

LITTLE CASTERTON, RUTLAND

Sir Thomas Burton and wife Margery M.S. I

DD cas-lit c1410  
(enr. c1420)

London: "B" series<sup>1</sup>

Effigies of Sir Thomas Burton, lord of Tolthorp, patron of the church, [d. 1381], in armor with SS collar, and wife Margery [Greenham ?], in mantle, engraved c1420.<sup>2</sup> Marginal inscription mutilated; one shield; achievement and three other shields lost. On the floor of the chancel.

The effigies of Sir Thomas Barton and his wife Margery are presented full-length and full-face, he on the left in the armor of the late fourteenth century. He has a mustache and probably a beard, though one cannot see the latter since the chin is covered by his mail aventail. On his head, he wears a pointed bascinet with a series of staples riveted to the rim at the sides and bottom. To these the mail aventail is attached by small rings along its top edge to a leather band that has holes that fit over the staples. A cord that is then passed through the staples keeps the aventail tightly in place,<sup>3</sup> thus protecting the knight's neck and shoulders. Here, too, we see the SS collar, each end with a buckle, the two held together by a short chain from which hangs a circular pendant. The meaning of this collar is uncertain, though it is clearly connected with the Lancastrian kings, especially Henry IV who wore the SS badge.<sup>4</sup> It may be short for "Souvereyne," since Henry's motto was "Soveigne vous de moi" (Forget me not).<sup>5</sup> The bottom of the aventail covers the upper part of the jupon, that padded cloth garment that fits over both the hauberk, a mail shirt that one can see at the armpits and just below the scalloped hem of the jupon, and the brigandine, a protective armor of small pieces of steel plates riveted to either cloth or boiled leather. On his upper arms, Sir Thomas wears rerebraces with overlapping plates of metal (the spaudlers) at the shoulders, couters to protect the elbows, and tight-fitting vambraces on the forearms. His gauntlets, too, are probably of metal with fingers capable of articulation. A baldric or belt ornamented with alternating roundels and quatrefoiled squares supports the sword, partly mutilated, on his left side, and the misericorde or dagger at his right hip. For leg-armor, Sir Thomas has metal cuisses around his thighs, poleyns over his knees, and

<sup>1</sup>Kent, p. 94; Norris, I, 56.

<sup>2</sup>There is some question about the date of the engraving. Kent, p. 94, dates it c1400. Norris, I, 56, says c1410 or later. He points out (II, 301, n. 14) that the style of the armor is consistent with an earlier date, but its details are of a later style. He finds this true, too, of the presentation of the effigy of Lady Burton, and would date the engraving as late as c1420. Emmerson, p. 73, would also date it c1420. He writes that the sabatons and the small-headed lion are clues to this later date and believes that the armor is deliberately cut of date. Cf. Emmerson, p. 52.

<sup>3</sup>Blair, p. 68.

<sup>4</sup>Brooke-Little, p. 192.

<sup>5</sup>Page-Phillips, p. 80.

greaves around the shins. On his feet, which rest on a seated lion whose head is turned toward the spectator, he has pointed steel sabatons with rowel spurs attached at the insteps.

To the right of Sir Thomas, Lady Margery wears a fine example of the crespine headdress. Her hair has apparently been braided and enclosed in an elaborate net on each side of the face with an ornamented band across the forehead to hold the headdress in place. Her gown, cut low at the neck, fits closely, especially on the arms, the mitten sleeves covering her hands almost to the knuckles. The skirt, however, is quite full. Buckled around the hips is a long thin belt ornamented with circles, its pendant end hanging to the knees. Over this gown, Lady Margery wears a fur-lined mantle fastened just below the neckline by a cord. On her skirt a small lapdog sits looking up at Sir Thomas.

Central above and between the two figures is part of a helm worn in tournament or battle, probably part of the lost achievement, and in the upper left corner, the only remaining shield, the other three that once occupied the remaining corners, now missing. The arms displayed seem not to be those of Burton, whose blazon was per bend indented impaling an eagle displayed.<sup>6</sup> What we see is a chevron and three crowned birds, kind indistinguishable, each standing on one leg.

A Latin marginal inscription, partly mutilated, surrounds the two figures. In black letter, and with missing portions in brackets, it reads:

Hic iacet dominus Thomas Burton miles quondam dominus  
de Tolthorp a[c ecclesie istius] Patronus qui obiit  
Kalendas August[i] ano dni M CCC lxxxii, et] dna Margeria  
uxor [sua in] eius sinisteris Quorz aiabz ppicietur deus Amen.

Translated:

Here lies Sir Thomas Burton, knight, sometime lord  
of Tolthorp and patron of this church who died  
the first day of August in the year of our Lord 1381 and Lady Margery  
his wife to his left, on whose souls may God have mercy. Amen.

The effigy of Sir Thomas is 38 1/2" (97.8cm), and that of Lady Margery, 35 3/4" (90.8cm). If complete, the marginal inscription would measure 36 1/2" x 83" x 1 3/8" (92.7cm x 210cm x 3.5cm). The shield is 4 1/2" x 5 1/2" (11.4cm x 14cm).

The history of the manor of Tolthorpe mentioned in the inscription goes back to 1086. For years, as its name suggests, it was in the Tolthorpe family. However, when William de Tolthorpe died c1323 having no sons, the estate went to his eldest daughter, Maud, by his wife Alice, the daughter of Ralph de Normanville. Since Maud had married Nicholas de Burton of Stamford, the manor now came into the Burton family. In 1326,

<sup>6</sup>*History of the County of Rutland*, II, 239. That shield would show on one side a bend with an indented diagonal bend; on the other, an eagle, wings expanded.

it was granted to their eldest son Thomas, but, unfortunately, he died childless in 1333, so it passed to his younger brother William, who spent much of his time abroad in the service of King Edward III. William founded a chantry at the Little Casterton church in 1358, and when he died in 1375, he was buried there.<sup>7</sup>

It is William's son, Thomas, thirty years old when his father died, who is memorialized on this brass. We know little about him except that he married Margery Greenham (?), was created "gouverneur de nostre tres cher et tres ame filz Henry" by John of Gaunt in 1374,<sup>8</sup> and died in 1381. Lady Margery passed away in 1410, leaving as heir their son Thomas, who, like his grandfather, spent much time abroad in the King's service. He was appointed Keeper of Fortheringay Castle in 1419 and died in 1435.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup>*History of the County of Rutland*, II, 238-39.

<sup>8</sup>James, p. 61. Perhaps it is this connection with John of Gaunt and his son Henry Bolingbroke, later Henry IV, that explains his wearing the SS collar.

<sup>9</sup>*History of the County of Rutland*, II, 239.

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