

Sheriff Hutton: Historic Doubts Reconsidered

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THE MONUMENT IN Sheriff Hutton church ascribed to Edward of Middleham by many historians has aroused much interest over the years, if only because the question of whom it commemorates is a complex and interesting one. The present authors consider in fact that it is of greater complexity than was allowed for in the article on the subject in the last *Ricardian*,¹ and the conclusions to be reached from a study of the problem rather different. Of course it is true to say that the identification with Prince Edward has been questioned before on grounds of style,² but none of the authors seem to have considered the whole of the evidence. The present article attempts to do this.

In form the tomb is now an altar tomb (i.e. attached to the wall), composed of four parts. The front is carved with weepers, a figure representing God the Father with a donor figure and two angels holding shields. Each end panel is carved with a shield, and the top slab bears the effigy. The whole stands against the north wall of the church, in the Witham Chapel. It seems to have been in this chapel since at least 1690, and at that time to have apparently been in separate pieces, in which state it remained until recently, as described by Routh and Knowles.³ Doubts have been expressed as to whether it was originally an altar tomb, or a free-standing tomb chest, in which case one side is now missing. A recent thorough examination shows however that there is little doubt that it has always been an altar tomb, and that it was wrongly re-assembled when it was reconstructed in 1950.

As described above, the tomb has a front panel and two shorter end panels. The front panel extends a short way past the end panels, forming vertical projections at both ends. These vertical projections are ornately carved, and matched by a similar plain carved projection or lip on that side of each end panel which is now against the wall. It seems clear that the lips on the end panels are meant to butt against the projections on the front panel. These lips are obviously meant to frame, or balance, the end panel where it meets the wall. If the tomb had originally been a free-standing four-sided tomb chest each end panel would have had either two lips each, or none.

A similar close examination of the image itself seems to show that while it is badly worn, it is more damaged on the side now against the wall. This is contrary to what would be anticipated, one would expect greater wear on the accessible side. This evidence would seem to show that the effigy itself was round the other way originally, with the side now against the wall on the outer side. For all this to be possible the tomb must have originally stood against a south wall. Only thus could the effigy's feet have correctly pointed towards the east, with the carved

cross end panel at the head. The donor figure would now look towards God the Father and the head of the effigy, which is more in accordance with custom. This could place it in what is now the Gower aisle (or Chapel). Possibly it was moved to make room for a Gower monument or burial. Some of the Gower achievements at present on the south wall are said to be copies of (probable) seventeenth-century originals. The tomb cannot, in any event, have stood in the chancel, as has been surmised,⁴ since it has apparently never been free standing.

The workmanship of the whole tomb is apparently not of a high standard, nor is the alabaster of particularly good quality, although since it is so badly damaged it is difficult to be definite about this. These facts would of course argue against it being the tomb of a Prince of Wales. However, it has also to be borne in mind that the quality of work in the late fifteenth century was not, in general, as high as it had been in earlier times, and the very fine white alabaster was not as common as at the start of the alabaster period in the fourteenth century.⁵ It could be argued that a King could command the best quality available, but it should be borne in mind that Richard only commissioned it, he is unlikely to have supervised the work. He was very preoccupied in the last year of his life, and the monument may indeed have been finished after his death (see below), or perhaps not even started then. After his death the natural reaction of a workshop would be to get rid of such a dangerous commission as quickly as possible (if only because of doubt about payment), if necessary at the expense of artistic quality. A relevant fact here is that the 'monument' erected to Anne Neville on her death seems to have been a very modest one.⁶

When considered as a whole, the tomb is typical fifteenth-century alabaster work, almost certainly of the York school of alabasterers. The carving on the front panel bears a resemblance to earlier Yorkshire tombs at Methley, Harewood and Swine.⁷ These tombs are dated between 1420 and 1430. This need not of course prove that the Sheriff Hutton tomb was carved at this time. Styles sometimes persisted over quite long periods, nor was copying unknown. The angels on the end of the tomb of Sir John Cressy at Dodford (Northamptonshire) are very similar to those on the Sheriff Hutton tomb, for example. Similarly the tombs of Sir Henry Perpoint at Holme Pierrepont (Nottinghamshire), died 1499, and Ralph Sacheverell at Ratcliffe on Soar (Nottinghamshire) died 1539, are virtual duplicates, although separated by a period of some forty years. An extreme case of a style being copied after many years is shown by the knight's effigy from Burton-on-Trent with legs crossed in the style of the stone effigies of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. This rather mutilated knight may be dated to about 1470, more than one hundred years after the style went out of use.⁸

Another factor dating the tomb to the later fifteenth century, rather than the earlier, is the presence of rusty metal studs around the effigy, at approximately one foot intervals. These once held a marginal brass inscription, obviously lost very soon after erection, since none of the extant descriptions mention it. These were rare before the sixteenth century, and one is obviously more likely to appear on a tomb dating from nearer the end of the fifteenth century than from the beginning.⁹

The effigy on this Sheriff Hutton tomb itself presents considerable difficulties. It is small, and undoubtedly represents a child, dressed in a long robe, with hands

clasped in prayer, and wearing on its head what has been variously described as a cap, a cap of maintenance, a ducal cap or a coronet. The head lies on a cushion, with the remains of creatures at either side, usually described as griffins. This is probably correct as feet, parts of wings and on the side next to the window even part of a body remain. The two sets of feet show slight differences, those next to the wall being heavier and less like talons than those on the other side. The costume worn, a typical civilian robe, is not distinctive enough to date closely, although parallels can be found. For example a very similar fur-trimmed robe with full sleeves is worn by William Walrond on his brass in Childrey, Berkshire. This is dated about 1480.¹⁰

The Sheriff Hutton effigy has no feet, and not very much can be seen of the hair under the head covering. What can be seen is apparently rather shorter than might be expected for a tomb dating from the late fifteenth century, although the monument is in such poor condition that one cannot be categorical about this. As with other matters though there was no rigid rule about hair length, and many differing lengths can be seen on late-fifteenth-century monuments, including some where the ears may be seen, as in the present example.¹¹ William Walrond, referred to above, has very short hair.

The interesting part of the effigy is the head covering. Dodsworth, whose notes contain the earliest description extant, and who thus saw it in a more intact state than anyone subsequently, described it as a cap of maintenance. This was translated by Dugdale as a ducal cap. Torre calls it a coronet, and recent examination would seem to confirm this.¹² No one has seriously questioned that one of these descriptions is the correct one, and this being so, it may be said that whatever might be thought about the date of the monument, it is undoubtedly that of a person of high rank. Symbols of rank were of great importance in the Middle Ages, greater attention was paid to these than to the features, and no one who was not strictly entitled to a coronet would be given one,¹³ and this, like the cap of maintenance, symbolised dominion. The person here commemorated had power of lordship while he lived. In connection with this, the point should be made that small children of no great importance were not given elaborate tombs. Even Margaret of York, fourth daughter of Edward IV, had a very modest tomb, although she was buried in Westminster Abbey.¹⁴ If the head covering is in fact a coronet, we may assume that the person represented was at least a peer, and one of very high rank. Coronets were usually given only to such persons as John de la Pole, Duke of Suffolk; even such an important peer as Ralph Neville, Earl of Westmorland, cousin to Richard III, did not have one.¹⁵

We now turn to the evidence which has been used to identify the person commemorated by the tomb. As described above, Dodsworth was the first person to leave behind a written description. This description has been discussed extensively since it is not clear exactly what Dodsworth saw, and it will be necessary to repeat it here since the layout of his words has played some part in the discussion.¹⁶ The manuscript reads as follows:—

(f.210) middle quyer window
 qu'ly 1 ar' 3 fuzells in fesse g 2 or an egle dispd
 second qu' g a X ar' a [T] compone ar & b
 3 as 2 4 as 1

The same on a neat monument of alablaster on
the topp wherist is the portraiture of a child in his
long coat having on his head a capp of maynetenance
France & England a [T] er' cantoned

(f.210b) qur'ly 1 Beauchamp erle of Warwick 2 qur checkqui
or & b a ^ er'

The blazons may be translated as:—

1. Quarterly: 1. Argent, 3 fusils in fess gules; 2. Or, an eagle displayed [vert]. Second quarter gules, a cross argent, a label compony argent and azure, with the third quarter as the second, and the fourth as the first.
2. France and England, a label ermine, cantoned [gules].
3. Quarterly: 1 and 4. Beauchamp Earl of Warwick; 2 and 3. Checky or and azure, a chevron ermine.

It will be noticed that the description is divided into three parts by the division into brief paragraphs, and by starting a new page. As has been remarked "France and England a label ermine cantoned" does indeed start a new line,¹⁷ this is however because the previous one has reached the edge of the paper, and almost certainly for no other reason. No larger gap is left between the previous line and this one, as is usually done elsewhere on this page where a new subject occurs. The top lines on f.210b could probably have been written at the bottom of f.210 had Dodsworth wished to do so, which may be significant.

The conclusions which may definitely be reached from the above description are firstly that the monument was intact in 1623 when Dodsworth saw it, and that on one of the shields appeared the arms used by Richard Neville, Earl of Salisbury, (the first shield above). The same arms appeared in the "middle quire window", presumably the east window in the chancel. However, from this point opinions diverge, and other evidence is brought to bear to try to determine what other coats of arms, if any, were in the glass or on the tomb. It is tempting to say that all the coats of arms must have been on the tomb and (presumably) in the window too. There are, after all, enough shields on the tomb. This was the view taken by Dugdale when he had Dodsworth's notes copied (probably in 1666) into a book now labelled "Dugdale's Yorkshire Arms" and in the College of Arms. The description has been translated into Latin, and drawings made of the coats of arms. Dugdale, or his copyist, had no doubt that coat of arms no. 1 above appeared in the window (the chancel, i.e. the east, window), and that all the coats of arms were on the tomb. This may well simply be a misunderstanding on Dugdale's part of Dodsworth's notes, we have no evidence that Dugdale ever visited Sheriff Hutton to see for himself. However he spent many weeks in Yorkshire when on his Visitation of 1665-66 (during which he borrowed some of Dodsworth's manuscripts, probably including the Church Notes), and since he was actually in York for a total of just over two weeks in all, it is conceivable that he did visit Sheriff Hutton. We know that he was an assiduous church visitor, particularly to check on, and if necessary to destroy, spurious heraldry, and he may very well have decided to look at local churches while he was there.¹⁸

The next description that we have is that of Torre, by whose time (1690) the tomb had apparently lost nearly all trace of the blazoning except for both end shields bearing argent a gross gules i.e. the cross of St George.¹⁹ That one end

panel should be so blazoned is easily believed, since it still shows a raised carved cross, which in 1930 apparently still bore traces of red,²⁰ but it seems strange that the other should do so. It is now perfectly plain, bearing no carving at all. One would have thought that if each panel was to bear St George's cross both, or neither, would be carved. It may be that Torre saw the remaining dividing lines of a quarterly coat of arms, but this is perhaps not likely. Faint outlines of a cross can be seen on the shield, but it looks rather narrower than the carved cross, if perhaps too wide for the division of a quarterly shield. Torre goes on to say that there was in a window (unspecified) what were apparently the arms of England. These were in the east window in 1824, where it may be that Torre saw them.²¹

Finally we come to the question of who is represented by the effigy. As explained above, the one coat of arms indisputably on the tomb was that used by Richard Neville, Earl of Salisbury, and could have been placed on the tomb to represent any of his descendants. The coat also appears to have been used at times by his eldest son Richard Earl of Warwick, father of Anne Neville. If the other two shields blazoned by Dodsworth were also on the tomb, we have no problem in its identification, the effigy must represent Edward of Middleham, only child of Richard III and Anne Neville.²² However, that these latter two were on the tomb has been disputed, and if indeed we accept Torre's evidence that the two end shields both showed the cross of St George there is no room for all three (the tomb only has four shields). The difficulty may perhaps be resolved by remembering that Dodsworth mentions two of the coats of arms in the same paragraph, that is the quarterly coat of Richard Neville and the differenced arms of England (these latter being the arms of Richard III as Duke of Gloucester). Dodsworth may have intended to show by this that these two coats were both on the tomb, and that the third and last coat mentioned separately (for Beauchamp/Warwick) was in the "middle quire window". As stated, Dodsworth could probably have written the blazons of the Beauchamp/Warwick coat with the previous blazons had he wished to do so, and his spacing may be intended to show that this last coat was different from the previous ones. If the above tentative explanation of Dodsworth is correct, and we are unlikely to ever really know what he meant,²³ at least two coats of arms were in the window, and all trace of both has now vanished. The one coat which we do know from Gill and Todd was once in the window, France and England quarterly, does not appear in Dodsworth's description, unless both of the former authors omitted to mention the Gloucester label. This matter is not perhaps of crucial importance, but it does illustrate the problems involved in the present study.

If the Salisbury/Neville and Gloucester coats were on the monument they would be quite sufficient by themselves to represent Edward of Middleham, being the coats of his parents. The presence of the Gloucester version of the royal arms might be wondered at, since when Edward died his father was King, and as Prince of Wales Edward would have borne France and England quarterly, a label argent. The explanation may be that, as mentioned above, the tomb may not have been finished when Richard died. It was fairly common for effigies not to be finished for several years after the death of the occupant of the tomb, and if this occurred in this case, the arms painter may have thought that the correct coat of arms to put on the monument was that of Gloucester. We must bear in mind that after his death Richard was known in all official pronouncements as Duke of Gloucester.

Another puzzling feature is the presence of the cross of St George on one end of the tomb, and possibly on the other as well. This has usually been interpreted to stand for the Order of the Garter, whose coat of arms it is. If this is so, then the effigy must show a knight of the Order, which Edward of Middleham was.²⁴ No person not a knight, and certainly not a child, would have been given this jealously guarded insignia, whose use was even more restricted than the other badges of rank discussed above. If the cross does not represent the Order of the Garter it may be there for England, and here again no virtually unknown person would be given such a shield, it must be there to signify a person of royal blood.

Attempts have been made to suggest other possible occupants of the tomb. One candidate, George Neville, once Duke of Bedford, may be ruled out by the heraldry. The coat of Montacute/Monthermer quartering Neville used by the Earl of Salisbury is not known (or likely) to have been used undifferenced by his second son John, Marquis of Montague, father of the Duke of Bedford.²⁵ Another suggested candidate is one of the younger sons of the Earl of Salisbury. It is true that two of Salisbury's six sons died young, and one of them, Ralph, was in fact buried at Sheriff Hutton,²⁶ but probably enough has been said above to show that an infant of no position or title would not be buried in such an elaborate tomb, particularly one displaying marks of rank to which the infant had no claim. Such a child would probably have had no effigy at all.

In conclusion, we draw together all of the above arguments. It has been seen that the tomb, probably an altar tomb from the beginning, is in a style which it is quite possible to date from about 1484.²⁷ Great care is necessary before stating that a style is too early for a particular identification, it must always be remembered that wide variations in style of carving, of costume and length of hair were possible at any one time, and the possibility of copying local styles can never be ruled out. It must also be borne in mind that artists in the fifteenth century did not necessarily adhere slavishly to any given style, but felt free to borrow from wherever they chose. It is difficult and dangerous to draw categorical conclusions from such evidence without other facts to back them up. This must especially be the case when a monument is in such bad condition as is this one. The quality of work may be lower than would be expected for a person of princely rank, but so far as can be judged from the present state of the monument, it is not especially poor. The tomb is elaborately carved, and is worthy of a person of rank, far more worthy indeed than if the tomb had been built for a virtually unknown son of even a powerful family. Just as the archaeological evidence is unclear, so the various descriptions of the tomb by Dodsworth, Torre, etc., are also ambiguous. It is somewhat doubtful practice to draw firm conclusions as to what they must have meant from such inconclusive evidence. The evidence should all be interpreted together. In the present authors' opinion their tentative view that at least two of the coats of arms described by Dodsworth (those of the Earl of Salisbury and of the Duke of Gloucester), were on the tomb, is at least as well supported by his description as any other conclusion, and has the merit of supporting and being supported by all the other evidence. We have to ask ourselves who died near Sheriff Hutton, of high rank, of at the very least Neville/Salisbury blood, whose tomb is not known. The evidence combines to point in one direction only; the only person who fits all possible criteria is Edward of Middleham. Therefore, despite all

difficulties involved in accepting this identification, the conclusion of the present authors is that the tomb in Sheriff Hutton church is that of Edward Prince of Wales, only legitimate son of Richard III.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Pauline Routh and Richard Knowles, Sheriff Hutton: Historic Doubts, *The Ricardian*, Vol. 5 (1980), pp.235-242.
2. The first seems to have been Edward Prior and Arthur Gardner in *An Account of Medieval Figure Sculpture in England* (London, 1912), pp. 448 and 493. Their doubts were referred to in P. W. Hammond, *Edward of Middleham* (Cliftonville, 1973) p.40, note 3. Similar doubts were expressed by Arthur Gardner in his *Alabaster Tombs of the Pre-Reformation Period in England* (Cambridge, 1940), p.6 and its precursor, his *Alabaster Tombs of the Gothic Period*, *The Archaeological Journal*, Vol. 80 (N.S. Vol. 30) (1923), p.38.
3. Routh and Knowles, p.239. One would normally expect the words there quoted from Torre's notes of 1690 i.e. "erected monument with thereon Escochecons. . . Above a short image of a man . . ." to describe an intact tomb, as would the words used by Thomas Gill in 1852 i.e. "an alabaster monument sustaining the recumbent figure of a young person of high rank . . . other ornaments of the altar tomb on which it rests are much defaced" (Thomas Gill, *Vallis Eboracensis* (York, 1852), p.429). No-one explicitly describes the tomb as in pieces until Churchill in 1934 (T. B. L. Churchill, *Some Notes on the Royal Monument in the North Chapel of Sheriff Hutton Church*, originally published in *Proceedings of the York Architectural and Archaeological Society*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (1935), pp.25-35, and later published unaltered as a separate booklet. Page references to Churchill are to this reprint. However the Blore manuscript cited by Routh and Knowles (note 15) would seem to show that it was in pieces in 1820. The dismantling of the tomb, and what appears to be deliberate damage could have occurred during the Civil War.
4. Routh and Knowles, p.239; Pauline Routh, *Medieval Effigial Alabaster Tombs in Yorkshire* (Ipswich, 1976), p.98; Churchill, pp.17 and 19. The type and position of the tomb is not necessarily any guide to the status of its occupant
5. Lawrence Stone, *Sculpture in Britain in the Middle Ages* (London, 1972), p.196; Gardner (1940), p.2.
6. P. W. Hammond, The Westminster Abbey Memorial to Anne Neville, *The Ricardian*, Vol. 2, No. 26 (1969), p.6. It remains a slight possibility that both this monument and that in Sheriff Hutton church (if the latter is that of Edward of Middleham) were meant to be temporary.
7. For similarities with older work see references in Note 2, and Routh and Knowles, p.240 for a discussion of these similarities. See also Churchill, p.18.
8. See Gardner (1940), plate 27 and pp.38, 73. The tombs at Holme Pierrepont and Ratcliffe-on-Soar are from the same workshop, and thus do not strictly show copying, but the Dodford and Sheriff Hutton tombs are not, and the latter may very well owe part of its design to the former.
9. Gardner (1940), p.35.
10. Herbert Druitt, *A Manual of Costume as Illustrated by Monumental Brasses* (London, 1906), p.208. Civilians' effigies are very much more common on brasses than in alabaster.
11. One such example, from many, is seen in the monument to Sir Walter Griffith (died 1481) at Burton Agnes, only some twenty miles from Sheriff Hutton, see Gardner (1940), plate 221. There are also many similar examples on brasses e.g. the well known brass of Thomas Peyton (died 1484) at Isleham, Cambridgeshire. Peyton is in late-fifteenth-century armour, so that there is no question of an old stock effigy being used, see Druitt, p.175. We would like to thank William White for the references to Druitt in this and the previous note.
12. Roger Dodsworth, *Yorkshire Church Notes 1619-1631*, edited by J. W. Clay, Yorkshire Archaeological Society, Record Series Vol. 34 (1904), p.176; Dugdale's translation and Torre's notes, Routh and Knowles, pp.238, 239.
13. Gardner (1923), pp.14, 15 and (1940), p.27.

14. The very small plain table tomb, once crowned with a brass, is now in St Edward's Chapel, Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, London, Vol. 1: *Westminster Abbey* (London, 1924), plate 56. Princess Margaret died in 1472, aged about seven months.
15. John de la Pole (died 1491) is buried at Wingfield, Suffolk, Ralph Neville (died 1484) in Brancepeth, Durham. For their monuments see Fred. H. Crossley, *English Church Monuments A.D. 1150-1550* (London, 1921), pp.23, 217. Ralph Neville is shown wearing body armour of some thirty five years before, and a York collar, originally with a boar pendant. Until 1444, when the right to wear one was granted to Earls, coronets were worn only by Dukes and Marquesses, see Boutell's *Heraldry*, revised by C. W. Scott-Giles (London, 1954), p.185.
16. Routh and Knowles, pp.235-236.
17. Routh and Knowles, p.135. The manuscript is illustrated in Churchill, plates IV and V.
18. The relevant entry in Dugdale's "Yorkshire Arms" is illustrated in Churchill, plate VI, see also page 5; Dodsworth, p.V; Routh and Knowles, p.238. For the itinerary of Dugdale while in the north see *The Visitation of the County of Yorke etc*, by William Dugdale, edited by Robert Davies, Surtees Society, Vol. 36 (1849), pp.x-xii. Dugdale borrowed Dodsworth's manuscripts from Lord Fairfax at Nun Appleton. For Dugdale's activities in churches see William Hamper (editor), *The Life etc of Sir William Dugdale* (London, 1827), pp.14, 35, 128, etc.
19. Routh and Knowles, p.239.
20. Churchill, p.5.
21. Routh and Knowles, p.239. Torre did not see the arms of the Duke of Gloucester in this window, since if the first quarter was there part of the Gloucester label (see below) would also have been preserved. Torre only describes a plain quarter of England. Todd in 1824 also only saw the arms of England (George Todd, *Some Account of Sheriff Hutton Castle etc* (York, 1824), p.43), as did Gill in 1852 (Gill, p.428).
22. Hammond (1973), pp.23-26; Churchill, pp.5-10. The griffins seen on the tomb add to the likelihood of this identification. The Montacute and Neville Earls of Salisbury used a griffin as their badge, and Edward of Middleham as their lineal descendant could equally well have done so. For possible evidence of this see Research Notes and Queries, *The Ricardian*, Vol. 3, No. 48 (1974), p.18.
23. We must be wary of trying to read Dodsworth's mind. His words are not clear, and any man, who can in a description of a tomb omit any mention of a shield or shields still plainly inscribed argent a cross gules some seventy years later, is obviously quite capable of making other errors. The tomb may have stood in the South aisle in 1623 as argued above, and Dodsworth was probably standing in the Chancel when he described it. This seems probable from the order of his description of the church, progressing from the North aisle to the Chancel and then to the South aisle (Dodsworth, pp.175-176). In the South aisle he might not see both ends of the tomb, but he would surely see one of them. Of course if the third coat of arms (Beauchamp/Warwick) was on the end, and Dodsworth meant to say as much, he did see the end.
24. Hammond (1973), p.26.
25. See also Routh and Knowles, p.241; W. E. Hampton, *Memorials of the Wars of the Roses* (Upminster, 1979), pp.230-231. George of Bedford was not of course the only son of the Marquis of Montague. He also had a second son, John, who was buried at Sawston, Cambridgeshire.
26. *Genealogist*, New Series, Vol. 3 (1886), p.111. The other young child, Robert, was buried at Middleham.
27. In this connection it is interesting to note that Philip Nelson, author of many articles on alabaster carvings and effigies as well as on stained glass, was prepared to be quoted as saying that the tomb must date from 1484-5 (Churchill, p.18). The views of such an eminent scholar must obviously be treated with some respect and not totally discounted even if, as an early member of the Society, his conclusions may have been somewhat influenced by his sympathies.

CORRECTIONS

We apologise for the following errors in the *Ricardian* September 1980:—
'Sheriff Hutton: Historic Doubts' by Pauline Routh and Richard Knowles.

p.235 Dodsworth's description of the tomb: both versions should read 'alabaster'.

p.238 The Dugdale quotation should end 'sunt haec Insignia'.

p.239 The transcript from Torre should read:

" at head ^{of last}
 ^ by the wall side

short ? erected monu^t with

Thereon blank
? Eschocheons ~~of armes~~ supported by 2 Angells

in midle ⁱⁿ a noble man
 ^ a tabernacle ~~a Cardinal~~ sitting

Above a short Image of a man

in a round cap ^{with} hands conjoyned in prayer
or coronet

on either side 2 Eschocheons in both
argt a Cross gu. "