

THE BUCKLE FAMILY OF ORFORD AT A TIME OF RELIGIOUS CHANGE

Editor's note *As this article is concerned with the 'time of religious change', some readers may find it helpful to read the very brief account of what those changes were, printed as an Appendix at the end of this article on p 15.*

When the iconoclast, William Dowsing, visited Orford Church in 1644, he ordered the removal of all the dedications on pre-Reformation brasses, since they would have incorporated requests for prayers for the souls of the deceased, an anathema to the Puritan mind¹. However the male and female brass figures, including those of children, were untouched, and in one case, the symbol of a buckle remains today. The buckle is a rebus, a visual clue as to the name of the person depicted. Thus we are able to identify the burial place, by the altar, of a female member of the Buckle family.



The Buckle brass to the north of the altar in St Bartholomew's Church.
Photo by Jane Allen

The frequency with which the family name (spelt variously Buckyll, Bokell, Bokyl, Bookill, Bukkill or even Bekell) occurs in the collection of documents in The National Archives at Kew and the Suffolk Record Office in Ipswich, show just how prominent in Orford's affairs the Buckles' were for over 100 years in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. There is a great deal of work to be done in reading and interpreting those documents, some of which are dry legal papers connected with the affairs of the town. A more interesting picture of the family emerges from their wills, three of which are examined here and which incidentally shed some light on how the momentous religious changes brought about by the Reformation affected people's lives.

The will of John Buckyll 1534

When John Buckle of Orford made his will he appointed his brother Robert sole executor, and asked to be buried in St. Bartholomew's Church. His widow, Marion, inherited his tenement and lands, which were to be sold after her death. She also received his stallboat, its anchor and a small craft know as a cock. These she could sell provided she gave the poor of Orford beer and bread every year to the value of four shillings. His household goods were divided between her and their daughters Margaret Moyse and Colett Buckle.