

HERALDIC MEMORIAL BOARDS IN ST ANDREW'S, TARVIN

Within the church of St Andrew's, Tarvin, are four interesting wooden memorial boards, each of which was probably painted by one of the men named Randle Holmes of Chester, of whom there were four generations of herald painters. These are to the memory of: John Bruen, dated 1605; Mary Bruen, 1651; Elizabeth Angell, 1661, and Mrs Jane Done, 1722.

JOHN BRUEN (1559-1626)

John Bruen resided at Bruen Stapleford and, according to the board, died on 18 January 1605 whereas he actually died on 18 January 1626 and was buried on 23 January. A serious error on the part of the painter. The board shows these arms: *Quarterly – 1. Argent an eagle displayed Sable (Bruen); 2. Gules, a scythe Argent (Praers of Duddon); 3. Argent, a fess dancetty y between three crosses crosslet Sable (Boughton); 4. Sable, two bars Argent, on a canton Sable a garb between four acorns Or (Dedwode of Chester).*



This John Bruen was educated at the home of the Dutton family, where among scholarly matters he learned to dance. 'At that time,' he said, 'the holy Sabbaths of the Lord were wholly spent, in all places about us, in May-games and May-poles, pipings and dancings, for it was a rare thing to hear of a preacher, or to have one sermon in a year.' When about seventeen he entered St Alban Hall (now part of Merton College), Oxford, on 20 December 1577, aged 18, and remained there for two years.ⁱ On return to Cheshire he married Elizabeth, daughter of Henry Hardware, who had been twice mayor of Chester. Bruen enjoyed hunting on his parklands and kept many hounds. But, on the death of his father, also named John, in 1587, Bruen's found his patrimony heavily encumbered with debt and the need to provide for his eleven siblings, he found it necessary to dispose of his dogs, the game, and convert the park into farms.ⁱⁱ

At some time he became a devout puritan and an iconoclast and is responsible for the removal of stained glass and the defacing of monuments in Tarvin church. As a very religious man he maintained a preacher at his own house which became celebrated for its preaching and attracted visitors from far and wide. After the death of his wife in 1597, by which time she had given birth to eight children, Bruen married Ann Fox, about 1600, by whom he had another nine children. After Ann's death ten years later he abandoned Bruen Stapleford and retired to Chester. There he cleared the debt which had encumbered his estate, made allowances for some of his children, and provided for the poor of the parish from the produce of two mills in Stapleford. He eventually returned to Bruen Stapleford with his third wife, Margaret, mother to another two children.

He died after an illness in 1626, at the age of 65. A biography of Bruen by William Hinde, curate of Bunbury, published in 1641.ⁱⁱⁱ Bruen was widely regarded as a notable exponent of Puritanism among the gentry and as a model landlord and employer. John was succeeded by his namesake who was born in 1584.



MARY BRUEN (1617-1651)

Mary Bruen, first wife of John Bruen (1609-1676) was daughter to John Tilston of Huxley: she died on 13 May 1651, but her burial is not recorded in the registers at Tarvin. The arms displayed show the four quarters of Bruen impaled with: *quarterly – 1. Azure, a bend cotised between two garbs Or* (Tilston); *2. Ermine, on a bend cotised Gules three crescents Or, in chief a mullet sable for difference* (Huxley); *Per Or and Argent, an eagle displayed Sable, a crescent Or in fess point for difference*; *4. Sable, a fess humetty within a bordure engrailed Argent, a crescent Or in chief for difference* (Bostock of Huxley)



ELIZABETH ANGELL (1599-1662)

Another black oak memorial board which has a painted achievement of arms has an inscription which reads:

Here lyeth y^e Body of Elizabeth, wife of John Angell, of Crowhurst, in ye county of Surrey Esq^r & only daug^r of S^r Robert Edolphe of Hinxhill in ye county of Kent K^t: she bore unto y^e s^d Jo: Angell 20 children but left after alive only 9 viz: 6 son^s William Robert John Justinian & Thomas & 3 daught^{rs} Mary Thomasin & Frances. She died y^e 16th of Marche 1661 at Peel Hall, beinge aged 62 yeares. ^{iv}

Elizabeth Angell was buried at Tarvin on 19th March 1662 and the entry in the burial register reads as ‘Mrs Angel of the Peele’.

This memorial is curious given that the lady, her husband and her father were not Cheshire people and that, other than the fact that she died at Peel Hall, Mouldsworth, she seems not to have had any connection with the parish. So, who was she and why is she here and what of the men in her life.

Before considering the family, I shall describe the arms and point out some errors made by the painter. The shield has impaled arms which ought to be: *Or, three fusils in fess Azure over all a bendlet Gules* (Angell of Crowhurst) quartering *Azure, crusilly Or a unicorn salient Argent* (Doane of Ireland), impaling *Ermine, on a bend Sable three cinquefoils Argent* (Edolphe of Hinxhill) quartering *Lozengy Or and Azure, a griffin salient Ermine* (Barrow of Kent). The crest of the Angell family is - *out of a ducal coronet Or, a demi pegasus crined Or*; and for Edolphe - *an Ibex's head erased Sable maned armed and attired Or*.



The arms are crudely painted and may have received attention over the years which has led to errors. The Angell coat of arms is sometimes given as having a red baton, a shorter version of the bendlet. The griffin in the Edolphe arms ought to be white with ermine spots and the background should be formed of lozenges (*lozengy*) and not squares (*checky*) as indicated. The Angell crest ought to be a flying horse – *Pegasus* – rising out of the coronet, instead of what appears to be a wolf. The Edolphe crest is the head of a black ibex and not what is shown which looks more like a ram with unusual horns – perhaps the painter did not understand what an ibex was. Images of the way the two crests ought to appear are given below.



Elizabeth's father, Sir Robert Edolph was sheriff of Kent in 1607/8 and not much more is known of him, but of her husband much more is known. John Angell (1592-1670) was a son of William Angell, a fishmonger of Old Fish Street, London, and Joan Povey the daughter of a London based embroiderer. John owed much to the influence of his father who was a purveyor of fish to the royal court and held the position of 'sergeant of the actary' (the royal store for provisions of meat and fish). He climbed the ranks of the Fishmongers' Company to become prime warden in 1616. He became sufficiently wealthy to purchase an estate at Crowhurst, Surry, which had a yearly income of £300 and to pay for John's education in law at the Middle Temple and afterwards at Jesus College Cambridge in 1608. William also paid to secure positions for John as porter of Windsor Castle, surveyor of St Katherine's Hospital, and ultimately as a Gentleman Pensioner to King James I. Using his influence in the town of Rye where he purchased fish, William was able to secure John's marriage to Elizabeth Edolphe, daughter of an influential townsman, and to secure for him, in 1621 and 1624, the appointment as MP for the town with the backing of some influential courtiers. It has to be said that John Angell was not particularly effective in representing the borough and was not returned in 1625. John Angell died on 23 October 1670 and was buried at Crowhurst parish church where, in the chancel, there is a slab to his memory with a Latin inscription he is stated to have been '*Provisor Publicus (quod vulgo Caterer audit) et itidem Windsorii Castri supremus Janitor.*' In his will he left little to his children and grandchildren as he had lost much London property in the Great Fire.

Among John's many children there was a daughter named Mary who married John Hardware of Peel, grandson of Henry Hardware, one-time mayor of Chester, who built Peel Hall in 1637. This accounts for Elizabeth's presence at Peel – it was the home of her daughter Mary, who by her marriage was related to John Bruen of Stapleford. Whilst her residence at Peel can be accounted for it is strange that she was interred at Tarvin and not back in her home parish of Crowhurst. It is interesting to note, and may be of no coincidence, that Elizabeth's son-in-law died a month after Elizabeth, on 17 February 1662.

JANE DONE (1656-1722)

The last board is to the memory of Mrs Jane Done who died on 29 April 1722 aged 66. She was buried on 3 May and the register of burials, despite the title 'Mrs', records her as a spinster from Chester, a fact borne out by the fact that her arms are in a lozenge. She was the daughter of Edward Done of Duddon, a junior line of the family that resided at Utkinton: by rights there ought to be a mark of difference, perhaps a crescent, on the arms which has been missed off.



ⁱ *Alumni Oxonienses 1500-1714*, ed. Joseph Foster (Oxford, 1891), pp. 171-200. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/alumni-oxon/1500-1714/pp171-200> [accessed 30 July 2018].

ⁱⁱ For more on the Bruen family see G. Ormerod, *History of the County palatine of Chester*, (ed. T. Helsby 1888), vol II, pp. 317-323.

ⁱⁱⁱ W. Hinde, *The very singular life of John Bruen, Esquire, of Bruen Stapleford, Cheshire* (1857), first published in 1641, revised by Coddington in 1799.

^{iv} The date given is of the old 'Julian' calendar of pre-1752 when New Year's Day was on 25 March. So, 16 March 1661 would in the modern 'Gregorian' calendar be 16 March 1662.