

## The Brasses In Dunstable Priory Church

### In The Floor Of The Church

The PYNFOLD brass, dated 1516, was originally in the nave, in front of the chancel screen. During the Victorian restoration it was moved to its present site, by the entrance to the Lady Chapel. It is dated 1516. This brass is complete, except for the missing fragment of seven daughters. There are two large figures, Richard Pynfold and his wife, Margaret. Over Richard's head are his arms, a chevron between three cockerels, granted to him in 1501. Over his wife upon a shield, almost obliterated, is a chevron between three perforated lozenges. Beneath the figures is an inscription which reads, 'Of yo charite pray for the soules of Richard Pynfold and Margaret his wyf, the which Richard decessid the xxiii day of Novembre in the yere of our Lord God M V & xvi on whose soules Jhu have pity. Amen.' Beneath the inscription are the four sons.

On The South Wall: -

FYNCH

PYGOT

BLUNTE

PURVEY

FAYREY

PEDDER

ALEE

**Photo of Pall**

Other brasses are now mounted on the South wall. The work was carried out by Messrs. Mabbitt of Colchester in 1972. This was done under the direction of Dr. HK Cameron, President of the Monumental Brass Society for the Victoria and Albert Museum. They lifted all the brasses they could, made copies of the ones they wanted and mounted the copies and the other originals on the south wall. The dull looking ones are originals and the brighter ones are copies. The pre-Reformation brasses are for families which were members of the St. John's Fraternity.

FYNCH brass, dated 1640; originally in the south aisle, and was moved at the same time as the Pynfold brass. It is to Richard Fynche, who died in 1640, but also commemorates his parents, who are depicted on the brass too. There are four shields, one at each corner, all bearing the same devices which are the 'Royal tent and Parliament robes' surmounted by a lion of the Merchant Taylors, of which Richard was a member. The inscription below the figures is now missing, but read 'Here lyeth the body of Richard Fynche, citizen and Marchaunt Taylor of London, being a bachiler of age 81 years or thereabouts, who deceased the 12 day of January AD 1640, the sonne of Thomas Fynche and Elizabeth his wife, which Eliz departed this second day of August AD 1607. And the said Thomas deceased the 26<sup>th</sup> of December AD 1586.' Richard is shown wearing a cloak reaching to the knees, open in front to show his doublet. He holds a book in his right hand and a pair of gloves in his left. To the left, in the middle, is his mother, wearing a broad-brimmed hat. The other figure is his father, in a long gown, holding a book in his left hand and a staff in his right. Under the inscription are two groups, on the left six boys in doublets and on the right two girls – children of Thomas and Elizabeth Fynche. Around the edge, forming a frame to the figures, runs an inscription which reads,

'We know thou art not lost but sent before;  
The friends all lefte thy absence to deploare;  
Nor can thy vertyes ever be forgotten  
Though in the grave (thy corpse be ded and roten)  
For yel tonged enveye to the world must tell  
That as thou livest thou dyest and that was well

This contrasts with the simple pious inscription on the Pynfold brass. The first trusts in the pity of God, while the other trusts in his own virtues. The Fynche brass is a palimpsest, in that an earlier brass, from about 1600, has been turned over and re-used.

PYGOT brass, dated 1450; originally in the north aisle. It shows Laurence Pygot, a wool merchant, in a merchant's gown with hanging sleeves and belted around the waist. His wife Alice has a veiled head-dress on a loose gown, with full sleeves and banded round the waist. The lower part of the effigy is now missing. There were also the smaller figures of three sons and six daughters. The daughters are now between the shields. One son, headless, and dressed in the style of his father, is preserved at the bottom. At the corners there were four shields, bearing this wool-merchant's mark. Only two remain. Below Pygot and his wife was a small figure of Laurence Cantelow, possibly their son-in-law. The Latin inscription, now lost, translated as, 'Here lies Laurence Pygot, lately of Dunstable, wool-merchant, who died the fifth day of the month of February, Anno Domini 1450, in the reign of Henry VI.' All three are very fine examples of the best period of brass engraving and by the same person. The band around the waist was at first probably filled in with red or blue enamel or wax. The figures were probably engraved in London. It was the year of the first Lord Mayor's show and of Jack Cade's rebellion. The shield shows a central cross, supported on a chevron shaped stand and with a flying pennon. The shaft of the cross forms part of the letter P, for Pygot, and on the right and left, the letters L and P stand for Laurence Pygot.

BLUNTE brass, dated 1505; originally on the south side of the nave. Its style is inferior to the Pygot brass. There now only remain two small figures of a man and his wife, facing each other in an attitude of prayer, an inscription scroll and a long inscription plate. Originally, there was a representation of the Holy Trinity above the figures of John and Elizabeth Blunte. Out of John's mouth came a Latin scroll which translated as 'Holy Trinity, have pity on us.' The scroll out of Elizabeth's mouth translated as 'Father in heaven, have pity on us.' John wears a cloak which reaches to his feet. It has a collar trimmed with fur and is banded at the waist. Attached to the waist-band is a large, broad pocket or purse with a flap. There are hanging sleeves, inside which can be seen the wrist coverings of an under garment. Elizabeth wears a cap of the period, pointed at the back and a long dress, which covers her feet. It has a small collar and is banded at the waist. At the wrists are plain cuffs. Her dress has no fur, nor has she a purse. The inscription reads, 'Here lyeth John Blunte and Elizabeth his wyf whiche John decessid the xx day of apreill in the yere of oure Lord thousand CCCC and V, on whose soulys Jhu have pity, amen.'

PEDDER brass, dated 1463; originally in the South aisle. Initially there were four figures, a man between two women and a third woman at the man's right. There were also two shields bearing the letters Pder. The reading on the brass translates as 'Here lie John Pedder, who died 6<sup>th</sup> August 1463, and Margaret, Matilda and Agnes his wives, on whose souls God have pity. Amen.' Only one of the wives survives.

PURVEY brass, dated 1521; originally in the south aisle, near the chancel screen. It initially consisted of a man in a fur gown, two women and an inscription. The latter and one woman are all that remain. The figures of Nicholas and Elizabeth, his first wife are lost. The figure is Alys Purvey, his second wife. The inscription reads, 'Pray for the soules of Nicolas Purvey, Elizabeth and Alys his wyves which Nicolas decessid the seconde day of January A M V XXI' There is a Tudor rose engraved after 'his'. The inscription contains con-joined letters in some of the words..

ALEE brass, dated 1518; originally in the North aisle. This shows Robert Alee and one of his two wives, in their shrouds. The inscription, part of which is lost, says, 'Pray for the soules of Robert Alee and Elizabeth and Agnes his wyfes, the whiche Robt decessid the iiii day of Septembre the yer of O' Lord M V XVIII o whose souls Jhu have m.' The family name may have been Hall or Hale, rather than Alee.

FAYREY brass, dated 1516; originally between the two pillars nearest to the SW corner. The figures are of a man and a woman in their shrouds. The inscription was, 'Off yo charite py for the soule of Henry Fayrey and Agnes his wife, the which lyeth buried under this stone and the said Henry decessid the XXVIII dai of December AD MCCCCXVI.' Under the inscription are five daughters and the heads of two of the five sons. At each corner of the stone was a small round plate of brass on which are engraved the symbols of the four Evangelists; an angel, a lion, a bull and an eagle. The magnificent Fayrey Pall is also on loan to the V&A. It, too, is commemorated in a window in the north aisle.

### Lost Brasses

Several of the sources mention brasses which are now lost. Apart from Pynfold and Fynche, the brasses have a rather chequered post-Reformation history. Some were mounted on the wall of the north aisle; some were in the parish chest, while others lay around in the vestry. It is a miracle that only those listed below have been lost. Some are beyond the medieval period.

LANE, Nicholas, 1459, half way up the south aisle.

MUSLO, William, 1460 with wife Alice, eleven sons and seven daughters, between Pygot and Purvey, on the south side of the nave.

BALDOCK, Laurence, 1465, and wife Katherine, three sons and six daughters, on the north side of the nave, in between Tersall and Pynfold. Laurence died on 12<sup>th</sup> December 1465

TERSALL, John, 1513 with wife Joan, six sons, on the north side of the nave, near the chancel screen. 'Pray for the sowles of John Tersall and Jone his wife which Johne decesed the VII day of Januar in the year of or Lorde Godd MDXIII on whose sowles Jesus have mercye.'

AWDELEY, John, 1518 with wife Agnes, one son and five daughters, original site unknown 'Here lyeth John Awdeley and Agnes his wyfe which Johne deceased the xxii daye of febr AD MDXVIII

SKELTON, John, 1529, with two wives, six sons and five daughters, in the north-west corner of the nave. 'Here lyeth John Skellton, otherwise called Holder, Joanna and Elizabeth his wyves, which John decessyd the viii of January AD M V XXIX on whos soule Jhu have marcy.'

HEYNES, Elynor, 1531, original site unknown 'Of yor charite pray for the sowle of Elynor Heynes the wife of Mr. John Heynes, citizen and grocer of London which Elynor died the iii daye of July in the yere of or Lorde Godde MDXXXI.'

DENTON, Richard, 1564, with wife Elizabeth, original site unknown. The Latin translates as 'Here lies Richard Denton who died 18<sup>th</sup> March 1564 and his wife Elizabeth. The Lord have mercy on his soul.'

MILLER, Sarah, 1780, original site unknown, 'Sarah Miller Died 4<sup>th</sup> July 1780 Aged 71 The Best of Mothers and the Fondest Wife.'

MILLER, John, 1792, original site unknown, 'John Miller Esq. was Born 19<sup>th</sup> Feby 1701 and Died 18<sup>th</sup> Jany 1792 He was the best of Husbands and an affectionate and most indulgent Father.'

At the west end of the nave there were four slabs whose figures and inscriptions were lost before they could be recorded.

#### Later Brasses

South aisle      The Boer war, 1899 - 1902

Lady Chapel      Charles Crighton Stuart Benning 1892 – 1924

Ellen Benning, died 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1933, wife of CCS Benning

Brian Stuart Benning, 3<sup>rd</sup> son of the above, killed in an aeroplane accident  
20.03.1935

William Elliott, 07.01.1802 – 04.04.1866

Mary Oliver Elliott, wife of the above, 06.01.1802 – 03.01.1892

East wall      WEA Sergeant, died 12.11.1948 (Latin)

North aisle      Revd Frederick Hose MA, Rector, 1843 – 1883

Revd John Heyrick Macaulay MA, Rector 1884 - 1903