

AN UNRECORDED BRASS IN WINCHESTER CATHEDRAL.

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The following is a full account of some fragments of an early Monumental Brass in the nave of Winchester Cathedral, which appear hitherto to have been never fully investigated.

On the north side of Wykeham's chantry, on the floor, there is a large slab, measuring 10 feet $5\frac{3}{4}$ inches in length (East to West), and 3 feet $7\frac{1}{4}$ inches in width (North to South). The edge of the chantry covers part of the slab, and also part of the remaining fragments of brass. These fragments belonged to the border fillet on the South side of the brass, so that there is only about 3 inches in all of slab covered by the chantry.

The main fragment, which is quite legible, measures 1 foot 8 inches by $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches, though the whole width is never visible. It contains the words OCTAVA DIE MENSIS in closely written Lombardic characters. There is a space of $1\frac{1}{8}$ inches between the words, and of about $\frac{3}{8}$ inch between the letters. A rubbing was not easy to make, and cannot represent quite all that is actually visible, since the eye can penetrate crevices of the chantry base where a stick of heelball cannot go. A rubbing was, however, made; and it at any rate shows clearly the distances between the fragments.

Let me take the other fragments in order from East to West. The first fragment begins about 1 foot 3 inches from the East edge of the slab, and contains the letters CATE followed by a space sufficient to indicate the end of a word. The next word appears to begin with a straight down-stroke. These letters are far from legible, and I may be mistaken in my reading of them.

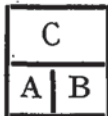
After an interval of about $30\frac{3}{4}$ inches, we come to a small fragment, immediately preceding the chief one, which contains the letters MA, with traces of a preceding I.

At an interval of $5\frac{7}{8}$ inches from where the brass comes to an abrupt end after the word MENSIS (with a straight edge, showing presumably the joining-place of two lengths of metal) we come to a fragment whose first letters are RIS with traces of a preceding B. Following this, traces of all the letters of ANNO may be seen. In order to decide whether the month here were September, October, November or December, I made experiments first with October. The letters OCTA of OCTAVA were found to take up rather less than 5 inches of space, and OCTO here might be supposed to do the same. Allowing the proper interval after MENSIS, and some room for the rest of the B of -BRIS, the

measurement suited exactly, and so the whole word must be OCTOBRIS. The other three months were excluded by having at least one more letter than October to be fitted in. There is, of course, the obvious objection that if the day were the 18th October (decIMA OCTAVA DIE), the date would probably have been expressed as FESTO SANCTI LUCE, or if the 28th (vicesiMA DIE) as FESTO SANCTORUM SIMONIS ET IUDE: but this cannot be maintained in the face of the measurements, which preclude all other months than October. Leaving due space for DOMINI MILL, we meet at exactly the right point (which I have carefully measured) clear traces of the letters ESIMO, and also the letters TRICENTE of the next word. The third letter of this last word is certainly I, not E, which might have been the more likely spelling. Here the fragment comes to an abrupt end, and within two inches the slab also turns its corner.

Having now described each fragment carefully, let us turn to consideration of the slab itself. It is so worn that no deductions can be drawn as to the original design of the brass. All along the South side the matrix of the fillet is quite clear, where the brass does not remain, and also on the East side it is fairly distinct. There are, however, no certain indications of it on the North, and none at all on the West. The very curious shape of the slab suggested a cross brass, but no indications on the slab bear out this idea at all. The fact that the slab ends very abruptly in the middle of the word TRICENTESIMO might indicate that the slab has been cut down, but it would then be longer than ever in proportion to its width. It may, of course, have also been cut down on the North side, but one can imagine no object in cutting a slab in this way.

The use of Latin in a Lombardic inscription suggests the brass of an ecclesiastic, of some date between 1325 and 1335 (black letter is already in use in brasses in 1337, e.g., in the Higham Ferrers brass of Laurence de St. Maur, priest). Fillets of brass replaced separate brass letters somewhere before 1320 (the Pebmarsh brass had a fillet at that date). One might try to work out some sort of parallel with the brass which once filled the grave-slab of Bishop Beaumont of Durham (1317-1333), the matrix of which may still be seen, on two slabs joined together, which measure 15 feet. 11 inches by 9 feet 8 inches. The dates correspond, and it is quite conceivable that another such brass existed in Winchester. It is difficult, however, to see how the slabs were arranged in our brass. Supposing the slab we have to have been one of three, there is the possible arrangement



where A is our slab, in its present position. This is quite hypothetical, but no other kind of solution has occurred to me. It seems clear, at any rate, that the slab as we now have it did not contain the whole of the original brass.