

IV. *Some Observations on the Paintings in the Window of Brereton Church. By the Rev. Samuel Pegge, in a Letter to Owen Salusbury Brereton, Esq. Vice President.*

Read Nov. 26, 1789.

S I R,

THE beautiful coloured drawing which you were pleased to exhibit at the Society [*a*], is so very curious, in regard to the many singularities which attend it, at least in my eye, that I request your favourable acceptance of a few additional observations upon it.

There are five figures in what we may call the lower compartment of the window at Brereton church, in the county of Chester, and seemingly all knights; and it is true, that in an illumination in a small vellum MS. of a Latin Manual of Prayers, which I have, the assassins are five; the piece consisting of them who are all standing, of *St. Thomas* kneeling at an altar, and of a monk, whom we may suppose to be his chaplain, or cross-bearer, at his side. But nevertheless all history testifies that the murderer of Becket were but *four* in number.

[*a*] Engraved in *Archæologia*, vol. IX. p. 368.

*William*

William Fitz-Stephen, who was living at the time, was in the archbishop's service [b], and no contemptible writer, names but four [c], and most later authors, if not all, agree, I think, in the same [d]; so that the middle and most conspicuous figure in your drawing must needs be intended to represent the martyr himself, though by a most wonderful incongruity, repugnant to all history, he is portrayed with his sword drawn, and clad in armour. We incur no mistake, Sir, in denominating this principal figure the martyr himself, for his name is expressly written on the label under him thus,

Martira Thoma [e].

It is further observable, in respect to the *Knights*, that the two on the right of the martyr carry their swords in their left hands, which can only be to please the eye of the spectator by making a contrast with the swords of the two figures on the opposite side.

The names of the knights on their labels are, *Willm's Traciq. Reginaldus filij Aic'i* [f], *nec non Mertilius* [g] *hugo, Ricardus Bruto* [h]; which in the inscription underneath stand thus, "*Ricardus Bruto nec non Mertelius hugo Willmus traci Reginaldus*" "*filius hici* (no doubt for *urci*, i. e. *urfi*) *Martirm Thomam figri*

[b] Account of Fitz-Stephen prefixed to his Description of London, A. 1772, p. 8.

[c] Fitz-Stephen, p. 78.

[d] Rog. Hoveden, p. 521. Annal. Duftap. p. 33. Rad. de Diceto et Gervas. inter X Script. col. 515. 1414. 1672. Dugdale, Baron. l. p. 678. Lord Lyttelton, Vol. IV. p. 353.

[e] i. e. Thomam.

[f] This certainly should be *Urci* or *Urfi*, as all authors call him; *Caxton* also naming him *Bereson*.

[g] That is, *Morville*.

[h] i. e. Brito.

“*fecere beatum anno milleno centum septuageno*,” of which the ten latter words, as you truly remark, form two Hexameter verses; but if I be not mistaken, the whole inscription may be thrown into four verses of that species, thus,

*Ricardus Bruto, necnon Murtelius Hugo,  
Willelmus traci, Reginaldus filius hici,  
Martirum [i] Thomam fieri fecere beatum,  
Anno Milleno centeno septuageno.*

The first of three figures in the upper compartment is evidently a bishop, and, as the *nimbus* denotes, a saint; whence I should esteem him to be either *Becket* himself, or *St. Chad*, who was connected at this time with the Diocese of Chester. I incline to the latter, because we have the effigies of *Becket* in the other compartment. The middle figure is also a prelate with his mitre and crozier, and in the attitude of conferring his benediction, and probably was that Bishop of Lichfield, or Chester, who was sitting at the time when the window was made. The third figure, with a *glory* and a book, must, I think, be the patron saint, to whom the church of Brereton was dedicated, some saint, but not a bishop, as he wants the crozier. This patron saint, I find, was *Oswald* [k].

The church of Brereton is thought to be one of the oldest in the County Palatine of Chester [l]; but whatever the fabrick

[i] This is particular both as to the quantity of the middle syllable, and the termination; but the like errors occur often in monkish verses.

[k] Eton.

[l] Archæol. vol. IX. p. 368.

of the church may be, perhaps as old as the Norman Conquest [*m*], this window, representing the tragical end of *Becket*, cannot be supposed to rise any higher than the canonization of that faint, A. D. 1172, and probably not near so high.

I am, Sir, with the greatest regard and esteem,

Your most obedient humble servant,

*Whittington, Oct. 29, 1789.*

S A M U E L P E G G E.

[*m*] There is no mention of a church at *Bretone*, which is placed in *Mildestwic* hundred, by which name *Northwich* hundred went at the making of Domesday. (Leycester, p. 421.)