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A gift of the Carbon Dubbs Family
Beginning in the 13th Century, and continuing well into the 17th Century, monumental brasses were popular alternatives to more expensive stone and wood memorials honoring the dead in churches. Typically constructed of sheet brass and set into the floor, they are also sometimes found mounted in a wall or freestanding on a plinth. The brass usually presents a figure of the deceased along with an epitaph. Monumental brasses are important records of contemporary armor, dress and heraldry and are used in genealogy and paleography. Once common throughout Western Europe, most monumental brasses were destroyed over the centuries to such an extent that, for example, none remain in France outside of illustrations. There are still some fine examples in Belgium, Holland and Germany.

England has the distinction of having the most existing brasses, with more than 4,000 still to be found in various churches. St. Mary Magdalene Church, Cobham, Kent, England, dating from the 13th Century, is famous for the 19 brasses that were laid down to memorialize various members of the Cobham family. The Cobham brasses are indicative of an inset style unique to England where the images were cut out of the brass sheet and then inlaid into the stone. Most brasses are in the incised style, which is Flemish in origin, where the images are engraved on a full sheet along with background images.

Sir Reginald Braybrooke, d. 1405

This wax-on-paper rubbing was taken from the medieval-era brass of Sir Reginald Braybrooke, d. 1405, which resides in the floor of St. Mary Magdalene Church.

Sir Reginald Braybrooke was knighted in 1390 and married into the Cobham family c. 1393. He served County Kent in a variety of public positions until 1403 when he answered the call to arms against the French. During the military campaign in Flanders, he received a mortal wound at the siege of Sluys in 1405 and passed away four months later. His body was returned to Cobham for burial.

His brass, c. 1408, is considered to be one of the finer examples of the style associated with the Cobham family church. Braybrooke is shown in full plate with bascinet (helmet) and aventail (mail curtain attached to the helmet). At his feet are two representations of his sons, Reginald and Robert, standing on pedestals, inscribed: “Here lies [Reginald/Robert], his son.” Over all of the figures is a triple-arch canopy that supports a Trinity and is flanked by two coats of arms: the left is Braybrooke’s own and the right shows his marriage into the Cobham family. The inscription on the fillet (border) reads:

“Here lies Reginald Braybrook, knight, son of Gerard Braybrook, knight, and husband of Lady Joan, Lady of Cobham, heir of John de Cobham, the founder of this College. The said Reginald died at Middleburg in Flanders on the 20th day of the month of September in the year of the Lord 1405. On whose soul God have mercy. Amen, AMEN.”

Rauf de Cobham, d. 1402

Also wax on paper, this rubbing was taken from the small brass of Rauf de Cobham, Esquire, of Chafford, which resides in the floor of St. Mary Magdalene Church, along with the brass of Sir Reginald Brabrooke.

There is very little known of Rauf de Cobham beyond the fact that he was the son of Thomas de Cobham and his wife’s name was Elizabeth. He is shown in half-figure, reflecting his relatively low status in the Cobham family, and wearing plate mail with bascinet (helmet) and an aventail (mail curtain attached to the helmet). This brass is unusual when compared to the rest of the Cobham brasses because of its small size and singular composition, which has the image of Rauf over the family coat of arms and holding his own epitaph reading:

“Rauf de Cobham of Kent, Esquire. Who died the 20th day of January in the year of grace 1402 lies here. God have mercy on his soul.”

Further reading:


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