

◆ Chronicle ◆

Journal of Yeovil Archaeological and Local History Society

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On the Wednesday night, the eve of the execution, Captain Hunt was allowed a last visit from his two sisters. They arrived at the prison at about 10 o'clock and were shown to their brother's cell which he shared with two other prisoners. His two companions were absent elsewhere in the prison during the visit and alone with his two sisters a daring escape was plotted. Hunt quickly changed clothes with one of the ladies and then with his other sister went down through the jail, passing two or three doorkeepers without recognition, as well as the guard and "soe past away but whether or howe it could not bee learned". The sister who stayed behind in the chamber placed her brother's cloak and hat on a chair and then got into his bed. When the Captain's cellmates finally returned they thought he was asleep and took to their own beds.

Captain Hunt's escape was not discovered until the following morning, and Sheriff Robert Hunt was given the unfortunate news. He immediately notified various important personages, including Oliver Cromwell and, no doubt, was a very worried man, particularly as the escapee bore the same name. However, the Sheriff's record as an impartial and able administrator stood him in good stead and although a person who Hunt would not name spoke against him, the incident passed without further recrimination.

What about the two sisters of Captain Hunt? They were immediately confined to the jail and although they were brought before two Assize Courts, they were never tried. They remained in Ilchester prison for two years until they were finally bailed at the summer Assizes of 1657 and released. For Robert Hunt the escape of his namesake was an obvious embarrassment but did not affect the career of this widely respected man. He continued in office as Sheriff of Somerset for another year, served the County and Ilchester in the Parliaments of 1659 and 1660 and for the last twenty years of his life continued to play an active role in County government as a Magistrate and Deputy Lieutenant. Robert Hunt died in 1680 and was buried in Compton Pauncefoot church. Of the man who cheated the axe, the writer has no knowledge. Did he live to a ripe old age regaling and perhaps boring his friends on the escapade, or did he just disappear into the mist of history?

Jack W.Sweet.

A RARE LEAD FILLED MEDIEVAL MEMORIAL AT MARK, SOMERSET

The interesting medieval grave stone shown here is to be found in the floor of the chancel of Mark church. It does not appear to have attracted any previous comment but is important because the incised lines are filled with lead. Such monuments would have been very vulnerable to subsequent damage and, therefore, it is a rare survival, possibly the only pre-Reformation example in Somerset. The black letter latin inscription would probably have been as follows :-

HIC IACET DO[MINUS] IOHANES SP[....]
 QUONDAM CURATUS [HUIUS ECCLESIAE CUIUS
 ANIMA PROPICIETUR DEUS AMEN].

The surname is hidden but it may be possible to identify the deceased from existing records. From its style, the monument probably dates from the late 15th C.

B. & M. Gittos.

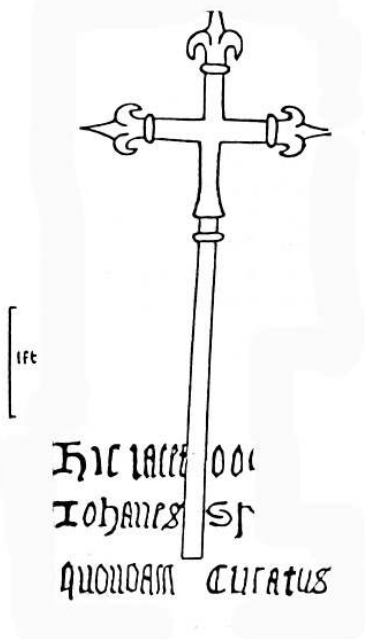


Plate 16. A Lead-Filled, Incised Grave Cover From Mark.

B.Gittos.