

NOTES ON AN IRON GRAVE SLAB AND THE CHURCH FITTINGS AT FOOTS CRAY.

BY V. J. B. TORR.

SEPULCHRAL slabs made of the unusual material of cast iron are fairly numerous in the churches of that border district of Kent, Surrey, and Sussex which was formerly the seat of the Wealden iron industry, and in Kent one so early as the beginning of the seventeenth century may be seen at Chiddingstone;¹ but out of this area they are of such rarity, that it is interesting to record the existence of an example in the churchyard of Foots Cray. This slab has its surface very much pitted from the effects of weather, and (I am informed) the feet of boys playing upon it, so that it is to be feared that in a few more years its inscription, the deciphering of which is even now a matter of great difficulty, may be no longer legible. It is therefore desirable to place this on record before it is too late.

This iron grave slab lies near the south wall of the chancel of Foots Cray church (All Saints'), mounted on a brick base only a few inches deep, and measures about 5 ft. 3 in. by 2 ft., and nearly one inch thick. At its head are incised two crossed bones, and beneath them the following inscriptions, rather rudely cut (as is often the case on iron slabs, which display both incised and raised lettering), in equal Roman capitals:

HERE LYETH INTERRED THE BODIE
OF MARTIN MANING YEOMAN WHO
DEPARTED THIS LIFE ON THE
10 (?) DAY OF OCTOBER 1656 nnnn
AGED 63 YEARS

¹ For Richard Streatfeilde, 1601. See *Arch. Cant.* XXXI, lxxviii, where, however, the inscription (in relief) is inaccurately and inconsistently transcribed and a word misread: *eene* should be *seene*.

And lower down :

AS ALSO BARBARA THE WIFE OF
MARTIN MANNING WHO DEPARTE^D
THIS LIFE ON THE 5 DAY OF
APRIL 1665 AGED 67 YEARS UN

And at the foot :

IN SPEM RESVRRECTIONIS UN

(The symbols at the ends of three of the lines represent scrollwork of simple type. October 10 is probably the correct date, but the figures have almost perished.)

Mention of a few further points of interest in the fittings of this pleasantly situated little church (which has in the last century undergone a lengthening to the west, and is now designed to receive the addition of a north aisle) may be allowed here, as there appears to be no paper upon it in any of the volumes of *Arch. Cant.*

The western doorcase and timber porch were moved and reset at the lengthening of the nave: the doorcase is of the square-framed Perpendicular type frequent in Kent, and appears to date from about the end of the fifteenth century; there is no hood mould, and the head of the arch is partly hidden by the eastern truss of the porch roof, implying that the (late mediæval) porch is probably of the early sixteenth century, though its walls are modern work. Despite the protection of this porch, the inner doorcase is unhappily covered with thick whitewash, which requires removal. The door seems of seventeenth century date.

Near this door, at the S.W. of the nave, is a good Purbeck (?) marble font, of the late twelfth century, though a good deal of restoration has taken place. The square bowl is lined with lead and has shallow, round-headed arcading externally, and rests upon a central and four angle shafts, on a moulded base; the plinth and step are modern, as also the angle shafts and seemingly the lower

part of the central column. The staple slots were apparently at the N.E. and S.W. corners.

The spired bell-cot is borne by timber framing from the ground, such as appears at Cowden, Harty, and other small churches in Kent and Surrey, but since the extension of the nave this is no longer at its western end.

The north chapel has in its northern wall a moulded brick arch, apparently of Tudor period, in which have been deposited the fine freestone effigy of a lady dressed in veil, wimple, and mantle fastened with a cord and pendant kirtle, with an angel supporting the head cushions, and the remains of that of her husband (the head and right arm only), the character of the armour generally similar to that of the knights at Folkestone and Ickham, and of the female head-dress to that of the brasses at East Wickham, Upchurch, and Graveney. These effigies are not in their original position, and are considerably worn; they date from the middle of the fourteenth century.

In the severely restored chancel a modern aumbry, piscina, and dropped-sill sedile may be seen; the altar table is modern also, and the bad communion rails are the Victorian successors of what were probably Carolean ones of good pattern. A little gate now opens to the rood-loft stair, rectangular-framed and with three moulded balusters pierced with heart openings (the design copied in the modern churchyard gates), and dated along the top,

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There can be little doubt that this is a remnant (probably one of the gates) of the ejected Communion rails, put to a new use.

The rood-loft stair is contained in a shallow buttress-like projection from the south wall of the nave at its east end; the quoins of this turret are of ragstone, much decayed, but two (at the S.W. angle) are re-used blocks of Caen stone, one of which bears a scratch mass-dial on its southern face. Access to the turret is gained from the church by a square-headed late Perpendicular doorcase, all whitewashed; three

steps of the newel stair remain, but modern alteration has taken place, and they now open on to the florid alabaster pulpit of unmistakable Victorian stamp, altogether too pretentious for a little country church.

A late heraldic ledger stone, of bluish-grey marble, lies in the chancel, commemorating "George Russell, late of Christchurch in Surry" (Hants?), died April 8th, 1804.¹ The medallion bears shield, torse and crest only: arms, a lion rampant, three cinquefoils in chief; crest, a goat passant. Next to this is a prettily-lettered buff marble slab to an infant, of date 1682, and a small brass inscription to Thos. Myton, rector, ob. 30 Jan. 1489-90.²

POSTSCRIPT.

Harris (*Hist. of Kent*, 1719, p. 234) notes at East Peckham (another church not actually in the iron district), a seemingly "ancient" iron plate, with a cross on it, to one William Banson. For some account of the restoration of Foots Cray church, see *Ecclesiologist*, June, 1863, p. 194; and a coloured drawing of the font (by E. J. Carlos, 1832), in unrestored state without angle shafts, in Add. MS. 32359, f. 188, where are (ff. 186-9) other pictures of the church, from 1799 onwards. *Reg. Roff.* 955, records that prior to 1769 was existing (now gone, alas) in the E. window of the chancel a "very ancient" impaled coat (*Ar. a chev. gu. int. 3 molets pierced sa. ; Ar. a salt. engr. az.*), the sinister attributed to Abell (of Erith); and Philipott (1659, but from earlier notes of his father), 109, mentions Vaughan impaling Warner in the windows. Hussey (*Supp.*, 365) notes a small remnant of fourteenth century screenwork surviving before 1852, now vanished with the glass. For other mention of the church, see Harris, 86; Brayley's *Beauties* (1808), viii, 1357; *Eccles. Topography* (1811), unpaginated; Glynne (ante 1840), 320; Hussey, 54; Grayling, i. 125-6.

Philipott says that the stone effigies are those of Sir Simon de Vaughan and lady (*temp.* Ed. III), quoting Robert Glover that they were perfect in the sixteenth century, but states that they were greatly injured by time and sacrilege in his own day,

¹ Ten years later than the last example quoted in *Arch. Cant.* XLI, 188.

² *Reg. Roff.* 954; Griff. and Steph. 91.

damage probably sustained during the Civil War. Philipott, Harris (who also records "a fair Communion-Table and Altar-Piece" in this church), and Thorpe state that the effigies lay on an *altar-tomb* (mentioned as late as Hussey's time, if he was not merely copying from earlier writers), but nothing more of this now remains than a slab beneath the sculptures, doubtless the top of the vanished tomb. The writers mostly agree upon the effigies being in the N. chapel, though Philipott simply says that the tomb stood "in the Church." The elucidation of their past history is difficult, as, though the brick arch is old work, it could scarcely have admitted even a low tomb; yet Thorpe says the tomb stood under an arch "on the North side," and Brayley, omitting notice of any tomb, that the mutilated effigies were under "a low obtuse arch" there, which answers the description. It is to be feared that failing any further reliable documentary evidence, the problem must rest unsolved.