

The Brookes of Whitchurch

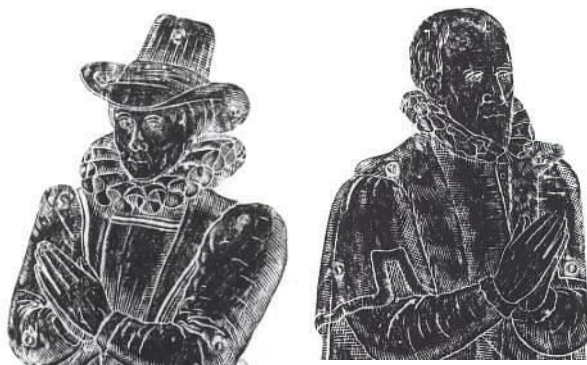
In the early history of Whitchurch, no group of people has left such visible evidence of their presence as the Brooke family. The parish church of All Hallows contains both a wall brass and tomb effigies of some Brookes who lived here in the 16th and 17th centuries.

The family lived in a large house opposite the church, now called King's Lodge, but in the 16th century it was Parsonage Farm. The two Brookes remembered in the brass are Richard Brooke and his wife Elizabeth, an heiress of the Twyne family from nearby Longparish. Both Richard and Elizabeth are shown on the brass richly attired, as befits a rich merchant family of the 16th century.



King's Lodge, originally Parsonage Farm, where the Brooke family lived. It has been much modified and extended since then

Richard and Elizabeth had three sons and three daughters, all depicted in two small groups beneath the main brass. The brass was originally on their tomb but is now mounted on the east wall of All Hallows.



Detail of a rubbing of the Brooke brass showing Richard Brooke (1525-1593) and Elizabeth (Twyne) Brooke (? - 1599)

The brass was erected by their youngest son Robert. In fact it says as much about him as it does about his parents (see the text below). Robert's indenture as apprentice goldsmith can still be seen in the City of London. The nearby pedestal shows the effigies of Thomas Brooke, the son of Richard above, and his wife Susan Foster. These chalk effigies have not stood the passage of time all that well, and are worn from abrasion, although small traces of paint work still show on them, hinting at the bright colours with which they must have been originally decorated. The richness of the clothes of Richard and Elizabeth Brooke on the brass contrast sharply with the sombre lawyer's attire of Thomas and his wife Susan on the pedestal.



The pedestal with the recumbent chalk effigies of Thomas and Susan Brooke, All Hallows church.



Detail of the Susan Brooke effigy.

Here is the text of the brass:

PIETATIS OPUS

*This grave (oh grief) hath swallowed up with wide and open mouth
the bodie of good Richard Brooke, of Whitchurch, Hampton South
And Elizabeth his wedded wife, twice twentie yeares and one,
Sweet Jesus hath their soules in heuen ye ground flesh skin and bone.
In Januarie (worne with age) daie sixteenth, died hee,
From Christ full fifteene hundred yeares, and more by ninetie three.
But death hir twist of life in Maie, daie twentith did untwine
From Christ full fifteene hundred yeares and more by ninetie nine.
They left behinde them well to live, and growne to good degree,
First Richard, Thomas, Robert Brooke, the youngest of the three,
Elizabeth and Barbara, then Dorothee the last.
All six the knot of Nature's love, and kindness keepeth fast.
This toome stone with the plate thereon thus grauen fair & large
Did Robert Brooke the youngest sonne, make of his proper charge.
A Citizen of London state by faithful service free
Of Marchante great adventurers a brother sworn is hee.
And of the Indian Companie (come gaine or losse) a lim,
And of the Goldsmith liverie, all these Gode gifte to him;
This monument of memorie in loue performed hee,
December thirtie one, from Christ sixteen hundred and three.
Anno Domini 1603. Laus Deo*

Of the 11 children of Thomas and Susan, three sons are notable: Thomas (1599-1665) for the manner of his death -- he was killed by lightning while riding home from Winchester; Richard, for entertaining King Charles I in the Parsonage Farm from 18-21 October 1644 when the King was on his way to the second battle of Newbury in the English Civil War; and Robert (1602-1655), an Anglican minister, for emigrating with his family and 28 servants, sheep and foxhounds, on June 30, 1650 to Maryland in America. The family's support for the royalist cause made life difficult both for Robert who emigrated and for the Brookes who remained in England, and within a relatively short time the family had scattered, with no descendants remaining in Whitchurch.

All Hallows receives a steady stream of Robert Brooke's descendants, who come from the United States to see the brass and the tomb. In the past they have generously supported All Hallows. Early in the 20th century they subscribed to a fund that resulted in the erection of the carved stone pedestal on which the chalk effigies rest, and they

contributed to the All Hallows Restoration Fund that ensured the structural integrity of the parish church.

Visitors wanting more detailed genealogical information about the Brooke family, including some of the descendants of Robert Brooke of Maryland, USA, can find a well-researched and carefully-written description by Marty Grundy on [this Rootsweb page](#).