

THE BRASSES AND INCISED SLABS AT MILTON REGIS
PARISH CHURCH

By IAN BETHUNE

MILTON REGIS was rich in brasses, and though some have been destroyed the majority remain. The brasses will be dealt with here in chronological order, as accuracy will permit.

(i) The earliest of the remaining brasses can be dated to 1480,¹ being an effigy of a knight in armour, 30 in. by 10 in. He is bare-headed and has a dog at his feet, which is slightly mutilated. The armour has tuilles elbow pieces and genouillieres of extravagant size, the latter having overlapping plates to guard the joints behind. There are Pauldrons with their shoulder rediges and gauntlets, the sword is girded in front, 1 ft. 1 in. in length, crossing from left to right. The marble slab in which the brass is set bears the incisions of former effigies, the shape of which suggests that there is space for an inscription 14 in. by 3 in., and four small figures 6½ in. in height, coupled either side below the inscription. Probably two sons, wife and daughter.

(ii) The next is an effigy of a man in armour, 31½ in. by 9 in., and his wife. He is bare-headed and is an example of the tabard worn over the armour, not too common in Kent. A dog is at his feet, badly mutilated. (Fig. 1.)

The wife measures 31 in. by 7 in., and is clad in a typical dress of the period, with a pedimental head-dress.

There is one remaining shield, St. George's Cross engrailed gules on field ermine, the arms of the de Northwode. This is also on the tabard.

The original arrangement of these brasses was on a slab (marble?) measuring 6 ft. 9 in. by 3 ft. 6 in.

There were then four shields, the top two were de Northwode, as is shown by a drawing dated 1803, by T. Fisher.² The bottom two shields were probably of his wife.

The inscription formed a border around the brasses, and is now entirely missing, along with the original slab. However, J. Weever,

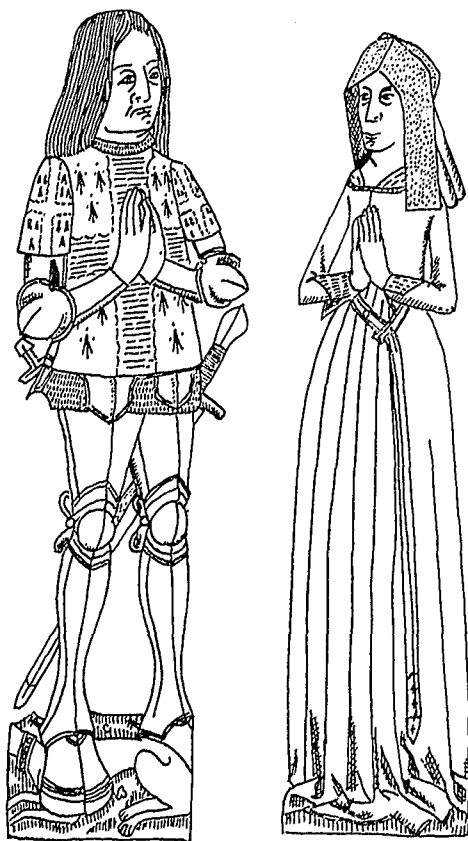
¹ Victoria and Albert Museum, *Brass Rubbings*, 3rd imp., 1970, 239, gives the date 1470.

² *Kent Drawings*, Vol. 2, Kent Arch. Soc. Library.

Funeral Monuments, 1630,³ quotes the piece of inscription which was then remaining, 'Prey for the soul of John Norwood Esquire . . . 1496'.

The brasses were duly restored (the male figure having a crack running the length of his waist), and re-varnished, in 1970 by Mr. James.

- (iii) The final brass is a monument to Thomas and Margaret Alefe. The kneeling figure is now missing, but T. Fisher again comes to our aid by supplying a diagram of Thomas Alefe, although the head is still missing. From Fisher's diagram, I have taken the illustrations shown here of the brass. He measures 8 in. by 4 in.



SIR JOHN de NORTHWODE 1496

FIG. 1.

British Museum.

BRASSES AND SLABS AT MILTON REGIS PARISH CHURCH

and is kneeling at a fold stall, together with his son. There is an inscription in Latin above each figure, 6 in. by $\frac{1}{2}$ in.:

'Wisere mei deus'

The wife, $8\frac{1}{2}$ in. by 5 in. is also kneeling at a fold stall in the same manner, with her daughter, both dressed in pedimental head-dresses and gowns. Above, in 1800, could be seen her coat-of-arms, three lions rampant. (Thomas Alefe's coat-of-arms is now also missing). The inscription, 15 in. by 4 in. is in English and states:

'Of your charytie Pray for the souls
'Of Thomas Alefe Esquyer and Margaret
'His wyfe of ye manar of Colsall Sum
'Tyme called Chechys ye whiche Thomas dwelled
'ye 10th day of April in the year of our
'Lord God 1529 Here under this Plaque stone.

'Here under', of course, refers to directly beneath the brass, on the floor, where was formerly fixed a flat stone, now missing, but J. Weever, already mentioned, noted it in 1630:



ALEFE BRASS 1529

FIG. 2.

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'Thomas Alefe Esquir and Margaret his wyff
'ly under this plain ston
'God grant hem everlasting lyff
'To whom we hop that yon
'He dyed as her ys to be sine
'On thousand five hundred twenty nine
'Who so that for ther sowles will pray
'God give hem meede at Doomyssday.

In these brasses at Milton Regis, we can see the decline in engraving setting in, with the earliest brass, 1480, shading appearing at the armour joints. With the next brass, 1490, we can see the appearance of bold shading, until, finally, there is the elaborate cross-hatching in the folds of the linen in the Alefe brass. (Fig. 2.)

To my knowledge, there are only two incised slabs at Milton Regis Church, and of these I have only been able to identify one.

One forms part of a larger altar tomb in the Norwood chancel, which has around its top of Purbeck marble a groove from which has been torn a brass inscription which revealed to whom it was dedicated. The coats-of-arms set in quatrefoils tell us of a Norton who married a de Northwode.

The north side of the tomb is the only one left plain and uncovered. This suggests that it came close to the wall below the place where the breast-plate and helmet⁴ of the occupant of the tomb once hung. John Weever again copied the inscription in 1630:

'Pray for the soules of Sir John Norton, Knight, and Dame Joane his wife, one of the Daughters of John Norwood Esq., who died 8th February 1534.'

This was the Sir John Norton who was knighted at Flanders by King Charles and who afterwards was ordered to prepare a meal for that king when Holy Roman Emperor, and for Henry VIII when he slept at Sittingbourne.

The second incised slab is in the extreme south-east corner of the main sanctuary. It measures 54 in. by 22 in., and depicts a male figure with his wife, kneeling, with scrolls; above an inscription. Unfortunately, I have been unable to identify this slab.

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⁴ The Norton Helmet was taken to the Tower of London in 1968 and restored, which revealed that it is a very rare specimen of a jousting helmet.