

TWO 14TH-CENTURY UFFORD FAMILY MEMORIALS
RECORDED BY ISAAC JOHNSON

by John Blatchly

In his late twenties and thirties, Isaac Johnson of Woodbridge enjoyed the patronage of the London antiquaries and authors Richard Gough and John Nichols, also of their friend Craven Ord. All three paid more than one visit to Suffolk and commissioned Johnson to make drawings to illustrate their collections and publications in preparation. Several were engraved for Nichols's *The History of Leicestershire* (1795 – 1815) and Gough's *Sepulchral Monuments* (1786 – 96), but two drawings found recently in the Loes Hundred volumes of the Starkie-Bence collections¹ are of particular interest.

Both are signed and dated 1786, and the first shows that the plate in Nichols's *Collections for Elmswell and Campsey Ash* (1790) is after Johnson.² The other (Pl. IV) must be a Gough commission to illustrate the Rendlesham passage in *Sepulchral Monuments* (Vol. 1, ii, 217) but the author decided that a description would be preferable to an engraving. The surviving index to Johnson's account book³ shows that all three London customers paid him for drawings in 1787.

Weever's *Ancient Funerall Monuments* (1631) has an account of Rendlesham Church on p. 777 which begins: 'Howsoever there be no Inscriptions here upon any of the Gravestones in the Church, yet questionlesse in former times it hath bene beautified with the Funerall Monuments of many worthe Personages'. He goes on to suppose that both Raedwald and Swithhelm were buried here, a suggestion which fired the learned rector and translator of *Vathek*, the Revd Dr Samuel Henley, F.S.A., three years after taking the living in 1782,

to examine what appeared to have been the place of their interment. The spot was covered with two coarse flat stones, which being raised, proved to be the slabs of two very fine figures of a knight and lady, formerly highly ornamented, but now miserably battered and defaced.

Gough goes on to describe the fragments, particularly the heraldry, with so many inaccuracies that we must turn to the detail of Johnson's drawing, one of the most careful of that meticulous painter's productions. The armoured figure wears the mail gorget and jupon. The bawdric hangs too low and the jupon is too long for a date later than 1370. Judging by its decoration the almost featureless slab on the lower right side of the drawing belongs to the male figure. The other may not be a pair with it, for the cusped and crocketed canopy looks to be c. 1330. On the cushion the gold quatrefoils on a blue ground seem to be without heraldic significance.

On both jupon and 'mattress' (as Gough calls it) there are alternate diamond shapes bearing Sable a cross engrailed Or, and Barry of six Argent and Gules. I suggest that the effigy painter showed Barry when Bendy was intended. We would then have seen *Ufford* and *Valoines* which must refer to the marriage of Robert, Lord Ufford, c. 1281 – 1316, and Cecilia, daughter and coheir of Robert de Valoines, d. 1325. Their second son and heir, another Robert, was made Earl of Suffolk in 1336/7. He died in 1369 and with his first wife Alianor was buried as his will (Lambeth: 109, 112 Whittleseye) directs, 'à Campasse, desoultz l'arche parentre la Chapelle St. Nich. & le haut altier, ou le tombe eut este ordeigne'.

Of others of the family known to have been buried at the Priory, Robert's brothers Ralph and Edmund died in 1346 and 1375 respectively, and his son William the second Earl in 1381; none of these dates fits the style of the male costume well, and the lavish display of Ufford and Valoines coats suit an heir best.

If, as I believe, the mutilated effigies are post-Dissolution refugees from the Priory, only a mile and a half from Rendlesham church, then they are most likely to be for the first Earl Robert

and his mother, the lady Cecilia, or his first wife Alianor who died *c.* 1337. There are many precedents for moves from conventual to parochial churches at the Reformation (e.g. at Hollesley from Butley, Framlingham from Thetford, North Creake, Earls Colne, and Cowfold from Lewes), and it has been suggested that some of the brass indents in the tower at Ufford church came from Campsey Ash too. The figures were inverted when Dr Henley found them, perhaps for safety, or because they had suffered so badly at some stage that they were no longer fit to be seen. It would be interesting to know what happened to them after the drawing had been made; they may still lie in church or yard at Rendlesham to this day. If so they are well hidden.

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Notes

- ¹ These are in private ownership.
- ² For the plate Johnson made a fair copy of Thomas Martin's drawings and plan, now in Craven Ord's extra-illustrated 1764 *Suffolk Traveller*, Bodley MS Top. Suff. b.2, between ff. 150-1.
- ³ Suffolk Record Office, Ipswich, HD 11: 432.