

Memorials to a medieval family: Part 2 by Michael Goddard



(Illustration courtesy of Joy Tudbury)

The next memorial in date is the recently rediscovered and relocated **incised slab** dedicated to the memories of another William Estefeld about whom less is known and of his wife, Joan. He was possibly a son or grandson of the Seneschal and must have been active at the time of the church's great rebuilding c1380-1420. A Wm. de Estfeld, bailiff of Tickhill+ appears on a grant of 1408 and is described as Lord of Stansalle+ in 1411; another, almost certainly this William, is referred to as a gentleman+ in a petition by the Prior of Blyth in 1427.

The incised slab's earlier position was beneath the altar, which is where it was when it was described by Joseph Hunter in 1828. As he says, the inscription around the two figures tells us that they both died on the same day (1st March 1434). A national epidemic of plague recurred from 1433-35. However, several months later, on 6th October 1435, William's son - who was twice Lord Mayor of London - was recorded as having already paid money so that Joan her widowhood+ would release her husband's lands in Tickhill and his lands, woods, rents and services+ in Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire to him, leaving to Joan just the manor of Stancil and lands, rents and services in Wadworth and Wilsic+ for the rest of her life. After her death these too would pass to mayor William. Moreover, the widow Joan, and her husband's other executor John Lambard, are recorded, at some time between 1432 and 1443, as being involved in a dispute over £20, owed at the time of William's death, which they are alleged never to have repaid.

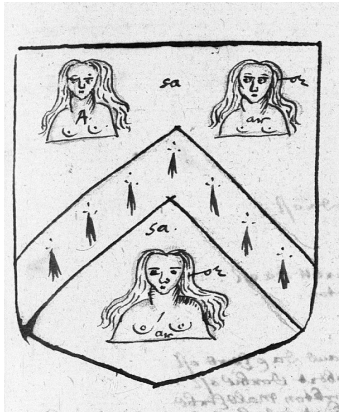
It looks as though the husband and wife could not, as the tombstone and Hunter say, have died on the same day+ any more than the Seneschal and his wife Margaret did. Is the shield below the female figure blank, not as has recently been suggested, because it is worn away, but, as Hunter implies, because - for whatever reason - nothing was engraved there in the first place?

The slab is chamfered down the right hand side, indicating location on a tomb chest . possibly that with quatrefoil compartments like that of Eastfield+ in the north chancel+ recorded by Joseph Hunter (and perhaps now in the churchyard near the north door). Also, it is marked in the centre and near the four corners by consecration crosses. Before its recent relocation the slab was on the very site of the altar itself and at some time has obviously been prepared for use as an altar. Possibly this was in 1553 when Queen Mary succeeded to the throne and Roman Catholicism was briefly restored. In many churches old tomb slabs were used temporarily to replace the wooden altar tables which had in their turn replaced the original stone altars (ordered to be destroyed in 1550), before the order was reversed after Mary's accession. Doncaster, Tickhill and the north generally were probably conservative in these matters: witness the Pilgrimage of Grace of 1536 and the Northern Rising of 1569 - the very year in which the Vicar and Churchwardens of Tickhill were briefly imprisoned after admitting to the Archbishop of York's Court of High Commission that there was an altar or old tomb in the Maison Dieu and that people went there to pray and perhaps to hear Mass. That altar was ordered to be pulled down and defaced. Both the slab and the tomb of the Seneschal were obviously located in the places of highest honour in the church in the sanctuary.

The third and most obvious memorial is the Estfeld or Eastfield **coat of arms**, which appears in several places around the church and in several forms . as Joseph Hunter observed. He mentions first a shield by the west door on the tower, now much worn, but in Hunter's time identifiable as a fess [a broad horizontal bar] between three maids' heads+ which he attributes to William Estfeld, the Seneschal. The shield incised beneath the male figure on the slab mentioned above has on it just three maids' heads with headdresses and bobbed or netted hair, but no fess+

However, the most prominent and impressive example is in the place of highest honour over the centre of the chancel arch. It has a chevron, spotted with ermine, between three maids' heads cut off at the shoulder with loose hair. When Roger Dodsworth visited the church on 11th August 1620, he also noted a further example in the glass of the east window of the chancel which he described as a black chevron between three maids' heads wopped+ (cut off smoothly at the shoulder). This glass has since been lost, although the same arms can still be seen in some fifteenth century glass in the apex of the west window of the church of St. Mary in Gilston, Hertfordshire. The reason for this will soon be clear.

The Monumental Brass Society's article of 2008 about Tickhill's incised slabs points out that the notes on Tickhill in the College of Arms 'Yorkshire Arms' manuscript are merely a translation of Dodsworth into Latin and bear the same date as his visit. However, a Harleian manuscript in the British Library devoted to arms in Hertfordshire and London gives a sketch of the coat of arms (left © British Library Board Harley MS 504) and another illustration of it (right, courtesy of hronline, University of Sheffield) appears in Anthony Munday and Humphry Dyson's expanded edition of Stow's *Survey of London* published in 1633 (though not in the earlier editions of 1598, 1603 or 1618). In the edition of 1618 Munday had added a list of lord mayors of London, including . from 1422 . their paternity and, in the edition of 1633, he and Dyson added their arms. These illustrations were reproduced in John Strype's *Survey of the Cities of London and Westminster* in 1720.



In the case of both these illustrations, the arms are said to be those of Sir William Eastfield, son of William Eastfield of Tickhill in Yorkshire. He was twice Lord Mayor of London (in 1429 and 1437), represented London at three parliaments (1430, 1439 and 1442) and was knighted in 1439 (the only alderman to be knighted in the ninety years between the Peasants' Revolt and the accession of Edward IV). He acquired the manor of Netherhall in the parish of Gilston and made a bequest to the church there in his will.

All these examples mention or show the ermine spotted chevron with three maids' heads in silver cut off at the shoulders and with loose golden hair - exactly like the example over St Mary's chancel arch, shown right.

This William Eastfield was one of the most prominent men in the kingdom in the second quarter of the fifteenth century and immensely wealthy. He had amassed a huge property portfolio by the time of his death, which included a capital place at the west end of the Guildhall where he was given permission to add his own chapel in 1428. His wealth sprang from his lucrative position as a stapler (one who shared in the monopoly in wool exports). This brought him into contact with royal finance and - with others - he is recorded lending enormous sums totalling over £10,000 to the crown in the 1430s. He was the biggest individual lender in the 1440s. In 1445 a necklace that the King had bought from him is mentioned. All of these loans would have been with interest, but because of the laws against usury, the sums recorded as being repaid actually already included whatever interest had originally been agreed but which was never shown.



He benefited from some very exclusive treatment as a result of his financial support for the crown's expensive campaigns in France. In 1443 he received the rare privilege of a licence for life to hunt in any royal park, forest or chase in Essex and Middlesex (so that this be done in his own person). In October 1444, because the Queen's coronation was to take place in 1445, the King requested the Mayor and aldermen that Sir William should be elected Mayor for a third time, though the city's rules would not permit this, and in April 1445 a papal letter allowed him, who is counsellor of Henry, king of England, and is old the privilege of eating flesh and milk-meats on fast days.

He died in May 1446 and was survived by an only daughter, Margaret, from his first marriage. He left the gold cup and ewer - which Henry VI had given to him when William Eastfield was Lord Mayor at the time of the king's coronation - to his grandson John and his heirs, or alternatively to John's younger brother Humphrey Bohun. He left a gold collar, which he had received from the king, and some silver vessels to his son-in-law.

Amongst numerous bequests were: money to Tickhill's vicar and chaplains, its poor, its friary and to the castle's chaplain . and to three other churches, seven nunneries, numerous friaries, various hospitals and prisons around London and to the poor in five other parishes. As well as leaving his and his late wife's silk and gold apparel to be converted into church vestments, another gold and jewelled collar and a gold and jewelled setting were to be offered to important shrines. He left a cask of red wine to each of five priories; various sums to the Mercers' Company; funds for the repair of a bridge and a road and for sermons to be preached. He funded conduits to supply drinking water to parts of London that were still being mentioned two hundred years later. He was buried in St Mary Aldermanbury, where he had founded a chantry to pray for his soul and those of his late wives, Juliana and Alice (a chaplain is recorded there in 1436 and there was still one there in 1525). The church was destroyed in the Great Fire and its replacement destroyed again in the Blitz.

It is undoubtedly true that in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries people awarded arms to themselves and that family members were not consistent or systematic in their adoption. Nevertheless, could it possibly be that the most prominent displays of this family's arms in Tickhill church (over the chancel arch and in the glass of the east window)

as well as the expensive London B+commemorative brass, represent a contribution made by this most celebrated son of Tickhill, providing the final touches to the church that was nearing completion at the time of his father's death, and that the Lord Mayor was the family member who was directly or indirectly memorialised in at least one example of the family arms? After all - as we have seen with some facts surrounding the other two - medieval memorials may not always be quite what they seem at first glance.

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