

Reinhard Lamp

The Two Lyndewode–Brasses, Linwood, Lincolnshire

The small church of St.Cornelius (a rare patrocinium), of golden sandstone, stands solitary in its churchyard, its slender spire just reaching out above a clump of trees and bushes. Only a small, easily-overlooked path leads towards it. It is quite a way outside the village of Linwood, at the foot of the Lincolnshire Wolds. The site and position prompt the suggestion that there may have been a manor not far off. St.Cornelius possesses three funeral monuments, hard against the west-wall, the oldest an incised slab with a marginal inscription in uncial capitals, much worn and hardly or not legible, and above all two great brasses, commemorating one the father, the other the son, both named John Lyndewode, wealthy Lincolnshire wool-merchants both.

1) John Lyndewode the Elder (d. 29.1.1419) and wife Alice Linwood, St.Cornelius, Lincolnshire

BIOGRAPHICAL¹

The elder John Lyndewode was a rich wool-merchant. His and his wife's brass is quite near their son's. It has a shield with a canting coat of arms, displaying lime-tree leaves – a pun on his name. As he was armigerous, and bears the name of the village, one might conjecture him to have been an esquire, and thus lord of Linwood, and to have occupied a manor, but there is nothing to confirm this.² The historian Graham Platts enumerates his many bequests for the needy and asks himself: "was he a generous benefactor or a man with a conscience who recognized that his wealth had been gained at the expense of many neighbouring smallholders?" The author sees the rich wool-merchant's "conscience" (he of course means "bad conscience") about having ripped off the poor as the reason why he should have given away so much of his fortune to charity-funds.³ That, however, is a serious

¹ The documentation on John Lyndewode has kindly been provided by Archivist Dr. Mike Rogers, of the Lincolnshire Archives. He had his information from Graham Platts, *Land and People in Medieval Lincolnshire: History of Lincolnshire Vol. IV*, Lincoln, 1985, p. 181.

² Dr. Rogers informs me that there had been a manor in the middle of Linwood village, and that the family, being very rich, may be expected to "have lived in a substantial house", but that he can find no proof of such a connection. Or did it not rather lie east of the church, according to N. Pevsner and J. Harris, loc. cit.? That seems to me more likely, considering the position of the church, which most likely was built near the manor. Neither can he "locate a pedigree or coat of arms which definitely relates to this family", which is unfortunate.

³ Graham Platts makes him out "one of those who found great prosperity in wool production. His estates lay on the western edge of the Wolds near Market Rasen, land which he held of

misinterpretation of the medieval mind. Charity was necessary for the functioning of society, since only church-foundations and sponsorship provided help for the needy and thus kept society from breaking apart, the state not yet having any social obligations. Also, charity was seen as a key to salvation, so held an enormous importance in the minds of the Christian people, not only at the moment of their deaths, but all along. Platt's stance is a gross misrepresentation of this essential aspect of medieval European culture.



(ILLUSTRATION of the entire brass, author's rubbing)

Sir Thomas Beaumont. At the time of his death in 1419 he left cash and possessions valued well in excess of £ 500.

We are, however, warned by Dr. Rogers that the author may have confounded the two John Lyndewodes, because all he says was taken from the will of John Lyndewode the Younger, which was proved at the Prerogative Court of Canterbury on December 2nd, 1421. In it he asks to be buried alongside his father's grave in Linwood church.

Such doubts seem reasonable, since no mention is made in Platt's text of the older John having commissioned the erection of the tower of Linwood church – surely a feat that would have been worth recording. (The graceful recessed spire is possibly of later date.) – cf. N. Pevsner and J. Harris, *The Buildings of England – Lincolnshire*, 2^o, 1989, p. 528.

DESCRIPTION of the BRASS

The brass to the elder John Lyndewode and his wife Alice lies on the floor, hard against the west wall of the north aisle. The two figures stand under a double ogee canopy, the pediment filled with delicate tracery, within an entablature decorated with a quatrefoil frieze, and topped with a brattishing of cloverlike trefoils. They are seen praying, John on a woosack, bareheaded, Alice wearing a widow's wimple and kerchief. Beside the left-hand finial there is one shield: "(T?) a chevron (T?) between three lime-tree leaves (T?)." Below the figures, within an embattled base-gallery, stand seven small figures in arcaded niches, much worn, but recognizably four male, the centre one wearing a canon's gown, and three female. Parts of the buttress-shafts and three of the originally four shields are missing. The faces of the principal figures are less clear than the rest, too, but nothing comparable to the almost complete disappearance of the heads of the children's gallery. One wonders what may have caused the abrasion at this spot only, the rest being in a much better state. Apart from that, the brass is in good condition. The same, unhappily, cannot be said of the slab itself, which is in a pitiable state. Humidity has seriously deteriorated the fabric of the stone, which is spontaneously crumbling and flaking off, making the brass stand proud of its foundation and opening a disturbing interstice with the neighbouring slab. In the base runs a prayer-text. Underneath all is a foot-inscription. The overall measurements are 2230 mm in height, width 1049 mm.

APPRECIATION of the SCRIPT



(ILLUSTRATION: Sample of text, with the line-end fillers: garlands of vine-leaves and roses. Author's rubbing and photo.)

The inscription is arranged in two blocks abreast, each of five lines of Latin verse. There are some abbreviations, some logograms. The lettering is in raised Gothic minuscule, only line-beginnings having capitals, the words

B)
FOOT-INSCRIPTION
TRANSLITERATION of the (based on author's own rubbing)

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>	ligatures	
^	flourish	abbreviation-mark
[/]		interstice deleted

1 Qui contemplaris lapidem modicu rogo siste
 2 Et precibus caris dic salvi sint tibi Xre
 3 Spiritus in requie lyndewode sine labe Johanis
 4 Eius et alicie consortis pluribus annis
 5 Anno milleno C quater nono quoqz deno

 6 Mense viruni Jani mors luce tulit Juliani
 7 X quater atqz tribus annis hij corde Jocundi
 8 Coniuxere quibus nati fuerant oriundi
 9 Septem qui pedibus tot gaudent puluer[^] fundi
 10 Vermibus ecce cibus sic transit gloria unudi

TRANSCRIPTION

1 Qui contemplaris lapidem modicu(m) rogo siste
 2 Et precibus caris dic salvi sint tibi (Christe)
 3 Spiritus in requie Lyndewode sine labe Johan(n)is
 4 Eius et Alici[æ] consortis pluribus annis
 5 Anno milleno C quater nono quoq(ue) deno
 6 Mense viru[m] Jani mors luce tulit Juliani
 7 X quater atq(ue) tribus annis hi[] corde jocundi
 8 Convixere quibus nati fuerant oriundi
 9 Septem qui pedibus tot gaudent pulver(e) fundi
 10 Vermibus ecce cibus sic transit gloria mundi

CLEAR TEXT

(arranged according to versification, and with appropriate punctuation added)

1 Qui contemplaris lapidem modicum – rogo – siste,
 2 Et precibus caris dic: salvi sint tibi, Christe,
 3 Spiritus in requie Lyndewode sine labe Johannis
 4 Eius et Aliciæ, consortis pluribus annis.
 5 Anno milleno C quater nono quoque deno
 6 Mense virum jani mors luce tulit Juliani.
 7 X quater atque tribus annis hi corde jocundi,
 8 Convixere; quibus nati fuerant oriundi
 9 Septem. Qui pedibus tot gaudent pulvere fundi,
 10 Vermibus ecce cibus ... Sic transit gloria mundi.

TRANSLATION

1 I beg you, who are contemplating this unostentatious stone, pause awhile,
 2 And say with loving prayers that safe be with Thee, Christ,
 3 In their rest, and unharrowed, the souls of John Lyndewode, a man
 without a blemish,
 4 And of Alice, the sharer of his destiny, his wife of many years' standing.

- 5 In the year one thousand four-hundred nine and ten (1419),
 6 In the month of January – on Saint Julian’s day – death carried the man
 out of the light.
- 7 For forty-three years did these two, in the kindness of their hearts,
 8 Live together, and unto them had been born offspring
 9 Seven. To those so many, who, at your feet, in the dust of the ground,
 enjoy themselves,
 10 To the worms – there! – they are now a meal. Thus goes the glory
 of the world.

COMMENTS

1 *modicum*: The word serves two functions, meaning “a little” in medieval Latin, thus being adverb for *siste*; but secondly, and at the same time – in the classical acceptance of the word – being an adjective for *lapidem*, thus meaning “adequate, not out of proportion, unostentatious”. The meaning, then, balances evenly between these two – simultaneous and equally valid – readings, whereby a covert compliment of modesty is paid to the commemorated.

3 *sine labe*: The same admirable linguistic skill is shown here. *sine labe* is, for one, syntactically in concord with *in requie*. So, *in requie...sine labe* says “in rest ... and free from perdition”. But the position within the name *Lyndewode ... Johannis* makes it rather mean “John Lyndewode, a man without a blemish”. Here again, the meaning covers both readings, and again that implies a delicate tribute to the man’s character. One has the feeling that he would not have liked to be overtly lauded, and, moreover, that the author of this poem knew this.

4 *consors*: The poet significantly avoids calling Alice *uxor*, the standard formula on monuments for “wife”, and prefers *consors*, which really means “sharer of one’s destiny”, and is a word of respect and endearment.

6 *viruni*: This word really reads *vir^unⁱ*, with all letters, including the last one, clearly carved, and the ‘i’ precisely dotted, but evidently containing a text-cutter’s error: there is no such word in the Latin language, neither classical nor medieval. It was obviously meant to be *vir^um*. As such it fills the function of the direct object, which else would go missing, with the incident semantic chaos in the sentence that would ensue. The text-cutter here quite possibly had difficulty reading the author’s manuscript, and that would mean that this manuscript had come to him in Gothic script, too. Such misapprehension is quite understandable and comes easily, seeing the great similarity of the Gothic letters ‘u’, ‘n’, ‘m’, ‘i’, which all have the same

minims, especially if the author was unsystematic about dotting his `i's, as is the case in our text – the best example is *tibi*, where one of the `i's is dotted, the other is not.

6 *luce*: In the same line, *luce* means “out of the light”, which creates an impressive image, but also “on the day” – yet one more example of the characteristic double function of a word in this poet's style.

6 *Juliani*: This is an allusion to Saint Julian, the first bishop of Le Mans (4th century probably), whose day is January 27th, thus providing the precise date of decease. He was a well-known saint in France, and had some following in England.⁴

7 *hii*: instead of *hi*, perhaps as an (unnecessary) inverted analogy to *i* for *ii* (*ei*). This strange spelling can be seen on other inscriptions, too.

8 *quibus*: should be regarded as a demonstrative, not as a relative, pronoun, opening a new main clause.

9 *pedibus*: Here it would seem to mean “at your feet”, meaning the visitor of the tomb.

9 *Qui*: If one seeks the word which *Qui* links up with, one has the choice between the two commemorated and their children, because in the foregoing text no other living being is mentioned. However, neither group can be understood as rejoicing over the situation. Therefore, instead of following up the word with which it is concord, *Qui* must be understood as opening a relative clause prefiguring it, in literary Latin a permissible ploy. This word can only be *vermibus*. The sentence therefore must be seen to be organized as follows:

Vermibus, qui tot gaudent ..., ecce cibus.

“To the worms, who in such numbers rejoice ... behold, (they are) a meal.”

9 The translation of *fundi* is somewhat delicate. Originally *fundus* means “bottom”, of a cup, of a cause, for instance; also “estate, lands”. However, in medieval Latin can be found the meaning of “field, earth, loam”. *Pulvere fundi* would then mean “in the dust of the ground”. Also, one must take into consideration the poet's need to find a word rhyming with the syllables -

⁴ *luce Juliani* is a calendrical indication. In the Sarum calendar, the standard feast-day of St. Julian in January commemorates Julian, first bishop of Le Mans. (I am indebted to Nicholas Rogers for this information.) The cult was possibly encouraged by Henry II, who had been born in Le Mans and christened in the church of St. Julian. Some of the saint's relics were translated from Le Mans cathedral to the cathedral of Paderborn (Westphalia) in 1243.

undi, thus the sense of “earth, ground” for *fundus* seems sufficiently well founded to support the present translation.

9 An alternative to the rendering proffered would see *fundi* as a passive infinitive “be struck, be thrown, swept”, and *tot* as the intended subject of an accusative structure. *Pedibus* would appear as “downward”, and the ablative *pulvere* (similar to the locative *humi*) is common usage with *fundere*. Thus, the alternative translation would run:

To those who rejoice that so many are struck down into the dust,
To the worms etc.⁵

This would present a case for humanity as a whole, speaking quite generally, whereas the first version insists on the fate of the commemorated, and the contrast with their personal lives, with *pedibus* seen as the visitor’s feet, making him realize the direct physical contact with the procedure going on underneath in the ground, not so far below his feet.

STYLISTIC APPRECIATION

This poem is written in Latin hexameters, scanning almost perfectly.⁶ The prosody can be presented as follows, bearing in mind that underlined syllables in bold print are stressed, and that the Roman ciphers must be read as letters. The cæsurae are indicated by the spacing.

1	Qui con tem pla ris	la pi dem mo di cum - ro go - sis te
2	Et pre ci bus ca ris	dic sal vi sint ti bi, Chris te,
3	Sp i ri tus in re qui e	Lynde wode si ne la be Jo han nis
4	E ius et A li ci æ ,	con sor tis plu ri bus an nis.
5	An no mil le no	C qua ter no no quo que de no
6	Men se vi rum ja ni	mors lu ce tu lit Ju li a ni.
7	X qua ter at que tri bus	an nis , hi cor de jo cun di,
8	Con vi xe re; qui bus	na ti fu e rant o ri un di
9	Sep tem. Qui pe di bus	tot gau dent pul ve re fun di,
10	Ver mi bus ec ce ci bus ...	Sic tran sit glo ri a mun di!

The poem’s main formal attraction lies in its rhyme-scheme. The following shows the verse arrangement and the complex rhyme-scheme. The arrows in the left and right margins (↓↑) indicate the rhyme-linkage within the respective hemistich-pair, the double arrow (↔) between the two hemistichs of a verse.

⁵ This alternative has been suggested and is favoured by my Latinist friend H. P. Blecken.

⁶ Faulty prosody occurs in v.3 *spiritus*, which, as a nominative plural, has a long end-vowel, and here is given a short vowel; but v. 7 *tribus* (which ought not to be made to have a long end-vowel) comes under cæsura-licence.

1	↓	Qui <u>contem</u> plaris		lapidem modicum rogo <u>siste</u>	↓
2	↑	Et precibus <u>caris</u>		dic salvi sint tibi, <u>Christe</u> ,	↑
3	↓	Spiritus in <u>reque</u>		Lyndewode sine labe <u>Johannis</u>	↓
4	↑	Eius et Alici <u>æ</u> ,		consortis pluribus <u>annis</u> .	↑
5		<u>Anno</u> mill <u>eno</u>	↔↔↔	C quater nono quoque <u>deno</u>	
6		Mense virum <u>jani</u>	↔	mors luce tulit <u>Juliani</u> .	
7	↓	X quater atque <u>tribus</u>		annis, hi corde <u>jocundi</u> ,	↓
8	↓↑	Convixere; <u>quibus</u>		nati fuerant <u>oriundi</u>	↓↑
9	↓↑	Septem. Qui <u>pedibus</u>		tot gaudent pulvere <u>fundi</u> ,	↓↑
10	↑↔	<u>Vermibus</u> ecce <u>cibus</u>		Sic transit gloria <u>mundi</u> !	↑

Thus vv. 1 / 2, and 3 / 4 respectively, are paired with interior *cæsura*-rhyme and with – different – end-rhyme, constituting a first stanza of four lines, and another four-verse stanza comes at the end, with vv. 7-10, which all four share the same *cæsura*-rhyme and separate end-rhyme, producing four times the same rhymes within each hemistich, and dissyllabic rhymes to boot.⁷ Between the two stanzas, and straddling the two blocks as they are presented in the inscription, come vv. 5 and 6. This couplet bears a different message, as it contains the date of demise, important for the annual ritual of commemoration, and correspondingly has a distinct rhyme-system, each verse having its own leonine rhyme. The inscription therefore should not be seen as arranged in two blocks, but as having a structure of 4 – 2 – 4 verses. Altogether, the rhyme-scheme is a formidable poetic feat, which has the effect of underlining the earnestness of the thoughts and intensity of feelings expressed.

The notional structure is interesting. It begins by addressing the visitor, and the intercessory prayer that is most commonly requested at the end here opens the inscription. Then follows a characterization of the man, and this is done not in bland flattering, but comes in allusions, indirectly, in the second meaning of words, which is in favourable contrast to many other epitaphs. In the centre, in the couplet, appears the date of death, theologically and ritually important for the annual obit, the commemorative Service for the souls of the departed.

The second quatrain opens up on a review of a happy, trustful, and blessed married life. That covers two lines and spills over into v. 9. After that agreeable picture begins the part which at first presents itself as a crux, seems dark, indeed intractable, because the sense does not bend itself to easy understanding. We ask ourselves who might be enjoying themselves in

⁷ *Johannis* – *annis*, ebenso *contemplaris* – *caris* do not rhyme, from our present conception of the term, but in medieval Latin poetry, such visual rhyme is often seen and was apparently deemed sufficient.

great numbers in the face of the loss of lovable parents – the sentence runs contrary to good sense. And does so until the relative clause is understood to prefigure the word *vermibus*. And when that key is turned, one sees the worms rejoicing over their food in the tomb. The effect is sprung only in the very last line. The poet intended this drastic and gruesome surprise not to be divulged prematurely, and for greater impact arranged his relative clause not behind the give-away word, but before. In the same breath the visitor whom we had seen at the beginning appears again in the word *pedibus* “at your feet”, which rounds up the scene and achieves architectural satisfaction. Thus the text is full of subtleties, which enrich its content. It possesses much intellectual appeal and great literary attraction, is a masterpiece of notional structure and dramatic sensibility, and has passages of striking poetic beauty. It is a very fine poem.

AUTHORSHIP

The author is, of course, anonymous, but some information about him can be gleaned from the text, so that his shape is dimly outlined.

It is easy to see that he was a consummate Latinist and masterful versewriter, but he was also a poet, who ingeniously contrived these floating double meanings, thereby creating a strong undercurrent of intention and greatly enhancing the substance of the poem. As a person of such great culture he most likely was a churchman.

Secondly, one feels that the author knew John and Alice Lyndewode personally, perhaps even having been very close. There are hints, and direct statements about these person’s characters and way of life. There is a tell-tale choice of words showing filial loyalty and affection, a revealing reticence where others indulge in loud praise, which bespeaks familiarity with their character. There is this third person in the first line of the text interceding for the deceased, saying *rogo*, “I beg you”, not so often seen in inscriptions.⁸ All in all, the impression that most clearly informs the poem is that of contained intimacy, respect, and love.

⁸ The phenomenon of an intercessory request for prayer addressed to the spectator by the author personally is infrequent. The formula “I beseech thee ...”, with the first person singular of verbs such as *rogo*, *quæso*, *precor*, *obsecro*, occurs on the inscriptions to J. & A. Lyndewode (Linwood, Lincs), H. & M. Bostok (Wheathamstead, Herts), E. & Thos. Andrewe (Charwelton, Northants), Wm. de Rothewelle (Rothwell, Northants), Thos. Cailey (West Bradenham, Norfolk), Thos. Cranley (Oxford), R. Bertlot (Stopham, Sussex), J. Asger senior (Norwich). In the case of J. Sleaford (Balsham, Cambs), N. Assheton (Callington, Cornwall), and on the brasses to J. Asger senior (Norwich) – twice here – , and Rupert von Jülich-Berg (Paderborn, Westfalen, Germany), the poet addresses himself with his appeal to God directly – that is very rare. The list most probably is not exhaustive.

These several aspects collated may be seen as pointing to the Lyndewodes' son William as being the author.⁹ William Lyndwode, the village's most illustrious son, was born c. 1375, and became a high-ranking church-politician and successful diplomat in the king's foreign service. Also, he was a renowned authority on Canon law, was made bishop of St. David's shortly before his death, and was given burial in Westminster Abbey. If such conjecture is correct this would be an extremely rare instance of a medieval epitaph attributable to its author.

DOCUMENTATION

The present article was published previously under the title *Foot Inscriptions on three Lincolnshire Brasses* in the TRANSACTIONS of the Monumental Brass Society, Vol. XVII, Part 1, 2003, vol. XVII, part 1, 2003, pp. 14-30. It has here received improving alteration.

PEVSNER, N., UND HARRIS, J.: *The Buildings of England – Lincolnshire* ²1989, 528.

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TORSY, JAKOB: *Der Große Namenstagskalender*, Freiburg, Basel, Wien, 10^o, 1975, 47.

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Rubbing: REINHARD LAMP (Hamburg)
 Photograph: BODO MARGRAF (Welt, Eiderstedt),
 REINHARD LAMP (Hamburg)

⁹ I am indebted to Nicholas Rogers for this information.

2) Johannes Lyndewode, † 21.7.1421

BIOGRAPHICAL¹⁰

The younger John had the tower of Linwood church built. The recessed spire is possibly of later date.¹¹ In his will he left generous bequests benefiting churches of the area and the needy of his village.¹² Not much else is known about him.



(ILLUSTRATION of the entire brass, author's rubbing)

¹⁰ The documentation on John Lyndewode was kindly provided by Archivist Dr. Mike Rogers, of the Lincolnshire Archives. He had his information from Graham Platts, *Land and People in Medieval Lincolnshire: History of Lincolnshire Vol. IV*, Lincoln, 1985, p. 181.

¹¹ Cf. N. Pevsner and J. Harris, *The Buildings of England – Lincolnshire*, 2^o, 1989, p.528.

¹² In his will, which was proved at the Prerogative Court of Canterbury on December 2nd, 1421, John Lyndewode the Younger asked to be buried alongside his father's grave in Linwood church. Graham Platts records: "At the time of his death in 1419 he left cash and possessions valued well in excess of £ 500, not including any dwelling-houses or other buildings he owned. Of this he bequeathed £ 54 6s. 8d. to various churches, mainly on the northern Wolds and in the Ancolme valley, which may represent the area of his business operations. The sum of £ 60 went to the poor of Linwood and its parish, plus a further 20 d. to each needy person." op. cit. (This Graham Platts intended as information on John the Elder, but Dr. Rogers warns me that it was taken from John the Younger's will, and that Plattner may well have confounded the two Johns.)

DESCRIPTION of the BRASS

John Lyndewode is clad in a high-reaching, baggy-sleeved coat, the fur-lining of which shows at the collar, the wrist, and at the bottom, where the coat springs open. At his left he carries the civilian's sword, the hilt hidden under the sleeve. No undergarment is visible. As sign of his profession he stands on a woolsack, which bears his merchant's mark. His feet are shod in soft-leather shoes. Around him rises a delicate canopy, which, however, is badly mutilated. Both shafts are incomplete, the top is missing. So are the two shields on either side of the pediment – even their indents have almost disappeared - but they will have shown the same coat of arms as his father's: a chevron between three leaves, a canting heraldic emblem, being a pun upon his name. The tinctures are unknown. Underneath the figure is a foot-inscription, arranged in four lines with double-verses, executed in delicately cut, very decorative Gothic raised minuscule. It comes on two plates, the small right-hand one of which is lost, the words breaking off in their middle, so that the ends of the lines are incomplete or missing. (Measurements: 231 x 86 cm)

FOOT-INSCRIPTION

TRANSLITERATION (based on author's own rubbing)

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>	ligatures	
^	flourish	abbreviation-mark
[/]		interstice deleted

- 1a Hunc lapide cernens lyndewode memorare Johis,
 b Que mors prosternens mundo dm ti { }
 2a M° C quater X bis uno Julii quoqz mense
 b Festo praxedis mortis quo corruit e{ }
 3a Sic qz patris tumulo nati tumulus sociatur
 b Quo velut in speculo mortis tibi mencio{ }
 4a Ergo qui transis magno, medio, puer an sis
 b Puras funde preces : nobis sic fit v{ }

TRANSCRIPTION Punctuation added.

Author's reconstitution of the missing text appears in double brackets.

- 1a Hunc lapide(m) cernens [L]yndewode memorare Joh(ann)is
 b Que(m) mors p(ro)sternens mu(n)do d(ominu)m ti{[ilit annis]}
 2a M° C quater X bis uno Julii quo(que) mense
 b Festo [P]raxedis mortis quo corruit e{[nse]}
 3a Sicq(ue) patris tumulo nati tumulus sociatur
 b Quo velut in speculo mortis tibi men[t]io{[natur]}
 4a Ergo qui transis magno medio puer an sis
 b Puras funde preces nobis sic fit v{[eniæ spes]}

CLEAR TEXT

- 1a Hunc lapidem cernens Lyndewode memorare Johannes!
 b Quem mors prosternens mundo dominum tulit annis
 2a M° C quater, X bis uno Julii quoque mense,
 b Festo Praxedis – mortis quo corruit ense.
 3a Sicque patris tumulo nati tumulus sociatur.
 b Quo velut in speculo mortis tibi mentionatur.
 4a Ergo qui transis magno, medio, puer an sis:
 b Puras funde preces; nobis sic fit veniæ spes.

TRANSLATION

- 1a Thou who perceivest this slab, remember John Lyndewode!
 b Striking him down, Death carried the gentleman away out of this world in the year
- 2a One thousand four times a hundred twice ten and one, in the month of July,
 b On the feast-day of St.Praxedis – when he broke down under the sword of Death.
- 3a Thus is the son's tomb companion to his father's.
 b Thereby, as it were in the mirror of Death, he is called up to thy mind.
- 4a So, thou who passest through here, whether thou beest an old man, of middle age, or a boy,
 b Pour forth prayers pure: thus is given us hope of redemption.

COMMENTS

2b St. Praxedis' feast is July 21st.

3a The strong family-ties that can be felt in the foot-inscription to John's father, John Lyndewode the Elder, can be perceived in this one, too, and one is a corroboration of the other.

STYLISTIC APPRECIATION

The poem is made up of eight hexameters. They scan (almost) perfectly. Saying that, one must read the first abbreviation expanded (after a fashion), and pronounce the ciphers syllabically, thus:

Mill mo **Ce** qua ter **(e)X** bis u **no** Ju li **i** quo que **men** se

The only flaw is the position of a short first syllable for *uno*, when that should have a long one.

The cipher *X* is considered a consonant, thus, visually, that would derange the scansion, but as it must be read as a syllable [ex], *quater* is given the vowel it needs behind it to produce the necessary position of a short second syllable, and that allows the words a prosodically correct flow when read. Date-lines are the most recalcitrant material for a poet to mould into a metre, and this one is rather a fine achievement. The following shows the verse arrangement and the complex rhyme-scheme. The arrows in the left and right margins (↓↑) indicate the rhyme-linkage within the respective hemistich-pair, the double arrow (↔) between the two hemistichs of a verse.

1a	↓	Hunc lapidem <u>cernens</u>		Lyndewode memorare <u>Johannis!</u>	↓
b	↑	Quem mors <u>prosternens</u>		mundo dominum tulit <u>annis</u>	↑
2a	↓	M ^o C quater, X bis		uno Julii quoque <u>mense,</u>	↓
b	↑	Festo Praxedis – mortis		quo corruit <u>ense.</u>	↑
3a	↓	Sicque patris <u>tumulo</u>		nati tumulus <u>sociatur.</u>	↓
b	↑	Quo velut in <u>speculo</u>		mortis tibi <u>mentionatur.</u>	↑
4a		Ergo qui <u>transis,</u>	↔	magno, medio, puer <u>an sis:</u>	
b		Puras funde <u>preces;</u>	↔	nobis sic fit veniæ <u>spes.</u>	

The first three double-verses have end-rhyme and additional – and separate – cæsura-rhyme (*cernens* – *prosternens* etc.). The last couple has a leonine rhyme, pairing the end-word with the cæsura-word, namely: v. 4a has *transis* – *an sis* (a particularly well contrived rhyme, as it integrates two complete words), v. 4b *preces* – *spes*. That singularity underlines the importance of intercessory prayer that is requested in these end-lines, and the urgency in the hope of redemption.

The prosodic system and the rhyme-scheme, together with lexical knowledge and grammatical extrapolation, have made it possible to reconstruct the missing ends of lines. V. 1b ended in the middle of a word, and since a rhyme for *Johannis* was needed and presented itself in the word *annis*, as preceded in his parents' epitaph, an appropriate verb was found in *tulit*. The line was understood to run on into v. 2a, and thus *annis* appears as part of the date-line.¹³ The expression "by the sword of death" (*mortis ense*) in v. 2b can sometimes be found in literary medieval inscriptions, e.g. *necis ensis* on the brass to Margaret Brounlet, in Wymington, and *ense necis* on Richard Byll's monument in Hull. In v. 3b, the verb needed only to be completed.

Vv. 4a/b is a staple text, which recalls other inscriptions, e.g. the earlier brass to the unknown civilian in St. Mary Redcliffe, Bristol, which is almost identical, and also in a variant, in the inscription of Hugo Bostok, Wheathamstead:

Hinc tu qui transis – magnus, medius, puer an sis –
Pro me funde preces : dabitur mihi sic veniæ spes.

The versification therefore is almost impeccable, but the poetic quality is much less remarkable than that of the inscription on the parents' brass. Here is none of the delicate feeling, the refinement of covert secondary meaning, none of the highly individualistic wording and phrasing which make the latter's excellence. Instead, we find the key-word "death" grossly repeated in all the first three lines, i.e. vv. 1b, 2b, 3b (*mors*, twice *mortis*). And the staple formula of that last borrowed double-verse shows that the poet took less trouble over the composition.

¹³ I had the help of my friend Hans Peter Blecken for the reconstitution of the first line-end.

One may therefore hesitate to suppose that John's brother William was the author, as in the earlier brass. William Lyndewode was a high-ranking cleric, became bishop of St. David's shortly before his death, was active in the king's foreign diplomatic service, an authority on legal matters, who wrote a seminal compendium on canon law, and was given burial in Westminster Abbey. Also, and more to the point, he was a consummate Latinist and could be trusted to produce such a poetic achievement. But perhaps it was William nevertheless: he may just simply have spent less time and dedicated less energy on the poem for his brother.

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