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## RESEARCHES AND DISCOVERIES IN KENT

### SEVENOAKS DISTRICT ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY GROUP

At the time of last year's report (*Arch. Cant.*, cii (1985), 261-5) our future looked bleak, particularly from the financial point of view. Subsequently, an award of £100 from the K.A.S. averted immediate disaster, but we spent much time seeking grants from fresh sources, and it is pleasing to state that a fair measure of success has been achieved. Ironically, however, the writer's ill-health inhibited progress on building-recording and the production of written results; although several further studies are in various stages of preparation, none has been completed during the year.

There was a marked reduction in the number of buildings with which we were concerned and the following notes relate to some of those inspected that were of more than passing interest.

#### *No. 1, Morants Court, Morants Court Road, Chevening*

Morants Court, formerly the mansion of an extensive estate, has notable historical associations described by Hasted in his *History and Topography of Kent* (1778). It is now divided into three residential units, of which no. 1 appears to contain the earliest remaining part of the building.

Externally, only the north front and west end of this part are visible because of modern rear extensions. The ground-storey walls are of white-painted brick and those of the upper floor are tile-hung and have been heightened to allow for larger windows under the eaves of the present ridged slated roof, which is a replacement of much lower pitch than the original. All of these features are Georgian and clearly represent alterations, since continuous first-floor jetties (with the joist-ends concealed by stucco coving) survive along both north and west sides. All chimney stacks are nineteenth-century or later and the house contains no visible fireplaces of earlier date.

Internally, the westernmost ground-floor room displays old ceiling-

beams with many signs of alteration and re-use. They cannot be in their original form, all being aligned north—south with no trace of the dragon-beam arrangement which must formerly have existed for the junction of the two jetties. All other early components possibly surviving in the ground storey are obscured.

The upper floor is open to the original, steeper-pitched, roof timbering for the full length of this part of the building. The roof is of three bays of high-quality crown-post construction, dating probably from the latter half of the fifteenth century. Both of the intermediate trusses, with cambered tie-beams, remain open and display identical crown-posts in the standard decorative form of octagonal shafts with moulded capitals and bases; each has the usual four braces up to collar and centre-purlin, but the braces are remarkable in being ogee-shaped. The timbers are not sooted and it seems that, structurally at least, this is yet another early example of a first-floor court hall of Rigold's second type.<sup>1</sup> Evidence of the purpose for which it was actually used is so far lacking, but the location is one in which local sessions of the medieval archbishops' Otford manorial courts may well have been conducted. At the east end of the central bay, a separately-roofed turret about 6 ft. sq. projects from the south side; although now largely enclosed by a modern extension and thereby obscured, it appears likely to be of the same date as the hall, originally housing its stairs or possibly a garderobe.

Clearly this building, including its adjoining other parts (nos. 2 and 5), will repay more-detailed examination.

#### *Baptist Church, Bessels Green, Chevening*

This is a charming unpretentious mid-eighteenth-century structure of white-painted brick with a tiled roof half-hipped at each end. The left-hand two-thirds is the church, its front and side elevations each distinguished by two large round-headed windows, with a timber gallery inside. The remainder to the right is the manse, the original character of which has been rather spoiled by later alterations including a single-storey side extension.

#### *Otford Palace*

Late in the seventeenth century, Chantry Cottage was built in the former Base Court of the palace, by then an abandoned ruin. Recent excavations by builders laying foundations for a single-storey extension of the cottage disclosed part of an underground conduit,

<sup>1</sup> S.E. Rigold, 'Two Types of Court Hall', *Arch. Cant.*, lxxxiii (1968), 1-22.

doubtless one of the several which conveyed spring-water to the palace. Its parallel ragstone walls, 27 in. apart, were roofed with chalk blocks. The writer was in hospital when this discovery came to light and the Group is indebted to the Otford and District Historical Society's Archaeological Group for its prompt investigation; their own report has been produced by J.A. Pyke.

This conduit headed straight towards that part of the surviving north range of the palace which was converted into a cottage-row c. 1900. A new problem has now arisen from the erection by one of the tenants of a greenhouse on hitherto-unused grassland in front of the splendid series of blocked Tudor cloister lights along the south side of this former gallery.<sup>2</sup> Although sympathetic to the tenant, the Group has registered objection to the planning authority on account of the dangerous precedent for garden structures spoiling, and possibly obscuring, the view of so important a feature.

#### *The Grove, Grove Road, Seal*

This large country house of c. 1800 is at present divided into two residential units and an application has been made for Listed Building Consent to convert one of them into five self-contained flats. Investigation by the Group revealed that an external side-wall is partly of old random masonry incorporating the stone head of a blocked seventeenth-century window, apparently the only remaining evidence of an earlier building.

#### *Seal Laundry, Wildernesse Avenue, Seal*

Wildernesse itself (Dorton House School for the Blind) was a mid-eighteenth-century mansion remodelled c. 1800 by George Dance, jun. The present laundry in its spacious grounds seems to date from a few decades later than the remodelling and to have been built as the mansion's stable block. It consists of four large two-storeyed ranges of Kentish ragstone enclosing an open square courtyard, the upper floors probably being used originally for the accommodation of estate employees. The front façade is of outstanding merit, with full-height round-headed blind-arcading arranged symmetrically along its whole length on either side of a large central entrance, the semicircular arch of which is surmounted by a stone clock-tower.

This building is not listed and planning permission is being sought to convert it into nineteen dwelling units, involving the demolition of

<sup>2</sup> Anthony D. Stoyel, 'The Lost Buildings of Otford Palace' *Arch. Cant.*, c (1984), 268 and Plate II.

one side-range and the erection of a substantial garage block on adjacent land.

*Nos. 99 and 101, High Street, Sevenoaks*

These unusual early timber-framed structures built as detached shops were described in our last report. They still remain empty and their deteriorating condition, with one side open and protected only by plastic sheeting, is causing considerable concern. The Group is continuing to urge the planning authority to do everything in their power to ensure the proper preservation of the buildings.

*Nos. 21-25 (odd), London Road, Sevenoaks*

Currently an empty shop, application has been made for Listed Building Consent to carry out very extensive alterations. The upper storey presents a Georgian appearance, but one end of the building displays seventeenth-century timber-framing with brick nogging, and it is suspected that further evidence of early work would be revealed by the stripping necessitated by the present proposals. The Group has asked the planning authority to provide for a detailed inspection to be made, if and when that stage is reached.

*Bradbourne Farmhouse, Bradbourne Vale Road, Sevenoaks*

This gracious detached house, five windows wide, has an exterior of outstanding quality dating mainly from c. 1700. Although of fairly common type, it is undoubtedly one of the most delightful examples in the district. Particularly pleasing are the symmetrical design of the front elevation and, contrasting with the red-brick walls, the white-painted woodwork of its doorcases, windows, and heavy projecting eaves cornice. The two classical doorcases (one the central feature of the front, the other in a side-wall) appear to be later eighteenth-century insertions. The front and sides of the original house, with its hipped tiled roof, remain largely unaltered and subsequent extensions have been confined to the rear.

In comparison the interior is disappointing, with staircases, wall-panelling and other features of the plainest character. It has, however, provision for six diagonal corner-fireplaces which, although generally rather uncommon, are emerging as a popular Georgian fashion in houses of this district.

ANTHONY D. STOYEL

## KENT SKILLET MAKERS

I bought from the effects of our late member, Mr V.J. Newbury (*Arch. Cant.*, cii (1985), 290), a bell metal skillet or posnet, which throws a little more light on items which have been much neglected, namely the lesser-sized objects produced by the Kent bell founders who are listed by Stahlschmidt.<sup>3</sup> This skillet stands on three grooved legs with hoof-like terminals and has a plain handle (length 8.25 in.), which has a right-angled support where it meets the curved sides of the bowl (diameter at rim 6.1 in., height 3.6 in.). Curved sides preceded the straight sides of the early seventeenth century.<sup>4</sup> Close inspection of this example shows near the handle junction a faint, raised inscription 'IW 1637' (?) As it was bought by Mr Newbury in central Kent, I thought it worthwhile to consult Stahlschmidt and was rewarded to learn that John Wilnar (who had a foundry at Borden and was buried there on 5th May, 1640) used for his inscriptions 'flat broad letters so slightly raised upon the surface of the bell as to be hardly perceptible to sight or touch.' I mentioned to our member Mrs. P. Winzar that I had acquired this skillet and she put me in contact with Mrs. J. Hutchinson of Charing who possesses a skillet of like shape, except for its double right-angled support to the handle (bowl 8½ in. in diameter at the rim, with a 5 in. depth of pan). The handle has the moulded inscription 'JOHN × PALMAR' with reversed 'N' (Fig. 1), which links it with the Maidstone Museum mortar. This latter has the inscription 'T.C. MAIER OF NEWNHAM 1621' and was probably made by John Palmar when he was in the Gloucester district prior to his coming to Canterbury.<sup>5</sup> Mrs. Hutchinson's skillet is more likely to have been made in Kent as her father 'bought it from the George Inn, Molash, between the wars - about 1934. It was the largest of a set of three. He paid 2s. 6d. for it and regretted not buying the other two.'

L.R.A. GROVE

<sup>3</sup> (a) J.C.L. Stahlschmidt, *The Church Bells of Kent*, 1887; (b) *Arch. Cant.*, lxii (1958), 226, for a note on a Thomas Hatch mortar.

<sup>4</sup> P. Hornsby, *Guide to British Pewter, Copper and Brass*, 1981, 128.

<sup>5</sup> *Arch. Cant.*, lxxvi (1961), 200-1. Hornsby, *op. cit.*, 106, has a photograph (Plate 64) which shows the skillet handle bearing the inscription 'THO PALMAR' (c. 1670). Thomas (d. 1671) apparently did not use his father's letter stamps on this example.

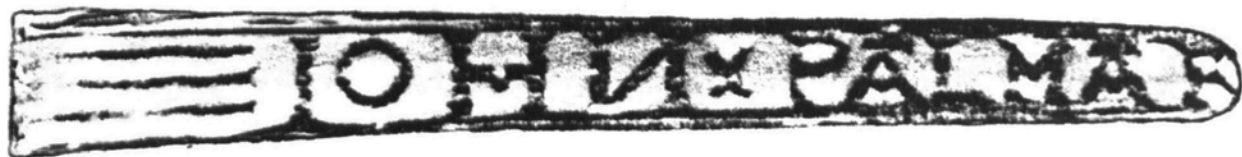


Fig. 1. Rubbing of John Palmar Inscription on a Bell Metal Skillet Handle  
(Scale: 1:1)

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### THE KILN AT NEW ASH GREEN

The Romano-British pottery kiln was excavated by the Fawkham and Ash Archaeological Group in 1976. The site is situated on alluvial deposits amidst a region where the subsoil is normally Clay-with-flints. The kiln was adjacent to a ditch system related to the Ash villa. The fact that it was relegated to the very edge of a ditch suggests that the establishment it was associated with was primarily devoted to agriculture rather than being a specialised pottery production centre. In this respect, the location of the kiln is very similar to that of the six Mucking kilns.<sup>6</sup>

The firing chamber was roughly circular and approximately 75 cm. in diameter, with a kiln floor some 25 cm. below ground surface. It was of semi-sunken type with a permanent clay 'bollard' style pedestal (A)<sup>7</sup> (Fig. 2). This central support does not seem to have been sufficiently high, because at some stage in the life of the kiln, the pedestal top was raised by the addition of blocks of ragstone (B). Mrs. V.G. Swan has examined these and suggested that they might be fragments of a kick-wheel. The structure had been fired at least once before the modification was made. It is possible that its purpose was to improve the flow of hot air around the pots, this perhaps having been impeded by the build-up of debris around the pedestal.

Just below ground level, the kiln wall was partially lined with broken tile (C). This gives the only indication of what kiln furniture was employed. It is probable that the tile served as a ledge to support further pieces which would bridge the void between pedestal and kiln wall. The height of these fragments in relation to the pedestal indicates that they date to the time its top was raised by the addition of the kick-wheel. It is possible that the modifications effectively converted the single chamber, bollard-style kiln into a dual chamber with temporary floor as seen at Upchurch and elsewhere.<sup>8</sup>

The structure was pierced by a hole (D) perpendicular to its main axis (O-O). This does not seem to have been functional so may be the result of damage. If so, this damage occurred during the lifetime of the kiln as its interior was burned. The fragmentary remains of a leather-hard base of a dish were found amongst the ashen infill of the chamber (E).

<sup>6</sup> M.U. Jones and W.J. Rodwell, 'The Romano-British Pottery Kilns at Mucking', *Essex Archaeology and History*, Third Series, v (1973), 13-47.

<sup>7</sup> V.G. Swan, *The Roman Pottery Kilns of Britain*, London 1984, Fig. XVII.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, Fig. IX.



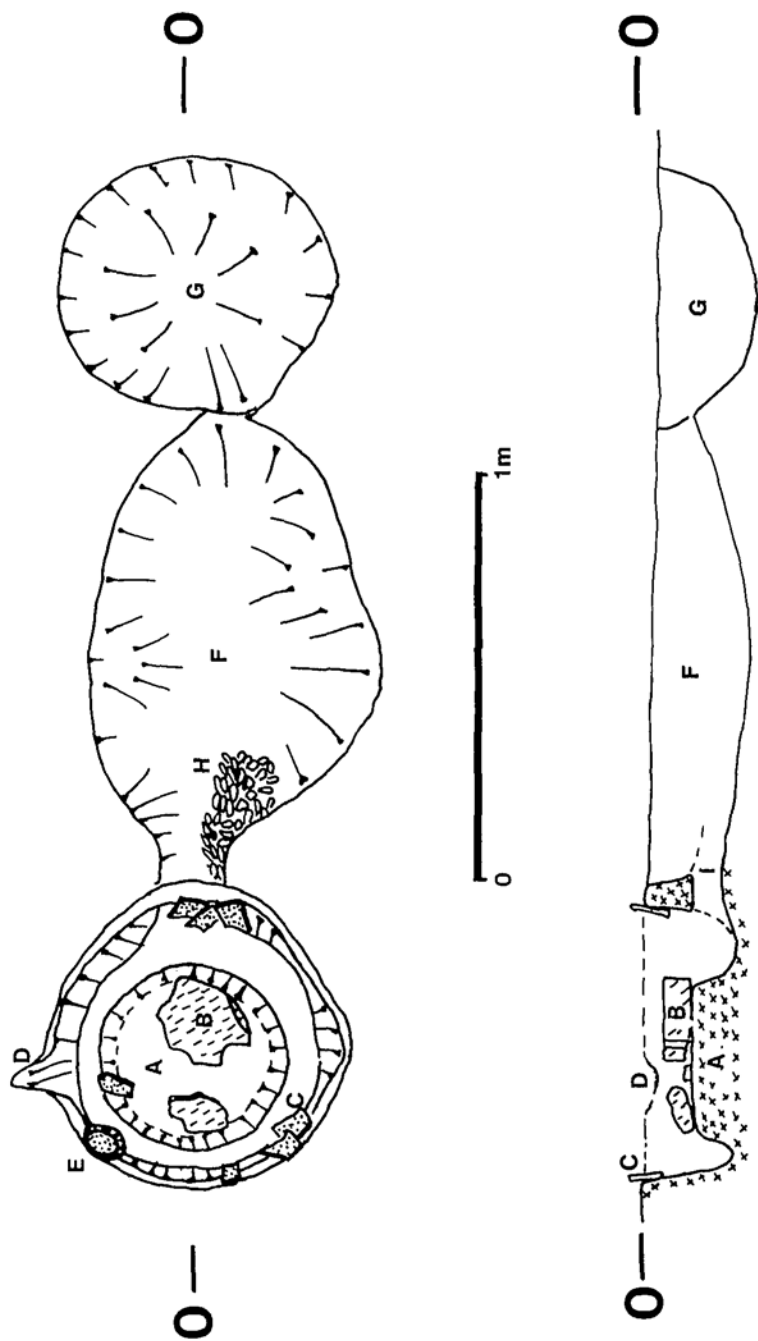


Fig. 2. The New Ash Green Kiln: Plan and Section.

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The stokehole (F) contained burned debris. It was cut by a later feature (G) which contained no material relating to the kiln. Both had been backfilled with archaeologically sterile Clay-with-flints. A particularly dense pile of pebbles (H), derived from the Woolhaven Beds, lying adjacent to the fire tunnel (I) was possibly another modification. Its effect was to narrow and lengthen the fire tunnel, possibly serving to support a tunnel roof made of more tiles.

There was little directly associated kiln waste, but it is thought that the kiln was producing 'grey ware' imitations of popular north Kent coarse ware forms of the early second century A.D.

J. MONAGHAN and E.P. CONNELL

### A DENEHOLE AT KINGSDOWN NEAR SITTINGBOURNE

Sometime in mid-January 1986 a subsidence occurred on church land 40 m. south of Kingsdown church, Sittingbourne, at N.G.R. TQ 92535857. A hole, just over 1.0 m. in diameter, had appeared in a grassed area. The filling of an old shaft had fallen into the underground chambers leaving the ground at the edge of the hole supported by only a thin layer of soil. Upon discovery, the Reverend W. Hill informed Mr R. Baxter of the Sittingbourne Archaeological Group, who in turn contacted both the Kent Archaeological Rescue Unit and the Kent Underground Research Group.

The site was first seen by a representative of the K.A.R.U. in early February 1986. No underground investigation was made at that time due to the dangerous nature of the shaft.

Members of the Kent Underground Research Group (a body whose members have experience in recording and surveying this type of site) visited the hole on 23rd February, 1986, after waiting for the worst of the winter snows to clear. On that date J. Bradshaw and D. Wisson descended the shaft, which proved to be 9.0 m. deep using specialised climbing and safety equipment. The structure was measured and the resulting plan and section shown in Fig. 3.

Two galleries could be entered, both in very poor condition, with evidence of several roof-falls and instability. A steep cone of debris some 6.3 m. high lay under the shaft, consisting of chalk fallen from the walls of the shaft and material from previous attempts to fill in a dangerous pit-fall. The last time the shaft was back-filled was in the 1960s as graffiti on the walls of the chambers show that it was open at that time.

DENEHOLE at KINGSDOWN

Nr. SITTINGBOURNE      TQ 9253 5857

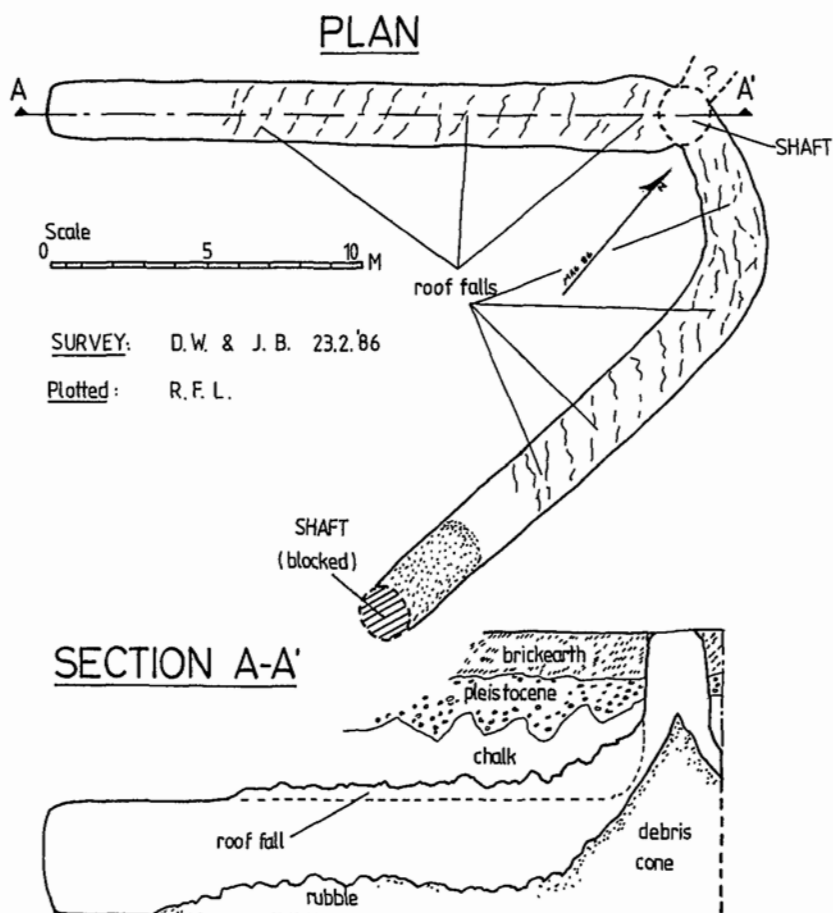


Fig. 3. Denehole at Kingsdown.

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The excavation was found to be part of a pair of linked 'chalkwell' type of deneholes dug to provide chalk for top dressing the local fields. The type of denehole most common in this part of Kent consists of three short chambers radiating from a shaft. In this case, however, two shafts had been linked by a common gallery. During the investigation an attempt was made to enter a third chamber on the north side of the open shaft. After removing 2.0 m. from the débris cone, it was still not possible to gain access and further excavation was considered unwise given the loose nature of the shaft sides. The second shaft was found at the end of the common chamber and was completely blocked with débris so that access to any galleries to the south was impossible.

Although it is very unusual for deneholes to be joined in this way, other examples have been recorded. A similar pair was surveyed at nearby Lynsted in 1977.<sup>9</sup> In October 1972, the late J.E.L. Caiger fully reported the investigation of a pair of chalkwells at Istead Rise, Northfleet.<sup>10</sup>

R.F. LE GEAR

## A MONUMENTAL BRASS IN MAIDSTONE MUSEUM

Maidstone Museum contains several fragments of monumental brasses. One of these is the upper part of a man with long hair and wearing civil dress (Fig. 4). The bottom part of the figure is broken away, leaving a jagged edge just above the knee, and the fragment now measures 11½ in. long by 6½ in. wide. The angle at which the man's gown streams out behind him makes it clear that he was originally portrayed in a kneeling position. The brass is at present fastened to a modern oak board, and contains two apparently original rivet-holes. The upper one of these is above and to the right of the man's ear, and contains what is almost certainly its original rivet. The lower one is not far from the broken bottom edge of the figure. It now contains a modern screw, used to fasten the figure to the board, and appears to have been countersunk. The metal of the brass is in excellent condition, although very shiny, perhaps the result of chemical cleaning at some stage.

<sup>9</sup> Chelsea Speleological Society Records, vol. 10, 76.

<sup>10</sup> *Arch. Cant.* lxxxvii (1972), 212-21.



Fig. 4. Part of a Brass Figure of a Man in civil dress, c. 1485. Height 11 ½ inches.  
(Probably from Warehorne, Kent. Maidstone Museum.)

The brass was presented to the Museum in the latter part of 1974 by L.R.A. Grove. He was given it by his friend R.W. Hounor, who had acquired it from a dealer who had bought the effects of T.H. Oyler, F.S.A., on his death – at which time it was already shiny and fastened to the oak board. Oyler had had the brass for many years, and probably acquired it through gift or purchase. (The oak board and shiny metal are indeed strongly suggestive of the antiques trade.) The brass was listed under his name in the 'Private Possession' section of Mill Stephenson's major work, *A List of Monumental Brasses in the British Isles*, published in 1926 (p. 585); and the important collection of rubbings belonging to the Society of Antiquaries of London at Burlington House contains one of this brass inscribed in Stephenson's own hand, 'Private Possession. T.H. Oyler, 12 Tonbridge Road, Maidstone, July 1921'.

The style of the figure is of the late fifteenth century. Stephenson in his *List* gave it as 'c. 1480'; recent stylistic analysis of brasses by Norris and Emmerson, among others, puts it perhaps five years later, c. 1485, near the end of the life of the prolific London workshop known as 'Series D', active c. 1420–1500.<sup>11</sup> The designers of 'Series D' must have known what they were about, for even in its present mutilated state this figure is well proportioned and vigorous.

The writer made a rubbing of this brass in June 1974, by kind permission of Mr Grove. He subsequently noticed how similar its outline was to that of the man's figure on an indent of a lost brass at Warehorne, as published by R.H. D'Elboux in *Arch. Cant.*, lxiv (1951), 124–5. D'Elboux's illustration did not correspond exactly with the outline of the brass, but this was not necessarily significant: the illustration was clearly derived from a rubbing, a most unsatisfactory method of recording indents afflicted with any degree of wear or decay.

According to D'Elboux, the slab in question lay against the north wall of the chancel, outside the communion rails, and was for a man in civil dress and his wife, both kneeling, with inscription immediately below. Further down the slab were the indents of two groups of children (which he interpreted as three boys below the father's figure and one girl below the mother), and in the bottom corners of the slab were two shields. He dated the monument as c. 1500, by comparison with the brass of 1499 at Boughton Malherbe to Nicholas Wotton.

D'Elboux was unable to find any mention of the slab in the records left by the antiquaries of the eighteenth and earlier centuries, except

<sup>11</sup> See in particular Malcolm Norris, *Monumental Brasses – The Memorials* (1977), I, chapters 8 and 11; and Robin Emmerson, 'Monumental Brasses: London Design c. 1420–85', *J.B.A.A.*, cxxxi (1978), 50–78

for a possible reference in Hasted, who in about 1790 saw a stone at Warehorne 'on which were the figures of a man and four children, the brasses of which are gone excepting part of a man'.<sup>12</sup> This description does not at first sound like the slab in question, but would fit if, say, one side of the slab had been covered at Hasted's visit. Such a theory would indeed also go some way towards explaining the silence of earlier antiquaries about the slab. It is also unlikely for other reasons that Hasted was referring to any other slab than this one: Warehorne church was left almost entirely untouched by the Victorian restorers,<sup>13</sup> and the present church floor is very probably that upon which Hasted trod as he made his notes about the church for his *History*. His description of the few monuments in the church will be found to tally exactly with the situation today if we identify his stone, bearing part of the brass figure of a man, with the slab published by D'Elboux.

The 'part of the man' that Hasted saw had unfortunately disappeared by 1861, when William J. Lightfoot, later Curator of Maidstone Museum, composed some impressionistic 'Notes' on Warehorne church.<sup>14</sup>

The writer and a friend (now Mrs. Freeth) examined the slab at Warehorne in some detail on 18 August, 1974. It was soon apparent that D'Elboux had completely failed to notice the existence of two further indents of shields, in the top two corners of the slab. These are hidden by the floor of a pew which covers the top few inches of the slab, but can easily be felt with the fingers beneath the pew. It was also clear that the indents for the man's figure, sons and shields were far better preserved than those for the wife, daughter and inscription, suggesting that the former had only lost their brass plates comparatively recently. In addition, and as suspected, D'Elboux's published illustration was found not to be a precise portrayal of the indents visible in the slab.<sup>15</sup> Thus, although Mr Grove's brass did not fit the outline of the man's indent in the published illustration; it – or rather a rubbing of it – did fit perfectly with the actual indent. The outlines

<sup>12</sup> *History of Kent*, 1st edition, III (1790), 483, note (s).

<sup>13</sup> 'The church . . . is without and within most enjoyably unrestored.' – John Newman, *The Buildings of England: West Kent and the Weald* (1969), 566.

<sup>14</sup> *Arch. Cant.*, iv (1861), 97–112. On page 101, Lightfoot refers to this slab as having lost all its brass plates. He then goes on to suggest that further indents for brasses had been buried under the chancel floor when it was raised 'some years' before. This sounds to me like mere hearsay.

<sup>15</sup> The same is true, to a lesser extent, of the illustration of the slab in A.G. Sadler, *The Indents of Lost Monumental Brasses in Kent – Part II* (1976), 75. This illustration is derived from a dabbling of the indents. It also, like D'Elboux, omits the two shields under the pew.

of brass and indent corresponded exactly; while the rivet-holes in the brass matched exactly the positions of the fixings in the slab. Finally, the remains of the fixings in the slab matched with the state of the rivet-holes in the plate. The upper rivet-hole in the brass still contains what seems to be its original rivet; all that is left in the slab at this point is a socket, from which a rivet has been torn away. The lower rivet-hole in the brass is now filled by a modern screw; the slab at this point contains a broken fragment of rivet, suggesting either that the rest of the rivet disintegrated, leaving the rivet-hole clear, or that what was left in the plate was but a fragment of a rivet, and perhaps ugly or sharp as well, which subsequently fell or was removed from the rivet-hole.

There was thus a strong case for believing that the brass figure was indeed from the slab in the chancel at Warehorne, and these findings were communicated to Mr Grove, who in turn passed them on when he presented the brass itself to the Museum later in the same year. Certainty is, of course, impossible, unless and until an ancient rubbing is discovered labelled 'Warehorne', showing the 'part of the man' that Hasted saw. Nor should we forget that the 'D' series was one of the most prolific that the London workshops ever produced, and that it contained many near-identical memorials, derived from standard designs or patterns, which were then dispatched to customers all over England. Nevertheless, the writer is quite convinced that we need look no further to identify this brass, and he was pleased and flattered recently to see the brass on display in the Museum, labelled 'from Warehorne'.<sup>16</sup>

I am most grateful to L.R.A. Grove for reading a draft of this paper and suggesting several improvements and corrections.

STEPHEN FREETH

<sup>16</sup> A preliminary report of these findings appeared in A.G. Sadler, *The Indents of Lost Monumental Brass in Southern England – Appendix III & Index* (1986), 53–5. It is now superseded.