

THE MONUMENTS OF St MARY'S CHURCH, FAIRFORD - 19

EDMUND TAME (c.1464-1534)



Edmund Tame was the son of John Tame, wool and cloth merchant, and is commemorated by two splendid brasses in St Mary's church: a large brass set in a floor slab and a wall brass, both in the Lady Chapel. Edmund was the youngest of John's sons and inherited much of his father's huge fortune and lands gained from the sale of wool and cloth. Edmund's oldest brother William had died in 1492 and his other brother Thomas was the vicar of Castle Eaton and was only left £40 in John Tame's will. Edmund was probably managing much of the family business well before John's death in 1500.

John Tame funded the almost complete rebuilding of St Mary's church in Fairford as his lasting legacy. The rebuilding work probably commenced in 1491 and may well have been substantially complete by 1497 when there was a special visitation held at the church with all the priests of the rural deanery in attendance to hear a sermon by the Vicar General of Worcester. However, the well-known quote by the 16th Century antiquarian John Leland states that '*John Tame began the fair new Chirch of Fairforde, and Edmund Tame finishid it*'. Edmund's part in the rebuilding of St Mary's is not known but what is known is that the magnificent painted windows were not installed until a few years after John Tame's death, so it is very likely that Edmund played a major role in the glazing of Fairford church.

In 1503 Edmund married Agnes, the daughter of John Greville of Drayton, Oxfordshire. The union produced two daughters, Alice and Margaret but Agnes died on 26 July 1506, possibly as a result of complications during childbirth. Agnes Tame was the first to be buried under the paving stones of the Lady Chapel in Fairford church.

Edmund soon remarried, possibly later in 1506, to Elizabeth the daughter of John Tyringham of Buckinghamshire. Elizabeth Tame may have given birth to at least three children: Elizabeth, Edmund and another son (depicted on his father's brass in Fairford church) who probably died in childbirth or as an infant. However, it must be stated that various sources give conflicting information about the dates of birth of Edmund's children and it is just possible that Agnes was in fact the mother of all of them. The

five children depicted on the floor brass in St Mary's are all sited below Agnes's image and the wall brass shows three daughters stood behind Agnes which may be indicative of their parentage.

Edmund continued the successful business that had been built up by his father, despite facing a more difficult economic environment and a gradual decline in the importance of the English wool trade. Edmund also continued to acquire land and manorial rights which enhanced his social standing. In 1506 and again in 1520 and 1524 Edmund was appointed sheriff for Gloucestershire. In 1510 he was appointed as a commissioner of the peace for the county and in 1516 Edmund was knighted by Henry VIII to become one of Henry's 'knights for the body' attending the King in his private chambers. In 1520 Henry VIII made one of his periodic tours and arrived at Fairford on 27 August, spending a week with Edmund in his mansion near the church. The King and his hosts would undoubtedly have attended mass in St Mary's church on 28 August, St Augustine's day, where they would have viewed the splendid set of windows mindful of their royal connections.



Sir Edmund continued to play a significant role in county matters for the rest of his life serving on various commissions and being a justice of the peace. In about 1517 the church of St Peter's at Rendcombe was rebuilt, Sir Edmund having bought the manor in 1503. Some of the features of Rendcomb are very similar to those at Fairford and it is highly likely that Sir Edmund paid for much of the work. His son, another Edmund, later lived in Rendcomb and is buried in an unmarked grave in the church.

Sir Edmund died on 1 October 1534 and left most of his fortune to his wife and his son Edmund who was also an esquire to Henry VIII and had been knighted at the age of 12 during Henry's visit to Fairford in 1520.

In addition to the brass in the floor slab (normally kept covered up for protection) there is a smaller brass commemorating Sir Edmund and his wives Agnes and Elizabeth set in the north wall of the chapel. The brass depicts the arms of Tame with those of his wives' families flanking a brass of the Holy Trinity.

The text on this brass reads:

“Of youre charite pray for the soul of Edmond Tame Knight here under buried which decessid the fyrst day of October in the yere of oure lorde god a thousand CCCCxxxiiij and for the soule of Agnes his first wife which decessid the xxvj day of July ano [Dni Milesimo CCCCVI] the prosperite of Dame Elizabeth his last wife [on whose soul]es & all xren soules ihu have mercy, amen”