

The Brass of Thomas de la Mare, St. Albans Abbey Church.

DESCRIPTION.

BY ERNEST WOOLLEY, F.S.A.

PLATE I.

THE Brass was made in the lifetime of Abbat Thomas de la Mare, whose Abbacy extended from 1349 to 1396. Its average length is a small fraction over 111 inches and width 52 inches, as measured March 4th, 1929.

It is rightly described by Mr. William Page, F.S.A., as one of the finest ecclesiastical brasses in England, and he states (*Brasses and Indents in St. Albans*) that it is of Flemish workmanship and is said to have been made under the direction of the Abbat himself some thirty years before his death.

On three of the corners are the emblems of three of the four Evangelists. That of St. John is missing from the top left-hand corner.

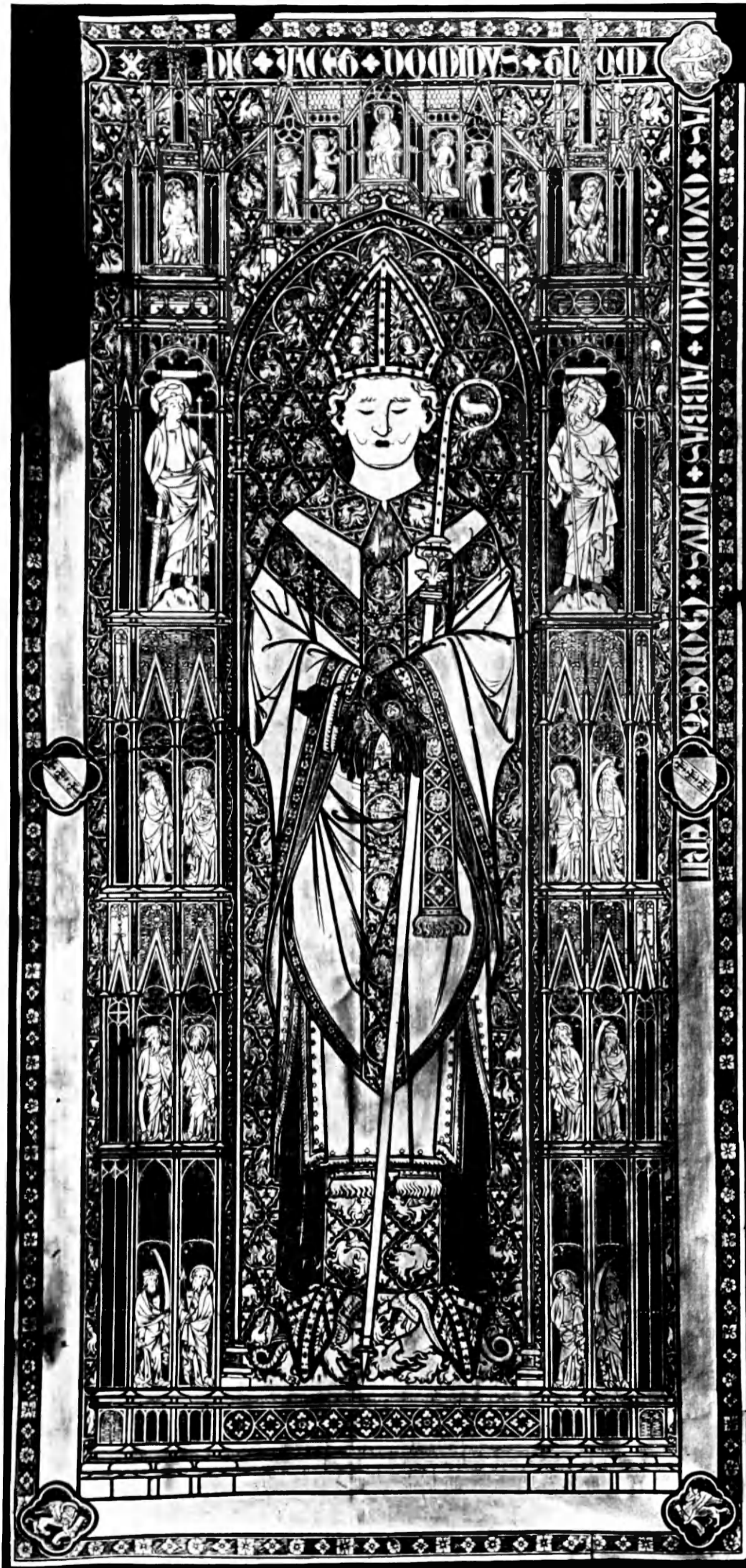
Before the inscription at the top begins there is a beautiful Saltire Cross charged with a Crosslet Cross (see Plate VI). The inscription runs "Hic jacet dominus Thom—as quondam Abbas hujus Monast—erii"; Here lies the lord Thomas formerly Abbat of this Monastery; finishing just below the Abbat's arms on the right-hand side (see Plate X).

The blank space below was, perhaps, intended for the date to be inserted after the Abbat's death.

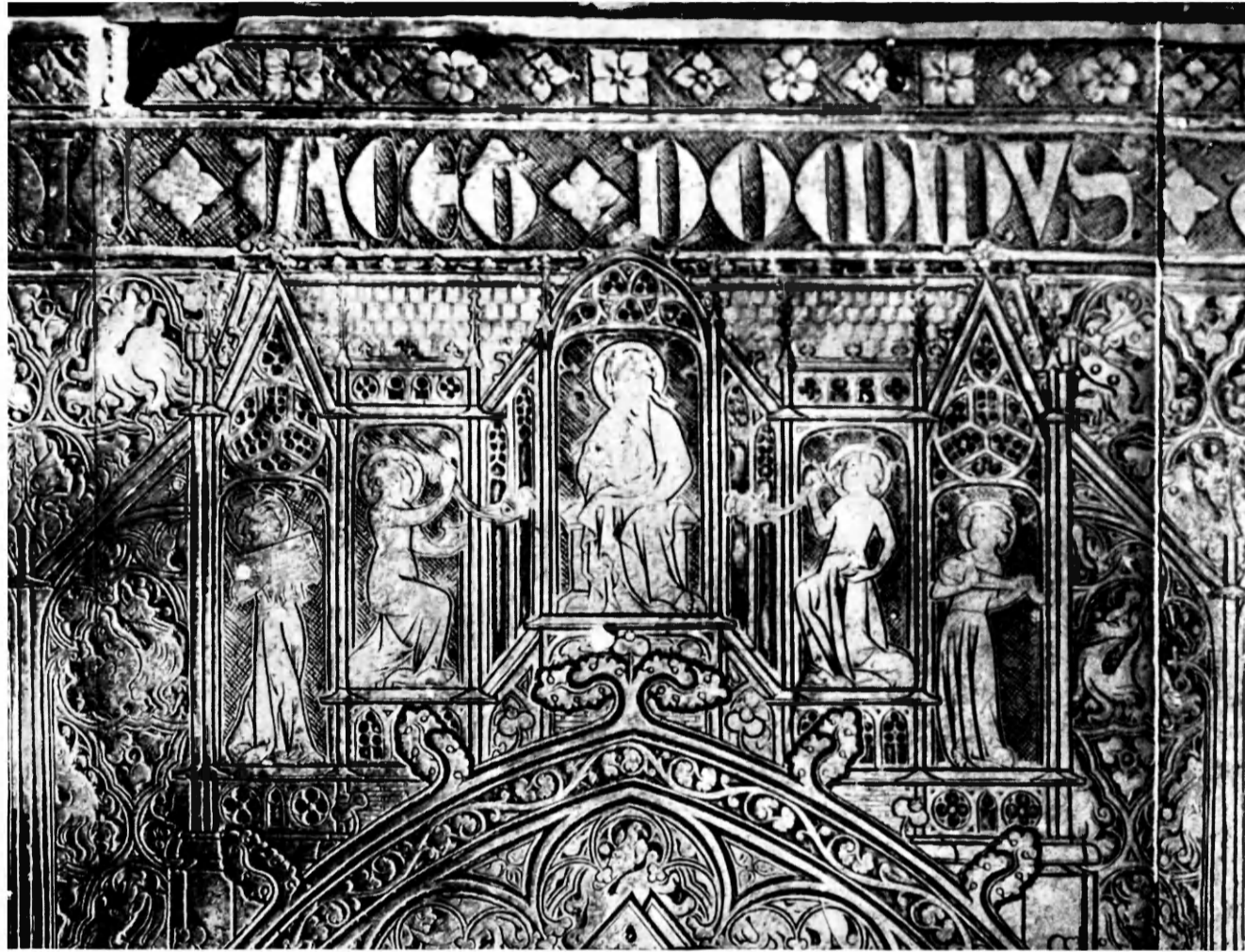
At the top the Angel, emblem of St. Matthew, is represented with a scroll of the gospel message (see Plate IX).

PLATE II.

The top centre group contains God the Father enthroned, and flanked by two censing Angels, while another on the left-hand plays a psaltery and that on the right a mandore.



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PLATE III.

The details of the Abbat's figure are exquisitely rendered. He is fully vested in Mitre, Amice, Chasuble, Dalmatic, Tunicle, Alb, and embroidered shoes.

This plate shows the mitred head and shoulders. The mitre is worked with glorious foliage and two small human heads in medallions.

His face and wavy hair are charmingly portrayed and his head well set on his neck.

Below is the Amice reduced to a mere tie, the Apparel, having become detached from the Amice and fixed like a collar to the Chasuble (cf. *Encyclopædia Britannica*, I, 854, 11th edn.) and the upper part of the Chasuble.

The floreated crook of his staff contains the emblem of St. John the Baptist, the Lamb and flag or Agnus Dei.

The ground work on the left of the photograph is well worth close examination under a magnifying glass. It is crowded with writhing beasts, *e.g.*, one level with the Abbat's right ear has horns and is winged.

PLATE IV.

This shows the lower part of the Chasuble, the jewelled gloves, the Maniple garnished with medallioned human heads (a very charming one is just above the Abbat's hands) and fringed, and the Dalmatic.

PLATE V.

This shows at the sides the Chasuble, the folds of the Dalmatic, the slightly fringed Tunicle, the fringed ends of the Stole, and below the Alb with Apparel or Orphrey embroidered with writhing griffins.

The Abbat's feet are encased in embroidered shoes, and the staff ends with a sharp point as if to slay the two ravening dragons which seem to be engaged in mortal combat.

The curled tail of each beast appears emerging from behind either of the Abbat's feet.

The wings of the left-hand beast appear from behind the Abbat's right foot, the tops of the wings between the staff and the foot, the tips showing on the left of the foot.

One of the hind feet of the beast is just below the tail, and the corresponding front leg and foot show between

the point of the staff and the Abbat's right foot.

The head, eye, ravening mouth and teeth of the beast are on the right hand of the staff point, biting one of the forelegs of the other beast.

The top jaw of the right hand beast appears to the left of the staff and, as it were, between the tops of the wings of the left-hand beast. Doubtless the lower jaw is occupied in a combined movement to close with the upper jaw somewhere in the anatomy of its enemy.

The wings of the right-hand beast are indicated below the Orphrey between the left foot of the Abbat and the staff, while two of its feet appear between the Abbat's left toe and the staff point.

It is a wonderful allegory.

PLATE VI.

No. 1 is at the top left-hand side of the Brass. It just shows part of the quatrefoil which held the emblem of St. John.

The seated figure is that of St. Peter with his key. Above is the Saltire Cross charged with a Crosslet Cross, and to the right the beginning of the inscription.

No. 2 represents St. Alban with sword and long-staffed or processional Cross.

PLATE VII.

Next below, follow on the left-hand side :—

No. 1. The Abbat's arms, "On a bend three eagles displayed." On this side and on the other are grouped, under elaborate canopies of magnificent workmanship, Prophets with scrolls and Apostles with their emblems. Mr. Page identifies the Prophets (*St. Albans Cathedral and Abbey Church*, 1911). Prophet Daniel. St John the Evangelist holding the poisoned cup, the serpent emerging from it.

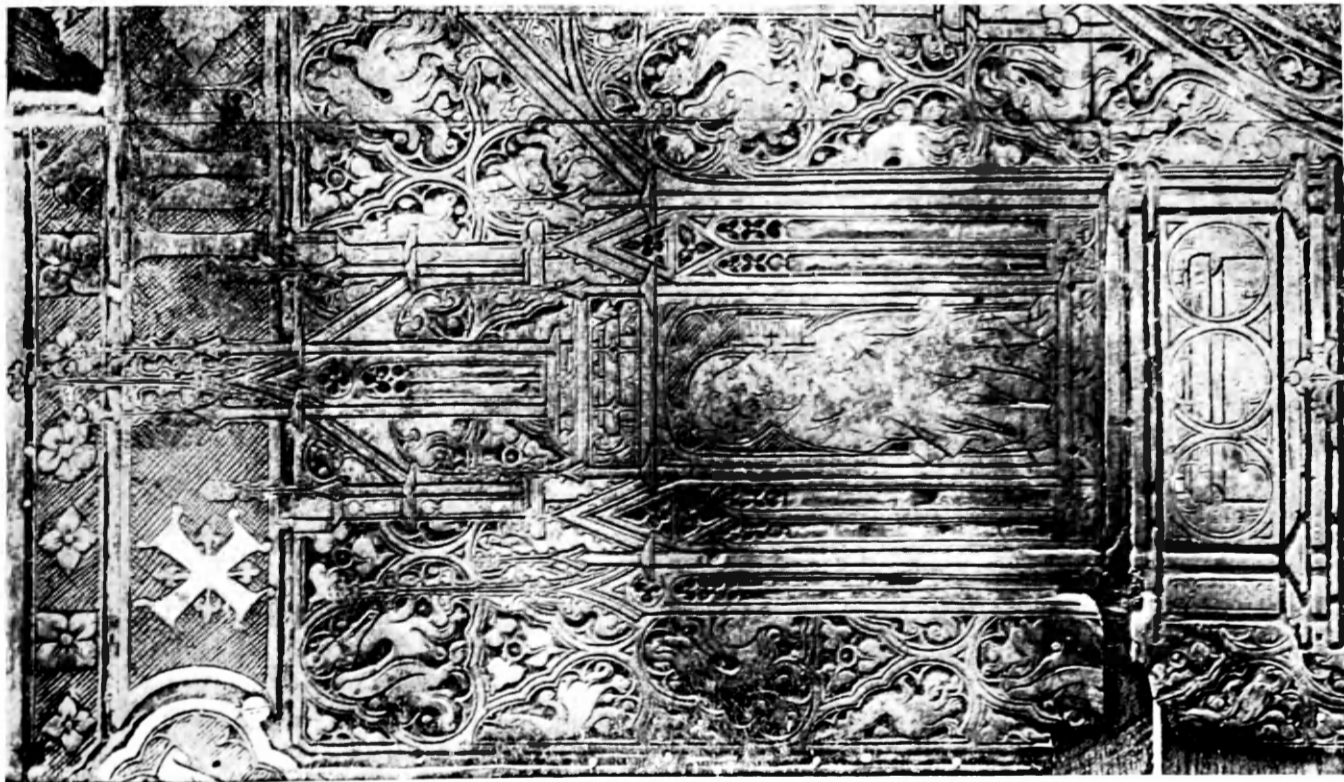
No. 2. David. St. Andrew with Saltire Cross.

PLATE VIII.

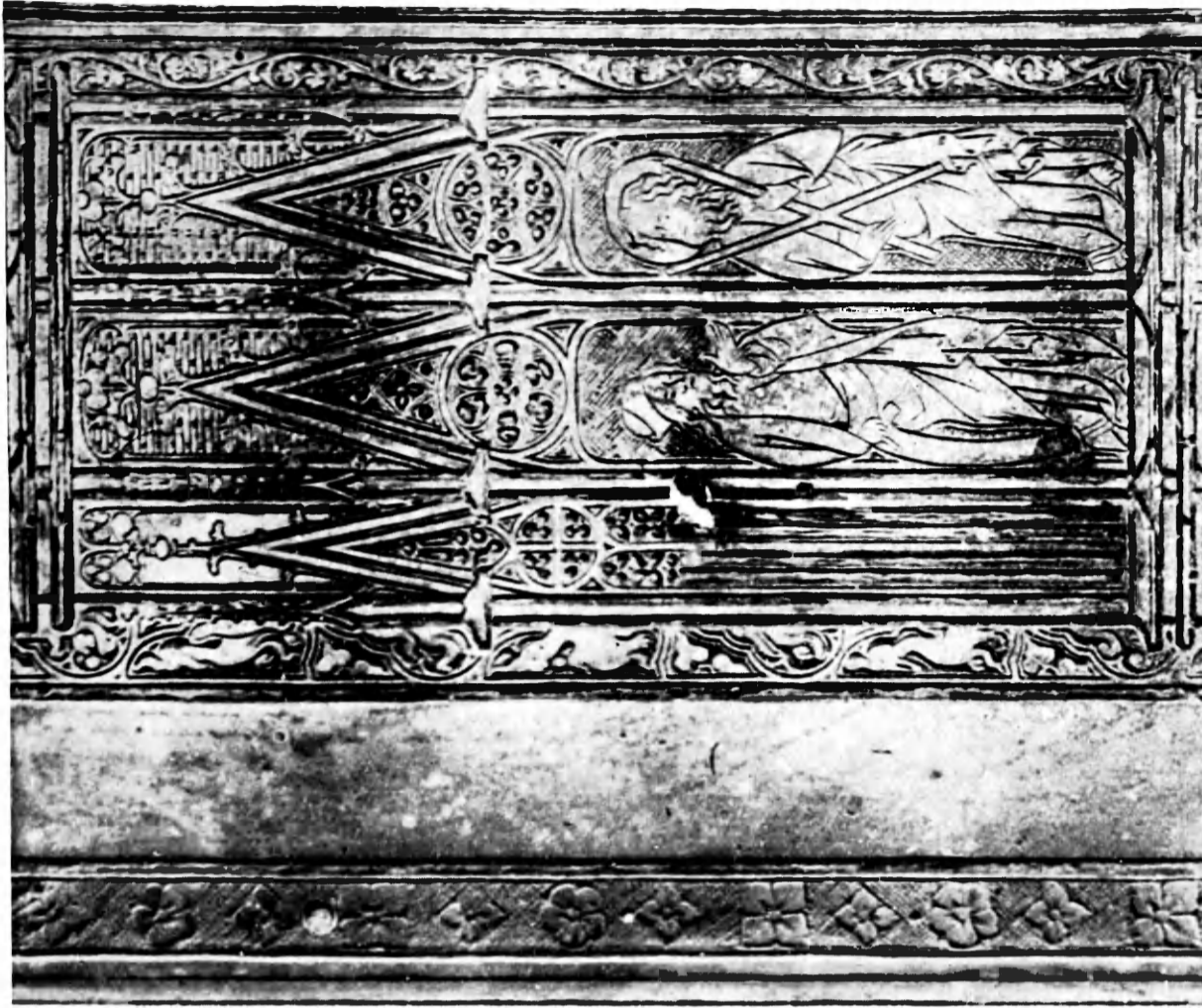
The bottom pair are Hosea and St. Thomas the Apostle with spear. In the corner quatrefoil is the lion of St. Mark.



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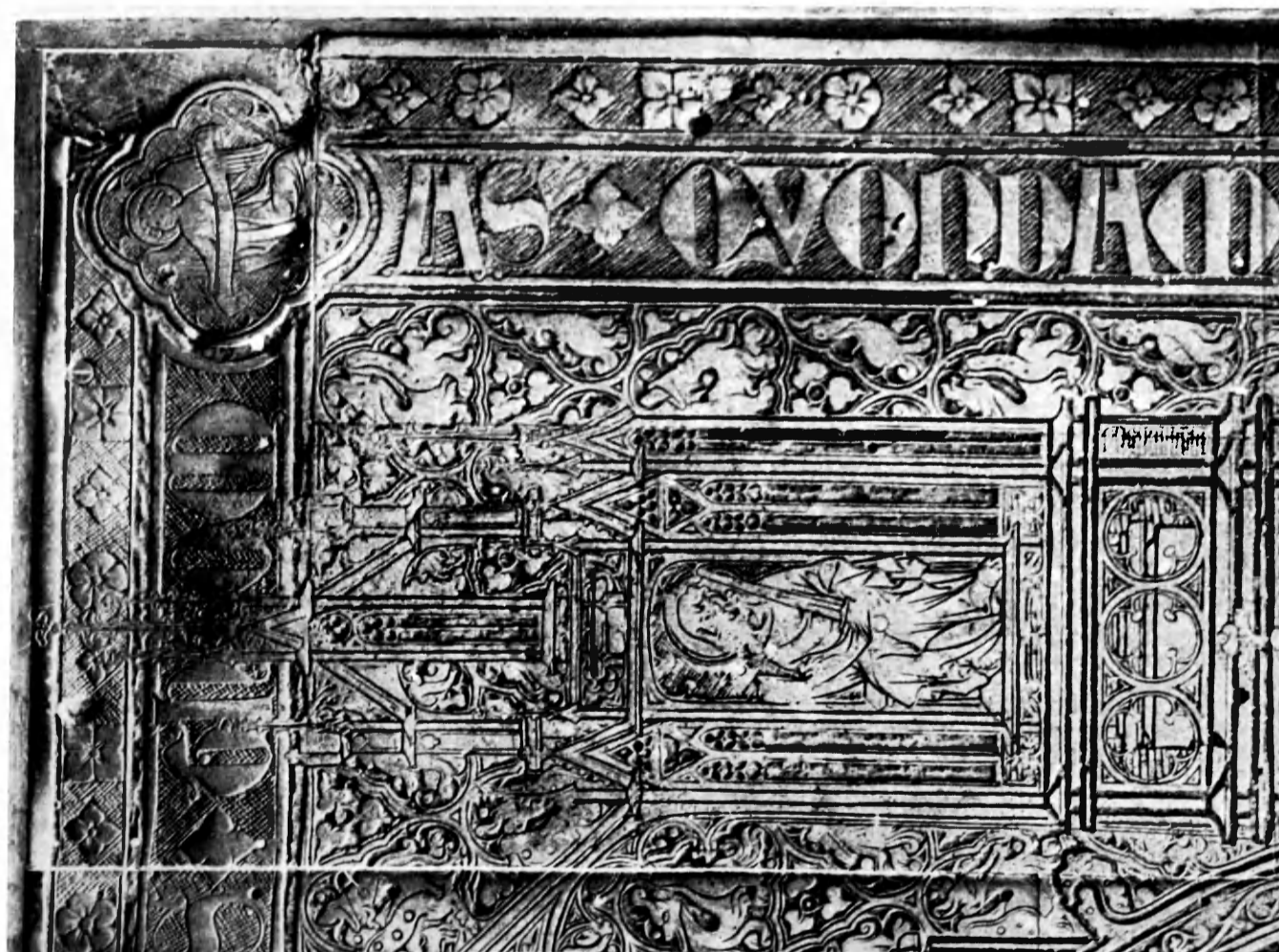
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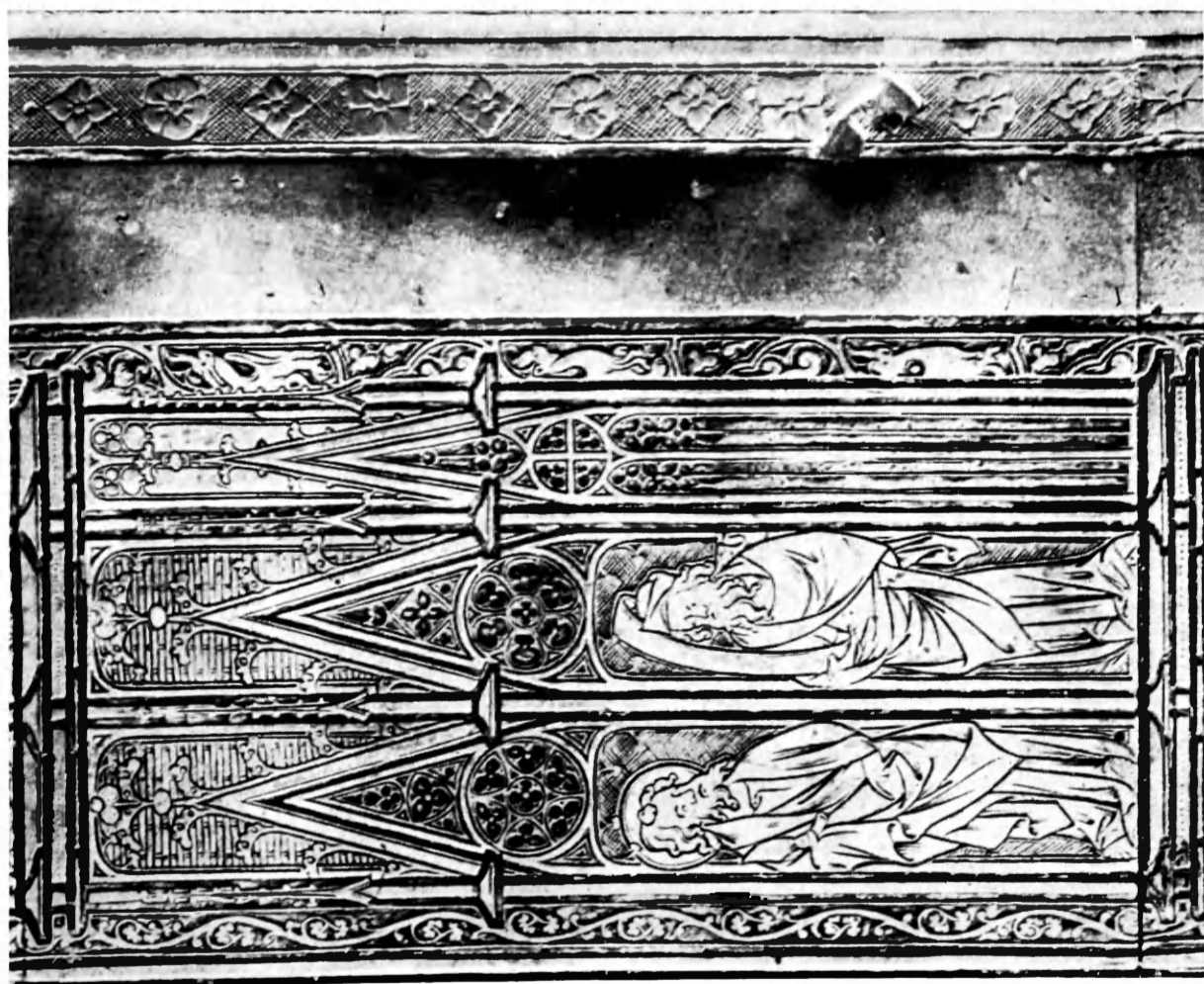
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PLATE IX.

No. 1. The right-hand top corner quatrefoil contains the Angel with scroll of the gospel for St. Matthew. The seated figure with sword is St. Paul.

No. 2 is most likely to be St. Oswyn, King of Northumbria, who gave the Cell, afterwards the Priory, of Tynemouth, to St. Albans.

PLATE X.

No. 1 has the Abbat's arms repeated.

St. James the Great. His emblem, a scallop shell, is indicated resting on the top of a cloth in his left hand.

The Prophet Isaiah.

No. 2. St. Bartholomew; the knife, with which he was flayed alive, in his right hand.

The Prophet Haggai.

PLATE XI.

St. Philip, the Apostle, carrying on his left hand a loaf of bread in reference to his part in the miracle of the loaves and fishes, because it was to him that Christ said, "Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat?"

In the quatrefoil is the emblem of St. Luke, in this case a winged ox with human head.

The decoration of the border should be noticed, especially that at the bottom of Plates V and VI, which is very fine. There, and indeed all over the Brass, the "tool marks" add enormously to the beauty of it

I am indebted to Mr. Edward Yates, of 147, Cannon Street, E.C.4, for the loan of his negative of the perfect rubbing of the Brass by the late Mr. T. F. Phillpot, of Barwell Cottage, 27, Lewin Road, Streatham, S.W.16.

From that negative I was able to make a negative for the reproduction of the Abbat's figure (Plate 1).

The details are from my direct photographs, printed by Mr. Emery Walker, F.S.A.

E. W.