

Knightly Effigies

Some effigies have already been examined in previous chapters. However to make the best use of this evidence we should take a look at what is really known about these plentiful and beautiful objects. Tombs have been built since the times of prehistory to honour the dead. Such a desire is unlikely to have declined and indeed the ‘honour’ of the Middle Ages included respect for ancestors. It is therefore not surprising to find that the Norman barons and also the lesser knights honoured their relatives and possibly also their ancestors. They certainly did in their charters. It should additionally be born in mind that two major periods of iconoclastic destruction have dramatically changed the proportion of surviving sculptural art in Britain and that this has also affected the number and positioning of tomb effigies. Further, not only is it unusual to find intact structures, but those effigies that do survive have often been remodelled to some degree, mostly with cosmetic repairs to remake Reformation ‘defacings’. Noses and praying hands have always been the easiest features to attack. The effigies have also lost most of their gaudy colourings which were probably once applied to them all.

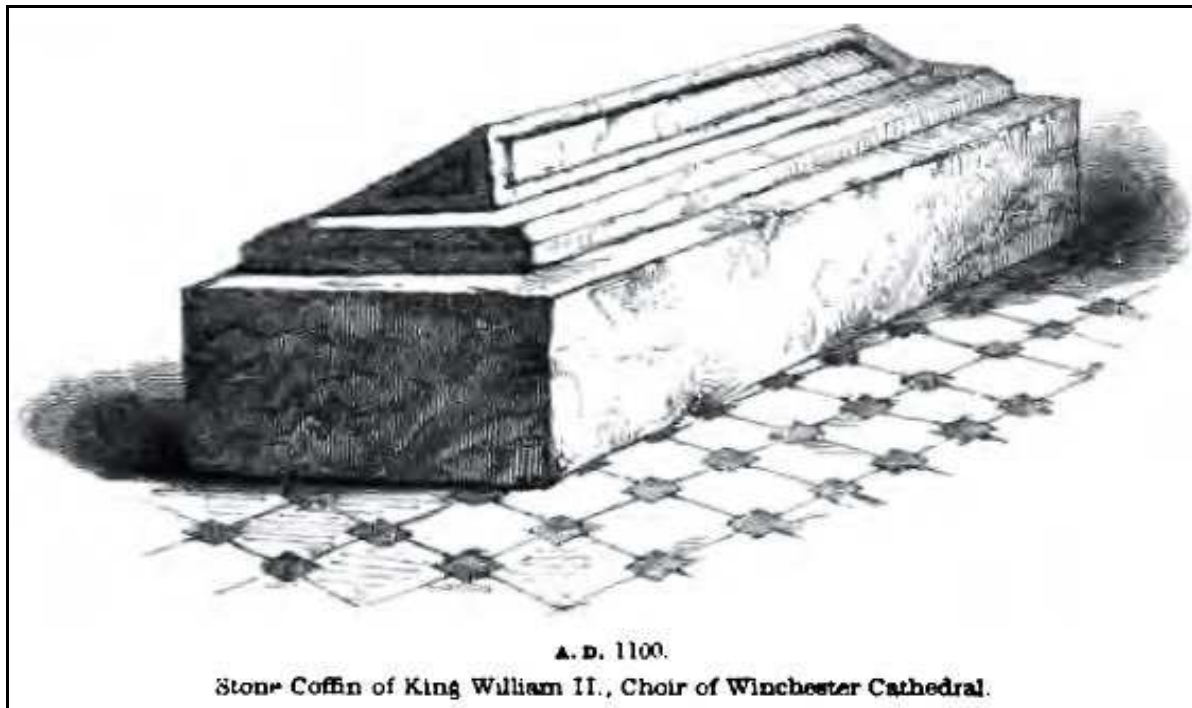


Figure 77, The effigyless tomb of William Rufus as it appeared in the choir of Winchester Cathedral. Note the total lack of inscription or adornment.

One of the earliest identifiable Norman tombs in England is that of William Rufus in Winchester Cathedral (Fig.77). This is not an ornate structure and bears little relation to other more ornate tombs of only a slightly later date. However recent research has suggested that this may not even be the tomb of Rufus and that Bishop Henry Blois of Winchester (bef.1100-71) may actually lie under here^{*77}. Another early and much more elaborate tomb is that of

^{*77} Crook, J., 'The Rufus tomb in Winchester Cathedral' *Antiquaries Journal* LXIX [1999], 187-202.

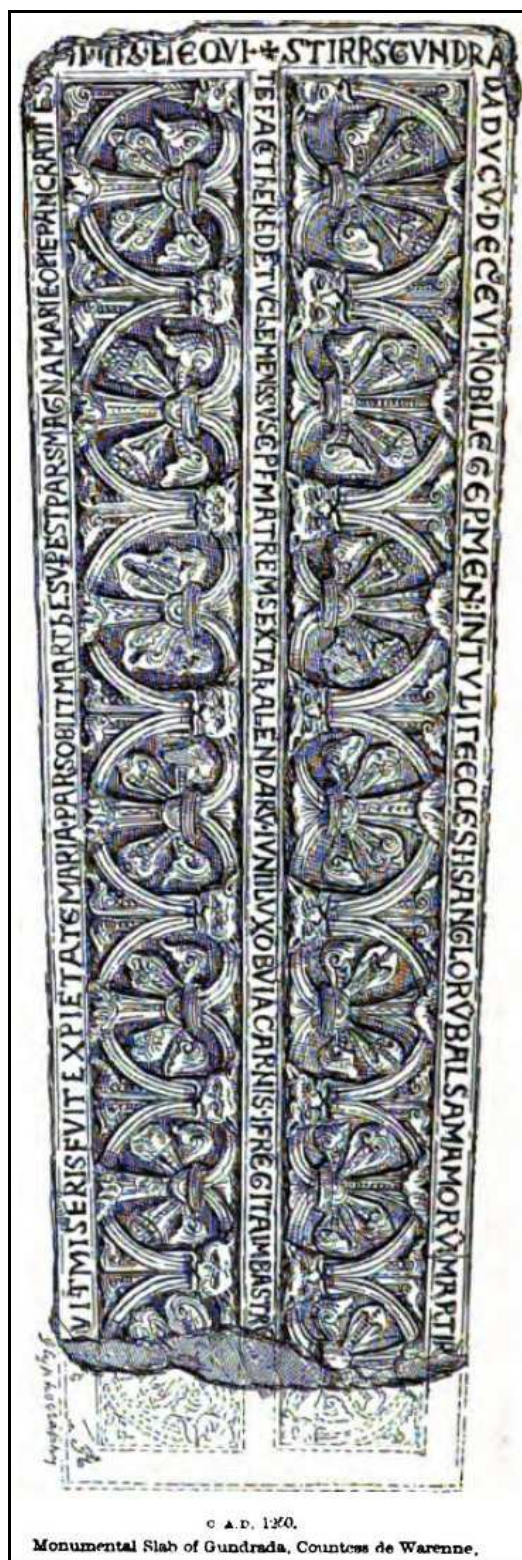


Figure 78, Countess Gundrada's ornately decorated and inscribed tomb lid.

Gundreda Thouars, the wife of William Warenne (c.1035-88). She is often wrongly alleged to have died in childbirth on 27 May 1085. She was certainly buried in Lewes priory where at some date she had a tomb of black limestone raised over her lead coffin. This is over six feet long and up to two feet wide. The decoration consists of a series of sixteen leaf-like designs, separated by lions' heads (Fig.78). Finally there is a long inscription running around the edge of the tombstone which recalls her ancestry as the 'offspring of dukes, ornament of her age, a noble seed' as well as the day of her death. Her death day would have been very important for on this day the monks of the priory would have sung for her redemption. Quite interestingly this tomb is 'said' to date from the 1140's^{*78}. Gundreda was the sister of the Fleming, Earl Gherbod of Chester, who relinquished his earldom in 1070 to return to Flanders. Once there he helped to defeat and kill Earl William Fitz Osbern of Hereford at the battle of Cassel in February 1071. Gundreda was at least thirty at the date of her alleged death in 1085. Her mother was not the wife of William the Conqueror as is often wrongly stated, but she was related to her in some degree and was also called Matilda. Quite likely she was a cousin of some description. Her father was Viscount Amaury of Thouars who died some time after taking part in the battle of Hastings.

Gundreda's husband died from an arrow wound received during the siege of Pevensey castle on 24 June 1088 at the age of at least 53. Only one document dating from 1444 states that Gundrada had died three years before her husband in the pangs of childbirth at Castle Acre on 27 May 1085^{*79}. This statement is followed by two obvious mistakes, namely that her mother was Queen Matilda and that she was countess of Surrey. Her husband was only made earl of Surrey by William Rufus and he did not become king until late in 1087, two years after Gundreda's alleged death. A widow certainly survived Earl William in 1088, and there seems little doubt that this was the earl's first wife. Orderic certainly states this in no

^{*78} *English Romanesque Art 1066-1200*, no.145, 181-2.

^{*79} *Sussex Record Society*, [1934] vol.40, 18.

uncertain terms when he wrote ‘the earldom was succeeded to by William and Reginald with their mother Gundreda’^{*80}. It must be recognised that such a contemporary statement is worth far more than that of a fifteenth century ‘historian’. The second Earl William Warenne died on 11 May 1138 aged at least 68. It is possible that he raised the tombstone to his mother and that she lived on well into the twelfth century. If she had lived into her 70’s, as many noblewomen did, she may well have been buried in the 1120’s, perhaps thereby eliminating the problem of the tomb set up sixty years after her alleged death.



Figure 79, The effigy of King Henry II at Fontevraud abbey.

Similar tombs to that of Gundreda were being set up in the early twelfth century. On 31 May 1116, Mary of Scotland died and was buried in Bermondsey abbey under an elaborate tomb which carried the gold engraved inscription ‘Here lies buried the noble Countess Mary’. The marble tomb was carved with images of kings and queens proclaiming her descent through her father, King Malcolm Canmore of Scotland^{*81}. Her sister, Queen Margaret of England, died on 1 May 1118 and was re-buried at Westminster abbey during the reign of Henry II (1154-89). It was probably at this time that Henry had a new tomb made for her. As befitting her rank the new king, her grandson, had a far longer inscription placed on the grave.

Here lies the lady Matilda II, the good queen of the English, once wife of King Henry I, mother of the Empress Matilda, daughter of the Lord Malcolm, once king of Scotland, and St Margaret, wife of that Malcolm. She died the first of May in the year of grace 1118. If we wished to tell everything about her goodness and uprightness of character, the day would not suffice. May the All High have mercy on her soul, Amen.^{*82}

It is possible that both tombs were built by King Henry II in honour of his relatives and to proclaim the stability of his regime. Perhaps he had an interest in funerary monuments. Certainly his is the earliest surviving representation of an English king and can still be seen in Fontevraud abbey in Touraine (Fig.79). However that there were earlier royal effigies is undoubted. The tomb and effigy of his grandfather, King Henry I (1068-1135), stood in his foundation of Reading abbey for many years. As late as 1398 King Richard II refused to confirm the abbey’s privileges until the restoration of the ‘tomb and effigy’ of his ancestor Henry I had been

^{*80} *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis*, ed. M. Chibnall [Oxford, 1983], IV, 180.

^{*81} Anderson, M., *Kings and Kingship in Early Scotland* [Edinburgh, 1980], 255.

^{*82} *Chronica monasterii de Hida juxta Wintoniam ab anno 1035 ad annum 1121, Liber monasterii de Hyde*, ed. E. Edwards [RS XLV, 1866], 312.

completed^{*83}. This again emphasises that effigies and perhaps also military effigies did not begin in England with the death of King John in 1216.

One of the earliest military effigies in the Anglo-Norman kingdom of the twelfth century appears to have represented Count William Clito of Flanders (1102-28), the nephew of King Henry I (1100-35). William died of wounds received on 27 July 1128 and the only remaining sketch of his destroyed effigy bears a striking resemblance to what a contemporary knight should look like (Fig.17). It shows a knight with split-skirted hauberk and integral coif with ventail, mail cuisses, long kite-shaped shield and a splendid rounded segmented helmet with a Roman-style face guard. Of even greater interest, he has a fine either large or double sword belt. Was the richness of his military garb merely style or wealth?

The earliest accepted effigy in England is said to be that of Bishop Bartholomew of Exeter (1162-84). It is in light relief, rather than a fully rounded effigy as appears later (Fig.80), and is more impressive than the damaged and even lower relief one of Bishop Jocelin of Salisbury (1142-84) who died the same year^{*84}. The oldest extant military effigy is said to be that of Earl William Marshall in the New Temple, London, but the identification, though likely, is not certain^{*85}. The knight in question has no heraldry on his shield, but his armour suits well for the early thirteenth century (Fig.40). The face too looks more like a man of 72, as the Marshall was, rather than the traditional age of 33, the age of Christ at his death, for an effigy. That the monument may be the Marshall is more likely as the Marshall's brother, Bishop Henry (1194-1206), was buried under an effigy at Exeter (Fig.81). However many other knights and barons were buried in the New Temple and few of them are identifiable. The effigy attributed to Earl Geoffrey Manderville (d.1144) by implication would be the oldest of the group (Fig.28). It is interesting that due to his excommunication he spent the next twenty years hung from a tree encased in lead until his son had the excommunication reversed and had his father absolved for Christian burial in the Temple. If the effigy attributed to him in the New Temple is actually his it would seem to date from 1163 at the earliest, for on 6 April of this year the excommunication of the earl was lifted and the restoration of the estates he had seized confirmed. The body was then rapidly buried in the graveyard of the New Temple and not within the church building, which in any case may not yet have been even begun^{*86}. In other words there is no evidence that this effigy can be linked with the earl. Both his sons were buried elsewhere in 1166 and 1189 and it is debatable if any of his co-lateral heirs would have a monument made to him over fifty years after this death. Conversely the shield on the effigy bears a coat of arms that is identifiable with Manderville and not the Say arms that the later 'Manderville' earls of Essex wore in the thirteenth century. Possibly this effigy actually represents Geoffrey Manderville, the grandson of Earl Geoffrey's disinherited son Arnulf.^{*87}

^{*83} *Reading Abbey Cartularies* [Camden, London, 1986], No.116.

^{*84} Bartlett, R., *England under the Norman and Angevin Kings: 1075-1225* [Oxford, 2000], 599.

^{*85} The suggestion that this was the Marshall comes from the statement that William Marshall Junior was buried at the New Temple, London, next to his father, 'Annales de Theokesberia', *Annales Monastici*, ed. H.R. Luard [5 vols., 1864-9] I, 78. In 1586 William Camden in his book *Britannia* described an inscription on the upper part of this tomb with the words *Comes Pembrochice* as well as *Miles eram Martis, Mars multos vicerat armis* on the side. This stands for, The Earl of Pembroke, I was a knight of the God Mars, Mars conquered many people by force of arms. This makes the attribution quite secure.

^{*86} *Gesta Stephani*, ed. and trans. K.R. Potter and R.H.C. Davis [2nd edn., Oxford, 1976], 167; Ramsey Abbey. *Chronicon Abbatiae Rameniensis*. Ed. Marcey, W.D., [London, 1886], 306, 333; *Monasticon Anglorum*, ed. W. Dugdale, Revised edition by J. Caley, H. Ellis, and B. Bandinel [6 vols., 1817-30] IV, 142. An early demolition as this as the effigy of the earl appears in Nichols, J.G., 'The Effigy attributed to Geoffrey de Magnaville, and the Other Effigies in the Temple Church', *Herald and Genealogist* [1866] III, 97.

^{*87} Round, J.H., *Geoffrey de Mandeville* [1892], 232. The date of this Geoffrey's death is unknown, but it cannot have been before 1216.



Figure 80, The low relief effigy of Bishop Bartholomew of Exeter (1162-84). This is in similar relief to the monuments at New Radnor (Fig.38) and Furness abbey (Fig.94).



Figure 81. The low relief effigy of Bishop Henry Marshall of Exeter (bef.1160-1206)

There is another early effigy that initially defies logical explanation. In Hatfield Broad Oak, Essex, is an effigy which came from the Vere's foundation of Earls Colne priory (Fig.82). This effigy once carried an early inscription to 'the third earl of Oxford, the first Robert Vere' on three sides of the slab. This has been used to identify the effigy with Earl Robert Vere of Oxford (bef.1185-1221), who was third earl after his brother Aubrey Vere (1163?-1214) and father, the first Earl Aubrey Vere (1110?-94). However that he is called the first Robert Vere would suggest that there had been at least a second before the inscription was made. The second Earl Robert Vere died in 1296 and his son, the third Earl Robert died in 1331 and was also buried at Earls Colne. He was the sixth earl of Oxford and the armour depicted by the effigy certainly sits better in the early fourteenth century than the thirteenth. It would therefore seem that the recording of the decayed inscription made many centuries ago was faulty and what should have been recorded was the burial place of the Earl Robert Vere of Oxford, the third earl of that name, in other words the 1331 burial. In this case the monument becomes irrelevant to our story as it surely depicts an early fourteenth century knight in full mail, with separate coif, surcoat with girdle and a fine Y-shaped knightly belt. He also sports poleyns a decorative circlet, twin pillows and angelic supporters at both head and feet. In design he is the last of the

chain clad warriors of the thirteenth century.

This leaves as the earliest certainly identifiable military effigy in England as Earl William Longspear of Salisbury who died in 1226 (Fig.24). There can be little doubt as to the identification due to chronicle records of his burial and the heraldic evidence displayed, still in colour, on the earl's shield. Under the effigy on the now destroyed tomb were originally six shields charged originally with the three lions passant of Plantagenet and the six lions rampant of Salisbury. The effigy attributed to Earl Richard Strongbow of Pembroke (1130-76) in Dublin is unlikely to be correct for the arms partially embossed on the shield are unlikely to be Clare. However the diminutive effigy besides the large one could possibly be a representation of the great earl. A plaque near the monument states that the church collapsed in 1562 and the original monument was reset in 1570 when the church was rebuilt. The lesser effigy is made of Purbeck marble and shows a worn mailed figure wearing a coif and surcoat without a belt. The end has been broken off and crudely carved into tubular drapery, probably in the sixteenth century^{*88}. In Normandy the destroyed monument to Juhel Mayenne (bef.1169-1220) shows what appears to be a low-relief effigy with a much more elaborate border than English versions. The armour worn by the knight is similar to that of the earl of Salisbury^{*89}. At the opposite end of the scale the effigy which bears the arms of Douglas in Douglas church, South Lanarkshire, almost certainly represents the James Douglas killed in Spain on 25 August 1330 (Fig.83). He is wearing armour that appears to have been in vogue in England almost a hundred years earlier.

^{*88} Gittos, B&M., 'Irish Purbeck', *Church Monuments XIII* [1998], 8.

^{*89} Knowles, R., French Excursions. 'Charles Alfred Stothard and the Monumental Effigies of France', *Church Monuments XIII* [1998], 32.



Figure 82, Stothard's drawing of the effigy at Hatfield Broad Oak representing the third Earl Robert Vere of Oxford, d.1331.



Figure 83, The effigy reputed to be of Earl James Douglas, d.1330, in Douglas church, Lanarkshire.



Figure 84, King Richard I from his effigy at Fontravault abbey.

An interesting comparison to the effigy of King John are the two known ones made to his brother King Richard (1157-99). The first is at Fontravault, while a second overlay the burial of his heart at Rouen cathedral. A drawing was made of this tomb around 1700 before its destruction in 1734 (Fig.86). This clearly shows the effigy set on a tomb supported by four lions. However the face of the king was not represented as close to reality as it could have been (Fig.87). The fact that both effigies of Richard have similar faces would again indicate that they were made to resemble those they represented. It is unfortunate that the effigy of the Young King Henry (1155-83), which was also despoiled in 1734, has not yet been found.

In France there are the effigies in Fontravault abbey of Kings Henry II (d.1189, Fig.7) and Richard I (d.1199, Fig.84), while in this country King John (d.1216) has his effigy in Worcester cathedral (Fig.85). The squat head and close beard of John are said to be a standard feature of Purbeck marble effigies. However all the effigies I have seen appear to be facially and physically unique so the idea that they do not represent the features of the people they commemorate seems absurd. It seems even more peculiar when it is considered that this effigy of John mirrored the corpse right down to the beard and the sword held in the left hand as was discovered when the body was disinterred^{*90}. John is said to have been laid in a new tomb on St Dunstan's day 21 October 1232^{*91}, though this does not mean that the effigy was made at this date. The original effigy and tomb was sumptuously coloured, but the present gilding, which destroyed the original colours, dates from only 1873. It is unfortunate that none of these regal figures are in armour as this would surely help in dating some of our military effigies.



Figure 85, King John (1166-1216), drawn from his effigy at Worcester Cathedral.

^{*90} Lawrence Stone, *Sculpture in Britain, The Middle Ages*, [Edinburgh, 1955], 116.

^{*91} Theokes, 84



Figure 86, The tomb of King Richard in Rouen Cathedral before its destruction. Notice the four lions supporting the effigy.

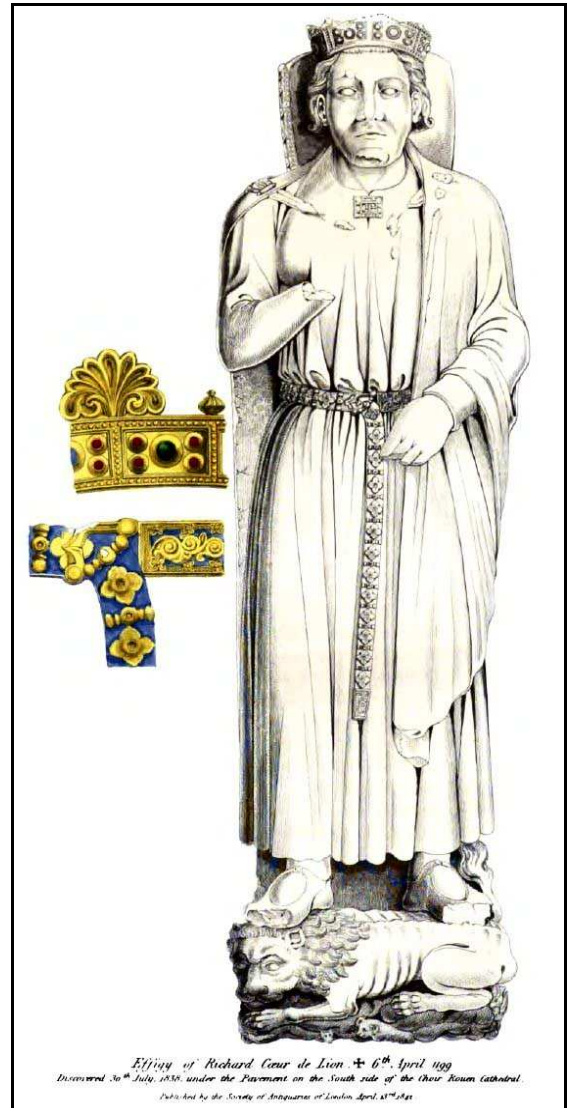


Figure 87, A much better 1838 sketch of the effigy of the Lionheart when it was discovered in Rouen Cathedral shows it was similar to the one in Fontavault, but has a lion at his feet.