

## NOTES ON HELMETS IN LITTLE CHART CHURCH.

BY MAJOR VICTOR FARQUHARSON.

Two helmets hang near the centre of the north wall in the Darell chapel.

They represent what would have originally been complete funeral trophies to two persons entitled to bear arms, who have been buried there with heraldic pomp.

They are on iron perches or brackets (as these are generally termed in the undertakers' accounts). Each bracket has a cross-piece and also a hook. On the former would have been displayed the Cote armour—this was generally of canvas, painted, and in shape resembled a tabard. From the hooks would have hung the sword, spurs and gauntlets, which, together with the shield or targe, made up complete achievements.

The helmets, as is usually the case, are now all that remain. Higher overhead two sets of irons, with loops for poles, shew where banners, which have now disappeared, formerly hung.

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The helmets represent two of the distinct types into which church helmets can be divided: that which is shewn by photograph, and can be known as No. 1, is made up entirely of real armour, in fact it represents the halves of two distinct head-pieces. The front is that of a tilting heaume and the back portion is that of a large bascinet. No. 2 is of the class merely made for funeral purposes, and never was intended to be, nor could have been worn.

No. 1 is of considerable interest. The front is part of a very massive and finely proportioned heaume, such as was used for tournament purposes from the middle of the fif-

teenth century to the end of Henry VIII.'s reign. It is of great weight; the upper part is very thick, especially where the edge is turned in at its prominent part in front of the slit for sight, and also lower down—parts where defence from the lance was most needed. Below, where there are two holes for screws by which the heaume was fastened to the breastplate, it is slightly thinner, and here it has been cut off on the slit side, leaving only one screw-hole visible; possibly it had been broken through at the other hole by a lance thrust.

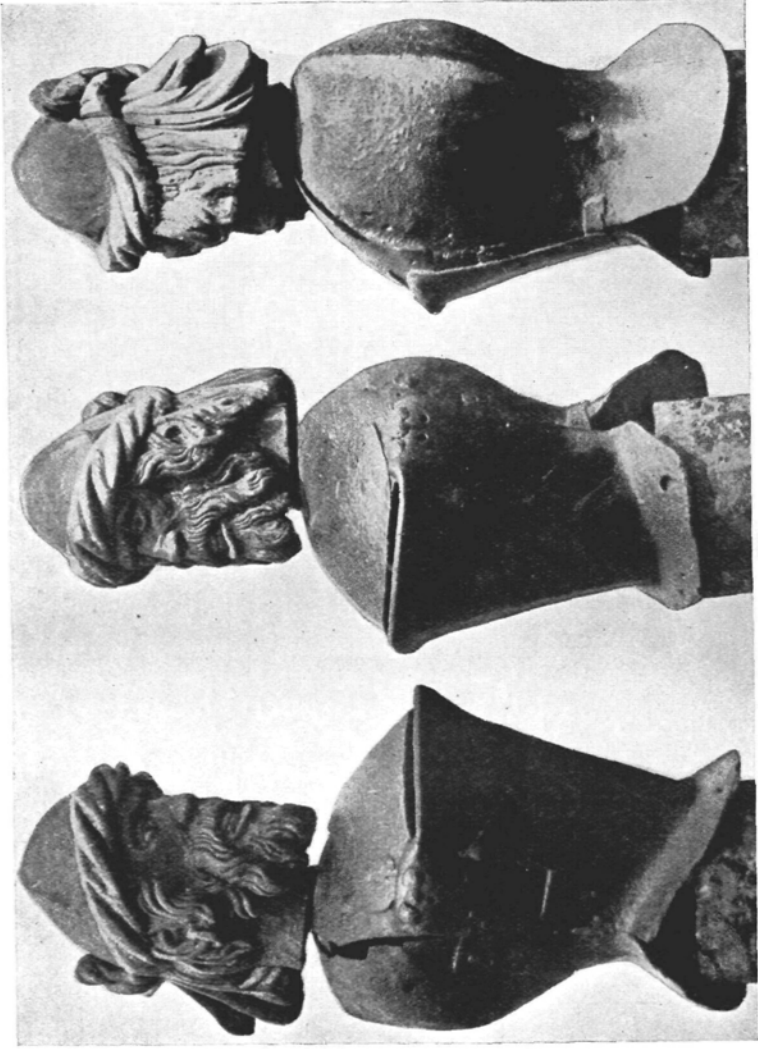
The crown is thick and formed at a requisite angle to deflect the lance. Over the real crown is rivetted a reinforcing piece which comes right down to the edge of the occularium. A remarkable feature is that, although the crown has this extra piece added to the top, another and third thickness is obtained by covering the inside with a thick piece of rather coarse metal from edge of eye-slit to top of crown. This third piece is rivetted through the two other plates, viz., the crown and top reinforcing piece; this points to its being a later addition.

On the right side there is the usual large rectangular opening for hearing and also for air, the metal being turned back to form a guard for the opening.

This opening in most cases must have been an afterthought. The openings are generally roughly made and the turned-out piece, being almost at right angles to the side, was liable to be broken off by the lance, which seems likely to have occurred in this example.

The front portion of No. 1 is almost certainly of English make and early of its class. It resembles in outline the best examples known of these English tilting heaumes—the "Brocas" now in the Woolwich collection. There are several others of the class still in churches, as at Ashford, Petworth, Westminster, Windsor, also Haseley, but some of these are shorter and of heavier make.

Similar tilting heaumes of continental make are generally fluted. A fine example is shewn in Albert Diner's etching of a heaume with a cock as crest, where the artist has run



LITTLE CHART CHURCH  
Helmet and Crest, from three points of view

riot with his graver and wealth of scroll as a mantling for the crest.

Our first printer at Westminster, in his second and illustrated edition of the *Game and Playe of the Chesse*, 1482, gives a woodcut shewing the knight wearing just such a heaume as the front shewn in the photograph belonged to.

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The back of No. 1: This is the greater part of the back of a large bascinet somewhat similar to a heaume in being supported on the shoulders. There is a considerable number of those large bascinets still to be found in English churches. It is a form only found in England, and must have been evolved from the early bascinet of the fourteenth century by lengthening so that it should rest on the shoulder, and dispensing with the earnail. With it could be worn visors for different vises. Where the holes appear on each side of the crown, short pieces having hinge slots worked on pivots; these were permanently fixed. The visors had corresponding hinge slots which fitted into those of the short pieces, and were secured by pins passing through both.

When a different visor was to be used the existing one was released by pulling up the pins, and another substituted. Smaller holes appear near the large pivot holes; these held eyelets, to which the short chains which secured the pins were attached. There are examples of the different visors to be seen in various churches—at Willington, Beds, is a very fine example of one with visor for tilting, over a Gostwick tomb; a similar is at Birling, Kent, with the Nevill crest, a well-carved bull and chain.

At Cobham there is a bascinet with visor resembling that of an armet fitting into a breffe. This is presumably one for war purposes.

These great bascinets were much used for fighting on foot, and their smooth rounded visors, with a number of small slits for vision and air, were used with them, or fluted visors of bellows appearance. A good example of the former

was in Rayne Church, Essex, passed to Baron de Cosson's collection, and thence to the Metropolitan Museum, New York. At Wimborne Minster is a large bascinet with visor of the latter pattern, near the tomb of a Duke of Somerset.

It will be noticed in the photograph that the portion of the bascinet we are discussing has been very roughly cut, or rather broken away, to fit it to the front part. It seems difficult to understand why it should have been cut at all, as the front part would have overlapped it, and the effect would have been neater. The probability is that this portion of armour was already a broken and discarded piece when chosen by the undertakers for the present purpose.

The front and back portions of No. 1 are joined by three metal straps, which may have been cut from the back part. One strap connects the two crowns, a narrow one the left side and a broader one the right, higher up. The effect of the whole, if somewhat contracted at the neck, is good.

The crest, a Saracen's head, is boldly carved and in good condition. The somewhat untidy folds of the twisted turban are well rendered and give a picturesque appearance. The colour of the turban is blue and white.

#### NO. 2 HELMET.

No. 2 helmet comes under the head of those made only for funeral purposes. In many instances these were roughly put together, and had little of the character of real ones. This specimen, though not real, is a dummy "with a circumstance," as no doubt it was made so that it should correspond with No. 1 (already hanging on the wall), and does in fact correspond when viewed from below.

It is of better make than most of its class, and has been well put together with rivets; the curves at the neck are properly hammered out. The crest is similar to that of No. 1, but not as well carved. Till quite recently it was supposed that the bulk of the helmets in churches was of this description, but such is not the case, the dummy ones being quite in the minority. A greater proportion is of

the class of No. 1, consisting of real pieces put together to make the funeral helmet. As very early portions were often used, these are generally very interesting.

Quite close to Little Chart there are two others, one at Ashford—the “Fogge” Heaume—similar to the front of No. 1, and at Brabourne the greater part of a bascinet similar to the back part of No. 1. It would have been of advantage to compare them with the parts similar in No. 1. In Helmet No. 1 we have an unusually interesting specimen of a church helmet, since it is made of two distinct and rare pieces of real armour.