

# ADDITIONS TO "THE INCISED SLABS OF LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND"

by

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Since this book appeared in 1958<sup>1</sup>, three further items have been recorded. Of these (1) evidently escaped Beetlestone's normally very sharp eye, but was spotted by Mr. John Daniell of Newarke Houses Museum in November 1969; (2) was found in 1962 by Mr. Leo W. Cullen of Melton Mowbray; for (3) I must accept full responsibility for having missed it when visiting the church in December 1926.

(I) AB KETTLEBY (FRAMLAND). November 1969  
15th or early 16th century. Two pieces of a cross-slab. Built into external parapet on South side, about 20 feet above ground, over South door. Figs. 1 and 2.

These were spotted in 1969 by our member Mr. John Daniell, who kindly took the photographs here reproduced and sent them to me. It is possible that more pieces of this slab—and perhaps of others—may be similarly built into the parapet, but facing inward (i.e. to the roof). To verify this would involve the use of a long ladder and a mountaineering effort of which, alas, I am no longer capable.

One of these pieces contains part of the stem of a cross, with some words of a marginal inscription on either side. The sinister side appears to read "t ?ri", the dexter "vii cui". The other piece comprises what seems part of a masonry-type base and marginal inscription "?Elen" on sinister edge, and on dexter side "?ml cccc?".

It is not known at what time this slab was cut up and used as building material.

(II) AB KETTLEBY (POTTER'S HILL FARM). (FRAMLAND).  
1962

?15th century. Part of a cross-slab, used as a building stone. Fig. 3.

Fragment of a slab showing lower sinister part of a curious cross-stem and a few letters of marginal inscription on sinister and bottom edges. It is apparently one of a local type of which another example may be seen at Muston.

The marginal inscription reads "m rogo cuntum (?abbreviation for "cunctum")/Me pr." The stone appears to be local oolite.

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1. F. A. GREENHILL, *The Incised Slabs of Leicestershire and Rutland*, published by the L.A.H.S. (Leicester, 1958).

The slab of which this fragment formed part evidently comes from some church in the locality, perhaps Kirby Bellars, where the gravestones were put up for sale at the Dissolution, or from some other church when it was re-floored at a time when a passion for neat tiles and "unity" prevailed.

\* For the photograph here reproduced I am indebted to Mr. Leo W. Cullen of Melton Mowbray.

(III) HUSBANDS BOSWORTH (GARTREE). 11 September 1975

- I. Erasmus Smith, esq., 1616 (error for 1615) and two wives, with five sons and five daughters, kneeling. Black marble tablets in alabaster frame, now skied on inner wall of Tower. ?From the workshop of Epiphany Evesham. Fig. 4.

I visited this church in December 1926, on a day when the light was not very good. I noticed a wall-monument on North wall of Tower, a black marble panel in an alabaster frame, much obscured by overflow from a tank higher up. The Tower was largely filled with paraphernalia; so far as I was able to see, there were no figures on the stone, but Mr. Harold Jones, viewing it recently in a better light, was able to spot some *very* thinly engraved ones on the upper part. As a result, a joint visit was made with Mr. Kellett of Commercial Photos Ltd., Leicester, and several photographs made; these, owing to disfigurement of the stone by the tank overflow, did not come out as well as we had hoped, but enabled Mr. Jones to make a careful restoration of his light rubbing, a task requiring infinite patience but finally crowned with signal success.

The monument consists of two slabs of black marble, the upper one 23 inches long by 22½ wide, the lower 5 by 22½ inches, both set into an alabaster frame surmounted by a sculptured achievement; on the frame, just under this, are the words, cut into the alabaster of the frame, now partly illegible, but recorded by Nichols (Vol. II, part II, p. 469) as: "QUI JACET HIC GRANDÆVVS ERAT PIETATIS AMATOR, DIVITIS EXEMPLV(M), PAVPERIS AUXILIV(M)."

The uppermost slab bears in the top portion a very finely engraved kneeling group of an armed man, two ladies, five sons and five daughters. He and the first wife are placed on opposite sides of a prayer-desk on which lie two books. The second wife kneels behind the first one, the children in the usual convention, sons in rear of the man, daughters behind the wives. Between the main figures is a skeleton with a dart in each hand which he points respectively at the husband and first wife; over his head, on a label, "VENI.VIDI.VICI". He is placed on a small hillock just above the praying hands of the spouses. From the husband's mouth rises a scroll inscribed "PECCAVI. PÆNITET MISERERE", and from the first wife's another bearing the legend "PIÈ. JUSTÈ.SOBRIÈ.VIXI".

The man's armour, with "peascod-belly" breastplate, is typical of the period; part of his sword-scabard is visible on the far side. The sons are in normal civil dress of the early seventeenth century; the wives wear the "French hood", with veils turned back behind at ruff level and brought forward again over the head; they are attired in handsome ruffs and acutely

peaked stomachers worn over plain gowns. The daughters are similarly dressed, save that four of them appear to be bareheaded, and their stomachers are flounced along the base.

This monument was removed from the Chancel, where Nichols found it, to its present position at the restoration in the latter part of last century.

Beneath the figures is this inscription:

“IN OBITVM ERASMI SMITH ARMIGERI, QVI (ornamental flourish)

MORTEM OBIIT AN(N)O DOMINI. 1616.

ET ÆTATIS SVÆ.82”. (ornamental flourish)

THVS DEATH TRIVMPHS, AND TELLS VS ALL MVST DIE,

THVS WEE TRIVMPH, TO CHRIST BY DEATH TO FLIE.

TO LIVE TO DYE, IS NOT TO DYE BVT LIVE

TO DYE TO BLISS, IS BLESSED LIFE TO GEVE.

OH BLESS ME THEN, OH STRIKE ME ATT THE HARTE;

BREATH OVT MY LIFE, AND LET MY SOVLE DEPARTE.

ASKE HOW HE LIV'D & THOV SHALT KNOW HIS END,

HE DIED A SAINT TO GOD, TO POORE A FRIEND.”

and on the smaller plate beneath:

“NASCIMVR HEV FLENTES, ET PÆNIS VIVIMVS OMNES,

HEV MORIMVR LACHRYMIS, HEV METVISSE MORI.

TOLLE CAPVT, CONFIDE DEO, CÆLOQ(VE) STVDETO,

EST MIHI VITA MORI, SIT TIBI VITA MORI. E.S.”

All these inscriptions are in Roman capitals.

At foot of frame are two projections, one on either side, each supported on a carved cherub's head.

On the sculptured achievement at top, these arms: *Gu.*, on a chev. or betw. three bezants, three crosslets fitchée sa., with mantled helm and crest, Out of a ducal coronet, a goat's head ppr.

Neither the Inventory of his possessions nor the *Inquisitio post Mortem* appear to have survived, but a copy of the will, made on 2 January 1611 (1612 by modern reckoning) is preserved in the County Record Office. Beginning with a recital of previous wills which he now revokes, he states that this final one is made with the consent of son Roger; after which, and the usual commendation of his soul to the Almighty and Jesus Christ his Redeemer and Saviour, and a direction that his body is to be buried at the discretion of his executor, he proceeds to dispose of his worldly gear. Nothing to son James, whose brother, the said Roger, has already, unknown to testator, made more generous provision for him than testator would have done. Nothing to daughters Croft and Nanfan or their children, he having already secured to each of them £200, to Mrs. Croft by a bill to her husband to be paid after testator's death, and to Mrs. Nanfan's husband the like value in cattle and money. To Dr. Duport, the rector, 20 nobles. (A few small legacies, of no special interest omitted). To his two men and son Roger's household servants one quarter's wages. To godson Erasmus Smyth £20, and to all the rest of Roger's children 20 nobles apiece. To Robert Tanfield, if still unapprenticed at testator's death, £10. To poor of Bosworth 40 shillings, of Goudby 10 shillings, with 10 shillings each to all the parishes bordering with Bosworth.

To mending of highways in Bosworth when the inhabitants shall agree to make them, £3—6—8. To Dr. Duport, Robert Smyth his brother and all his children each a gold ring worth 35 shillings engraved with the words "Doe as you woude be done unto: E.S." To each of his grandchildren who shall demand it, 10 shillings. To son Roger (appointed sole executor) and his heirs all his lands, tenements and hereditaments and residue of all goods, chattels, money and debts. Finally, he again expressly revokes all other wills formerly made, whether written or spoken. Witnesses, Erasmus Burditt, Robert Nicholls and Edward Somers. Proved at Leicester 4 October 1615.

From the endorsement of the will "Probat' Quarto die Octobris A° Dni 1615" it would appear that the year of death is wrongly stated on the monument as 1616, and must be related to the first nine months of the previous one. This, combined with the omission of the day and month of death, seems to indicate that the monument may not have been executed for some little time after that event.

According to Nichols, Erasmus was the third son of John Smith of Withcote, esq., and resided first at Somerby, prior to his purchase of the manor and advowson of Husbands Bosworth in 1565. He married (1) . . . Baiard, relict of . . . Wye (2) Margaret,<sup>2</sup> sister of Lord Burleigh and widow of Roger Cave of Stanford-on-Avon, Co. Northants.

As only two of the sons and the same number of daughters are mentioned, most of the others had presumably predeceased him. (One son, Henry, had been presented to the rectory, but had died after a relatively short incumbency, being succeeded by the Dr. Duport who gets 20 nobles and a memorial ring).

According to the List of Benefactors (Nichols, Vol. II, part II, p. 470) he conveyed by trust, shortly before his death, a half-yard land and several other properties in Bosworth, the rents and profits to be applied to the use of the church and causeways, or other charitable uses, at the discretion of the Trustees.

Nichols's drawing, reproduced at Plate LXXXI, fig. 16, is about as misleading as could well be, suggesting detached figures sculptured in some light-hued stone against a dark background.

It was apparently one of Roger's children, who, shortly after his grandfather's death, began to suffer from a species of fits which in 1616 resulted in bringing nine local women to the gallows on a charge of witchcraft, as related at length in an interesting letter from Robert Heyrick of Leicester (for whom see p. 101) to his brother Sir William in July 1616, given at length by Nichols (*ibid.*, p. 471).

This slab resembles another a year earlier at Chelmsford, Essex, which the late Mrs. K. A. Esdaile attributed to the noted monumental artist Epiphany Evesham. Both bear almost identical dart-bearing skeletons, though the Chelmsford one is set a trifle lower, standing on the prayer-desk. The eight English verses also appear at Chelmsford, identical in every detail. They occur again, shorn of the fifth and sixth lines, on another slab, dated

2. Nicholls, II, part I, p. 183 (and again at II, part II, p. 470). Yet on p. 185 he calls her "Margery" and says she was the *daughter* of William Cecil, Lord Burleigh.

1630, at Water Stratford, Bucks., also probably by Evesham, though it contains no skeleton.

The skeleton and dart motif, with a side instead of a front view, is also found on a brass at Marsworth, Bucks. (1618), signed "Evesham fecit" and showing Edmund West, esq., lying fully armed on a bed, with the skeleton appearing from the sinister side; the wife kneels beside the bed, with the children (two of them in cradles) facing her. The treatment of wife and children, as also of the Chelmsford figures, seems to leave little doubt that both these, as also the Water Stratford and Husbands Bosworth slabs are works by Evesham, or one of his staff. The somewhat inferior style of the majority of the Husbands Bosworth figures tends to suggest that most of the figure-work was in this instance handed over to an assistant of second-rate ability.