

MONUMENTAL BRASSES

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Monumental Brasses by Herbert W. MacKlin

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HERBERT W. MACKLIN

**MONUMENTAL
BRASSES**

The Antiquarian

MONUMENTAL BRASSES.

BY THE
Walter

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PREFACE.

THE object of this handbook is to enable the explorer of churches, young or old, clerical or lay, to more fully appreciate the true value of those ancient brazen memorials which they so frequently see adorning pavement or wall.

There are probably no objects of antiquarian interest which so well repay any attention which may be devoted to them, and the ease with which a valuable collection of rubbings can be made has induced great numbers of persons to provide themselves with paper and heelball, and apply their energies to the church floor. To such persons this book is more particularly addressed, in the hope that it will prove a useful and handy guide to the pursuit of what the author has found to be a most fascinating branch of the vast tree of archæology.

No cheap handbook dealing with the subject has ever before appeared, and even the more expensive manuals of Haines and Boutell have long been out of print, and are hard to procure. The beginner has therefore been frequently in a difficulty—eager to rub, and anxious to imbibe knowledge, but unable to do so on account of the absence of the needful text-book. Such was the case with the author and his Kentish school-friends when first they commenced their “chalchotriptic” expeditions from Cranbrook town to the neighbouring churches of the Weald, and began to adorn the walls of their studies with mediæval portraits in black and white.

In the pages which follow, an attempt has been made, amongst other matters, to give as full an account as space would permit of the various styles and fashions of armour and costume. In so doing, the author has been careful to follow in the lines laid down by the famous antiquarians whose books are described in

the chapter entitled "A Literary Guide." He has, however, stated nothing which is not fully borne out by the evidence of his own collection of rubbings.

The county notes, and the lists of towns and villages where brasses are to be found, will no doubt be useful. It cannot claim to be perfect, nor would space have allowed the brasses to be mentioned in detail. For detailed information the collector must have recourse to the larger works already mentioned.

The author is glad to embrace this opportunity of recording his obligations to the clergy and others who are the custodians of the brasses of England. Except in a few very rare instances, he has met with nothing but kindness at their hands, from his school-days upwards. The rubbing of a brass, properly performed, does not work the slightest injury to the monument which is copied; but the collector should remember that, after all, he *is* under an obligation to those who have permitted him to follow his pursuit. Courtesy received should, if possible, be returned. And there is one act of courtesy which is easily done,—on a wet and muddy day the collector may well leave his boots in the church porch, and on a Saturday afternoon, when God's House is ready for the services of the morrow, it is only fair to do so. Much stronger is the obligation to leave matting, seats, hassocks, and books in the same places and state in which they were found.

In conclusion, if this little handbook should help to infuse a greater love and reverence for our national antiquities into one single breast, it will have done its work.

ST. IVE, CORNWALL, *June*, 1890.

N.B.—The illustrations are from the author's own collection, except those on pages 72 and 82, which are reproduced from rubbings made by Mr. Thorp, who kindly lent them for the purpose, that on page 34, from a sketch by Mr. J. P. Frend, and that on page 49.

TABLE OF CONTENTS.

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	7
I. ORIGIN AND HISTORY OF THE MANUFACTURE OF BRASSES	11
<i>a.</i> Material	13
<i>b.</i> Manufacture	13
<i>c.</i> Progress and Decline of the Art	14
<i>d.</i> Historic Treatment of Brasses	18
II. MAKING A COLLECTION	23
<i>a.</i> Methods of Copying	23
<i>b.</i> How to Arrange a Collection of Rubbings	28
III. CLASSES OF EFFIGIES	35
<i>a.</i> Priests	35
Episcopal Vestments	38
Processional Vestments	40
Academicals	43
The Monastic Orders	47
Post-Reformation Ecclesiastics	47
<i>b.</i> Brasses of Knights	48
<i>c.</i> Brasses of Ladies	68
<i>d.</i> Brasses of Civilians	76
<i>e.</i> Shroud Brasses	83
IV. ACCESSORIES	84
<i>a.</i> Brasses and Architecture	84
Canopies	84
Crosses	87
<i>b.</i> Brasses and Heraldry	90
<i>c.</i> Inscriptions	94
V. ADDITIONAL CLASSES	104
<i>a.</i> Flemish Brasses	104
<i>b.</i> French Brasses	107
<i>c.</i> Palimpsests	107
VI. A LITERARY GUIDE	113
VII. DISTRIBUTION	123
Alphabetical List of Counties and Places	124

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

	PAGE
SIR WILLIAM HARPER AND WIFE, 1573	30
PRIEST IN EUCHARISTIC VESTMENTS	34
THE AMICE	36
MITRES, Fourteenth and Sixteenth Centuries	39
COPED PRIEST, 1511.	41
A DOCTOR, 1480	45
STONE EFFIGY, 1270	49
SIR JOHN DAUBERNOUN, 1277	54
SIR JOHN D'ARGENTINE, 1382.	58
SIR JOHN LOWE, 1426	61
SIR HUMPHREY STANLEY, 1505	65
A LADY, 1400, showing Head-dress.	70
THE SIDELESS COTE-HARDI	70
ANNE HERWARD, 1485, showing Butterfly Head-dress	72
ELMNA BERNARD, 1467, showing Horned Head-dress	73
ELYZTH PEREFOYNT, 1543, showing Pedimental Head-dress	75
EDW. COURTENAY, 1460	79
SHROUD BRASSES	82
CROSSES	87-89
PALIMPSEST, from St. Alban's Abbey	109
PALIMPSEST EVANG. SYMBOL, British Museum	111

INTRODUCTION.

MONUMENTAL brasses are of two kinds—ancient and modern, the latter being almost invariably inscriptions within a more or less elaborate border. The brass-rubber, however, confines his attention to those of earlier times, not without sufficient reason.

The brasses of mediæval England are of the greatest possible interest, and form a valuable series of illustrations and a commentary on the history and manners and customs of our ancestors. Commencing, as they do, in the reign of Edward I., and from the time of the last Crusade, they continue in use, without a break, through the troubled periods of the French wars, the Peasants' revolt, the struggles of the rival Roses, the Revival of Learning, and the Reformation, to the Great Rebellion and the establishment of the Commonwealth, and thus form one of the many links of the chain which binds us to the past.

A thousand churches in all parts of the country still preserve the brasses that were laid down hundreds of years ago, and in almost as perfect a state as when they were fresh from the engraver's hand. Stone effigies of equal antiquity are often found to be mutilated almost beyond recognition. The hands, the feet, the noses, the very heads are broken and lost. The bodies are hacked and disfigured with the names of Harry and Harriet, of the Smiths and Joneses and Robinsons of the darkest of dark ages, the eighteenth century.

The brass alone defies the hand of time and the penknife of the desecrator. In the Chapel of St. Edmund, in the Abbey Church of Westminster, lie side by side the brazen effigies of Alianora de Bohun, Duchess of Gloucester, daughter and wife of two great Constables of England, *dramatis persona* of Shakespeare's "Richard II.," and Robert de Waldeby, Archbishop

of York, the tutor of Edward the Black Prince. Elsewhere lie the brasses of John Estney, Abbot of Westminster, of Dr. Bill, the first Dean, of Sir Thomas Vaughan, beheaded by order of Richard III., of Sir Humphrey Stanley, knighted upon the battle-field of Bosworth, and others. Of these, some are slightly worn, and some slightly broken, but on no single one of them have wandering sightseers succeeded in scratching so much as an initial. The material of which brasses are made is of such strength and durability as to withstand misfortunes to which effigies of stone would quickly succumb. The action of fire is an instance. Churches have been burnt to the ground, and their monuments for the most part reduced to dust; but the brasses have escaped with little or no damage. The Surrey Archæological Society has in its possession a beautiful little brass, originally in Netley Abbey, which was discovered some years ago in a cottage, doing duty as the back of a fireplace. It is quite uninjured. An additional advantage which brasses have over stone effigies is that all classes of the community are commemorated by them. The carved figure upon its lofty marble tomb and beneath its vaulted canopy was suitable only for persons of the highest rank: the noble, the knight, the lord of the manor, the bishop of the province, the abbot of the monastery. The brass might be used, and was used, by all ranks alike; and moreover, being usually let into the pavement of the church, occupied no valuable space. In brasses, as in monuments of stone, we have our nobles and knights and bishops, but we can add to them the franklein, the yeoman, the merchant, the mechanic, the servant, the parish priest, the monk, the student, the schoolboy. The scope of the brass-engraver was a wide one, and his work applicable to the humblest purse as well as to the richest. In St. Alban's Abbey, once the wealthiest and most important religious foundation in England, lies the magnificent memorial of one of its abbots. His life-size figure is engraved upon plates of brass of exquisite workmanship and surrounded by canopy and diaper work, by saints and angels. Close by are the humbler memorials of some of the Benedictine monks of his monastery, simple figures or half-figures, of small size and no great value, save to the student of the past.