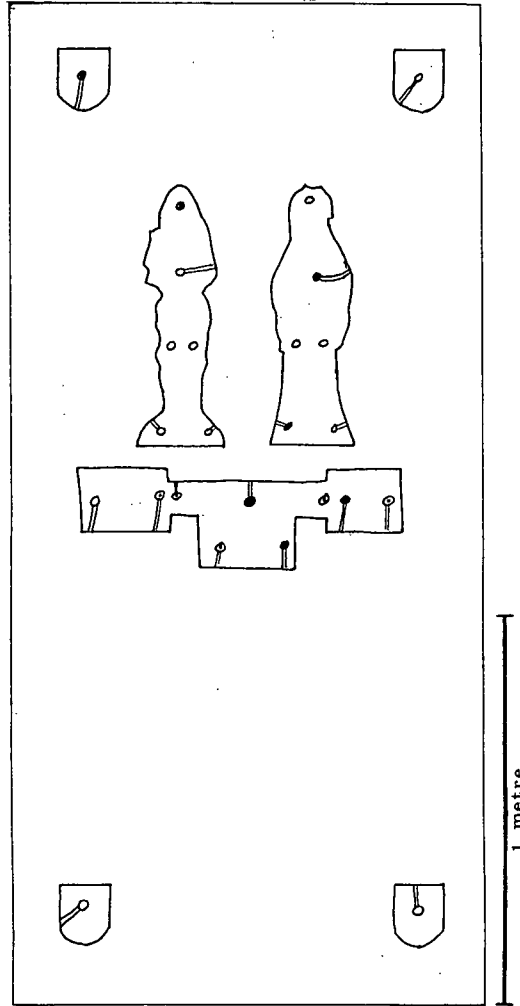


FIG. 59 – All Saints', South Elmham: indent of the Norfolk Series 4 brass to John Throckmorton, 1507 (recognisable outlines indicated by solid lines, empty rivet holes by a circle, lead plugs by a blacked-in circle, and brass rivets by a dot within a circle).

inscriptions only, without shields. It is almost certain therefore that this was the tombstone of John Throckmorton, bearing the inscription and arms that Blois recorded.⁵

All this evidence, albeit circumstantial, suggests that Blois's record was accurate and that the heraldry, at least in the glass, was how he tricked it; the problem lies in accounting for the presence of the unidentifiable arms. Any doubt that they result from an injudicious restoration must be dispelled, because although the glass of both shields has been moved and probably re-arranged, a bad repair could not reassemble in the same way the three quarters in question.⁶ The pall reversed (if that is what it is) was therefore definitely what was meant by the artist of the stained glass. Several possibilities arise, one being that there were originally more than two shields in glass – and possibly duplicated in brass – of which Blois chose to make a composite copy, using both sources, of the clearest or most intact shield, and one which included arms which were familiar to him. Secondly, the glass has glaring errors in the heraldry – the 'voyded' fess is one example, whereas the brass engraver seems to have avoided that particular pitfall. Was it possible therefore that the glass

painter was incorrectly instructed as to the heraldry, or interpreted it in ignorance? The Throckmorton arms were those of a Midlands family, hence unlikely to be known in Norwich like those of more local families, so that their depiction was open to error. Whilst there are definite associations between the design of Norwich-produced brasses and stained glass, the links were not that close, so it is very likely that two orders were given to two different workshops (Badham 1990, 10–11). Thirdly, there may well have been acceptable differences in the same arms in the shields, including the possibility of lost ones, accounting for the reversal in the arms of De la Spine which survive of the tinctures Blois recorded.

By extending this theme of heraldic variation it is also quite possible that for some reason known only to himself, John Throckmorton adopted a completely different set of arms in addition to those of the main family; both sets, the chevron and the reversed pall, with quarterings, were consequently set up in the stained glass – perhaps even during his lifetime – and presumably on the brass as well. It is interesting to speculate that as a pall almost invariably has ecclesiastical connotations (Fox-Davies 1904, 82), the new arms might not represent a family as such but be more to do with a particular land holding, or manor; and being inverted, is it some veiled reference to displeasure with the ecclesiastical lord of the manor (the Bishop of Norwich), or with the See of South Elmham? Commonly at this period armorial bearings passed on with property, but any attempt to find a source for this very rare ordinary, or the combination of a chevron with a charge akin to a buckle in chief, has proved unsuccessful.

The unidentified coat appears to have been adopted uniquely by John Throckmorton as it does not feature in other heraldry pertaining to the family either in Suffolk or elsewhere. In particular, the brass of John's grandson, Lionel Throckmorton (1599), at Holy Trinity, Bungay, displays the family's usual arms of 3 bars gemel on a chevron, although in this case differenced by a crescent, as the second son. It is interesting to speculate on the heraldry which was on the brass originally at Earsham to Simon Throckmorton, John's second son, who died in 1527. There is now no trace of it, but from an old rubbing of the inscription in the collection of the Society of Antiquaries the original slab can be identified, revealing that there was also once a brass shield. Might this also have displayed, to use Suckling's words, the 'pairle inverted'?

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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NOTES

- 1 B.L. Add. MS. 19,111, f.32. When he revisited the church in 1830 he noted 'The Arms in the N. chancel window still remain' (*Ibid.*, f.34). The division between nave and chancel is ill defined along the north wall; presumably both Davy and Suckling found the shields in the same windows but their opinions differed as to the precise location.
- 2 S.R.O.I., GC 17:755, III, 30.
- 3 S.R.O.I., HA 12/C2/30 memb.2v.
- 4 P.R.O., E150/613/2. One peculiarity is that the inquisition, held in 1510, recorded the date of John's death as September 1508 – and yet the chronology of the court rolls must be correct.
- 5 An additional point in confirmation is that in her will Jane Throckmorton desired 'to be bury[e]d w[ith]in the Chauncell of the church of all Sayntes in Sowthe elman by the grave of my . . . husband' (N.R.O., N.C.C. 131–34 Hyll; proved in June 1540). It was in the chancel, close by the glass, that Davy found the gravestone with indents in 1830 (B.L. Add. MS. 19,111, f.34).
- 6 When this was done is not known, although some correspondence and papers dating from 1933–44 refer to the resetting of the glass in the small window in the north wall and the window in the south aisle by the main door, by the firm of C. Townshend and J. Howson, stained glass workers of Putney (S.R.O.L., 147/E4/2).

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Abbreviations

- B.L. British Library.
- N.C.C. Norwich Consistory Court.
- N.R.O. Norfolk Record Office.
- P.R.O. Public Record Office.
- S.R.O.I. Suffolk Record Office, Ipswich Branch.
- S.R.O.L. Suffolk Record Office, Lowestoft Branch.