

Reinhard Lamp

The Browne Brothers, All Saints, Stamford, Lincolnshire

John Browne the Elder was a wealthy Stamford wool-merchant, a member of the influential company of the Staple of Calais. He and his wife Margaret have an impressive mural brass at the end of the north aisle of All Saints, Stamford's central church. In c. 1475, their two sons, John and William, also rich wool-merchants, contributed generously towards the enlargement and embellishment of the church, where their parents had been laid to rest. The upper walls, windows, and the roof are their work. John the Younger commissioned the tower with its beautiful spire. William founded Browne's Hospital, almshouses in Broad Street, an institution that is still operating today. Both brothers have a sepulchral brass in the church.

1) William Browne, d. c. 1460, and wife Margaret¹

DESCRIPTION of the BRASS

The brass of William and Margaret lies on the floor, hard against the south-eastern corner of the chapel beside the chancel, in its original position.² There is a good deal of mutilation to deplore. Much is missing: the entire left-hand half of the double canopy, the top of the remaining one, and the shields have disappeared. Also, the right-hand shaft lacks its finial. Yet, luckily, the figures and the base with the inscription are in good condition.³ Husband and wife stand praying, William on two wooolsacks, which indicate his trade. He is bareheaded, his hair is close-shaven to above his ears, he is clad in a fur-lined gown and mantle. Margery is in a mantle and clinging gown, wearing a veil over her horned headdress, a small pet sitting on her right foot. Above each figure is an arched prayer scroll. William has "✠ me spede", the cross being a symbol for Christ, thus the scroll says "Christ help me on", which is the Brownes' family-motto. And Margaret's reads: "Der lady help at nede".

¹ The present article was published previously (though not in identical wording) under the title Reinhard Lamp, *Foot Inscriptions on three Lincolnshire Brasses* in the TRANSACTIONS of the Monumental Brass Society, Vol. XVII, Part 1, 2003, pp. 14-30.

² In his will of 17th February 1489, William directed that his body be buried in this Chapel. Information from All Saints church.

³ There are, however, some very unhappy scratches right across Margaret's head-dress and face.



[Abb: Author's rubbing, photo Margraf]

Within the tracery of the canopy gable is a stork, displayed, nesting, the Brownes' heraldic emblem.⁴

Underneath the figures is a foot-inscription of twelve lines of Latin verse, arranged in two blocks of six. Between the two text-blocks is again the stork, this time standing on the wool sack, with the Brownes' motto in miniature script above the bird. There are neither names nor dates of

⁴ The Browne-family emblems of the stork and the heart can also be seen in the founders' window of stained glass above the brass, and two bosses in the chancel-ceiling show the stork. It was chosen for a pun, because Margaret was the daughter of John Stokke, says Malcolm Norris, *Monumental Brasses (The Memorials)*, I, London, 1977, p. 93.

death – probably these were on a marginal text which also has since disappeared. (Overall measurements: 2216 x 1067 mm)⁵



[Author's rubbing, photo Margraf]

APPRECIATION of the SCRIPT

The lettering is incised Gothic minuscule, only line-initials having capitals, the engraving very precise. Undotted 'i's, or any of the minims of 'u', 'n', 'm' often resemble each other, but all in all, the text is well legible, only two abbreviations demanding some reflection. Artless scrolls mark the line-ends.

⁵ *Portfolio Plates*, pl. 187.



[Foot-inscription, author's rubbing, photo Margraf.]

FOOT-INSCRIPTION TRANSLITERATION

Legend	Is in the inscription	Signifies
Small script	text needing treatment	author's intervention
(...)	text needing treatment	expansion of abbreviations and ligatures
[...]	text needing treatment	author's correction or alteration
<u>underlining</u>	superscript-bar	abbreviation-mark
<i>italics</i>	ligature	
[]		interstice made
[/]		interstice deleted

1 Rex regum d̄ns dn̄antum tu quia solus §
 2 Velle tuo suberit om̄e quod est vel erit §
 3 Intrauit terram corpus ꝑ . sp̄us ad te §
 4 Currere festinat tu . deus . accipe me §
 5 Inte sperantem fili deus et pater alme §
 6 Altitonansqꝫ Deus sp̄us / accipe me §

 7 Peccavi mala uulta tuli me peuitet huius §
 8 Ad te clamantem tu deus accipe me §
 9 Non intres d̄ne iudicare mihi nisi primo §
 10 Digneris uenie reddere quod satis est §
 11 Et q̄c pro nostris aiabus suscipiendis §
 12 Rex terrenus eras tu deus accipe me §

TRANSCRIPTION

1 Rex regum d(omi)n(u)s d(omi)nantum tu quia solus
 2 Velle tuo suberit om(n)e quod est vel erit
 3 Intrauit terram corpus (sed) sp(irit)us ad te
 4 Currere festinat tu deus accipe me
 5 In [] te sperantem fili deus et pater alme
 6 Altitonansq(ue) deus sp(irit)us accipe me

 7 Peccavi mala multa tuli me p[æ]nitet huius
 8 Ad te clamantem tu deus accipe me
 9 Non intres d(omi)ne iudicare mi[hi] nisi primo
 10 Digneris ueni[æ] reddere quod satis est
 11 Et q(ua) pro nostris a(n)i(m)abus suscipiendis
 12 Rex terre^{nu}s eras tu deus accipe me

CLEAR TEXT

Arranged according to versification, and with appropriate punctuation.

- 1 Rex regum, dominus dominantum, tu quia solus –
 2 Velle tuo suberit omne quod est vel erit.
 3 Intravit terram corpus, sed spiritus ad te
 4 Currere festinat – tu deus, accipe me!
- 5 In te sperantem, fili deus et pater alme
 6 Altitonansque Deus spiritus – accipe me!
- 7 Peccavi, mala multa tuli – me pænitet huius!
 8 Ad te clamantem, tu deus, accipe me!
- 9 Non intres, domine, iudicare, mihi nisi primo
 10 Digneris veniæ reddere, quod satis est.
 11 Et quia pro nostris animabus suscipiendis
 12 Rex terrenus eras, tu deus, accipe me!

TRANSLATION

- 1 King of kings, Lord of lords, o Thou, because Thou art one and only –
 2 All that is and will be shall be subjected to Thy will.
 3 My body entered the earth, but my spirit to Thee
 4 Hastens to run. Thou God, accept me,
- 5 Who put my hope in Thee, Son God, kind Father,
 6 And God Holy Ghost thundering from on high – accept me! Receive me!
- 7 I have sinned, I have done much evil, and rue this.
 8 Thou God, accept me, receive me, who am calling out to Thee
- 9 Enter not, Lord, in judgment, unless beforehand
 10 Thou deignest to give me of Thy redeeming grace, which is enough.
 11 And since for the sake of the salvation of our souls
 12 Thou, a King, wast on earth, receive me, my God!

COMMENTARY

1 *dominantum*: Normal in classical Latin would have been *dominantium*, but in poetry the ending *-um* instead of *-ium* is current.

2 *velle*: In medieval Latin, the word *velle*, "to will, intend", can be a noun: "will, volition".⁶

3/4 *β*: Much depends on the correct expansion of this logogram. The conjecture is for *sed* "but", which marks the contrast appropriately.

4 *accipe*: The word has the two essentially different meanings of "receive" and "accept", neither of which should be missing in a translation here.

9 *non intres, domine, iudicare*: This is a quotation of Psalm 143,2.⁷

11 *qc*: *quia* "since, as" is expanded from this abbreviation, but it could also be *qui* ("who"). Prosodic parameters cannot determine the choice between either. The option here is for the former, because it seems more plausible to see the longer word thus abbreviated, but conversely the sentence could also be seen as going: "And, Thou, who for the salvation of our souls / Wast King on earth, God, accept and receive me."

STYLISTIC APPRECIATION

Each block of text comprises three distichs, which scan flawlessly, a great exception for medieval Latin poetry, where departures from the classical rule of versification are current.⁸ There is no rhyme in most verses, but vv. 1, 2, and 11 have leonine rhymes, the last word rhyming with the word before the caesura, and vv. 9 and 10 have caesura-rhyme. As can be seen, those rhymes that do come are not conspicuous or impressive. Set out below is the verse arrangement and the rhyme-scheme. The frames indicate rhyme-links; arrows in the left and right margins (↓↑) show the vertical rhyme-linkage within the respective hemistich-pair, the double arrows (↔) mark the horizontal connection between the two hemistichs of a verse. Abbreviations must here be read expanded. The prosody can be presented as follows. Long syllables come in bold print, underlining and bold print marks long main ("stressed") syllables. Roman ciphers must be read as letters. The caesuras are indicated by the spacing.

⁶ *Velle* appears in accusative cases mostly, but here it is a dative and, interestingly, still this verbal noun is uninflected.

⁷ The poem brings a mixture of the two versions of Psalm 143, 2: Hebr.: „et non venias ad iudicandum cum servo tuo..." LXX: „et non intres in iudicio cum servo tuo..."

⁸ Saying this, one must mention the exceptions v. 2 *suberit* and *domine* (v. 9); these can claim caesura-licence, though.

1	<u>Rex</u> re <u>gum</u> , do mi <u>nus</u>	↔	do mi <u>nan</u> tum, <u>tu</u> qui a <u>so</u> lus -
2	<u>Vel</u> le tu <u>o</u> su be <u>rit</u>	↔	<u>om</u> ne quod <u>est</u> vel e <u>rit</u> .
3	<u>In</u> tra <u>vit</u> <u>terram</u>		<u>cor</u> pus sed <u>spi</u> ri tus <u>ad</u> <u>te</u> ↓
4	<u>Cur</u> re re <u>fe</u> sti <u>nat</u>		<u>tu</u> de us, <u>ac</u> ci pe <u>me</u> ! ↑
5	<u>In</u> te <u>spe</u> ran <u>tem</u> ,		fi <u>li</u> de us <u>et</u> pa ter <u>al</u> <u>me</u> ↓
6	<u>Al</u> ti to <u>nans</u> que De <u>us</u>		<u>spi</u> ri tus – <u>ac</u> ci pe <u>me</u> ! ↑
7	<u>Pec</u> ca <u>vi</u> , ma la <u>mul</u> ta tu <u>li</u> –		me <u>pæ</u> ni tet <u>hu</u> ius!
8	<u>Ad</u> te <u>cla</u> man <u>tem</u> ,		<u>tu</u> de us, <u>ac</u> ci pe <u>me</u> !
9 ↓	<u>Non</u> in <u>tres</u> , do mi <u>ne</u> ,		iu di <u>ca</u> re, mi <u>hi</u> ni si <u>pri</u> mo
10 ↑	<u>Dig</u> ne <u>ris</u> ve ni <u>æ</u>		<u>red</u> de re <u>quod</u> sa tis <u>est</u> .
11	<u>Et</u> qui a <u>pro</u> no <u>stris</u>	↔	a ni <u>ma</u> bus <u>sus</u> ci pi <u>en</u> <u>dis</u>
12	<u>Rex</u> ter <u>re</u> nus e <u>ras</u> :		<u>tu</u> de us <u>ac</u> ci pe <u>me</u> !

The text is distinctively, and meaningfully, structured. Order is achieved through the repeated outcry of *tu deus, accipe me* at the end of lines. In this manner, instead of having two stanzas, as it would seem by the looks of it, the poem is broken up into four groups: one stanza of four lines at the beginning of the first block, another at the end of the second, and straddling them a pair of couplets, namely one at the end of the first block and the other at the beginning of the second.

The two couplets resemble each other in their textual, even syntactical structure, the first (i.e. vv. 5/6) beginning with an apposition to the person praying, in the form of a present participle (*sperantem*), the second (vv. 7/8) having this construction in its second line (*clamantem*, in v. 8). In the two couplets, therefore, the commemorated comes to the foreground and speaks for himself, whereas in the two quatrains the principal subject is God. The criteria for this grouping are thus not only formal, but light up the intrinsic structure of the poem.

Apart from this, there are other elements of composition, an important one being that of contrast. There is opposition of time: *est* ↔ *vel erit*; of body and spirit: *corpus* ↔ *spiritus*; of movement, first downwards, then up: *intravit* ↔ *ad te ...currere festinat*; of guilt and repentance: *peccavi, mala multa tuli* ↔ *me pœnitet huius*; of judgment and remission of sin: *iudicare* ↔ *mihi ... digneris veniæ reddere*; of God's reign on earth and the elevation of souls: *rex terrenus eras* ↔ *pro nostris animabus suscipiendis*.

Another element of structure is equilibrium. The first and the last lines begin with the same word, *rex*. Also the third lines in each block (as the poem appears in the inscription, i.e. in vv. 3 and 9) contain the same word, namely forms of *intrare*. Twice also appears the notion of the earth, at first in v. 3, where the commemorated states that he entered the earth,

and at the second mention in v. 12, where that is also said about Christ. Thereby a delicate bond is knit between the soul and Christ. And the appeal to God ends both blocks, and also all four stanzas – a most impressive effect contrived by this finely wrought text-grouping.

Symmetry is the pervading structural force of this text, which produces a harmonious cohesion, for all its affective commotion, and the intensity and earnestness of personal feeling is its main substance. The text with its extraordinary hymnic power breathes the religious fervour of the psalms. It is a very unusual inscription, a moving and lovely text, a great poem.

REFERENCES

MALCOLM NORRIS: *Monumental Brasses (The Memorials)*, vol. I, London, 1977.

LAMP, REINHARD: *Foot Inscriptions on three Lincolnshire Brasses*, in: *Transactions*, Monumental Brass Society, Bd. XVII, Teil 1, 2003, 14-24.

Illustration:

Monumental Brasses, The Portfolio Plates of the Monumental Brass Society 1894-1984, Suffolk 1988, Tafel 187.

Rubbing: Reinhard Lamp

Photography: Bodo Margraf, Welt (Eiderstedt)

2) John Browne, d. 13.2.1475, and wife Agnes, All Saints, Stamford, Lincolnshire

DESCRIPTION of the BRASS

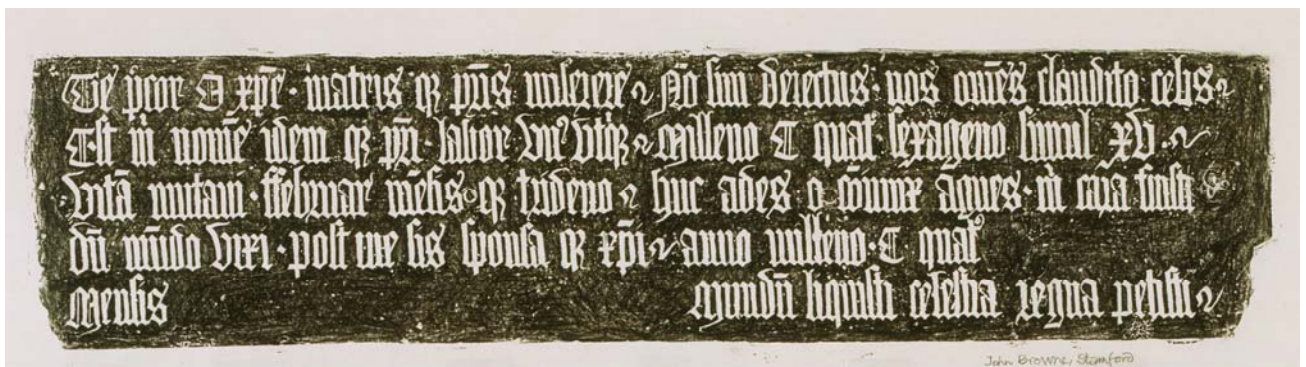
The brass to John Browne the Younger and his wife Agnes is mural in the north aisle of the church, beside his parents' monument. The figures stand praying. John is clad in a mantle clasped on his right shoulder and thrown back over his left arm, disclosing its fur-lining, now an empty recess, originally inlaid. His wide-sleeved gown is also fur-lined, as is visible in the hatching at the bottom, where it opens out a little. He carries a big purse hanging from his belt, in the same manner as his father. Agnes wears a mantle over her kirtle, her head veiled and wimpled, in widow's fashion.



[Photo Paetzold]

The artistic quality of this brass is much inferior to that of the other monuments to the Browne family, especially the design of the heads and faces is crude. One wonders how such a disparity between these more or less contemporary compositions may be explained.

Underneath the figures is an inscription-plate. It has suffered at the lower corners, where the metal has been worn away to frayed edges, luckily leaving the text unimpaired. That consists of five double-lines of Latin verse. John's date of death is given, his wife's is left blank; she died later. The literary quality of the inscription well compensates the reader for the aesthetic disappointment, as will be seen.



[Foot-inscription, author's rubbing, photo Margraf.]

APPRECIATION of the SCRIPT

The lettering is incised Gothic minuscule, only line-initials having capitals, the engraving being very precise. Some 'i's are dotted very faintly, many, though, are undotted; then they resemble the minims of 'u', 'n', 'm'. Yet all in all, the text is legible. However, abbreviations are numerous and of varied shape, which is why the transcription demands considerable reflection. Thus, the expansion of v. 2a, which has five such contractions, and where only three words have not been foreshortened, is challenging, and here the author is to a certain extent exposed to the danger of misconstruction. Artless scrolls mark the line-ends. (Measurements: 173 mm in height, 730 mm in width)

FOOT-INSCRIPTION TRANSLITERATION

Legend	Is in the inscription	Signifies
Small script	text needing treatment	author's intervention
(...)	text needing treatment	expansion of abbreviations and ligatures
[...]	text needing treatment	author's correction or alteration
<u>underlining</u>	superscript-bar	abbreviation-mark
<i>italics</i>	ligature	
[/]		interstice deleted

1a Te p[^]cor $\text{\textcircled{D}}$ xpe • matris qz pris uiserere §
 b No s^um deiectus • nos oues claudito celis §
 2a Est m' noue idem qz pri • labor vn[^] vt'qz §
 b Milieno $\text{\textcircled{C}}$ quat' • sexageno s^um^ul xb §
 3a Vita uitaui • Februar' mes^us qz trideno §
 b huc ades o conu^ux agnes • m' cara fuisti §
 4a du uiudo vixi • post me sis sponsa qz xpi §
 b anno milieno • $\text{\textcircled{C}}$ quat'
 5a Meus^us
 b Muudu liquisti celestia regna petisti

TRANSCRIPTION

- 1a Te p(re)cor O (Christe) • matris[/]q(ue) p(at)ris miserere
 b Non sim deiectus • nos omnes claudito c[æ]lis
- 2a Est m(eo) no(m)ine idem[/]q(ue) p(a)ri • labor un(us) ut(ri)q(ue)
 b Milleno C quat(er) • sexage_{no} sim_{ul} xv
- 3a Vita(m) mutavi • Februar(ii) men(s)is[/]q(ue) tride_{no}
 b Huc ades o coniux Agnes • m(ea) cara fuisti
- 4a Du(m) mu(n)do vixi • post me sis spon(sa) [/]q(ue) (Christ)i
 b Anno mil_leno • C quat(er)
- 5a Men(s)is
 b Mundu(m) liquisti c[æ]lestia regna petisti

CLEAR TEXT

With appropriate punctuation added.

- 1a Te precor, O Christe, matrisque patris miserere!
 b Non sim deiectus! Nos omnes claudito cælis!
- 2a Est meo nomine idemque pari labor unus utrique.
 b Milleno C quater sexageno simul xv
- 3a Vitam mutavi Februarii mensisque trideno.
 b Huc ades, o coniux, Agnes, mea cara fuisti.
- 4a Dum mundo vixi; post me sis sponsaque Christi.
 b Anno milleno C quater
- 5a Mensis
 b Mundum liquisti cælestia regna petisti.

TRANSLATION

- 1a I beseech Thee, o Christ, on the mother and on the father have mercy!
 b I would not be cast away! Enclose us all in Thy heavens!
- 2a The trouble undertaken on my behalf is one and the same for each of the spouses.
 b In one thousand four times a-hundred and sixty and again fifteen
- 3a I changed life, on the thirteenth of the month of February.
 b Come hither, o my wife, Agnes! My beloved you were
- 4a While I lived in the world, and after me may you be the bride of Christ.
 b In the year one thousand and four-hundred
- 5a Of the month
 b You left this world behind, bound towards the heavenly realms.

COMMENTARY

1a *matrisque patris*: The deceased – unusually, and surprisingly – speaks of himself and his wife as “the mother and the father”, possibly meaning “my wife and me”.⁹

1b *omnes*: may be intended to be understood as “the two of us”, or does he mean his whole family?

2a *idemque ... unus*: “one and the same ...”, only here the words are reversed in order (the expression is *unus ... idemque*) – poetic licence, taken (and granted) for the sake of prosody.

2a *m' nome*: has been expanded into *meo nomine*, “in my name, on account of my person, on my behalf, as I am concerned”.

Either *meo* must be read expanded, which would place its last – long – syllable in the position of a short one. This hypothesis seems less probable, considering the general competence and inventiveness of the poet. Or else the *m'* is not expanded and must be read [em], as a syllabic letter. The juxtaposition of *nomine* and *idemque* would entail an elision, so we would get *em nomin' idemque*.

Bearing in mind that bold type represents a long syllable, underlined are long (“stressed”) main syllables, the line is understood to read:

Est em no min' i dem que pa ri // la bor u nus u tri que.

2a *pri ... ut'que*: *pri* closely resembles the *pris* of v. 1a, where it has been expanded into *patris*. That seemed fitting there, as the word corresponded to *matris*. Here, though, the same expansion would come as a repetition, and that makes it less likely. But above all, it would run counter to sense, as *pri* is associated with *utrique* – “both, either” – there are not two “fathers”. The two words are here therefore understood to read *pari ... utrique*. The word *par* is normally an adjective, saying “equal”, or “proper, appropriate”, but can also appear as a noun, and then may take the meaning of “partner, comrade” and “spouse”, so that here the sense may be seen to be “to/for either of us spouses”.

3b *Huc ades*: *Huc* really is an adverb translating movement towards the speaker, meaning “hither”. *ades* therefore is meant to be an imperative, ordering the addressed person to “be here, i.e. in this place”. That is static, does not convey a movement, but in Latin, both ideas do go together and mean “come here, where I am”. He pleads with his wife to come and join him in the other world.

⁹ There is a similar line using the terms “mother and father” on the brass to Hugh & Margaret Bostok, Wheathamstead, Hertfordshire, 1450.

The same expression, *Huc ades*, appears in Vergil, *Bucolica* 2, 45. There the verses go:

Huc ades, o formose puer, tibi lilia plenis –
ecce – ferunt nymphæ calathis ...

“Come hither, oh beautiful boy, the nymphs will bring thee lilies in full baskets ...”

John Browne’s inscription has even the same subsequent syntactical structure as Vergil’s verses; it is evidently modelled on the quotation.¹⁰

4a *sponsa Christi*: What the “betrothed of Christ” means may be open to interpretation. One may perhaps see here the wish of the deceased for his wife not to remarry. But the more likely meaning behind this expression is the husband’s hope, and consolation proffered to his wife, that after his disappearance she would be under the protection of Christ, and his assumption, and wish, for her henceforth to lead a godfearing, respectable life (as can be assumed she has hitherto done).

That was, indeed, quite the normal thing for the widow to do. There was distinct public pressure on a widow to behave appropriately. She was expected to dress differently after her husband’s death and to wear the *barbe*, which covered her breast up to her chin in starched folded linen, a similar garb to that of nuns. But this she did whether she joined a monastic congregation or not, and led a conveniently sober and unequivocal life (i.e. in general, or in principle, of course). The inference that John ordered his Agnes to leave the temporal world and cloister herself – become a vowess – is therefore technically possible, but not conclusive and not shared here, because it does not seem to fit the feelings expressed by her husband.

STYLISTIC APPRECIATION

The poem is made up of twice five hexameters, incomplete in vv. 4b and 5a, where the woman’s date of death has been omitted. The lines scan, but one needs to take into account the author’s wish for having certain abbreviations read expanded, and others not – quite in the medieval fashion.¹¹ The caesura-mark is left out in the last verse, but in the others it shows the interior order of the hexameters. These follow the general rule, halting after the third stress, but in v. 2a, the caesura is laid after the fourth stress, so that the poem’s rhythm is here agreeably varied.

¹⁰ This information came to me from my friend H.P. Blecken, Hamburg.

¹¹ *Christe* (v. 1a) is made to have a long end-syllable – permissible departure from the strict rule, because the syllable appears at the caesura, and length here may be considered the poet’s freedom, as at the end of a verse (caesura-licence).

The two date-lines, vv. 2b-3a, are again an extraordinary job of juggling recalcitrant bits and pieces into prosodic order. To achieve it, the abbreviated *Februar'* (understood as *Februarii*) is not to be expanded when read out. And Roman ciphers must be read as letters; thus the last figure, *xv*, is to be pronounced [eks u:]. These lines, then, scan as follows:

2b **Mil le no** ce quater // **sex a ge no** si mul **eks u**
 3a **Vi tam mu ta vi** // Fe bru **ar men sis** que tri **de no**.

There is no rhyme-scheme, apart from end-rhymes in vv. 3b and 4a, and a leonine rhyme-pair within v. 5b.¹²

It is interesting to see how, in his imploration of Christ and plea for His mercy, the husband integrates his wife's salvation from the very start, in the first line. The third verse resumes this idea, and, in a very singular, perhaps naïve, but quite touching attempt to win God over, explains how He would not need to go out of his way much if, in one and the same movement of His heart, He graced both, and that a second, time-consuming screening for Agnes could be dispensed with, so that He could safely take her also into His heavens, like her husband. Thereby the author meant to convey how similar husband and wife were in character, ways of life, and saintliness, and how united.

The certitude of after-life is nowhere more strongly expressed than in v. 3a: "I changed life", he says, as one would change gears. That highlights how strong was the medieval conviction of a spiritual continuity after death. The most moving verse is of course 3b, which shows the husband's love for his wife so intensely. The religious fervour and the warm feeling of marital love make this poem a rather wonderful and inspiring thing to read.

REFERENCES

Sharp, Pamela, *All Saints' Church Stamford, A Short History and Guide*, 2003

Rubbing: Reinhard Lamp

Photography: Johannes Paetzold (Hamburg), Bodo Margraf, (Welt, Eiderstedt)

¹² A leonine rhyme links the verse-end to the caesura-word, i.e. the end of the first hemistich.