

Reinhard Lamp

William Fynderne, d. 1444, & Wife Elizabeth Kyngeston – Childrey, St. Mary's, Berkshire

Site

The small church of St. Mary's stands on the outskirts of the village of Childrey, on the foot-hills of the North Downs, and from the top of its square tower one has a wide view over the valley of the White Horse. The church possesses a number of interesting sepulchral brasses, the largest of which is the object of this study.

Biographical

The monument shows the figure of an armed man, who proudly displays his coat of arms, is called "armiger" in the inscription, and thus belongs to the landed gentry – his armour, though, does not mean he was a military, but is a convention to document Fynderne's social status. The marginal text proves that, in spite of this outward show, he was a man of the law. WALLER / GOODALL¹ believe that he may have studied some law for the needs of a country-squire. "He served the office of sheriff of Berkshire 10th Henry VI, 1432,² and was elected member of parliament for the same county with Robert Shottesbroke in 1434.³ On the 8th of May this year he was present at the great council held in the bishop of Durham's palace in the Strand when the king endeavoured to reconcile the dukes of Gloucester and Bedford, between whom a quarrel had arisen about the conduct of war in France.⁴ In 1436, he subscribed fifty pounds, a large sum in those days, to the loan ordered by the privy council 14th February 14^o Henry VI to be raised from the peers, ecclesiastics, cities, towns, and influential persons of the kingdom, to enable the king to send an army into France under the Duke of York".⁵

1 Information from J.G. & L.A.B. WALLER, engravers, *A Series of MONUMENTAL BRASSES from the 13th to the 16th Century*, 1864; reprinted with additions and corrections by J.A. Goodall, F.S.A., Phillips & Page, London, 1975, p. 39b

2 Ibidem. Here reference is made to Berry, *County Genealogies*

3 Ibidem. Here reference is made to Ashmole, *Antiquities of Berkshire*.

4 Ibidem. Here reference is made to Nicolas, *Ordinances of the Privy Council*, iv. 213

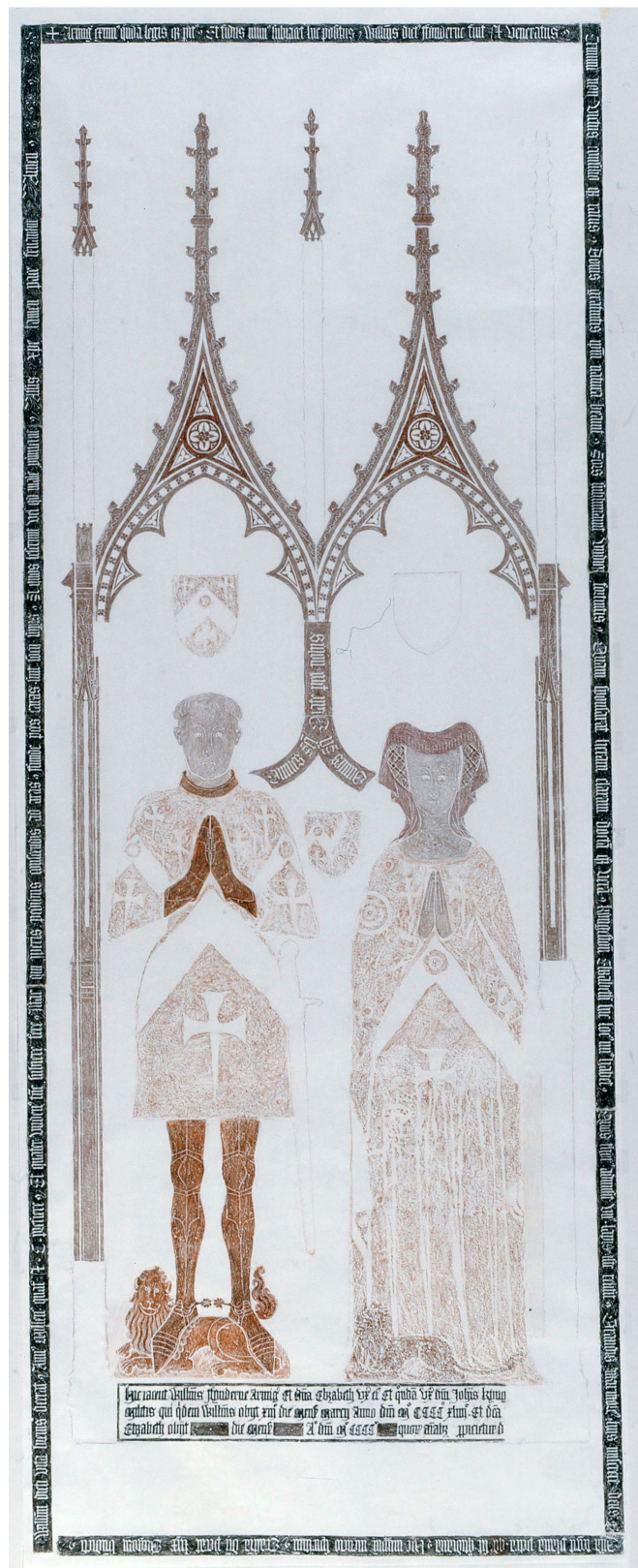
5 Ibidem. Again reference is made to Nicolas, *Ordinances of the Privy Council*, iv. 329

His wife Elizabeth was daughter and co-heiress of Thomas and Elizabeth de Chelry of the manor of Frethorne, the most influential manor in Childrey, the family being of some importance early in the 14th century. Elizabeth was widow of Sir John Kyngeston, and William Fynderne was her second husband. She "was possessed in her own right of large estates in the counties of Wilts, Somerset, and Berks."⁶

William seems to have had a short life only, as witnessed by the inscription on his brass. His wife survived him for "nearly twenty years, and appears to have resumed the name of Kyngeston, being so styled in the Inq. p. mortem 3^o Edw.IV, 1463–4. The brass having been laid down in her life-time, the date of her decease was never inserted."⁷

Description of the Brass

The brass (largest in Berkshire) lies beside the altar, hard against the southeast corner of the walls, but was originally placed in the centre of the chancel, which accounts for the lead and colour inlays having long been



6 Ibidem.

7 Ibidem.

worn away. It shows two figures. On the left a man stands praying, bare-headed, wearing a heraldic tabard over full plate-armour, his feet resting against a lion. Above him a shield: Argent a chevron sable between three crosses formy fitchy of the same, the chevron charged with an annulet⁸ argent. This coat is reproduced on the tabard three times, namely on each fore-arm, and on the body, where, however, the annulet has disappeared.⁹

Beside him is his wife, in a horned head-dress, at her feet a small lion. She also wears heraldic clothes, marked with her husband's coat of arms on her kirtle, and her mantle is emblazoned: Quarterly: 1) and 4): Argent a bend nebuly between two cotises gules [Kyngeston]; 2) and 3): Argent a whirlpool¹⁰ gules [Chelrey]. Only the emblem of the whirlpool consisting of three concentric rings is clearly visible today. The shield above her head is missing.

Between them a further shield: [Fynderne] impaling [Kyngeston] and [Chelrey] quarterly. The Fynderne family originates from Findern, in Derbyshire¹¹, the Kingston family is known in Yorkshire.

The man's tabard, the woman's gown, mantle, pet-dog, and the shields are made of lead, the white metal intended to convey the prevalent tincture of argent in the heraldry. This soft material is now worn away to a rough surface, and also the originally coloured inlays are gone.

Above the figures is a fine, though mutilated, double canopy with soaring ogee gables and particularly beautiful and well-proportioned subcusping. Of the originally three high pinnacles, only the tops of the left-hand and middle ones remain. Also, the lower half of the right-hand canopy-shaft, as well as the bottom of the left one, and the little plate of the foot-inscription on the right are gone. Luckily, it is only small, so that the text can easily be reconstituted by conjecture. Missing also is one of the three shields (above the right-hand figure) and the man's sword. The marginal text, however, is

8 The annulet is a cadency-mark for the fifth son of an armigerous family.

9 The Fynderne crest (not illustrated here) is an oxen yoke, with its chain hanging down from the middle.

10 "The ancient heraldic form of the whirlpool differs from the modern one, which is formed by a spiral line resembling a watch-spring." WALLER BROS, after pl. 39.

11 A particular, very beautiful flower grows in people's gardens in Findern, Derbyshire, which, as legend has it, one ancestor of the Fynderne family had brought back from the Holy Land, probably from a crusade. It is *narcissus poeticus plena*, a plant at home around the Mediterranean. I owe this information to MARY CLULOW, MBS, Derby.

– very fortunately – complete.

Appreciation of the Script

The brass has three different texts. Instead of a pendant underneath the centre of the two canopies appears a text-fillet, the splayed ends turned towards the two figures respectively. There is a foot-inscription of three lines, in raised Gothic characters. A marginal text runs around the monument, ending in a line-filler in the form of flower-like arabesques.

A, B) FILLETS in the MARGIN and in the CANOPY-PENDANT

The lettering is Gothic minuscule, incised, small and compressed, the characters reduced in shape and not easily decipherable, because the minims for 'n', 'm', 'u', 'v', and the – almost always undotted – 'i', are (in most cases) undistinguishable, and also the 'e' is recognizable only by no more than a hint of an excrescence in the shaft, and mostly is indistinct from a 'c'. There are many abbreviations. All this makes the text a challenge.

C) FOOT-INSRIPTION

Gothic minuscule, raised characters, delicately executed and easily legible, of a different type from the other scripts and therefore (probably) from a different maker.

Transliteration

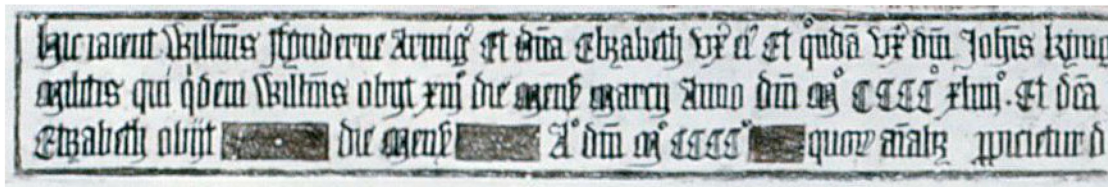
Legend:	Is in the inscription:	Signifies:
Small script	text needing treatment	author's intervention
(...)	text needing treatment	expansion of abbreviations and ligatures
[...]	text needing treatment	author's correction, amendment, alteration
{ }	voided flourished brackets	missing text
{[...]}	script in double brackets	author's conjectural reconstitution of missing text
underlining	superscript-bar	abbreviation mark
<i>italics</i>	ligature	
' , ° , ^ , ~	swirl, flourish, apostrophe (variously)	abbreviation mark
§	scroll	verse-end marker

A) Pendant Text**Transcription:**

Omnes S(an)C(t)i Orate pro nobis

Translation:

All Ye Saints, pray for us!

B) Foot-Inscription**Transliteration**

- 1 Hic iacent Willms Fynderne Armig' Et dña Elizabeth ux'
ei' Et °quda ux' dñi Johis Kyng{ }
- 2 Militis qui °qdem Willms obiit XIII° die mens' marci
Anno dñi M° CCCC° XI III° Et dca
- 3 Elizabeth obiit --- die mens' --- A° dñi M°
CCCC° --- quor' aiaz ppietur d' }

Transcription

- 1 Hic iacent Wil^(he)lm^{us} Fynderne Armig^(er) Et d^(omi)na
Elizabeth ux^(or) ei^(us) Et qu^(on)da^(m) ux^(or) d^(o)m⁽ⁱⁿⁱ⁾ Joh^(ann)is
Kyng^{[eston]}
- 2 Militis qui q^(ui)dem Wil^(he)lm^{us} obiit XIII° die mens^(e)
Mar^(t)ii Anno d^(o)m⁽ⁱⁿⁱ⁾ M° CCCC° XI III° Et d⁽ⁱ⁾c^(t)a
- 3 Elizabeth obiit --- die mens^(e) --- A⁽ⁿⁿ⁾o d^(o)m⁽ⁱⁿⁱ⁾ M° CCCC° ---
quor^(um) a⁽ⁿ⁾imab^(us) p^(ro)pi^(t)ietur d^{[eus. Amen.]}

Clear Text

- 1 Hic iacent Wilhelmus Fynderne, Armiger, et domina Elizabeth, uxor eius, et quondam uxor domini Johannis Kyng{[eston]},
- 2 Militis. Qui quidem Wilhelmus obiit XIII^o die mense Martii Anno Domini M^o CCCC^o XLIII^o. Et dicta
- 3 Elizabeth obiit ---- die mense ---- Anno Domini M^o CCCC^o ---- . Quorum animabus propitietur d{[eus; Amen.]}

Translation

- 1 Here lie William Fynderne, Esquire, and Dame Elizabeth, his wife, and formerly wife to Sir John Kyngeston,
- 2 Knight. This aforesaid William died on the 13th day of the month of March in the 1444th year of the Lord. And the said
- 3 Elizabeth died on the ---- day of the month of ---- in our Lord's year ---- . On their souls may God have pity. Amen.

C) Marginal Text**Transliteration**

(based on author's own rubbing)

- a ¶ Arung' exiii' °quda legis qz p.it' § Et fidus
iiii' subiacet hic positus § Willius dict' Fynderne
fuit & veneratus §
- b Crimine non Victus consilio qz ratus § Douis gratuitis
ipui natura beavit § Sors sublimauit vudiqz fortuitis §
Quam sponsarat heram claram docta °qz vera §
Kyngestou · Elizabeth hic loc' iiii' habet § Quos
thor' admisit vii' · lapis · iste relisit § Grandis
marmore' hys miserere deus §

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- c Ossa tegit plana petra · qd' sit °qtidiana § Hic
 un~~per~~u mencio spirituu § Crastia du °perat lux
 Gregorij bndicti §
- d Willui dicti vita brevis deerat § Ann⁹ Millen⁹
 quat' & · C. pret'iere § Et quater vuden' tuc
 subiere fere § Istac qui pperis pedibus conscendis ad
 aras § Funde pces caras sint locij supis § Si
 quos leserunt vel qd male .pui⁹uerut § Assis Xpe
 tamen pace fruantur Amen ~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Transcription

- a ✱ Armig(er) exim(ius) q(ui)da(m) legis[/]q(ue) p(er)it(us) § Et fidus
 nimi(us) subiactet hic positus § Wil(hel)mu(s) dict(us) Fynderne fuit
 (et) veneratus §
- b Crimine non victus confilio[/]q(ue) ratus § Donis gratuitis
 ip(sum) natura beavit § Sors sublimavit undiq(ue) fortuitis §
 Quam spon(s)arat heram claram docta(m) q(uo)que vera(m) §
 Kyngeston Elizabeth hic loc(um) im(um) habet § Quos thor(ax)
 admisit un(us) lapis iste relisit § Grandis marmore(us) his
 miserere deus §
- c Ossa tegit plana petra q(uo)d sit q(uo)tidiana § Hic [(in
 perpetuum)] men[t]io spirit[ui](m) § Crasti(n)a di(e)i (pro)perat lux
 Gregorii b(e)n(e)dicti §
- d Wil(hel)mi dicti vita brevis deerat § Ann(i) Millen(i) quat(er)
 (et) C pr[æ]t(er)iere § Et quater unde(n)i t(u)nt subiere fere §
 Istac qui (prop)eris pedibus conscendis ad aras § Funde
 p(re)ces caras sint locii sup(er)is § Si quos leserunt vel
 q(ui)d male p(ro)meruerunt § Assis (Christe) tamen pace
 fruantur Amen ~~~~~

Clear Text

with appropriate punctuation

- 1 ✕ Armiger eximius quidam legisque peritus
- 2 Et fidus nimius subiacet hic positus.
- 3 Williamus dictus Fynderne fuit et veneratus.
- 4 Crimine non victus consilioque ratus.
- 5 Donis gratuitis ipsum natura beavit –
- 6 Sors sublimavit undique fortuitis.
- 7 Quam sponsarat heram claram, doctam quoque veram –
- 8 Kyngeston Elizabeth; hic locum imum habet.
- 9 Quos thorax admisit unus, lapis iste relisit
- 10 Grandis marmoreus ... His miserere, deus !
- 11 Ossa tegit plana petra – quod sit quotidiana
- 12 Hic in perpetuum mentio spirituum !
- 13 Crastina diei properat lux Gregorii benedicti,
- 14 Wilhelmi dicti vita brevis deerat:
- 15 Anni Milleni quater et C præteriere,
- 16 Et quater undeni tunc subiere fere.
- 17 Istac qui properis pedibus conscendis ad aras,
- 18 Funde preces caras ! Sint socii superis !
- 19 Si quos leserunt vel quid male promeruerunt,
- 20 Assis, Christe, tamen, pace fruantur ! Amen.

Translation

- 1 A most excellent gentleman, a man versed in the law
- 2 And signally trustworthy, is here underneath laid to rest.
- 3 William Fynderne he was called, and venerated he was.
- 4 In his accusations he was never defeated, and in his counsel unerring and solid.
- 5 Nature had made this man happy with freely awarded gifts –
- 6 And Destiny uplifted him by showering upon him from all sides fortuitous endowments.

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- 7 What an outstanding, learned and also truthful wife had Fate looked out
for him –
- 8 Elizabeth Kyngeston; here she has her ultimate low abode.
- 9 One and the same armoured cavern has admitted them both, this stone
has pushed them down,
- 10 This huge marble... May God have pity on them!
- 11 The slab covers their bones – which may be daily
- 12 Reminder here of their souls now and forever.
- 13 The light of the day following upon the feast of the blessed Gregory was
hastening on,
- 14 And the said William’s short life failed him.
- 15 One thousand and four times a-hundred years had passed,
- 16 And almost four times eleven followed after.
- 17 Thou who from this side approachest the altars on thy hurrying feet,
- 18 Let flow forth loving prayers! May these two be in company of the hea-
venly spirits!
- 19 If they have hurt anyone or have in any way ill deserved,
- 20 Yet stand by them, Christ, so they may enjoy your peace! Amen.

Commentary

The lettering is rather imprecise and contains many abbreviations. These add on to slight surface-damages in the brass, which need then to be distinguished from (or understood as) abbreviation-marks, so the poem here presented should be read bearing in mind the delicacy of the work of transliteration, and all the more so of the expansion. Much of the commentary must therefore be given over to the problem of establishing the text itself.

1 °quda: The word has some little flaws in the metal above it, which may or may not represent an abbreviation-mark. It could therefore at a stretch be interpreted as *quondam* “in his time”, particularly as that also fits into the prosody. But *quidam*, which underscores a previous adjective (“signally, most certainly”) seems the better solution. Not improbably, the author chose this abbreviation in order to allow for a double meaning of the word.

2 ⅞⅞⅞⅞: Only *nimi(us)* or *-(um)* “exceedingly” seems to fit these seven

identical minims in all respects.

5 *donis ... gratuitis*: The adjective may be seen in a double meaning: "gifts given freely, without ulterior motive", but perhaps also "gifts unearned, not due to merit". This second sense of the word would then cast more light on the person's character and show him from a new angle: not only as a man unwavering and sure of himself, but also conscious of his qualities being a gift, and not due to personal merit.¹²

12 *iiiiϑϑiii*: The word makes difficult deciphering. It could be *imperpetuum*. As such it fulfils the prosodic requirements, but in this meaning of "transitory" the word would go against the idea of continuity of intercession. Hence there is probably a mistake here. Possibly what was meant by the poet was "*in perpetuum*", understood as two words, meaning "for ever".¹³ Compound-words with the prefix *in-* preceding the labials 'm', 'p', 'b' can also be spelt *im...*, but the poet himself would not have chosen this spelling, because here not one, but two separate words are intended. This mistake can have been made by a scribe writing from dictation, or by the engraver who, from his Latin knowledge, may have seen fit to correct what he thought had come as a mistake in the autograph submitted to him, and thus had written *imperpetuum*.

13 *lux Gregorii*: The feast of St. Gregory the Great, according to the Sarum calendar¹⁴, is March 12th – Fynderne died the day after.

19 *.piiii^ueriit*: Another cryptic word needing expansion. Of the several openings, which, however, in most cases do not fit the context closely enough, the rendering that seems most appropriate is *promeruerunt*. The verb *promeruere* means "to deserve", *male promeruerunt* therefore "they deserved ill".

Stylistic Appreciation

The text consists of ten distichs, which in general scan well, although there are some departures from orthodoxy.¹⁵ In addition, the poem has a highly

12 The inscription on the brass to J. Blodwell, Balsham (Cambs), contains a similar thought.

13 I owe this insight to my friend and latinist colleague Hans Peter Blecken.

14 I owe this insight to Nicholas Rogers, Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge.

15 Unorthodox prosody:

v. 8: *locum imum* should of rights be scanned with an elision, namely *loc' imum*.

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complex system of rhymes.

Set out below is the diagram of versification. Coloured text and frames mark relationship of sounds. The arrows in the left and right margins (↑↓) show the vertical rhyme-linkage between the respective hemistichs, the double arrow (↔) indicates the horizontal connection between or within the hemistichs.

1	↓	Armiger <u>eximius</u>	↔	quidam legis <u>peritus</u>	↓
2	↔↑	Et <u>fidus nimius</u>	↔	subiacet hic <u>positus</u> .	↑
3	↔↓	Wilhelmus <u>dictus</u>	↔	Fynderne fuit et <u>veneratus</u> .	↓↑
4	↑	Crimine non <u>victus</u>	↔	consilioque <u>ratus</u> .	↑
5		Donis <u>gratuitis</u>	X	ipsum natura <u>beavit</u> –	
6		Sors <u>sublimavit</u>		undique <u>fortuitis</u> .	
7		Quam sponsarat <u>heram</u>	↔↔↔↔	claram, doctam quoque <u>veram</u> –	
8		Kyngeston Elizabeth;	↔	hic locum imum <u>habet</u> .	
9		Quos thorax <u>admisit</u>	↔	unus, lapis iste <u>reliquit</u>	
10		Grandis marmoreus ...	↔	His miserere, <u>deus!</u>	
11		Ossa <u>tegit plana</u>	↔↔↔↔	petra – quod <u>sit quotidiana</u>	
12		Hic in <u>perpetuum</u>	↔	mentio <u>spirituum!</u>	
13		Cratina diei <u>properat</u>	X	lux Gregorii <u>benedicti</u> :	
14		Wilhelmi <u>dicti</u>		vita brevis <u>deerat</u> .	
15	↓	Anni <u>Milleni</u>		quater et C <u>præteriere</u> ,	↓
16	↑	Et quater <u>undeni</u>		tunc <u>subiere fere</u> .	↑↔
17		Istac qui <u>properis</u>	X	pedibus <u>conscendis ad aras</u> ,	
18		Funde <u>preces caras!</u>		Sint <u>socii superis!</u>	
19		Si quos <u>leserunt</u>	↔	vel quid male <u>promeruerunt</u> ,	
20		Assis, Christe, <u>tamen</u> ,	↔	pace <u>fruantur! Amen</u> .	

The first two verse-pairs 1/2 and 3/4 have rich, disyllabic rhymes, one for the two caesuras, another for the verse-end respectively, linking them audibly together to underpin their distich-form – a splendid piece of versification. And there is even more complexity in the 3rd distich, which shows saltire-rhymes, in that the caesura of the hexameter rhymes with the end of the pentameter, and conversely.

The following verses are also interesting. In v. 7, rhymes are particularly prominent: the hexameter has five times the same syllable (-am), the

v. 13: *diei* is made to be pronounced [djei] in one syllable, which is permissible.

v. 11: *plana* with its wrong long end-syllable can claim caesura-licence. *petra*, however, should not be made to have a stressed long end-syllable.

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pentameter (v. 8) produces a rhyme with the two last syllables of the personal name – an impressive achievement. Here we have poetical effects supporting the message of the poem: the man’s admiration for the woman is in this way strongly marked. The distich of vv. 11/12 has again disyllabic leonine rhymes, but again with a difference: v. 11 boasts a triple internal rhyme, all three words of the first hemistich corresponding with words in the other: *Ossa* looking at *petra*, *tegit* being paired with *sit*, and *plana* going with *quotidiana* – a great performance of versification. The following distich (vv. 13/14) again stands apart due to its rhyme-sounds: saltire rhymes link up the two lines, *properat* pairing up with *deerat*, *benedicti* with *dicti*. The distich of vv. 15/16 reaches another height of complexity: there are again three pairs of rhyme-words respectively: *milleni* / *undeni*; *quater* is a repeat; *præteriere* / *subiere*. The distich of vv. 17/18 has again the saltire rhyme, and the last verse-pair has the “simple” leonine one.

All in all, here is a poetic achievement of outstanding competence. Integrating a rhyme-system into the Latin hexameters and pentameters is difficult enough, but here the system is in addition varied most artistically and ingeniously, so that the reader’s ears are not fatigued with pounding monotony. Instead, we have a text that has its lines linked, its cohesion of message wrought with great variety and liveliness. So not only does the author deliver proof of the highest competence in versification, but shows that he is a sensitive poet.

The enormous burden of versification in this poem of course weighs heavily on the freedom of expression, most awkwardly limiting the range of words lending themselves to be used. Therefore, much more in the way of stylistic effects – in addition to the admirable rhyme-scheme – could realistically not be expected. And yet, the poet managed a good flow in his text. In vv. 1–8, the syntactical unit straddles the line-end. Sometimes, on the contrary, sentences are quite short, as in v. 12, and there are interjections (vv. 18, 11/12). The varied syntax makes for a fresh and natural language. He also produced a particular liveliness through his choice of verbs. The abstract subjects *natura* and *sors* are given verbs showing them endowed with the capacity of volition (*beare* “to gladden”, *sublimare* “to lift up”, *sponsare* “to vow”), and even the inanimate subjects *thorax* “armour”, *lapis* “stone” and *petra* “slab” have verbs expressing actions springing from spontaneous decision: *admittere* “admit”, *relidere* “push down”, *tegere* “cover up”. Therefore, these subjects all appear like living creatures, mysteriously endowed

with authority.

A certain grouping of words can be discerned. After the enriching and the uplifting of the verbs *beare* and *sublimare* comes the tomb's contrary movement of enclosing, the slab weighing down, and throwing or pushing back. The verb *relidere* appears again in the last but one line in the guise of its simplex verb, *lædere* "injure, wound".

Also, the middle part of the poem is marked by a recurrence of the deictic words *hic* and *his* (vv. 8, 10, 12), which has the effect of forcefully drawing our attention to the thing at hand, away from speculation, fixing our mind implacably on the tomb before us. Vv. 11 and 12 offer an impressive contrast between *ossa* and *spirituum*, "the bones" and "the souls" of the departed, together with the opposition between *quotidiana* "daily" and *in perpetuum*, "for ever".

In spite of the constraint of metre and rhyme fettering him, the poet has found some suggestive wording. *thorax*, in v. 9, really means the breast-armor, and together with its verb *admittere*, an idea of protection and reception ought to be associated – here, it is nothing of the kind. This irony is felt particularly keenly. In v. 17, *istac* means "on this side", and one wonders whether here may not be meant more than just banally the direction of approach by the church-visitor, namely the opposite of "the world beyond", i.e. "this side of death". Here also is a delicate overtone, which is meaningfully borne out by the word *pedibus*: how else if not on one's feet would one enter – unless one be carried in ... Those hurrying feet are in lurid opposition to the timeless immobility of the grave.

The religious link is interesting. In v. 6, it is Destiny that rules a man's life, not God. V. 8 speaks of the *superis*, "the Gods" – again a heathen notion. Only in the last line does a Christian idea appear, in the invocation of Christ. And that is done with an ingenious turn.

V. 4 pointed to Fynderne being involved in legal activity. The text says that he was never defeated in his case when he had to run an accusation (*crimine non victus*). The idea is taken up again in yet another relevant word of the legal world: *consilio ratus*, saying that one could rely on his solid and sound assessment of the situation. At the end, in v. 20, that semantic field again appears. The poet calls out *Assis, Christe!* "Be present!" That word, *assis*, beyond its immediate sense also means "help!" and, when speaking of a divinity, "grant grace!". But surprisingly, and more to the point in a third

and most relevant sense, *adesse* means to “appear in court”, as a witness for example, (hopefully) contributing to the clearing of the accused – in our case, the soul of the deceased, on the Day of the Last Judgment. In this manner, through the choice of one word, the legal context is compounded with the central religious issue.

The way in which Fynderne's wife is presented is quite exceptional. She does not appear as simply the man's wife, or another man's daughter, or heiress, or as having given the man so and so many children – in total deference to the man's identity – but in her own right, under the name by which she entered into Fynderne's marriage, Kyngeston. And, what is more, she is praised for her own merits, in a series of adjectives extolling her virtues, calling her “outstanding, learned, truthful”, and Fate is thanked for having given Fynderne such a spouse.

However, what may be the echo of William's true feelings for his wife may also be seen in a different light altogether. Elizabeth had outlived William and after his death reverted to her former name, something she would not have been able to do in her second husband's lifetime. She presumably commissioned his brass and had it laid down. Does that also explain the quite unusual series of high compliments that are paid her in the inscription? She would have ordered the wording herself then? Was there not so much affection or esteem felt by Elizabeth towards her husband after all? A veil of doubt now hovers about these lines, and a good portion of its attraction seems to waver.

The end of the poem reserves yet another surprise for the reader. After the habitual appeal for intercessory prayer, Christ is begged to provide help even if the deceased should have injured anyone, or deserved ill, i.e. overreached others. Such a prayer recognizing one's unwitting, or intentional, guilt is also most unusual, especially so in a text commemorative of a man of the law.

In summing up one can safely say, therefore, that this poem is, for many reasons, of the greatest interest, possesses superb poetic qualities, and may be said to rate among the best medieval funerary inscriptions.

Reinhard Lamp, Hamburg

**Reinhard Lamp: William Fynderne, d. 1444,
& Wife Elizabeth Kyngeston – Childrey, St. Mary's, Berkshire**

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