

These wall paintings, having been perceived as popish imagery at the time of the Reformation, were subsequently over-painted with whitewash, but are now gradually reappearing as the whitewash falls away.³ They consist of a painted chancel arch with what is described as a Doom, a symbolism of the gates of Heaven at Judgement Day, together with several other paintings elsewhere within the church. In particular those in the north transept window continue to intrigue because of their strange depictions, added to by their indistinct but unquestionably antique appearance.

The painting on the left of the window depicts a bearded man wearing what can be described as a coronet,⁴ a small crown once worn by princes or others of high status. The man appears to be looking at the object held in his right hand, an identical bearded head, seemingly his own. In his left hand he is holding what has been described as a palm frond, but so indistinct is the painting it could equally be a sword. The painting to the right again appears to show the same bearded male, now holding with both hands what might be a ciborium or lidded chalice used to hold consecrated wafers for Communion, but what has been described elsewhere as a simple cup.

The current informal opinions are that the left-hand painting relates to Saint Kenelm of Winchcombe, because of Burton Dassett's connections with the de Sudely family, and that the right hand painting might depict the Christian King Oswald of Northumbria, the cup being that which Bede states was given to the Church within Northumbria by Oswald. Others have suggested the right-hand painting may relate to John de Sudely, whom it is believed may be interred in the tomb below the north transept window; this does appear to be the oldest tomb in the church. John de Sudely may have been cup bearer to the king and perhaps the right-hand painting may relate to this in some way.

Elsewhere it has been suggested there may be some connection with the Knights Templar, but the possibility has also been raised in the past that these paintings might relate to the curious folk tale of Saint Freomund. Before expanding on this last connection more discussion is needed on the paintings' currently perceived representations.

³ See 'Notes on the Paintings in Burton Dassett Church', by E. Baker, A.R.C.A., to be found in the back of the guide to *Burton Dassett Church*, by F. O'Shaughnessy.

⁴ Coronet: any small crown worn by princes or peers as a mark of rank. *O.E.D.*