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FLORILEGIUM
A Selection of Latin Inscriptions on late-medieval Brasses from English Churches

I: Brasses to Ladies

1. Introduction[1]

In the European Middle Ages flourished a particular branch of sepulchral art. Slabs were decorated, in the beginning with symbols or small inscriptions, later with ever more complex designs, figural, heraldic, textual. Beside incised slabs appeared also monuments decked with brass, on the Continent mostly whole, fully incised plates, or, as in England common, cut-out inlays of figures and texts. England possesses mostly flat incised monuments, Germany favoured the execution in (at least partly) low-relief.

Originally only high clerics had the right to be buried in a church, later came princes and potentates, also knights, and their ladies. In Germany one only finds persons of rank – clergy, nobility, with the typical exception of Hanseatic towns, where also prominent burghers received (and were able to afford) such honours. In England, however, from the 15th century onwards, this sepulchral art spread into the civilian population quite generally, so that also merchants, judges, lawyers, notaries, craftsmen were thus commemorated.

In addition to their effigial and heraldic design, the monuments furnish textual information concerning the life and death of the deceased and theologically relevant (intercessory) prayer, but some of these plates have inscriptions of literary quality. Particularly the 15th century possesses valuable texts, and that mostly in England – why we find only few in Germany is a mystery.

The greatest number of these sepulchral monuments appear in areas dedicated to coppermetal-work, in Germany above all around the Harz-region, with Hildesheim, in Thuringia, later in Saxony, also in cities such as Köln, Lübeck, Nürnberg. The most important European region was the lower-Rhenan and Mosan area, with the mines around Aachen providing the necessary raw-material for the workshops in the Flemish centres of Dinant, Antwerpen, and particularly Bruges and Tournai. From there, Hanseatic ships transported these plates into all the North- and West-European countries, from the Iberian peninsula, France, England and Germany to the Baltic countries and Scandinavia, so that one finds Flemish work mostly in coastal towns.

In the 17th century (in England over a century earlier than on the Continent), this art lost its spiritual substance and artistic quality. It had much to do with the Protestant revolution in religious orientation and with the resulting political chaos and economic decline. People no longer realized what great works of art they had in their churches. Thus the brasses were allowed to fall to pieces, disappeared, or were reused (such palimpsests are of no aesthetic quality). Or else they were wilfully destroyed by religious and political fanatics, Protestants declaring them works of superstition and French revolutionaries finding the commemoration of noblemen distasteful. Many brasses were sold for scrap-metal and smelted down to be turned into household-goods, such as vases and teakettles, or were cast into cannon. The art disappeared, with a flaring-up in England in Victorian times and a flicker after the Second World-War. Now it is extinguished.

In medieval times the monuments were principally an expression of piety and a means for Christians to obtain the intercession of posterity and of saints, thus to improve their perspective of achieving acceptance in the eyes of God. Also the wealth, size, beauty of execution of these sepulchral monuments was intended to serve the church and enhance the glory of God, was therefore a Work of Faith. Only since the Renaissance, when things of worldly interest were put first, did the sepulchral monuments primarily become an instrument of self-glorification of the deceased and of consolidation of the family's social standing. But be the motivation behind the sepulchral brasses and slabs what it was – works of art they are, beyond any doubt.

In the mid-19th century medieval art was revived in Western Europe. In England the *Monumental Brass Society* was founded and assembled academics, art-historians and antiquarians, who took an interest in the remaining brasses and slabs. These were registered, described, and studied. In order to document their existence and to-date appearance the historians made rubbings of them.

That was the beginning of "brass-rubbing". The procedure is as follows. A length of white paper is fastened across the brass or slab. Then one rubs over the surface with a piece of wax. Where the metal surface is in contact with the paper, it will receive the colour; incised lines will remain white. Originally black heelball was used, with which the cobbler protects open sides of the leather soles against intrusion of water. Today's materials are specialized products of the British industry and come not only in black, but in colours, too. The black rubbing, however, is still standard among brass-rubbers.

The brass-rubbing produces a greater contrast of colour against the white paper and thus shows up the design more clearly than the original can, because the metal-surface has over the centuries been covered by a patina as dark almost as the incisions. It no longer shines golden as it did when the plate was laid down, and when the feet of the many people walking across them in the Middle Ages polished them consistently.

The drawback of a rubbing is, that the originally intended bright surface of the metal plate will now appear darkened by the wax. The engraved lines, on the other hand, which the soles of the visitors did not polish, and where soon the dust and dirt collected, so that they darkened and contrasted against the bright brass, will in the rubbing remain white. Thus, the rubbing produces a colour-negative. Its great advantage, however, is that it is axially true, which allows the inscription to remain legible, whereas a print must invert sides, in the way that the mirror does.

In most cases one will encounter black rubbings. They are clear-cut and hard, like a woodcut, or filigree and dainty, and possess great decorative beauty. The technique can also be differentiated by putting greater – or less – pressure on certain elements, thereby setting them off against each other, or lending the image perspective and depth. The design will thereby achieve better legibility. Greater differentiation even will be attained by employing colours, so that e.g. details in dress or armour, or structural elements will appear more clearly, and sometimes an approach of the natural can even be attempted. Such a fully differentiated rubbing can also gain in atmospheric substance.

In this way, the rubbing fluctuates strangely between a negative copy and a positive creation, which endows the object with an identity and a

character quite of its own. It is subjected to the strategy or unconscious leaning of the artist, who thereby acquires a decisive role in the process. One may therefore compare such a rubbing with the performance of a play in a theatre, or a concert, where an original, which comes before the actors or musicians in print, awaits a birthing. The subjectivity of the art-direction must remain in proportion with the original. And whether the product is fitting and true and full of substance, and can reach across, is a matter for the educated taste to decide. The following is a series of articles on sepulchral brasses from English churches that possess inscriptions of literary quality. They come illustrated by rubbings and photos. The author aims at recalling to modern minds the weight of their values and at instilling – or satisfying – in the reader and the beholder the sensibility for enjoying their great beauty.

2. Joan Clopton, † ca. 1430, St. Swithin, Quinton, Warwickshire

BIOGRAPHICAL

"This elegant series 'D' brass shows Joan, widow of Sir William Clopton, stepson of Thomas Crewe of Wixford, Warwickshire; William died in 1419 and has an alabaster effigy in Quinton church. Three years later Joan made an enfeoffment of her estates – presumably she took vows shortly after that. She was the second daughter and co-heiress of Alexander Besford, alias Pearsford of Besford, Worcestershire. The canting pears in the arms of Besford appear in the inscription as well as on the heraldry."[2]

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[2] Nigel Saul, *Portfolio of Small Plates*, in TRANSACTIONS of the Monumental Brass Society, Vol. XV, Part 4, 1995, p.399. He also made the rubbing.

DESCRIPTION of the BRASS

On an altar-tomb lies the brass to Joan Clopton.[3] She is shown praying, in widow's weeds, a plaited barbe covering neck and chin, a veil over her hair. A tasselled cord holds her mantle, under which she wears a simple kirtle.

The strictest symmetry is observed in stance and vestments, the folds – with few exceptions – falling in corresponding lines on either half of the figure. The swirls of her clothes around her feet are the only element providing some liveliness. Above her heads is a curved, double-lined prayer-scroll, and a fine canopy surrounds her. On the second tier of the side-shafts sits a richly-crocketted ogee arch with a delicately cusped round-arched soffit. Within it is an intricate oculus resembling a church-rose, with, in the middle, a quatrefoil-filled circle, around which there are six elliptical shapes, each containing fine tracery recalling a geminated Gothic church window. The spandrels are also filled with quatrefoil and trefoil tracery.

Between the finial of the pediment and the side pinnacles are two shields. Dexter: Argent two bars gules fretty or [Clopton]; sinister: Gules a fess between six pears or [Besford]. Below the bases of the side-shafts hangs another pair of shields: Dexter: [Clopton] impaling [Besford]; sinister: [Clopton], with a blank canton. In the figure, the lines of incision are all of the same width, be they wrinkles in the face or folds of garments – it is not an ornament of the brass. Fine lines appear in the canopy for the tracery, so the engraver did have the tool and the skill to differentiate. As one wonders what prompted him to be so indelicate, one is drawn to the conclusion that it was not the same man working on the two elements. Around the architecture is a marginal text, with, in the corners, cusped and lobed medallions containing the symbols of the Evangelists.

Measurements: The figure's height is 910 mm, the marginal inscription measures 1900 by 700 mm.[4]

APPRECIATION of the SCRIPT

The script is Gothic incised minuscule, rather compressed in the prayer scroll, the characters in the text-fillet clear and decorated with flourished serifs. There is some indistinction among the letters 'u', 'n', 'm' and the (sometimes) undotted 'i'. The text begins at the top, after a cross crosslets (symbol for Christ), reading from inside. The top and the bottom

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[3] An inscription on the east end of the tomb reads: T. Lingen, Ar. reparavit, Anno 1739.
[4] Measurements according to N. Saul.

fillets contain a verse each, the side-fillets have each three verses. Verse-cæsuræ have spacers, verse-ends are marked with a pear – a reminder of the Lady's coat of arms. The texts reads very well, except for the prayer-scroll.

A)   PRAYER SCROLL
TRANSLITERATION

Complaccat tibi D<u>nc</u> • utı § crıpıas me '
D<u>ne</u> ad adıuvand<u>u</u> me refpıce '

TRANSCRIPTION

Complaceat tibi, D(omi)ne, • uti eripias me!
D(omi)ne, ad adiuvandu(m) me refpice !

TRANSLATION

May it please Thee, Lord, to wrest me away!
Lord, consider helping me!

COMMENTARY

The two lines of the prayer scroll are taken from Psalm 40,14. The Septuaginta Bible has *conplaceat tibi Domine ut eruas me, Domine ad adiuvandum me respice.* So, instead of *eripias*, the original has *eruas* (with no difference in meaning, though). The verb *eripere* comes from Psalm 71,2, where there is a similar line. Here, the corresponding expression is *libera me et eripe me.* So the choice of *eripere* in our inscription has been inspired by the other Psalm.[5]

B)   MARGINAL TEXT
TRANSLITERATION

Legend:	Is in the inscription:	Signifies:
Small script	text needing treatment	author's addition
Underlining	superscript-bar	abbreviation-mark

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[5] The psalm-version "iuxta Hebraicum" has: *placeat tibi Domine ut liberes me / Domine ad adiuvandum me festina.* Thus *liberes* instead of *eruas*, and *respice* , "consider well" instead of *festina*, "hasten". In 70,2 it has *erue me et libera.*

(...)	text needing treatment	abbreviation or ligature expanded
[...]	text needing treatment	author's correction, amendment, conjecture
z		v.4: -us ; v.8: -ed
✐	a pear	canting arms

a ✠ Criſte nepos Anne : Clopto<u>n</u> miſerere Joh<u>e</u> ✐

b Que tibi ſacrata : clauditur hic vidua ✐ Milite defuncto ſponſo : pro te
jh<u>u</u> fuit iſta ✐ Larga libens miſeris: prodiga & hoſpitibz ✐

c Sic ve<u>n</u>abilibus templis : ſic fudit egenis ✐

d Mitteret ut celis : quas ſequeretur opes ✐ Pro tantis meritis: ſibi
dones regna beata ✐ Nec premat urna rogi : Sz beet aula dei ✐

TRANSCRIPTION

a ✠ C[h]riſte nepos Ann[æ] : Clopton miſerere Joh(ann)[æ] ✐

b Qu[æ] tibi ſacrata : clauditur hic vidua ✐ Milite defuncto ſponſo : pro te
Jesu fuit iſta ✐ Larga libens miſeris : prodiga (et) hoſpitib(us)

c Sic ven(er)abilibus templis: ſic fudit egenis

d Mitteret ut c[æ]lis : quas ſequeretur opes ✐ Pro tantis meritis : ſibi dones
regna beata ✐ Nec premat urna rogi: S(ed) beet aula dei ✐

CLEAR TEXT
Arranged according to the versification, and with appropriate punctuation.

1 ✠	Christe, nepos Annæ,	Clopton miserere Johannæ !
2	Quæ tibi sacrata	clauditur hic vidua.
3	Milite defuncto	sponso pro te, Jesu, fuit ista.
4	Larga libens miseris,	prodiga et hospitibus
5	Sic venerabilibus	templis, sic fudit egenis,
6	Mitteret ut cælis	quas sequeretur opes.
7	Pro tantis meritis	sibi dones regna beata!
8	Nec premat urna rogi,	sed beet aula dei !

TRANSLATION

1 Christe, Anna's grandson, have pity on Joan Clopton!

2 After having vowed herself to Thee when she became a widow she is now entombed here.

3 The Knight, her spouse, having died, she became even that to Thee, your bride, Jesus.

4   Being magnanimous – and gladly, too! – to strangers and generous
       to the unfortunate,
5   She showered upon the venerable churches as well as upon the
       needy her riches,
6   So that she might send up to Heaven this her wealth which she
       obtained from there.
7   For such great merits mayest Thou grant her the blessed realm,
8   And may the dark destiny of the tomb not weigh her down, but let
       the forecourt of God enrich and delight her.

COMMENTARY

1   *nepos:* According to the Apocryphal Gospel of St James, Mary's
parents were Joachim and Anna, and in medieval pictures and statuary
Mary is often shown together with her mother, having her little child on
her lap. Anna was much venerated in the Middle Ages, and she is here
invoked because her name recalls that of the deceased: Johanna.
7   *sibi: ei* ought to be the proper form to use here, and its replacement
by *sibi* has not the excuse of metric necessity, as is the case in other
inscriptions. It was not unusual in medieval Latin poetry to use *sibi* for *ei.*
8   sz: *sed*
8   *aula:* The forecourt of a palace (also of a medieval town-hall) was
the place where public rituals were held and judgments were pronounced,
and hence is the symbol of authority and glory of a ruler.

STYLISTIC APPRECIATION

The poem is in elegiac distichs, which scan perfectly, except for v. 3,
which compresses the name of Jesus Christ.[6] It comes in abbreviated
form, "jhu", and even without a capital initial, when the other personal
names each have one, and does not fit into the hexameter. However,
since without it the prosody of the verse is correct, this
(unpronounceable) abbreviation is in all likelihood understood to be taken
as a logogram, extraneous to the metre, meant to be perceived only, read
silently, and left unpronounced. Perhaps the author, on reviewing his
finished verse, thought that the addressee of his invocation needed to be
made more explicit, and so added the logogram. This interpretation
replaces my former assessment of this verse, as published in "Forum
Classicum" of December 2009 . In the foot-inscription to the brass of
Robert Ingylton in Thornton, Bucks, there is another example of such a
logogram inserted into a perfect hexameter and not intended to be part of

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[6] The poet probably did not understand the corresponding Greek foreshortened form of
IHY, thus wrongly latinizing it and misguidedly lettering "jhu" in minuscules.

the metre, not to be read out, but simply registered. Here non-Latin ciphers are used to furnish the information of the date of decease, which else could not have been provided without disrupting the composition.

In the case of *Clopton* (v. 1), the superscript-bar only pretends that there is an abbreviation, but neither is there prosodic need, nor is it likely that the poet knew what declension-ending to add to the correct name. Still, he knew that he had a genitive to deal with. All other abbreviations are to be read in expanded form. The hemistich-end of v. 2 comes under cæsura-licence.[7]

There is also a rhyme-system, of sorts. The following shows the verse-arrangement and the complex rhyme-scheme. The arrows in the left and right margins (↑↓) indicate the vertical rhyme-linkage within the respective hemistich-pair, the double arrows (↔) show the horizontal connection between (or within) the two hemistichs of a verse. The X indicates a cross-wise relationship within two verses.

1	Christe, nepos <u>Annæ</u>,	↔	Clopton miserere Joh<u>annæ</u> !
2	Quæ tibi sacr<u>ata</u>	↔	clauditur hic vidu<u>a</u>.
3	Milite defunct<u>o</u>	↔	spons<u>o</u> pro te, {Jesu}, fuit ista.
4	Larga libens miser<u>is</u>	\ /	prodiga et hospit<u>ibus</u>
5	Sic venerabil<u>ibus</u>	/ \	templis, sic fudit egen<u>is</u>, ↔
6 ↓	Mitteret ut cæl<u>is</u>		quas sequeretur opes.
7 ↑	Pro tantis merit<u>is</u>		sibi dones regna beata!
8	Nec premat urna rog<u>i</u>,	↔	sed beet aula de<u>i</u> !

In v. 1, the two (very similar) names rhyme, in all others the rhyme-words are only declension-endings. The system is inconsistent. Vv. 1, 2 have leonine rhymes, linking the ends of the two sections of the verse.[8] V. 3 pairs the end of the first hemistich to the beginning of the next (*defuncto* ↔ *sponso*), adding variation to the poem. Vv. 4 and 5 play their rhymes saltire-wise: *miseris* (cæsura-word of v. 4) goes with *egenis* (end-word of v. 5), and *hospitibus* (v. 4) is linked with the cæsura-word of v. 5, *venerabilibus*. Vv. 6 and 7 have a rhyme for their cæsura-words (*cælis* ↔ *meritis*), but their end-words, *opes* and *beata*, are left without a partner.

So the rhyme-system is not spectacular, but rhyme is not a prerequisite of a poem, neither was it the poet's foremost aim, nor his principal instrument. In several other respects he earns himself more laurels.

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[7] *sa cra t<u>a</u>* ought not to have a long end-syllable, but prosody here demands this. A regularly taken liberty in the Middle-Ages, when the rule covering the hexameter's end-syllable is simply applied equally to the cæsura-end. Such cæsura-licence in no way mars the poetic effect, nor the poet's merit.

[8] In a leonine rhyme, the end-syllable of a verse is linked by sound to the end-syllable of the 1st hemistich, i.e. to the last syllable before the cæsura.

The syntax of the poem is complex. The sentences are long and intricate, containing much information. Thus vv. 1 and 2 may be considered as one sentence, and there is a case for presenting vv. 3, 4, 5, and 6 as one highly hypotactical structure, of impressively delicate syntax. Twice the poet used the same word for more than one function. Thus, *sponso* (v. 3) does double duty, being used first for Joan's husband, but then, abstractly as *sponsa*, which has its correlative in *ista,* for Joan herself, as bride of Christ. An even more cleverly contrived multiple function is seen in the word *opes* (v. 6). It is the object of *fudit* and of *mitteret*, and yet again of *sequeretur*: Joan's wealth is therefore at the same time seen to be showered on the needy, but also to have been previously obtained from Heaven, and thirdly, and more importantly, in turn to be sent up to Heaven. By means of this triple function the poet closely combines, indeed identifies Joan's earthly riches with her charitable work and her merited compensation in Heaven.

The syntactic structure is then here used for the hope, or even claim, that good works may give the soul hope of the acceptance and grace of God. The age-old question as to whether we can achieve God's grace through our effort is here answered in the affirmative, in true medieval fashion, and this is done by stylistic means, which is an outstanding poetic and intellectual feat. That bespeaks sensibility, thoughtfulness, and character on the part of the poet.

Notionally, too, the poem is carefully arranged. It starts out with the all-important word of Christ, and precisely that idea of "God" is also the last word: *dei* (v. 8). In both cases the deceased is placed near the mention of God, whose grace is appealed to in view of the great merits of the deceased, so that the same juxtaposition, or even causal nexus, of Works and Grace is repeated at the end.

The choice of words and their composition follows this general line of ideas. Words expressing Joan's merit are numerous. The idea of "wealth" is very much to the fore: again *larga, prodiga* (v. 4), also *opes* (v. 6), in that triple function, hence is strongly underscored. Then there is the semantic field of "dedication": *sacrata* (v. 2) "dedicated, vowed", *sponso* (v. 3) "husband / betrothed", and closely linked to it that of "generosity", of "giving away": (yet again) *larga, prodiga "generous",* then, *fudit* (v. 5) "showered", *mitteret* (v. 6) "sent up". These words correspond to the same value on the level of God's activity: *dones* (v. 7) "grant", and *beet* (v. 8) "enrich, gladden".

There is also semantic opposition. The poet starts out on a word of disagreeably claustrophobic feelings: *clauditur* (v. 2) "shut in, penned up", but that is contrasted at the end with the idea of "opening out": *beet aula*

– the image of an open ground granting joy. True, the verb *premat* (v. 8)
"weigh down", appears here again, evoking the deadly pressure of the
slab as at the beginning, but the idea is here negated, and is paired with
the happy outlook of the forecourts of the Lord.

"Authority" is another semantic domain. *regna* (v. 7) here means "the
realms, the fields, space", but the word *rex* is present as a hind-thought,
this king being God. *urna* (v. 8) is not only "the vase for the ashes of the
deceased", but also the "receptacle from which are taken the lots of a
lottery", or decisions of destiny. *aula* (v. 8) is the equivalent of "God's
power".

In sum, then, this is a text of feeling and refinement, but also of
theological commitment, with impressive imagery in its last line. It is a
structural masterpiece from the point of view of use of language, and all
in all it is a fine poem.

AUTHORSHIP

As always, the author is anonymous, but there is more here than the
general assumption that the poet must have been a clergyman, for,
besides being a most sensitive poet and erudite man he must have been
more than normally versed in the wording of the Bible.

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Illustration of the rubbing from The Monumental Brasses of
Gloucestershire, William Lack, H.Martin Stuchfield and Philip Whittemore,
London 2005, p. 355, reproduced by courtesy of the publishers.

3. Margaret de Brounflet, † 22.10.1407, St. Lawrence, Wymington, Bedfordshire

BIOGRAPHICAL

Margaret de Brounflet[9] was the daughter of Sir Edward St.John, heiress of Lord Vessy, and she married Sir Thomas Brounflet, whose brass is near hers – the effigy of an armed knight and a foot-inscription.

Thomas Brounflet was cupbearer to Richard II until that king was deposed (and later murdered) and superseded by Henry IV in 1399.[10] Between 1401 and 1403, he acquired the manor of Wymington out of the sale of the heritage of the previous proprietor, John Curteys, who had wielded the important and lucrative office of Mayor of the Staple of Calais and who financed the rebuilding of the church entirely out of his private purse. John Curteys and his wife have their brass quite near this one, on the table-tomb in the chancel. In 1407/8, Thomas Brounflet was entrusted by the new king, Henry IV, with the functions not only of Treasurer, but also of Keeper of the Wardrobe of the Household (from 1407 to 1412)[11] – a noteworthy fact, because it means that Henry placed utter confidence in this high dignitary of the king whose place after all he had usurped.

Brounflet was indeed an eminent man of the realm, and such a husband did Margaret wed, and by him she had five sons and one daughter. She was in many respects a typical medieval woman of the upper classes, if one goes by the inscription on her tomb. Where men's slabs and brasses document their merits, achievements, and positions acquired in a life of contention, all that can be brought forward to speak in her favour is her connection with males. We hear who was her father (not her mother), whose heiress she was (a man's), who was her husband, and her achievement are her – and Thomas de Brounflet's – children.

The inference derived from Margaret's and her husband's tombstones is that she did not live very long. She died in 1407, in childbirth possibly, or rather probably even – v. 5 might be an indication in that direction. By that time she had already born her husband (who died much later, in 1430) six children. So one might suppose her to have married in or near

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[9] A variant of the name is Bromflet.

[10] Kings' reigns: Richard II 1377-99; Henry IV 1399-1413; Henry V 1413-22; Henry VI 1422-61.

[11] Brounflet obtained a charter of free warren in demesne lands. In 9 Henry IV, i.e. 1407/8, the acts show the indenture as to delivery of the jewels and plate by John Tiptoft, late keeper of the wardrobe of the household, to Thomas Brounflet, his successor. This information was kindly provided by Mrs. Susan Edwards, Archivist of the Bedfordshire and Luton Archives.

1400. This conjecture seems to find corroboration in v. 10 of the inscription, where the poet speaks of seven agreeable, God-given years, which points to the lease of her married life. When one considers that she probably was a young girl when she married, as was customary at that time – sixteen or so – that would give her a span of about twenty-three years in this world.
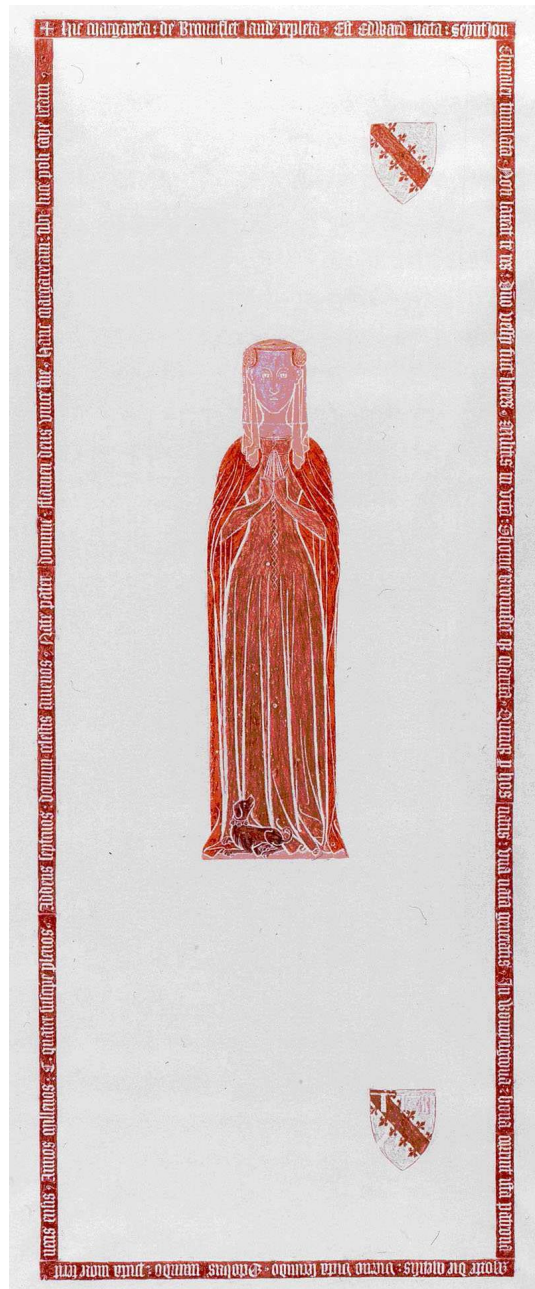
DESCRIPTION of the BRASS

The monument lies on the floor in the chancel, beside the Curteys table-tomb brass. It shows a woman, praying, in gown and mantle, a veil over her head-dress, a pet dog at her right foot.[12] The top sinister shield is blazoned: Sable a bend flory counterflory or [Brounflet]; the bottom sinister shield: the same, with a 3-pointed label. A marginal inscription contains 12 Latin verses.

With the exception of the two dexter shields missing, there is no other damage. The loss of those two shields regrettably mars the general impression, because the monument had obviously been calculated to rely for effect on grand simplicity and rigid symmetry. The brass is warped, and hollow underneath, and needs refitting.

This effigy conforms to a standard model in the 15th century, as instanced in Joan Urban's brass in Soutfleet (Kent). That, however, by no means detracts from its aesthetic value.

Overall-measurements: 2230 x 846 mm, the figure being relatively small: 916 x 260 mm.

APPRECIATION OF THE SCRIPT

The script is in Gothic minuscule, having simple capitals for initials of lines and hemistichs and names (irregularly, however). The characters are very clearly and beautifully incised. They are regular, small (33 mm only), of simple form and reduced size, well legible except for the indistinctness of the letters 'u', 'n', 'm', 'e', 'i', the latter being inconsistently dotted, i.e. marked by a fine wavy line, in black-letter fashion.

MARGINAL TEXT
TRANSLITERATION

Legend:	In the inscription:	Signifies:
Small script	text needing treatment	author's addition
Underlining	superscript-bar	abbreviation-mark
(...)	text needing treatment	abbreviation or ligature expanded
[...]	text needing treatment	author's correction, amendment, conjecture

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[12] In England, a female effigy of the 15th century often has a small dog at her feet, not seldom wearing a bell-collar, clearly a pet, indication of social rank.

-p-	flourish issuant from either side of the descender	*per*
qz		*-que*
'	flourish at a letter-end	abbreviation-mark
•, ?		line-end marker
:	colon	mark of hexameter-cæsura.

a   ✠ hic margarcta : dc Broiiiflct lau*de* rcplcta ? Eſt Edward'
       iiata : SeyiitJoii

b   Chiiialer tiiiiiilata ? Noii lateat te res : D<u>u</u>o veſſy fiiit heres ?
       Militis iii vita : Thoiiie Broiiiflet qz iiarita ? Qiiiiiqz
       p_hos iiatis : iiiia iiata geiieratis ? Iii Woiiiyiigtoiia : boiia
       corriiit iſta patroiia •

c   Morte die iiieiiſis : vicciio victa fcciiiido • Octobris iiiiiiido : piita
       iiore feriit

d   iiccis ciiſis • Aiiiios iiiillciios : C. qiiater fiiſcipc plciios •
       Addeiis fepteiios : doiiiiii celeſtis aiieiios • Nate pater
       doiiiiie : Flaiieii deiis iiiice t'iic • Haiic iiargarctaiii :
       tibi liicc   poli cape lctaiii •

TRANSCRIPTION

a   ✠ Hic Margareta : de Brounflet laude repleta ? Eſt Edward(i) nata :
       Seynt Jo[h]n

b   Chivaler t[u]mulata ? Non lateat te res : D(omi)no *V*eſſy fuit heres ?
       militis in vita : Thom[æ] Brounfletq(ue) marita ? Quinq(ue) p(er) hos
       natis : una nata generatis ? In Womyngtona : bona corruit iſta
       patrona •

c   Morte die menſis : viceno victa fecundo • Octobris mundo : puta
       more ferit

d   necis enſis • Annos millenos : C quater fuſcipe plenos •
       Addens feptenos : domini celeſtis amenos. • Nate, pater,
       domine : flamen, deus unice t(ri)ne • hanc Margaretam : tibi luce poli
       cape l[æ]tam •

CLEAR TEXT   Arranged according to versification, and with appropriate punctuation.

1	✠	Hic Margareta	de Brounflet, laude repleta,
2		Est Edward(i) nata	Seynt Jon, Chivaler, tumulata.
3		Non lateat te res	Domino Vessy fuit heres,
4		Militis in vita	Thomæ Brounfletque marita.
5		Quinque per hos natis,	una nata, generatis,
6		In Womyngtona	bona corruit ista patrona,
7		Morte die mensis	viceno victa secundo
8		Octobris – mundo	puta more ferit necis ensis!
9		Annos millenos	C quater suscipe plenos,
10		Addens septenos	domini celestis amenos ...
11		Nate, pater, domine	flamen, deus unice, trine,
12		Hanc Margaretam	tibi luce poli cape lætam!

TRANSLATION

1   ✠ Here lies Margaret de Brounflet, of highest praise, *
2   Daughter of Edward Saint John, Knight, buried. *
3   May you be in no doubt about this: she was Lord Vessy's heiress, *
4   And in her life-time wife of Sir Thomas Brounflet, Knight. *
5   After five sons had been engendered by them, and one daughter, *
6   This good patroness broke down in Wymington, *
7   By death vanquished, on the 22nd day of the month *
8   Of October – in truth, in its clean and proper fashion the sword of death strikes all pure things! – *
9   Take into your account full one thousand and four times a hundred,
10   and add seven pleasant years *   Granted by the heavenly God ...*
11   Son, Father, Lord, Windbreath,, one and threefold God! *
12   This Margaret here take in happiness unto Thee in the light of Thy heaven.*

COMMENTARY

2   *timulata*: The word *tumulata* is often misspelt – the effect of sound-dissociation in speech? Or rather of confusion over the number of identical minims.

5   *una nata*: is a feminine ablative here, needs the completion with the verb *generata*, which is to be seen as an ellipsis. The word is missing for aesthetic reasons in order to avoid duplication.

8   *mundo puta more ferit necis ensis*: The whole passage is interesting, and difficult. The word *puta* contains a double meaning. For one, it signifies "in truth! verily! believe me!", being an imperative of *putare*, "believe". But it can also be an adjective from the verb in its other meaning of "cleanse", signifying "pure, clean", therefore being parallel in meaning to *pura*, saying "all that is pure", which produces a most meaningful widening of the sense. Such a double use may well be intended by the poet, which is why the translation combines both readings.

8   *mundus*: means "the world", but a second meaning says "clean, proper". This latter seems to obtain in the present case. That its sense "the world" is active nevertheless in an undercurrent will appear later in the Stylistic Appreciation.

STYLISTIC APPRECIATION

The text is made up of 12 Latin verses, hexameters all, which are marked in their middle, i.e. at the cæsura, by a colon, and have a line-end marker at the end. The scansion is very good.[13] In medieval Latin poetry, the last syllable at the end of a cæsura, which should be long, is very often short. This particularity of the age, however, which we will call "cæsura-licence" – a resumption of the liberty of lengths of syllable that obtains for the end of the hemistich – is frequent in our present text, and by no means belittles the poet's achievement.[14]

The following shows the verse arrangement and the interesting, varied, and very artistic, rhyme-scheme. The arrows in the left and right margins (↓↑) indicate the rhyme-linkage within the respective pair of hemistichs, the double arrow (↔) between the two hemistichs of a verse.

1	↓	✠ Hic Margareta	↔ V	de Brounflet, laude repleta,		↓
2	↑	Est Edward[i] nata	↔ ∧	Seynt Jon, Chivaler, tumulata.		↑
3		Non lateat te res	↔	Domino Vessy fuit heres,		
4	↑	Militis in vita	↔	Thomæ Brounfletque marita.		↑
5	↓ ↓	Quinque per hos natis	↔	una nata generatis,		↓↔
6	↑	In Womyngtona	↔	bona corruit ista patrona,		
7	↓ ↑	Morte die mensis	V	viceno victa secundo		
8	↑	Octobris – mundo	↔ ∧	puta more ferit necis ensis ! –		↑

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[13] Saying that, in v. 9, *quater* is made to be read as having a long first syllable, when it should be short. *Edwardi* is intended to be read as written, namely *Edward*, for the sake of scansion – the extra syllable would not do. Tricks of the trade.

[14] Examples of cæsura-licence here occur in vv. 1 (Margareta) , 2 (nata), 11 (domine).

9 ↓	Annos millenos	↔ \/	C quater suscipe plenos,	↓
10 ↑	Addens septenos	↔ /\	domini celestis amenos.	↑
11 ↔	Nate, pater, domine	↔↔	flamen, deus unice, trine !	↔
12	Hanc Margaretam;	↔	tibi luce poli cape lætam !	

The pervading order is for leonine rhymes, the verse-ends being coupled with the last syllable or syllables before the cæsura. In most cases, rhymes are disyllabic, and in v. 3, there is a particularly rich one: here two words of the first hemistich constitute the rhyme: *te res* ↔ *heres*. In the vv. 1/2, and again 9/10 this rhyme-scheme is doubled. Each verse-pair has an end-rhyme which is complemented by a cæsura-rhyme, identical to boot, thus enriching the effect.

In the verse-couple 7/8 concerned with Margaret's death, instead of leonine rhymes there is a system of crosswise pairing, with a saltire-rhyme. By such means, *secundo* is brought into close relationship with *mundo,* and one sits up to hear a second meaning looming up from behind this rhyme: *victa secundo mundo* also means "she was defeated in the second world", implying that the material existence is secondary to the spiritual.

V. 11 has twice the same rhyme-syllable in each hemistich, four times in all – the rhyme here effectfully underlines the intensity of imploration, the strength of feeling behind the words.

Apart from rhymes at the end of lines or hemistichs there are effects contrived by words resembling each other in sound and appearance. This is particularly strongly marked in the two verse-couples 5 / 6 and 7 / 8. In the first instance there is a marked reiteration of the syllable *–na-* , which appears six times. Strangely enough, that is precisely the number of children (*nati*!) she gave birth to. One wonders whether that was an intentional effect of the poet's, but it certainly operates on us in this respect, as underlining this woman's life-achievement.

The vv. 7 / 8 have additionally the attraction of *Morte* (v. 7) echoed by *more* in v. 8, with the corresponding stress laid on the lady's worldly end. The words *viceno victa*, in v. 7, seem expressly to be made to neighbour for the sake of their alliterative initial syllables; the words *necis ensis* (v. 8) also have much in common in the way of sounds.

V. 12 ends with a spectacular feat, because there is more than only the leonine rhyme of the respective last syllables: here both last words of the line, *cape lætam,* with four syllables, bring back (almost precisely) the four vowels in the name of the commemorated, thus most meaningfully

repeating the sound of *Margaretam,* like a faded echo, at the end of the poem.

The rhymes and sound-effects, then, constitute an essential part of the poetic substance of the inscription, accompanying and underscoring, even creating the message of the text, a sure sign of literary quality. The poem seems to be made up of three stanzas, of four lines each. The first one forms a unity by ending on the same –*a*-rhyme as the first two verses; it is the introductory stanza, and states Margaret's name and social background.

The second stanza (vv. 5-8) opens on the same – *is*-rhyme, as its last verse 8, thus again appearing as a unity, and remembers relationship with the first stanza by repeating the –*a*-rhyme. This middle stanza is much more personal. We get a little nearer Margaret when she is called *bona ista patrona,* "this good patroness," or "lady" – she must have been liked then. And we sense compassion for her untimely death, brought down as she was by the sword "which slays all pure things" (*puta more ferit necis ensis*) and terminates "her agreeable years". We have here a line of great feeling, nobly contained, as one discovers the sense only hidden in a double meaning. And this stanza is taken up with an important contrast, because here is stated that she gave life often – and that she suffered death. In v. 8, the sword is said to have killed her "in its clean, proper fashion". That is what *mundus* means: "clean and proper", a never-heard-of attribute of death, most unusual. Is there bitter irony in the choice of this expression? That also would fit into the picture of the author feeling sympathy for her.

The last stanza (vv. 9-12) is in contact with the previous by following up the information of the date of Margaret's death. Immediately afterwards, we are turned towards the spiritual world. Intimation of things celestial were hidden in vv. 7 / 8, but the direct statements start in v. 10. In v. 11, there is an apostrophe of the trinitarian God which is quite extraordinary in its wording. It begins with "Son", then calls upon the "Father" (normally the sequence is inverted), lastly says "Windbreath Lord!". That is new – *flamen* is a most surprisingly concrete, and superb, variation of the usual *Spiritus.*[15] Words concerned with heavenly things are numerous in this stanza: 10 out of the 19 words of the last three lines are given over to this subject – an enormous weight therefore is laid on the spiritual world. And then the last line harks back to the beginning of the poem by repeating the name of the departed, with so much intensity. The poem, therefore, is beautifully structured, the stanzas keeping in contact with each other by criteria of form or content, and each containing a different

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[15] *Spiritus*, however, really does not mean anything else, namely also "windbreath", or our "breath".

message. And that in itself is something lifting this epitaph far above the run of the mill. Towards the end, then, the text becomes more and more personal. It contains human warmth, shows deep religious feeling, has impressive passages, and attains great poetic density.

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Rubbing: Reinhard Lamp; photograph: Bodo Margraf (Welt, Eiderstedt)

4. Ele Bowet, d. 7.2.1400, St. Nicholas, Wrentham, Suffolk

BIOGRAPHICAL

Ele Bowet was born c. 1375, of a high-standing family. She was (quite possibly) the daughter of Sir Robert d'Ufford, baron, (* c. 1335 in Horsford, Norfolk, d. 1384) and Eleanor Felton (married c. 1374). Ele married Richard Bowet in 1395, in Wrentham, Suffolk, remaining childless. One of her sisters married her husband's brother, Sir William Bowet.[16]

DESCRIPTION of the BRASS

The brass lies on the chancel-floor. It shows a woman praying, clad in a wide-sleeved mantle-gown enveloping her entirely up to her chin. It is buttoned from top to toe. Her arms, which protrude from her sleeves, are covered in a close-fitting undergarment that reaches up to over her wrists, where it is also buttoned down all the (visible) length – buttons in the Middle Ages were expensive articles, and such a show of buttons bespoke wealth. Her hair is covered by a light kerchief thrown over a reticulated head-dress. The figure is static and strictly symmetrical, the only movement being in the swirls of her clothes around the shoes. Below her feet is a foot-inscription of four lines of Latin verse.[17]

Above her head are two shields. The sinister half of the first shield shows: Sable a cross engrailed or, over all a bendlet argent [Ufford]. (The bendlet differences this branch of the Uffords from the Uffords, Earls of Suffolk.) The sinister half of the other shield blazons: Per fess; 1) Chequy or and gules, 2) Azure [Pierpoint].

The dexter halves of both shields have been at some time erased, carefully and demonstratively, and above all – as it would seem – after the same fashion. As the dexter shield has Ele's father's arms, it stands to reason that it originally impaled her husband's, namely: Argent three stag's heads caboshed sable [Bowett]. And since the sinister coat is Ele's

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[16] Mary Clulow, of Derby, thankfully contributed the genealogy.

[17] This brass is not a unique creation. At more or less the same time quite similar effigies have been laid down on tombs in the churches of Stoke-by-Nayland, Suffolk (anonymous, c. 1400) and Shottesbrooke (Berkshire), where it commemorates Margaret, † 1401, daughter of Sir William Trussel, wife to Sir Fulk Pennebrygg. I owe this information to my friend Kevin Herring. (Also in Lambourne, Berkshire, on the brass to John de Estbury (d. 1406) & Wife Agnes - a couple of half effigies, the female being an exact copy of Ele Bowet down to her elbows. There may be more.)

grandfather's, who was Sir Simon Pierpoint, the inference is that its dexter half had been her husband's grandfather's.

It means then that her husband's memory and regard was wiped out from the monument. That interpretation corresponds to the fact that the text gives the woman's name, and her father's, but her husband's is not mentioned, apart from his family-name, which is also Ele's. That is most strange and rare. One has the impression that not much love was lost between the spouses, and that someone close to her also had feelings against her husband so strong as to make them extinguish even to his heraldic presence near his wife, after the brass had been made. Perhaps the workshop, when it received the order of deletion, was at the same time given a new text for the inscription, with wording better suited to the hostile feelings that obtained against Bowet, so that the plate would have been made somewhat later, perhaps even replacing an earlier one.[18] Without such an explanation the almost insulting absence of Bowet's identity from his wife's monument is inexplicable. At any rate, behind this brass is an untold story of drama.

Ele Bowet's brass is one of the very few commemorating a single woman and, in addition, having a Latin inscription, and in verse-form to boot.

Overall measurements: height 1062 mm, width 525 mm.

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[18] Is that the explanation for the uncommonly large interstice between inscription-plate and effigy?

Ele Bolbet grata mulier iacet hic tumulata
Roberti uata fuit vffued hic voctata
M C quater in hijs febuari septm' idus
Uiuat in eternis pagrauit tunc suis fidus

APPRECIATION of the SCRIPT

The script is incised Gothic minuscule, with inconsistent dotting of the 'i's,
and some abbreviations. Capitals are shaped like uncials. A good
engraving.

TRANSLITERATION

Legend:	Is in the inscription:	Signifies:
Small script	text needing treatment	author's addition
Underlining	superscript-bar	abbreviation-mark
(...)	text needing treatment	abbreviation or ligature expanded
[...]	text needing treatment	author's correction, amendment, conjecture
.p.	a 'p' with two dots on either side of the descender	*per-*
[/]		a letter or space deleted

1   Ele Bowet grata mulier ıacet hıc tumulata
2   Robertı nata fiıit ufford hec vocitata
3   M C quater in hijs februari feptim° ıdus
4   Viuat in eternis .p.agrauit tıııc fup^{er} fidus

TRANSCRIPTION

1   Ele Bowet grata mulier iacet hic tumulata
2   Roberti nata fuit [U]fford h[æ]c vocitata
3   M C quater in hi[/]s [F]ebruari[i] feptim(o) idus
4   Vivat in [æ]ternis p(er)agravit tunc fup(er) fidus

CLEAR TEXT   With appropriate punctuation

1   Ele Bowet, grata mulier, iacet hic tumulata.
2   Roberti nata fuit Ufford hæc vocitata.
3   M C quater in his Februarii septimo idus
4   (Vivat in æternis!) peragravit tunc super sidus.

TRANSLATION

1   Ele Bowet, this friendly woman, lies here interred.
2   Robert Ufford's daughter she was, thus her name.
3   In this year 1400, on February 7th
4   (May she live in eternity!) she then wandered off to beyond the stars.

COMMENTARY

3   *in his*: This is the cryptic spot of this inscription. It has no noun with which it could be seen to be in concord. Therefore one may assume that there is an ellipsis. As the noun relative to the year is missing, an elliptical *annis* is conjectured. True, *anno* would have been the more logical addition, because that would have read "in the year 1400", but such a grammatically wrong plural can be seen in medieval inscriptions. Also, and more to the point, the plural was here needed for the rhyme.

3   *Februarii septimo idus*: The Roman calendar has the ides of February on the 13th, and counting seven days off, including the first and the last, brings us to February 7th.

4   *peragravit*: must be seen as the verb relevant for the date-line. Therefore the beginning of that line is not in chronologically correct sequence: the soul cannot first "live in eternity" and only afterwards "wander off". The phrase *vivat in æternis* must therefore be understood as an interjection, an intercalated phrase.

4   *sidus*: is "the star", not saying which, but probably what is meant is "the stars" – the rhyme here demanded the singular.

STYLISTIC APPRECIATION

The first two verses scan correctly, if one allows special terms for the name, and the (common, and permitted) cæsura-licence in the first two verses. The third verse, with its notoriously difficult date-information, however, does not quite comply with correct prosody.[19] The last line has perfect scansion again.

The following shows the verse arrangement and the complex rhyme-scheme.
The arrows in the left and right margins (↓↑) indicate the vertical rhyme-linkage within the respective pair of hemistichs, the double arrow (↔) demonstrates the horizontal relationship between the two hemistichs of a verse. The X is a reminder of the additional saltire-wise connection among the hemistichs of the first verse-pair.

1	↓	Ele Bowet, grata	↔\/	mulier, iacet hic tumulata.	↓
2	↑	Roberti nata	↔/\	fuit Ufford hæc vocitata.	↑
3	↓	M C quater in his		Februarii septimo idus	↓
4	↑	(Vivat in æternis !)		peragravit tunc super sidus.	↑

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[19] There is an error of prosody in v.3 : *quater* should not be made to have a long second syllable, nor a long first one. Also, *septimo idus* ought to have an elision between the two words. But that deviation is just permissible, as else it would ruin the run of the rhythm.

Vv.1 / 2 are coupled with disyllabic, and even identical, cæsura-rhyme and end-rhyme, the same rich rhyme appearing therefore four times in the two lines. The verse-pair 3 / 4 also has disyllabic verse-end rhyme, *idus* going with *sidus*, but the (distinct) cæsura-rhymes have even more to say for themselves, because here not only the word-ends rhyme (*-is)*, but the two verses are almost in their entirety bound together by a similarity of consonance – and that is quite an achievement of versification.

The wording of the inscription follows beaten tracks often trodden by other poets. But the imagination is suddenly arrested by the last line, which sees her soul wandering off to beyond the stars.

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Reinhard Lamp, Hamburg