



The principal memorial mounted on the north wall of the Wyndham chapel depicts the two brothers kneeling, these are Henry, who died in 1613 and George, who died in 1624 (photograph on front cover). The brass memorial set in the floor of the chancel, with four identical shields, remembers Edmund Wyndham who died in 1616.

A further brass with portrait bust shows yet another Sir John Wyndham 1558 - 1645 along with his wife Joanna and their son William 1st Baronet who died in 1683. The memorial to William 1st Baronet is the grand if somewhat macabre wall memorial made from alabaster with skull and cherubs. William was Member of Parliament for Somerset for 2 years and MP for Taunton from

1660 -1679 He was made a baron by Cromwell in 1661 'of Orchard, Somerset'. William is also remembered for his healing skills with those who suffered in the civil war.

Sir William Wyndham 3rd Baronet 1687–1740 became chancellor of the Exchequer during the reign of Queen Anne.

He was succeeded by his son Sir Charles Wyndham 4th Baronet (1710 -1763) as 2nd Earl of Egremont in 1750.

High above you will see two fine helmets each with the Wyndham crest, two further helmets can be found in the Lady chapel, the oldest dates from 1565, they were too small to be worn and would have been used in funeral processions.

For further information see the St Decuman's guide book, available in the Community Bookshop (price 50p).

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# Wyndham Family Memorials

## In St Decuman's Church Watchet



PHOTOGRAPHS AND TEXT ALAN JONES



Margaret Wyndham married Sir Andrew Luttrell of Dunster. Her brother John Wyndham married Elizabeth Sydenham of Orchard near Williton in 1528 and so St. Decuman's became part of the Orchard Wyndham estate in 1529. There are many interesting monuments of the Wyndham family both in the Wyndham chapel and in the chancel: The earliest is an altar tomb on which there are fine brasses of Sir John Windham (died 1574) and Elizabeth Sydenham his wife (died 1571). These brasses show in excellent detail the knight's armour of the time and his wife shows what the finest of dresses looked like. A magnificent four pillared canopy over the tomb, in Elizabethan gothic style, was dismantled in 1972.

The Wyndham family (sometimes spelt Windham) came from Norfolk. As a youth Sir John accompanied Henry VIII's sister Mary on the occasion of her marriage to Louis XII. Whilst visiting his sister Margaret (married to Sir Andrew Luttrell of Dunster), he met Elizabeth Sydenham who owned the Sydenham home at Orchard. Sir John married Elizabeth in 1528 and so became the first of the 'Orchard Wyndham' family. They were married for 44 years and on her tomb we read: "She bore him six daughters and four sons".

Sir John was succeeded by his grandson, the son of John Wyndham and Florence Wadham as John had died two years before his father in 1572. Florence died in 1596 and their brass memorials can be seen on the east wall of the north aisle, set in black marble (imported from Tournai in Belgium.)

Marble is always cool to touch as opposed to slate, try this for yourself.



The altar tomb on the north wall commemorates Sir George Wyndham 4th Earl of Egremont who died in 1845 and his wife Jane who died in 1876. (see separate plaque above the tomb). Living at

Orchard Wyndham both were great philanthropist and supporters of the local community. Jane carried on with her good works for many years after her husband's death and was much loved in the community. They had no children and so the estate of Orchard Wyndham was inherited by a distant cousin.

**The legend of Florence Wyndham**

In 1559 about a year after their marriage, Florence was pregnant and the family hoping for an heir, but towards the end of her pregnancy she was struck down, apparently dead, Sir John was overcome with grief. Florence was buried the next day in the Wyndham crypt at St Decuman's Church. After the funeral, and the family had returned home, they were astonished and unbelieving as Florence knocked on the window dressed in her grave clothes. It is said that the servants refused to let her in believing her to be a ghost or a witch. Sir John fainted and took to his bed. In the morning she was found on the doorstep in labour.



What actually happened was that the sexton, a man called Tom Hole, had seen the rings on Florence's body and decided to steal them. He returned to the crypt at night and opened the coffin. He was unable to prise them from her fingers and so he used his knife to cut them off. When he saw the blood flowing from Florence's hand and the body stirring, as she recovered from her coma, the terrified Tom Hole fled down the hill to Watchet never to be seen again. Florence struggled out of her coffin and staggered down the hill back to her home at Kentsford farm. She recovered completely and gave birth to a son, John Wyndham II, who in turn married Joan Portman and subsequently raised 9 sons and 6 daughters from whom all the world wide Wyndham family are descended. A fortuitous escape indeed. Some years later, whilst Florence was on her way home to Kentsford farm, it being too late to complete her journey, she gave birth to twins, at the Bell Inn in Watchet .

To this day members of the Wyndham family are not buried until three days after their death.

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