

## The Fourteenth-Century Effigy of a Lady at Moorlynch

BY F. C. EELES

IN Moorlynch Church is a remarkable Bere-stone effigy of a lady, described by Dr. A. C. Fryer in the Society's *Proceedings* for 1919 (vol. lxxv, 45). This effigy has recently been carefully cleaned and placed in the chancel near what is believed to have been its original position (Plate XIV).<sup>1</sup> Until lately it was in the base of the tower, standing upright and clamped against the north wall, in a position where it was not well seen and in danger of injury, besides being thickly coated with lime-wash.

Who is represented by it can only be a matter of conjecture. The period is the last quarter of the fourteenth century. It is possible that it was the memorial of a member of the Pyke family which was connected with Moorlynch for over three hundred years.

The chancel of Moorlynch is a very striking and refined piece of early Perpendicular work and may have been built as early as 1380. There are two windows in the north and south walls with a doorway in the middle of the south side, and a shallow recess in which the organ stands in the middle of the north side. Here no doubt the effigy was originally placed and an old inhabitant of the parish, aged ninety-five years in 1934, remembers seeing it in this position; it was probably turned out when the organ was erected. The chancel is noteworthy, not only for its fine detail, but also for the fact that it exhibits no less than ten external consecration crosses of unusual elaboration, four on each side wall and two on the east wall, indicating consecration not long distant from the time of

<sup>1</sup> The photograph, Plate XIV, is reproduced here by permission of the Vicar, the Rev. J. R. Hearn.

building. The Sir Richard Pyke whose name stands at the head of the pedigree of his family given in Weaver's *Visitations of Somerset* (p. 64) is there stated to have been 'living 8 R. II'. This Sir Richard was clearly of Moorlynch at the time it may be supposed that the chancel was erected, and the effigy may have been placed there by him in memory of his wife. He was evidently the second of the two Sir Richards mentioned by Gerard in his description of the parish (*S.R.S.* xv, 127), and may be identified with the Richard Pyke junior who appears to have married Eleanor, daughter of Hugh de Beauchamp about the year 1333 (*S.R.S.* xii, 167). In the absence of other evidence it seems possible that the effigy is that of Eleanor de Beauchamp.

The writer's thanks are due to Mr. A. W. Vivian-Neal for the help he has given in this attempted identification.

There was a close association between the Pyke family and Moorlynch Church in the fifteenth century. Isabella Pyke in her will, proved 17 June 1411 (*S.R.S.* xvi, 44), bequeathed her body 'to be buried by leave of the curate of the same place in the church of Merlynch'. In 1499 Alice Montague left bequests to Sir William Pyke, chaplain, her son, and also a gold ring with a figure of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin to Moorlynch Church (*ib.* 384).

It may perhaps be noticed here that the arms of Pyke of Moorlynch in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries appear to have been *Per pale azure and sable over all three chevronels or* (not *three crescents* as given by Weaver). Later a different coat was used, *Sable three fire pikes or*, quarterly 1 and 4 with the earlier coat. (*Harl. MSS.* 1559; Seventeenth-century *MSS. of Arms*, Taunton Castle; *S.R.S.* xv, 127.)

In October 1934 Miss M. Janet Becker cleaned the effigy and it has now been placed on the floor of the chancel, on the north side of the altar (Plate XIV). Miss Becker has kindly supplied the following report:—

'I first saw this effigy on the 18 September 1934, up-ended behind the door of the tower screen. Though thickly coated with white-wash and dirt, traces of colour could be seen. The effigy was released from an iron cramp in the wall and laid flat on the tower floor for cleaning, 15 October.

' The figure is that of a lady, 5 ft. 6 in. tall, lying on a plinth of the same length, 1 ft. 10 in. wide and 2 in. thick. Her arms have been broken at the shoulders and are missing. She is clothed in a cloak, kirtle and cote-hardie. The head-dress, of the "nebule" type, is very elaborate, and consists of an under-cap with scalloped edge and an outer frill, ruched and pierced to represent lace or fine material.

' The head is supported by two oblong cushions, 10 in. by 9 in. and 17 in. by 9 in., the upper one set diagonally. Both have covers, fastened with round buttons or rosettes on all sides, and tassels at the corners.

' Cleaning brought out mere vestiges of colour, sufficient however to indicate the whole was originally painted as follows :

' Plinth—red—right-hand side near head, underneath behind head.

Head-dress, under-cap—traces of yellow.

Kirtle—vermilion—armpits, left hip, breasts, folds of dress at feet.

Mantle ?

Upper cushion—red, yellow tassels—left side under head.

Under-cushion—bright bluish green—left side under head ; right side near shoulder, near plinth behind head.

Face—pink—but this is not likely to be original, since the nose has been mended or remodelled with mortar, and the colouring goes over this.

' The inner folds of the mantle on the left side are modelled in ancient plaster. The head-dress is less highly sculptured on this side.

' The letters  $\begin{matrix} \text{F. C.} \\ \text{I. C.} \end{matrix}$  cut at the waist have been filled in with wax.'

M. JANET BECKER,

17 October 1934.



XIV CENTURY EFFIGY OF A LADY AT MOORLYNCH, SOM.