

THE EFFIGY OF ALEXANDER STEWART
EARL OF BUCHAN AND LORD OF BADENOCH
(?1343 - ?1405)

by A. V. NORMAN, B.A., F.S.A.SCOT.

THE effigy of Alexander Stewart has already been published in Volume xxix (1894-5) of these Proceedings in a general study of Scottish effigies by Robert Brydall, F.S.A.SCOT. Since that date the study of armour has advanced considerably and a reassessment of this figure in the light of more recent knowledge may be of value in estimating the dates of a number of other Scottish effigies of the fifteenth century, where heraldry or inscriptions fail us.

It lies on an altar tomb behind the screen of the communion table at the east end of the choir of Dunkeld cathedral, now the parish church, and is grey-green marble, said to be of the kind quarried in Glen Tilt in Atholl until the last century and used for fireplaces. The figure is 7 ft. long from the top of the bascinet to the heel of the left foot. (fig. 1 and Pl. XVIII)

The effigy today consists of four pieces, broken at the neck, waist, knees and ankles. The right foot is entirely missing and the left from the instep down. The left shoulder and elbow are also broken off and have been replaced by the shoulder and elbow of a much smaller sandstone effigy of which these are the only traces. The face has suffered considerably, probably at the same time that the effigy was broken, which is thought to have been in 1560 at the Reformation.¹

The inscription runs

'HIC JACET ALEXANDER SENESCALUS, FILIUS ROBERTI REGIS SCOTORUM ET ELIZABETH MORE, DOMINUS DE BUCHAN ET DNS DE *BADENACH QUI OBIIT VINGESIMO QUARTO DIE JULII.*'²

The words italicised are cut with a rather narrower line than those preceding them, and the stones on which they are cut are, or were, fixed to the main slab by iron staples. It is therefore possible that this part of the inscription is a restoration. The date of death is wrong as the Wolf probably died between the end of 1404 and the beginning of 1405.

An attempt has been made to attribute this effigy to other Alexander Stewarts on the strength of the restoration of the inscription. However, the unquestioned evidence of the description of parentage seems to leave the Wolf in possession.

The head rests on two pillows placed one on top of the other; the lower is parallel to the edges of the tomb, the upper lying diagonally to them. The body, which lies

¹ *New Stat. Acc.*, Perthshire, 976.

² This reading is from Rogers, C., *Monuments and Monumental Inscriptions of Scotland* (London, 1872), II, 159. He read BADENOCH, but this, on inspection, proved to be BADENACH.

on a cloak, is quite straight, as are the legs. The hands are in the position of prayer on the breast, but most unusually the left hand is placed palm downwards on the right hand which is palm upwards.

The effigy lies on a large chest tomb which is surrounded by twenty-two weepers all in armour, eight at each side and three at each end. They stand each under a three-arch canopy and are divided one from another by small buttresses.

The head is in a great bascinet of hazel-nut shape, with pointed skull and a slight keel down the front. On either side are hinges for a removable visor. A large bevor is riveted to the skull by three rivets on each side. There is a gorget consisting of a back and front plate riveted together by one rivet at each side. These rivets probably also attach the two plates to the skull, thus forming a single defence. The gorget plates curve down over the breast and back. Beneath it is an aventail or a mail fringe. The edge of the skull plate at the brow is decorated by a row of trefoils presumably representing a latten edge. In fact, only two remain on the right side, the rest are entirely worn away.

The shape of this bascinet is transitional between the fourteenth-century 'International' type with an aventail and the fifteenth-century great bascinet; that is the skull is high and pointed and is not drawn in towards the neck but quite vertical, and the bevor and gorget plates follow the outline of the aventail and are not of smaller diameter than the skull. Bascinet of this type occur on English brasses as early as 1400, on the brass of William Lord d'Eresby at Spilsby (Lincs.)¹ and continue until 1418 on the brass of Sir Thomas de St Quinton at Harpham (Yorks.).² An actual example exists in the Musée de l'Armée at Paris (No. H. 24³). It has a typical pointed visor which, when closed, falls within the upper edge of the gorget, thus preventing a weapon point from catching under the visor edge and throwing it up.

The decoration of the brow of the helmet with cusps and trefoils is paralleled on the brass of Lord Camoys at Trotton (Sussex) *c.* 1419,⁴ but the fashion can be traced back to the effigy of Lord Montacute in Salisbury Cathedral, *d.* 1388.⁵

It is uncertain whether the mail which appears beneath the edge of the gorget plates on effigies of this period is in fact an aventail fixed to the skull plate or a mere fringe attached to the gorget plates. Mail seems always to have been worn under the great bascinet in Scotland; it appears on the shoulders of effigies at Cupar and Ceres, both of which wear the second type of great bascinet with a low pointed skull and a gorget which follows the contours of head and neck much more closely. It also appears in the bascinets which are shown on a group of Scottish effigies of the middle of the century under the head of the deceased, for instance that of Sir Alexander Irvine of Drum, St Nicholas Church, Aberdeen. In this case the fringe

¹ Illustrated in *The Catalogue of Rubbings of Brasses and Incised Slabs in the Victoria and Albert Museum* (London, 1929), Pl. 11, fig. 1.

² Illustrated in Bouquet, A. C., *Church Brasses* (London, 1956), fig. 21.

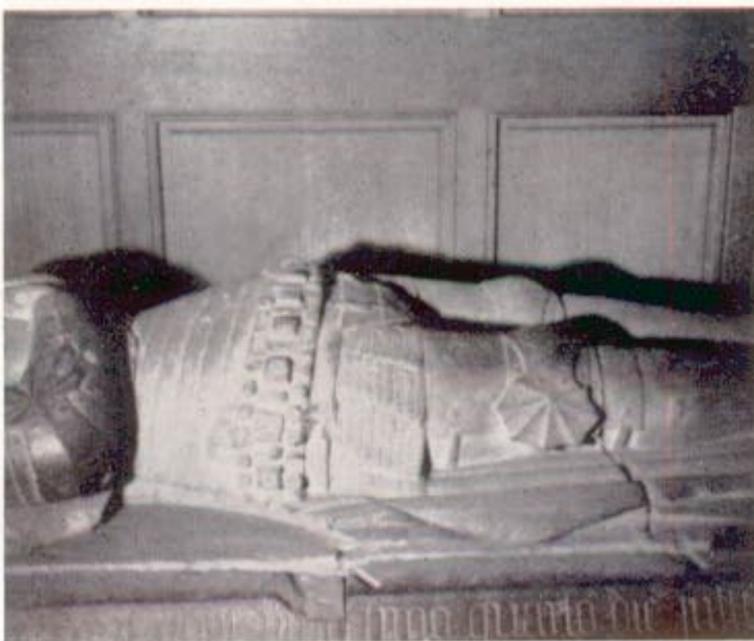
³ Illustrated Laking, Sir Guy, *A Record of European Armour and Arms* (London, 1920), 1, fig. 292, and also Robert, L., *Catalogue composant le Musée d'Artillerie* (Paris, 1889-93), Pl. 26.

⁴ Illustrated in *The Catalogue of Rubbings of Brasses and Incised Slabs in the Victoria and Albert Museum*, Pl. 15, fig. 3.

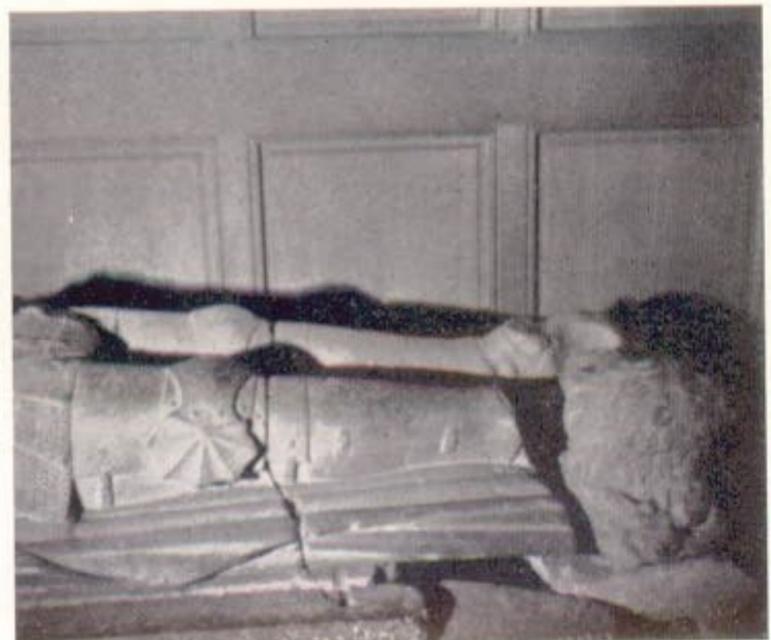
⁵ Illustrated Stothard, C. A., *The Monumental Effigies of Great Britain* (London, 1817), Pl. 94.



(a)



(b)



(c)

Alexander Stewart, Wolf of Badenoch

is of aventail proportions and fixed far up inside the neck. These bascinets are of the type on the armour of Frederick the Victorious at Vienna.¹

The left shoulder of the Wolf effigy is broken off, but the defence of the right shoulder is of advanced form. The part visible under the mail consists of six upward-overlapping cylindrical lames. The top one covers the point of the shoulder and defends the top of the 'défaut' of the breastplate by a small rectangular projection at right angles to the rest of the plate. Below this lame, which is the widest, are four narrow lames which encircle the outer three-quarters of the arm, and are riveted to each other at the front and back. The top two of these lames and part of the third pass under the rectangular projection of the top lame. The lowest lame of all, which is slightly wider than the four above it, is hinged to a narrow lame which encircles the inside of the arm. The lowest lame is rather wider at its extremities than at its centre. The shoulder defence is not boxed down the centre of the plates. (See Pl. XVIII, *a*).

The shoulder defence or pauldron, was in a very experimental stage at the beginning of the fifteenth century, as can be seen by an examination of English effigies and brasses of that period. On brasses up to that of Sir Nicholas Hawberk, 1407, at Cobham (Kent),² the shoulder is usually defended only by four small lames covering just the point of the shoulder. (See fig. 2, *b*.) A small round or oval besaque is added to this over the 'défaut' *c.* 1410, on the brass of Robert de Fréville at Little Shelford (Cambs.).³ By 1416 on the brass of Sir Symon Felbrygge, K.G., at Felbrigg (Norfolk)⁴ the number of lames has been increased to nine and they extend almost half-way down the upper arm. These lames appear to overlap downwards, that is in the manner of tiles on a roof, the besaque is now pavise shaped and has a St George's Cross on it. (See fig. 2, *c*.) In the same year the brass of Mathew Swetenham at Blakesley (Northants)⁵ shows a pauldron very like that on the Wolf effigy. There is a large upper lame, five narrow lames and a wider lowest lame strapped round the inside of the arm. The 'défaut' is covered by a besaque, circular in shape. (See fig. 2, *d*.) The 'Bear' shoulder defences in the armoury at Churburg, believed to date from *c.* 1420-30, are closely related both to those on the Swetenham brass and to that of the Wolf effigy. They consist of eight lames. The fourth from the top is the largest and covers the point of the shoulder; it is extended over the 'défaut' by a small besaque made in one with the lame. This plate overlaps the lames above and below it and all the other lames overlap away from it, hence those below are tile-wise, those above are counter-tile-wise. The wider lowest lame is strapped round the upper cannon of the vambrace.⁶ (See fig. 2, *e*.)

There is an effigy (illustrated by Heffner-Alteneck in his 'Waffen', Pl. 40, No. 2) the pauldrons of which appear to be rather similar to the visible portion of the Wolf's pauldron. The particular interest of this effigy is that the helmet is not shown and the top of the shoulder is therefore visible: the top lame of the pauldron, which has

¹ Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, illustrated Laking, *op. cit.*, I, fig. 212b, and Thomas, B., *Harnische* (Vienna, 1947), Pl. 10 and 11.

² Illustrated in *The Catalogue of Rubbings of Brasses and Incised Slabs in the Victoria and Albert Museum*, Pl. 14, fig. 3.

³ *ibid.*, Pl. 12, fig. 2.

⁴ *ibid.*, Pl. 17, fig. 2.

⁵ *ibid.*, Pl. 17, fig. 1.

⁶ No. 18 in the *Catalogue of the Armoury of Churburg*, by Count Trapp and J. Mann (London, 1929).

the rectangular extension over the 'défaut', is seen to enclose the entire point of the shoulder. This figure is in the Cathedral at Mainz and probably dates from *c.* 1430. (See fig. 2, *g.*)

To return to the Wolf effigy, it has a short upper cannon plate covering the outside of the arm only, over a mail sleeve. To this plate the narrow boxed couter is articulated by two narrow lames. The couter is held on by a broad strap round the inside of the elbow and is articulated by two narrow lames to the lower cannon. The wing of the couter is bilobate and is fluted. There are eight raised flutes radiating from the point where wing and couter coalesce. Wherever a flute reaches the edge of the plate the metal is drawn out to a point, thus giving the wing plate a cusped edge. The couter is secured to the lames above and below it by rivets. Fluted couter wings appear on English brasses *c.* 1410, as on the brass of an unknown knight in South Kelsey Church (Lincs.),¹ but they are invariably single lobed and shaped like a scallop shell. (See fig. 2, *f.*) These examples have engrailed edges while those of Sir Symon Felbrygge, K.G., *c.* 1416, at Felbrigg (Norfolk) have invected edges. (See fig. 2, *h.*) Fluted wings with engrailed edges appear on the brass of Lord Camoys *c.* 1419 but here again they are shell shaped. The flutings on English examples are usually very close. An example more in keeping with the type of fluting on the Wolf's armour is to be found on the model for the tomb of Ludwig VII of Bavaria-Ingolstadt *c.* 1435 now in the Bavarian National Museum.² Here the fluting is wide, the cusping deep and the central hollow is wider, giving a slightly bilobate appearance.

The lower cannon of the Wolf's vambrace is in two parts hinged round the arm. The hinges are applied to the outside of the metal. On the inside plate just below the upper edge there is a stop rib of rectangular cross section. The outer plate has no stop-rib. The rivets from the lower lames of the elbow cap would doubtless have worked in slots parallel to the ends of the lower cannon plates giving a certain amount of rotary motion to the forearm. This system can be seen in the arm pieces from Chalcis now in the Metropolitan Museum, New York.³ The double external hinge is quite common, it occurs on several of the Chalcis arm pieces,⁴ but as an alternative the hinge was often inside as a precaution against it being damaged (as on the Metropolitan Museum arm piece No. 29.150.22 and the Churburg armour, No. 13 in the Trapp and Mann catalogue).

The single stop-rib inside the arm is unusual. They are usually found in pairs, one on each plate, or outside only and with the edge of the inner plate turned outward at the top to form a built-in stop-rib in front of the elbow joint (as on the Metropolitan Museum armpiece No. 29.150.29). There are no gauntlets on this effigy.

The breast plate has the rather baggy profile typical of one type of German breast plate of the early years of the century, the type shown on the effigy of Graf

¹ Illustrated Laking, *op. cit.*, II, fig. 564.

² Illustrated Kelly, F. M., 'Early Crested Armours', *Apollo*, XII (London, 1930), 212-16, fig. VI.

³ Illustrated by Kienbusch and Grancsay, *Catalogue of the Bashford Dean Collection* (Portland, Maine, 1933), Nos. 76-81.

⁴ *ibid.*, Nos. 77 and 78. General Museum Catalogue Nos. 29.150.33, and 29.150.19.

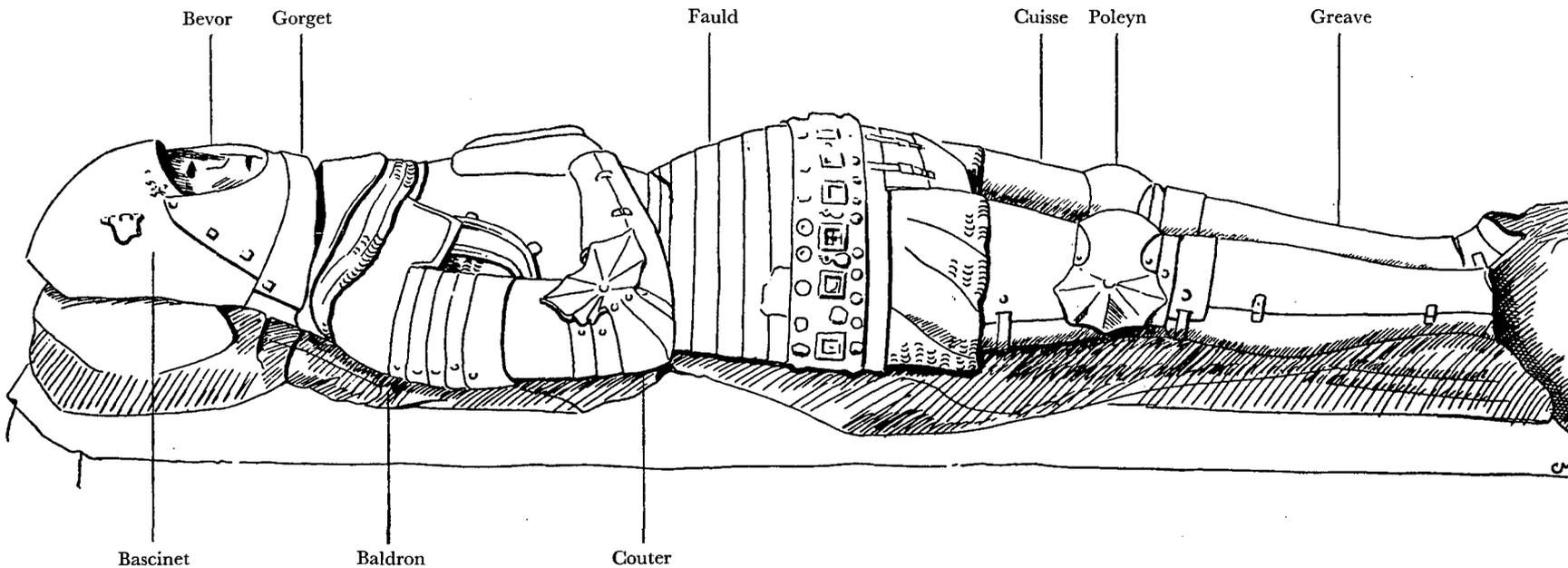


FIG. 1

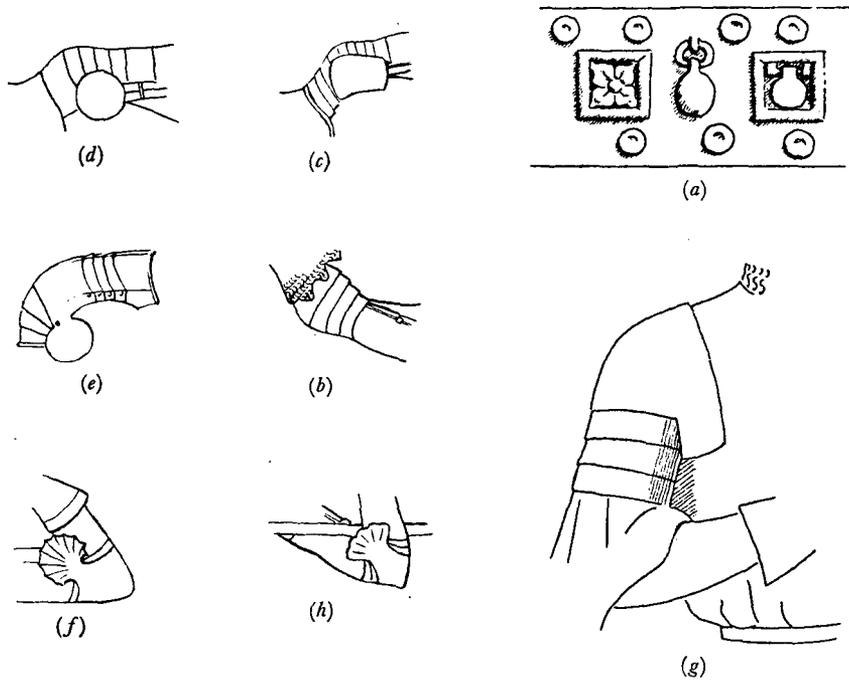


FIG. 2

Moritz von Oldenburg, 1420, in the church at Rastede.¹ The Wolf's breast plate has a strongly boxed turn-over at the neck parallel to the lower edge of the aventail. There is also a strong turn-over at the armhole. Next to the armhole and diverging slightly from it is a curved rib of rectangular cross section apparently riveted to the breast plate by two studs on the side away from the armhole. This is probably an applied stop-rib such as is found below the neck of many fifteenth-century Italian armours, as on the Bear suit at Churburg and on the two late fourteenth-century breast plates there (Nos. 13 and 14). Of course the turn-over at the neck of the Wolf may have been an applied stop-rib also. There is a breast plate in the Metropolitan Museum in New York with applied stop-ribs at the armholes but they differ from the Wolf suit by being at the very edge of the plate. This breast plate is German, c. 1450, much later than the estimated date of the Wolf armour.² However one of the half breast plates of a coat of plates from the armoury of Chalcis which is believed to date from the early years of the fifteenth century has a stop-rib, not unlike that of the Wolf, riveted to the edge of the right armhole.³ The position of the rivet holes at the armholes of the well-known breast plate in the Rathaus at Vienna (No. 278) c. 1440 suggests that it had stop-ribs applied in this position as well as the existing one at the neck.

The skirt or fauld probably consists of ten lames overlapping counter-tile-wise. Eight are visible and the hip belt is estimated to cover two more. There is no joint in the fauld lames and no buckles or hinges on either side. This may be due to carelessness or ignorance on the part of the carver, although he has rendered all the other details correctly. It may, however, be worth while recalling the wooden figure of William VI van Beieran Graaf van Holland, carved c. 1475 and now in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. In this figure both the backplate and fauld open down the centre back. Now, while there must be some degree of antiquarianism in the figure since it was carved nearly half a century after the death of William VI; most of the features can be paralleled in the paintings of Stephan Lochner and others of the North German school; furthermore, there is literary evidence of backplates opening at the back. In Lydgate's *Book of Troy*, III, lines 60-63 we find:

And some chose of the new entaille,
For to be sure myd all her foos
An hol brest-plate with a rere-dooz
Behynde schet or ellis on the side.⁴

The MS. *Flos Duellatorum* by Maestro Fiore dei Liberi da Premariacco, at Bergamo, shows faulds and backplates buckled at the back (pages 25b and 26a). Unfortunately, the details on these illustrations are rather sketchily drawn, and one cannot be

¹ A cast of this effigy in the Germanisches Museum, Nürnberg, is illustrated by Sir James Mann in his 'Notes on the Evolution of Plate Armour in Germany in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries', *Archaeologia*, LXXXIV (1935), Pl. XVII, fig. 2.

² Museum No. 29.150.79. Illustrated in *The Catalogue of the Bashford Dean Collection*, No. 55. It is there said to be Italian c. 1470, but see Robinson, H. R., 'Some examples of Mid-15th Century German Armour', *Journal of the Arms and Armour Society*, II, No. 6 (London, 1957), 136.

³ Illustrated by Foulkes, C., 'On Italian Armour from Chalcis in the Ethnological Museum at Athens', *Archaeologia*, LXII (1911), Pl. LIV, No. 3.

⁴ Quoted by F. H. Cripps-Day in *Fragmenta Armamentaria*, v, 128.

certain that the lames of the fauld completely encircle the hips. They appear in fact not to meet at the back, and the implication is that they may have been attached to some sort of foundation garment, and that it is this that is buckled together. Viollet-le-Duc¹ illustrates a figure taken from the manuscript *Les Merveilles du Monde* c. 1404-17, on which the body armour is buckled up the back. In this case, the backplate is made up of lames like the fauld, and all the lames meet down the line of the spine.

At the centre of the lowest lame of the fauld is buckled a fork defence of flattened shield shape, consisting of two horizontal lames overlapping counter-tile-wise. The lames are hinged together by means of two applied hinges and are hung from the fauld by two buckles on the upper lame and straps on the fauld. This defence appears on English brasses c. 1411, on the brass of Sir John Drayton at Dorchester (Oxon.),² but his lames are both rectangular with rounded corners and without any sign of buckles or hinges. The brass of Sir John de Brewys at Wiston (Sussex), 1426, has a single lame fork defence.³

The hip belt is placed one lame from the bottom of the fauld. (See fig. 2, g.) Since there are no signs of any joints, it is probably of leather. The edges are lined with large round studs with a small circular depression on the head of each. The square bosses are comparatively small, little more than one-third the width of the belt; they are decorated alternately with conventionalised flowers and small circular medallions hung on hinges. These medallions are of the type that are usually described as harness decorations. They would probably once have been painted or enamelled with heraldic devices. Between each boss is hung, from a ring and staple, a small oval object which may have been a bell. Bells were common articles of dress in the fifteenth century; they appear for instance on the effigy of Graf Moritz von Oldenburg, d. 1420, hung on long chains from the waist belt.

The hip belt was worn in Scotland up to the end of the century as is shown by the effigy of Sir Kenneth Mackenzie, 7th Baron of Kintail, d. 1492, at Beaulieu Priory. A number of Scottish hip belts on effigies are hinged on the left side, suggesting that they were permanently attached to the armour and opened with the fauld, as for instance on the effigy of a Seton in Seton Collegiate Church.

Below the Wolf's fauld appears the edge of his skirt of mail; eight rows of rings are visible and it is realistically draped to fit in with the recumbent position.

The leg armour is lightly boxed down the centre front. The cuisses or thigh defences consist of one semi-cylindrical plate; there are no side plates nor any sign of a stop-rib at the top. The latter appear as early as 1371 on the effigy of Sir John Swynford at Spratton (Northants).⁴ The cuisses are strapped round the leg by a single strap at mid-thigh, buckling inside. On the outside of the leg the strap is riveted to the inside of the cuisse and passes out through a rectangular slot in the metal close

¹ *Dictionnaire Raisoné du Mobilier Français* (Paris, 1874), v, 130.

² Illustrated Druitt, H., *Costume on Brasses* (London, 1906), 190.

³ Illustrated in *The Catalogue of Rubbings of Brasses and Incised Slabs in the Victoria and Albert Museum*, Pl. 18, fig. 2.

⁴ Illustrated Gardener, A., *Alabaster Tombs of the pre-Reformation Period in England* (Cambridge, 1940), Pl. 143.

to the edge of the plate. This method of strap attachment is also that used on the leg pieces of the boy's armour at Chartres which Mr F. H. Cripps-Day dated as not later than 1382.¹

The cuisses are articulated to the poleyns or knee-cops by one narrow lame. The knee-cop is convex in profile and cusped above and below on the medial line. The wing is one-lobed and fluted like the couter wing with seven flutes.

The poleyn is strapped round the leg, and below it are two narrow lames and one longer one also strapped round the leg. On this lowest lame the strap is riveted on in the same manner as on the cuisse. This plate overlaps the greave at the front, but does not seem to be attached to it in any way, nor does the strap encircle the top of the back plate of the greave as happens on the effigy of Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, in the Lady Chapel of St Mary's Warwick, c. 1454.² Effigies of the Ralph Neville group (most of which seem to have been made c. 1410) have the large lame below the poleyn attached to the top of the greave by a slot and turning pin located at the outer bottom corner of the lame. The greaves are of fine robust proportions and are hinged on the outside by two applied hinges and buckled inside at two points. They fit well down over the ankle, though not as far down as later fifteenth-century greaves.

Two lames of the sabaton are visible on the left foot, the remainder and the whole of the right foot are broken away. The left spur is attached to the top lame of the sabaton by two short straps riveted to the metal.

The sword hangs from the waist belt on the left side; it is extremely battered and broken. It was very broad-bladed and there are remains of cruciform quillons or guards, a semicircular water guard over the mouth of the scabbard and an ornamental strap. The dagger is entirely broken away and so is the left arm except for the hand.

Considering the dates of the comparative material the date of the Wolf effigy appears to be between 1410 and 1430; this view gains strength from the evidence of the weepers, all of which are in armour generally corresponding with that of the main figure, they are, however, extremely battered. Two of the weepers wear jelly-bag hats flopping to one side, also worn by a weeper at Elford, c. 1408, and fashionable up to c. 1415.³

MacGibbon and Ross in their *Ecclesiastical Architecture of Scotland* depict two panels from an altar tomb which must have been very similar to that of the Wolf. They were at that time in the tool shed of the church at Coupar Angus but are now fixed on the wall in the south-west vestibule of the Parish Church. They show six weepers: two are in armour very similar to that of the Wolf, one is in armour over which he wears a type of sur-coat having a full pleated skirt and over this a wide hip belt, the other three are all civilians. One of these however wears a three-quarter length houppelande with the belt placed low over the hips causing the garment to bulge above it in rather an unsightly manner.⁴ The combination of these two

¹ See *Fragmenta Armamentaria* (Frome, 1941), v, 95.

² Illustrated Stothard, C. A., op. cit., Pl. 123 and 124.

³ Kelly, F. M., and Schwabe, R., *A Short History of Costume and Armour* (London, 1931), I, 32.

⁴ Illustrated in *The Ecclesiastical Architecture of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1896-7), figs. 1450 and 1451.

garments reappears on an altarpiece at Wismar in the church of St Jurgen, of about 1420.

When considering the date of erection of the tomb it is probably significant that the arms of the Wolf's son, Alexander, Earl of Mar, occur in the cathedral on a small shield at the top of the arch above the tomb of Bishop Cardeny in the south aisle of the nave. This tomb is, or was, dated 1420.

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GLOSSARY OF ARMOUR TERMS

- AVENTAIL** The tippet of mail worn hanging from the lower edge of the bascinet to protect the neck.
- BEVOR** The defence for the lower part of the face.
- COUTER** The defence for the elbow.
- CUISSE** The defence for the thigh.
- DÉFAUT** The gap in the plate defences at the armhole of the breast plate, necessary to allow the movements of the arms.
- FAULD** Skirt of overlapping lames.
- GREAT BASCINET** The later form of the bascinet in which the neck is protected by plates rather than by the mail aventail.
- MAIL** Flexible armour made of interlocked rings.
- PAULDRON** The defence of the shoulder.
- POLEYN** The defence of the knee.
- QUILLONS** The cross guard of the sword.
- SABATON** The defence for the foot.
- STOP-RIB** A rib riveted onto a plate to prevent the point of a weapon glancing over the edge and entering the body of the wearer.
- VAMBRACE** The complex of plates defending the arm excluding the shoulder.