



<http://kentarchaeology.org.uk/research/archaeologia-cantiana/>

Kent Archaeological Society is a registered charity number 223382

© 2017 Kent Archaeological Society

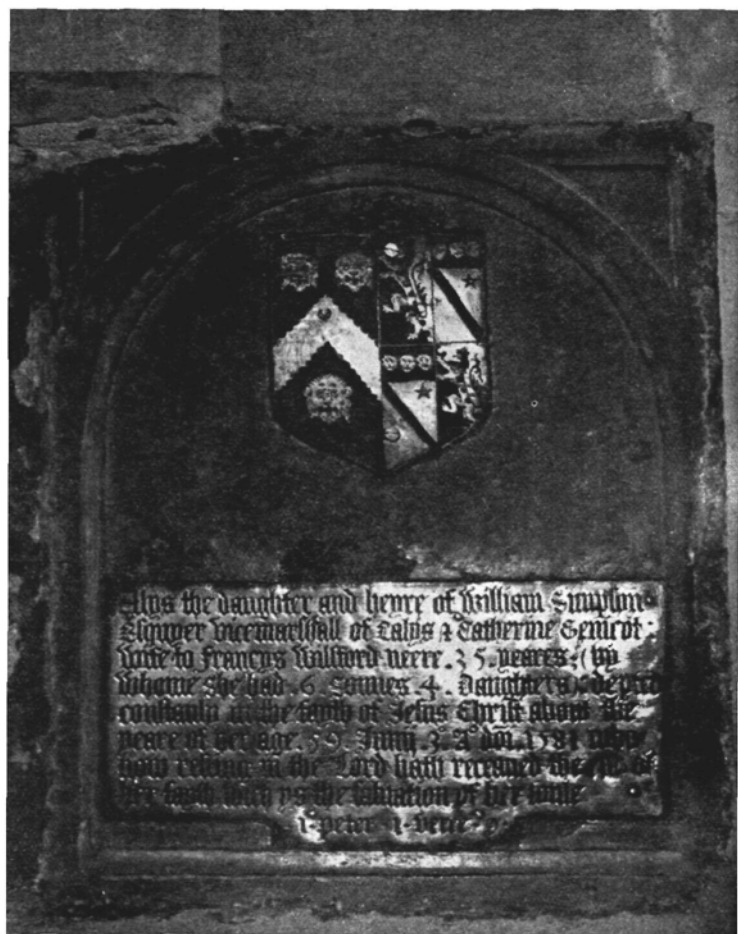


FIG. 1.

NONINGTON, KENT.

Monument on East wall for Alys Wilsford, 1581.

A BRASS AT NONINGTON, KENT

BY RALPH GRIFFIN, F.S.A.

ON the east wall of the chancel of St. Mary, Nonington, just north of the High Altar is a monument of Bethersden marble containing two brass plates. These are an inscription with above it a coat of arms. They are illustrated in the second volume of Belcher at page 100 (No. 332) but not with great success; and as the frame of marble is interesting and very characteristic of its date, 1581, a representation of it may be useful and is shown at Fig. 1. The inscription in eight lines of black letter runs thus:—

Alys the daughter and heyre of William Simpson Esquier
vice marshall of Calys & Catherine Genicot : wife to
Francys Wilsford neere .35. yeares ; (by whome she had .6.
sonnes .4. daughters) : deptyd constantly in the fayth of
Jesus Christ about the yeare of her age .59. Junii .3°. A°. .
doī .1581. who now resting in the Lord hath receaved the
end of her fayth, wiche ys the saluation of her soule

Underneath this on the plate is a half-line in black letter:—

1. Peter .1. verce .9.

being the quotation from the first epistle general of St. Peter which in a version in use in 1581 ran, "Receiving the end of your faith even the salvation of your soules."¹

One point in this inscription may be noted. The numbers are not spelt out in full but given in figures, each figure having a full stop on either side of it. This convention is frequently to be observed in MSS.

The shield above is a fine example of artistic heraldry. Being recently loose in its slab the back could be examined and it was found to be palimpsest. The obverse and reverse

¹ There were several versions in use about 1581: the most popular was the so-called "Breeches" bible. My friend Mr. H. S. Kingsford has been good enough to consult a copy of this and has noted for me the verse as quoted above.

are both shown on Fig. 2 and Fig. 3. The inscription was also examined but was found not to be palimpsest. Both plates are now securely fastened in their slab.

It is gratifying to be able to add one more to the number of palimpsests in Kent already quite considerable. A glance at this reverse shows that it is a cutting from a large Flemish brass consisting of two compartments with foliage enclosing a plain centre such as one might expect to see on the margin of a large brass to carry the inscription; such for instance as can be seen in the brass in Bruges Cathedral for John of Liekerke and his widow, 1518, reproduced in Creeny's *Monumental Brasses of Europe* (Norwich, 1884), page 72, where the foliage is very similar if not identical with that at Nonington. But the matter does not rest there. Recent investigation by Mr. R. H. Pearson at Walkerne in Hertfordshire has revealed a palimpsest identical with that at Nonington except that the middle is filled with letters from an inscription. Another piece exactly like Walkerne is found at Marsworth, Bucks. Both the brasses at Walkerne and Marsworth are dated 1583, a date so close to 1581 that Mr. Pearson is well warranted in concluding that all three brasses are from the same London workshop that was using up a large Flemish brass, spoil from some monastic church in Flanders plundered by the Puritans. Both the palimpsests are illustrated in the *Transactions of the Monumental Brass Society*, Walkerne in Vol. IV, p. 132, and Marsworth in Vol. VI, p. 245. Mr. Mill Stephenson, F.S.A., reproduces both in his volumes which give a list of palimpsest brasses in Great Britain.

For comparison Fig. 4 reproduces the relevant part of the back of the brass at Walkerne, showing how the original has been pared off top and bottom so as to make it fit, the dimensions being reduced from $6\frac{5}{8}$ to $6\frac{1}{8}$ and from $10\frac{3}{8}$ to $10\frac{1}{4}$. The brass is to Edward Humbarstone, 1583, while the palimpsest side shows it to have been cut from one laid down c. 1500 to one of the Gryse family.

The other, Fig. 5, from Marsworth, shows the inscription inserted between the edges which are blank at Nonington,



FIG. 2.
 NONINGTON, KENT.
 Shield in brass. 1581.
 Wilsford impaling Simpson.

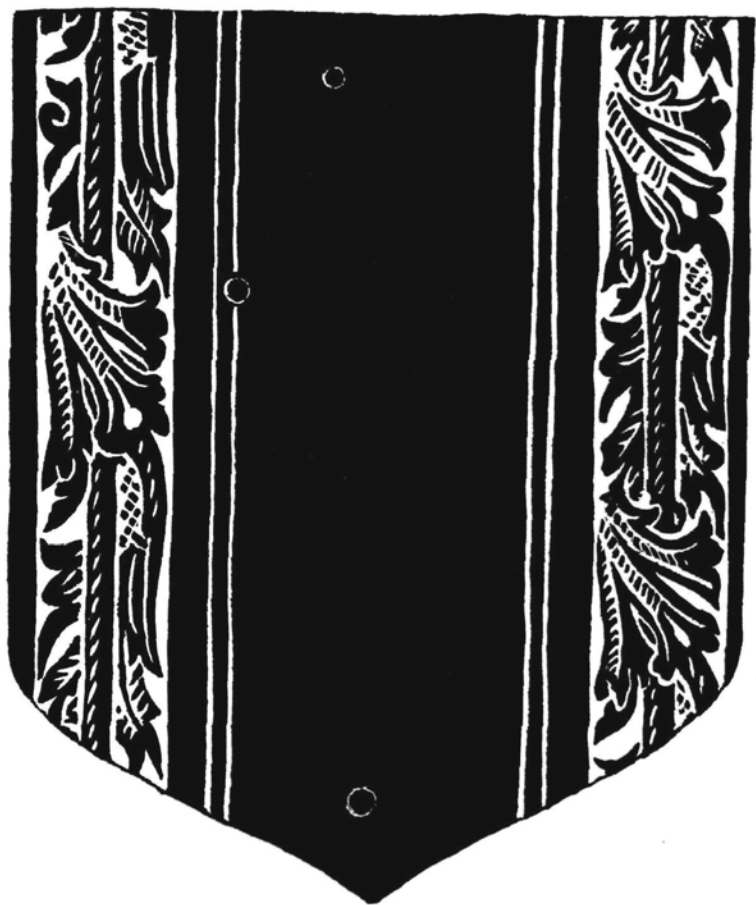


FIG. 3.

NONINGTON, KENT.

Palimpsest back of brass shield. 1581.



FIG. 4.

WALHERNE, HERTS.

Palimpsest, c. 1500, on back of Humbarstone brass. 1583.



FIG. 5.

MARSWORTH, BUCKS.

Palimpsest, c. 1500, on back of West brass. 1583.

Fig. 3. The dimensions here are $7\frac{3}{8} \times 7\frac{3}{4}$. This palimpsest is on the back of part of a brass to William West, 1583.

Turning now from the interesting detail of the palimpsest it will be well to deal with the obverse of the shield. This is shown in Fig. 2. It still has a good deal of colour in it, though not enough to give the blazon quite accurately. This is *Gules, a chevron engrailed between 3 leopards faces or; on the chevron, a crescent sable for difference* (Wilsford) impaling two coats quarterly, namely, 1 and 4, *Per bend nebuly sable and or, a lion rampant counterchanged* (Simpson). 2 and 3, *Argent a bend sable; on a chief gules three leopards faces or: above the bend, a mullet sable in sinister chief for difference* (Genicot).¹

The coat of Wilsford or Wilford is found in the Kent Visitations of 1530-1, 1574, 1592 and 1619. The pedigree of 1592 gives this Francis Wilsford as second son of Thomas Wilsford of Hartridge in the parish of Cranbrook by his wife Elizabeth Culpeper, daughter of Walter Culpeper of Bedgebury whose brass is at Goudhurst, c. 1520. Thomas Wilford had his lands disgavelled in 1548.

James Wylford, the first purchaser of the manors of Hartridge and Hockredge, seems to have been attracted to Kent by his first wife who was a daughter of John Bettenham of Pluckley, which connection probably led to the purchase of these manors in Cranbrook which he entailed on his eldest son Thomas by will proved in 1526 (*P.C.C. 13 Porch*). That will is a long and very interesting document which is worthy of being printed *in extenso* as it corrects Hasted as well as the Visitation of 1530-1 and includes a bequest to the reparation of the road from Riverhill in Kent to Northiam in Sussex which the testator had made. This Riverhill is probably the one in Biddenden. The testator mentions three wives for whom he desires prayers to be made. The first is Elizabeth (Bettenham). The others are Joan and Margaret.

¹ This name has been read Gemcote but Papworth (page 200) gives the shield to Genicot and suggests that family is Gascon, quoting from "Glover's Ordinary".

The will dated 27 April 1526 runs thus:—I, James Wylford, Citizen and Merchant Tailor of London and late alderman of the same, give bequeath and recommend my soul to Almighty God, to his Blessed Mother and all the saints in Heaven, and my body to be buried within the parish church of St Bartholomew the Lees in the chapel of St Nicholas and St Kateryn there before the image of St Kateryn under the tomb there which I have lately repaired.

Further I give $13/4$ to the high altar there for my tithes and oblations in time past negligently forgotten.

Item Whereas I have purchased the manor of Hartrich and Hogriche, co. Kent, I will that my eldest son Thomas Wylford shall have these manors, to him and his heirs male lawfully begotten; provided that the said Thomas is content therewith and makes no further claim.

Item, whereas I have already given to my son-in-law Mighell Englisshe, mercer and alderman of London, 400 marks sterling on his marriage to my daughter Anne, and whereas I have already given 500 marks to my sons John Wylford, William Wylford, Robert Wylford, Nicholas Wylford and Edmond Wylford; let them be therewith contented and make no further claim.

Item, whereas on 26th May 1514 I gave and delivered unto John Breton, then master of the Merchant Tailors of the Guild or Fraternity of St John Baptist of London, and to Robert Fayrethwaytte, William Wylforde, Paul Wythepaule and John Handford, wardens of the said Guild, to its use and behoof, the sum of £433 . 6 . 8. For the which sum the said Master and Wardens, by an indenture of the same date under the Common Seal, gave and granted to me and my heirs and assigns an annuity of £9 . 13 . 4 out of their messuage called the Sarysons Hedde in Frydaystrete of London; to be paid in equal portions four times a year; with a clause of distraint. I, therefore, will that the said annuity be expended in manner following:—that the said Master and Warden shall cause to be held yearly in the Church of St Bartholomew, on the day of my death, or on the next convenient day following “myn obytte or anniversary

solempnely by note with placebo and dirige overnight and Masse of Requiem on the morowe" by the parson of the said Church or his deputy with two priests of my craft and the parish clerk there. At which obit I will that three solemn peals be rung at the time of singing placebo overnight, and three like peals at the time of the mass of requiem; the parson praying for my soul and the souls of Elizabeth, Joanna and Margret my wives and all other Christian souls. And the said Master and Wardens for the said service shall bestow yearly the sum of 40s. as follows:—for two wax candles weighing together 12 lbs—12d.

And the Master and Wardens with the Clerk and Beadle shall come together "in oon clothing", as well to dirige as to the mass of Requiem "there to say de profundes [sic] and other orisons" and then all with other neighbours being there shall come to the hall of the Merchant Tailors and there shall be provided bread, cheese and ale to the sum of six shillings and eight pence.

Also I will that the said Master and Wardens shall offer at the said Requiem Mass "every one of them a penny in the worshep of the fyve woundes of our Lord Jesu Christ". And after the mass is done I will that the Master and Wardens pay the following fees: viz.

To the parson if there in person	8d
or to his deputy	6d
and to every priest of the Church (if not more than four) and to the two priests of the Company	6d each.
and to the clerk for his labour and for ringing the bells	12d
to the Master for his labour in coming	20d
„ „ Wardens „ „ „ „ „	12d each
to the clerk of the clothing and livery	6d
to the beadle for attendance and labour	6d
to the poor of the parish between All Saints and Christ- mas—one load of coal.	

the residue of the said 40s. also to be spent on coal for the poor.

I will also that 6/8 of the said annuity shall be paid to a Friar Minor of the place of the Friars Minor in the city of London, being a doctor of divinity or at least a bachelor thereof, that he may preach a sermon every Good Friday in the Church of St Bartholomew the Lees from six in the morning until nine in the morning. And if there is no such graduate of the Friars Minor available then there shall be chosen some other able and discreet doctor.

And whereas it has been customary in that Church at Easter to make a collection from the householders and strangers towards making and maintaining the Paschal Light, I will that 6/8 of the said annuity be applied to its making and maintenance, on condition that the householders etc. of the parish go free of any charge therefore.

Moreover I will and ordain that if the Master and Warden be negligent of the above charges and make default above the space of fourteen days without reasonable cause, then my bequest to them shall entirely cease and the said 53/4 shall be given to the parson and wardens for the time being of the church of St Bartholomew to be used for the same purposes as are expressed above.

And whereas I have heretofore given the £7 of residue of the annuity for the salary of a chantry priest in the said Church, I utterly revoke and renounce such gift, and will that the Master and Wardens should pay the said £7 to my son-in-law Mighell Inglisse and John Wylford my natural son, being my executors during their natural lives, and the natural life of the longer liver to bestow the same in manner following :—

Whereas of late I have caused to be made the Common Highway between Ryverhille, co. Kent and Northyam Church, co. Sussex, I will that whenever any part shall be in need of repair, upon relation thereof by any of the parishes of Rye, Notyham [sic] or Newyngden, the said executors shall deliver whatever part of the said £7 which may remain in their hands for the amending and repairing of the said highway.

And after the decease of both the executors, the money is to be paid to my eldest son and then to his next brother if living and so on, until all my sons have administered the money as above. And after the death of them all, the money is to be administered by the eldest heirs male of my eldest son, and in default of these by the eldest heirs male of my second son, and so on. And for the lack of such issue, by the heirs male of my brother William Wylford. In case any of the said heirs male be less than 21 years of age, the Master and Wardens are to pay the said sum to the parson and Church wardens of Rye, during the nonage of every such heir male. And if the name of Wylford be extinguished by default of heirs male, the money is similarly to be paid to the parson and Churchwardens of Rye, for ever, to be used for the same purpose. And if they do not duly expend the £7 on the repair of that highway, then I will that it be paid to the parson and Churchwardens of Nothyham for a similar purpose. And if they be negligent, then it shall be paid to the parson and Churchwardens of Newyngdon.

And I have caused two pairs of indentures tripartite to be made, signed and sealed containing the conditions above set forth, one for the Master and wardens of the Merchant Tailors, one for my executors, one for my eldest son, and one for each of the three parishes above-named.

And so that they may know from time to time of their rights, I will that the said indentures be read in Church once a year at Rye, Northiam, Newingden and Hartriche.¹ And if ever the full £7 is not expended on the repair of that highway, I direct it shall be spent on the repair of some other highway within that neighbourhood, as shall be convenient.

Moreover, whereas I have willed in my last will and testament that the sum of £200 shall be paid by the hands of Thomas Wylford, my eldest son, to Kateryn my daughter in twenty years, if she so long live, that is at the rate of £10 yearly till all be paid; I will that the said Katerin shall

¹ Hartridge is a large manor in Cranbrook which belonged to the Wilsfords but no parish or church of that name has been noted.

take the said sum as in full recompense of all her full portion, without any further claim. And if she makes any claim for more, then this my legacy is to be null and void.

Item I give to the Prior and Convent of the Friars Augustynes of the city of London, to the intent that they shall come to my burying, and the next day shall cause to be songen in their Church for my soul a solemn dirige by note overnight, and, on the morrow after, a Mass of Requiem by note,—40s.

Item, the like to the warden and Convent of the Friars Minor within the Newgate ; and to the Prior and Convent of the Carmelite Friars in Fletestrete ; and to the Prior and Convent of the Friars Preacher within Ludgate for the same purpose. And to the Prior and Convent of the Crowched Friars within Algate to the intent that they shall in like manner come to my burying, and that they shall do a solemn dirige and mass by note of Requiem, and a trentall of masses in their Conventual Church as soon as convenient—40s.

Also I will and require my executors that they do not vex, sue or trouble any person being indebted to me and who cannot pay ; but give them quittance of their debts that they might pray for my soul. And if later any shall be able to pay the said debt, the money so recovered shall be evenly distributed amongst the issue of my children at the time of their marriage [sic].

In witness whereof etc. “Per me James Wilford. Test’ Thoma Burley, rectore sancti Bartholomei predicti ; Test’ me Johanne Stanford, presbyter’ ; Ego Frater Willelme Boury, prior ordinis Fratrum sancte Crucis fateor sic esse ; per me Willelmum Wilford, seniore ; per me Thomam Cole ; per me Rogerum Payne ; per me Johannem Wilford, notarium publicum.

Probate granted 12 January 1526.

It is unfortunate that with this interesting will the recorded wills terminate, so that no will exists for Thomas Wilford, the next owner of the manors at Cranbrook, whose

lands were disgravelled under the Act of 31 Hen. VIII. The eldest son of this Thomas was a very distinguished man, Sir James Wilford or Wilsford. Of him a full account will be found in the fifth volume of the *Genealogist*, pp. 1 seqq., together with an abstract of his will. But his younger brother Francis, who as a second son differences with a crescent, has no recorded will. So beyond the Visitations nothing more is known of him. No trace of the Simpson who was of Calais, or of his wife Catherine Genicot, has been discovered, though various Simpsens can be traced with the same arms: for instance Richard Sympson of Bures St. Mary's, co. Suffolk, who in the Essex Visitation of 1634 is stated to be descended from John Sympson of Cumberland.

This result is disappointing: but we must wait in the hope that some further information may turn up about a family which it is clear had many ramifications but seems to have disappeared from Kent a good deal sooner than might have been expected.