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TWO BRASSES IN MERSHAM CHURCH.

BY RALPH GRIFFIN.

MERSHAM Church in the last century suffered a devastating "restoration" which cleared out much fine wood work, and it is probably to this period that we may assign the detachment of two brasses from their original slab or slabs. They have since remained in the church chest. The first person who noted them there is, it is believed, our member Mr. V. J. B. Torr, who sent rubbings of them to Mr. Mill Stephenson, too late unluckily to allow of their notice in his List. They were unknown to Belcher.

The usual procedure at a "restoration" was to drag the brasses out of their slab or slabs and either destroy the slabs for concrete or cover them with a layer of concrete as a bedding for tiles then thought so neat and tidy. Recently the rector, Mr. Brocklehurst, agreed that the brasses in the church chest might very well be better preserved if fixed to a board on one of the walls of the chancel, and they were handed over to the competent hands of Mr. W. E. Gawthorp, who treated them suitably and affixed them to a board which is now strongly attached to the S. wall of the chancel just inside the screen.

The brasses, each seventeen inches high, are effigies of a man and a woman and are shown from rubbings on the accompanying Plate. It is of course not certain, and possibly the exact fact can now never be correctly known, whether they belong to one or to two monuments. It is quite possible that they belonged to a monument for a man and his two wives as the man is front face and the woman is turned towards him rather suggesting another woman on the other side of him also turning towards him. Many brasses in Kent illustrate this. There are three at Westerham. The workmanship looks local, the treatment of the man's hair being peculiar. His pouch hangs in front and not at the side, as is more usual.



BRASSES c. 1500 MERSHAM CHURCH, KENT.

The plates are thick and good and a date somewhere round 1500 can be assigned to them. It is difficult to be more exact than the first quarter of the sixteenth century, as the costume shown lasted certainly during this period.

The hands are smaller than as usually portrayed at this date, as can be seen by looking at the brass of Isabel Boys at Goodnestone by Wingham and that of Agnes Yden at Penshurst, while the small hands can be seen in local brasses at Hoath, the date there being 1532, rather later probably than these Mersham brasses. The same remark applies to a local brass at St. Paul's Church, Canterbury, figured in my little collection of "Drawings of Brasses in Kent Churches," published in 1913. This was then in the private possession of Dr. Philip Nelson, F.S.A., but was nobly returned to the Church by him some years ago and is now to be seen there.