

# SOMERSET HERALDRY SOCIETY

Journal No 23 Winter 2012

## Gilling Castle and its Heraldry



Fig. 1 The Fairfax Arms as they appear on the staircase of the family's town house in York

In May 1929 Messrs Sotheby & Co. of New Bond Street were instructed to sell 'the magnificent Elizabethan Panelling and Heraldic Stained Glass Panels in the Great Chamber' of Gilling Castle in Yorkshire, former seat of the Viscounts Fairfax. The castle itself had passed through several hands since the death of the last member of the Fairfax family to live there in 1885, and in 1929 was purchased by Ampleforth Abbey for use as a junior school. The panelling and glass, however, were retained by the vendor, who sold it separately.

'The general effect of the room is very fine;' announced the sale catalogue. 'The panelling is of the highest quality; the painted frieze has a unique interest for Yorkshire being an armorial of the county at the time of the decoration of the room; the fine stained glass of the windows, together with the arms on the overmantel, give the heraldic history of three great families [Fairfax, Stapleton and Constable], and without exaggeration it may be said to be one of the finest, if not the finest, specimens of a room of the Elizabethan period now extant in Great Britain.'

The panelling and stained glass was ultimately acquired by the American newspaper tycoon Randolph Hearst, who wanted it to decorate an extension to his newly acquired thirteenth century castle of St Donat's in Glamorgan. Fortunately the extension was never built, the treasure from Gilling Castle glass never left its packing cases in a London warehouse, and ultimately all was restored to the Great Chamber in 1952. As the current guide to the Great Chamber points out, the room may not look exactly as it did when Sir William Fairfax installed the heraldic decoration in 1585, but it certainly looks just as it did before the sale of 1929.

There were three distinct branches of the Fairfax family, all descended from a Richard Fairfax (1395-1431) whose two sons, William of Walton and Guy of Steeton, represented two of those branches. The third branch made its appearance when Guy's son William married Elizabeth Thwaites of Denton, making it possible for the elder of their two sons to inherit Denton while the younger was given Steeton.

The Walton branch of the family acquired Gilling Castle, some twenty miles north of York, in 1492, and Sir Thomas Fairfax of Gilling was created Viscount Fairfax of Elmley in 1628. The previous year his kinsman of Denton, another Sir Thomas, was created Baron Fairfax of Cameron. It was his son, General Ferdinando Fairfax, later second baron, who gained fame as a Roundhead general during the civil war, while his grandson, another Thomas and later third baron, became the Commander in Chief of the New Model Army. The Steeton branch could claim neither a peerage nor national fame, although Robert Fairfax of Steeton (1665-1725) rose to become an admiral during the reign of Queen Anne and Mayor of York in 1715.



The Denton branch of the family emigrated to the New World in the later eighteenth century, where they are commemorated by Fairfax County, Virginia and are represented today by the fourteenth baron. The Fairfaxes of Gilling died out in the male line in 1772 (the last Viscount having built Fairfax House in York, now open to the public), while the last representative of the Steeton branch seems to have died without issue within living memory.

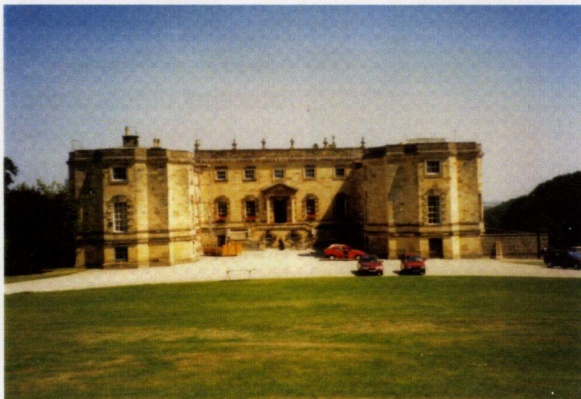


Fig. 2  
Gilling  
Castle

Sir William Fairfax of Gilling, the creator of the heraldic Great Chamber, was the great grandson of Thomas Fairfax, the first member of the family to live at the castle. He succeeded to the property in 1571, and it was he who substantially reconstructed the old fourteenth century house. He left the ground floor intact but rebuilt the first and second floors and created as his piece de resistance the heraldic Great Chamber. At the beginning of the 18th century the then Viscount Fairfax remodelled much of the interior of the house and added the wings enclosing the front court. Minor alterations were made in the 1750s but the Great Chamber was left intact on both occasions.



As far as the heraldry is concerned, the Fairfaxes originally used the arms of Malbis, a family from which they had received a considerable inheritance as a result of the marriage of one of Sir William's ancestors, but by the middle of the fifteenth century they had acquired arms of their own. These were *argent a lion rampant sable debruised by three bars gemel gules*. A century later Sir Thomas Fairfax of Denton changed the field from *argent* to *or* to distinguish his branch from his Gilling relatives.



Figs 3 & 4

The Great Chamber showing the Stapleton window and the Fairfax arms above the fireplace



The principal achievement in the Great Chamber is to be found in a panel above the fireplace. Here one has the arms of Sir William Fairfax quartering *argent a chevron between three hinds' heads erased gules* (Malbis), *barry of six argent and gules on a canton sable a cross flory or* (Etton), *argent a bend azure* (Carthorpe), *argent a chevron between three martlets sable* (Ergham) and *argent a fess between two lions passant guardant sable* (Folyfayt). The supporters are *two goats argent* and the crest is *a lion's head erased sable*. Above the Fairfax arms are the arms of Queen Elizabeth I while the chimney breast above the fireplace contains the arms of Sir William's four sisters and their husbands (Bellasis, Curwen, Vavasour, and Roos, each impaling Fairfax).

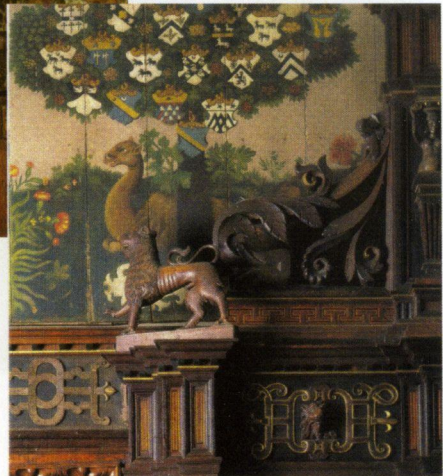
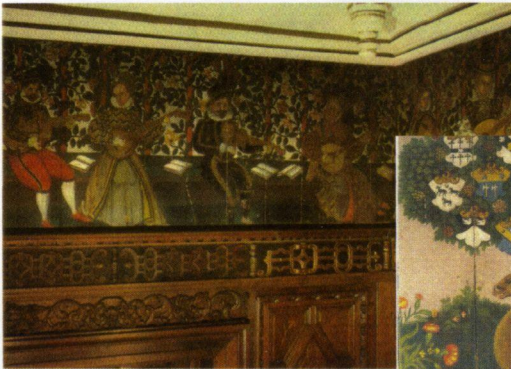




Fig 5

The fireplace showing the heraldic frieze, the royal arms, the Fairfax arms and the arms of Sir William's married sisters

The heraldic frieze above the panelling is made up of wooden boards decorated with twenty two trees set in a meadow inhabited by an assortment of animals and flowers. Under each tree is a label containing the name of one of the Tudor wapentakes of Yorkshire. The branches of the trees bear shields containing the arms of the gentry who lived in each wapentake. In all there are four hundred and fifty shields of which seven are blank. As there were not enough wapentakes to fill the entire frieze an area in the north east corner is filled with six musicians, three men and three ladies.



Figs 6 & 7

The Musicians in the north-east corner and one of the wapentake trees



Fig 8  
The arms of Fairfax  
impaling Gerrard for  
Sir Thomas Fairfax

When it came to the stained glass, Sir William traced his own heraldic descent in the Bay Window, that of his wife Jane Stapleton in the South Window, which alone survives almost intact, and the family of his daughter-in-law Catharine Constable is commemorated by the glass in the East Window. This last cannot have been placed there before 1594, when the young couple obtained a licence to marry.



Fig 9  
The multiquartered  
arms of the Sta-  
pleton family from  
the South window



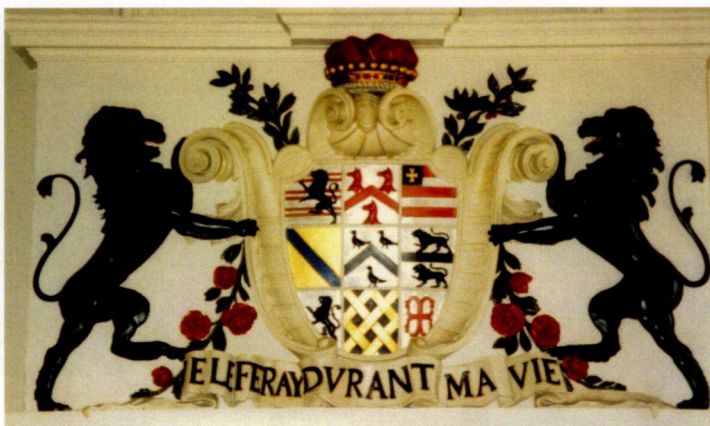


Fig 10  
The arms of Constable  
(ancient) from the East  
window

The Great Chamber at Gilling Castle is an invaluable heraldic record, not only of the important Yorkshire families of Fairfax, Stapleton and Constable but also of their neighbours in the latter half of the sixteenth century, and one can only bless the fates that prevented the disappearance and possibly destruction of the heraldic panelling and stained glass after 1929. Gilling Castle still functions as the home of St Michael's the prep school for nearby Ampleforth College and great care is taken of the national treasure that the castle contains. A full record of the heraldry was compiled in 1996 and was published by the Ampleforth Abbey Trustees (The Great Chamber at Gilling Castle by Hugh Murray – ISBN 0 95181 738 8).

Fig 11  
The arms of Constable  
(modern) impaling Oyri from  
the East window





## THE FAIRFAX FAMILY

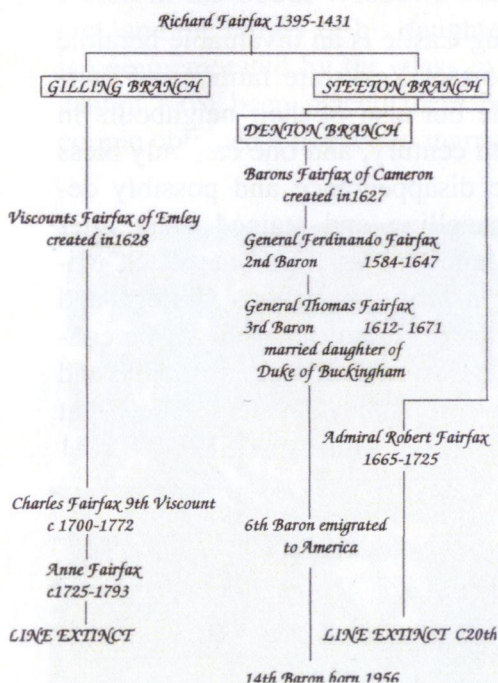


Fig 12

The Arms of the seventh Viscount Elmley located over the fireplace of the entrance hall at Gilling Castle..

Quarterly of nine:-

1. Fairfax
2. Malbis
3. Etton
4. Mauley
5. Ergham
6. Folyfayt
7. Stapleton
8. Bellew
9. Goddard

The goat supporters that appeared on the arms of Sir William Fairfax (Fig 4) have been replaced by two lions rampant sable, presumably granted in 1628 when the viscountcy was created.

Stephen Tudsbery-Turner



## SINCE OUR LAST

## VISIT TO HINTON ST GEORGE

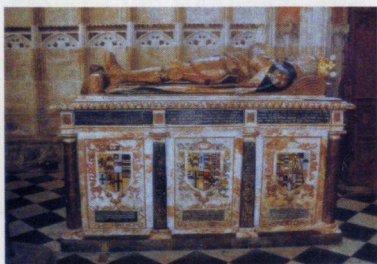


On Saturday 15th September twelve members enjoyed an excellent lunch at the Lord Poulett Arms in Hinton St George before visiting the superb monuments in St George's Church where they were treated to a stimulating presentation by local historian Charles Bird. Seen here in our

picture are past chairman Alex Maxwell Findlater, current chairman Mary Rose Rogers together with member and regular contributor to our journal, Gale Glynn.

## THE ANNUAL DINNER

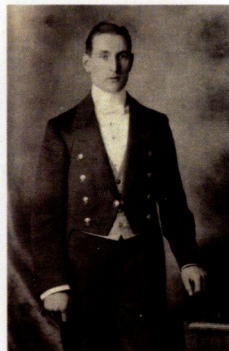
This year the annual dinner was held at the Great Bow Wharf, Langport on the 10th October and was preceded by a talk entitled The tomb of Ambrose Dudley and the head of the Duke of Suffolk. The somewhat gory subject matter did not deter members from doing full justice to yet another mouth-watering meal, and there was a lively discussion over the intricacies of the heraldry displayed by the Dudley and Grey families.



The Tomb of Ambrose Dudley  
in the Beauchamp Chapel, St  
Mary's Church Warwick

## POWDERED WIGS AND CRESTED BUTTONS

Twelve members were present at the White Hart in Somerton on the 14th November to enjoy the hospitality provided by the society's new venue for meetings. A wide variety of excellent pub food was available and a stimulating evening was spent discussing the esoteric world of heraldic livery buttons.



Incidentally, if anyone can throw any light upon the ownership of the arms displayed on the button illustrated above, the editor would be delighted to hear from you. At first sight the Duke of Buccleuch seems likely, but then note the crest and supporters.

## FUTURE EVENTS

Meetings to be held on Tuesdays at the White Hart in Somerton.

Time: 6.30 p.m. for a pub supper, 7.30 p.m. for the meeting itself.

19th February - **AGM**. Ideas for future events welcome.

19th March - **Heraldic Book Auction**. Book list to be circulated later.

23rd April - **Members 10 minutes talks**. Volunteers requested!



## RAGE, RIVALRY AND USE OF HERALDRY

by Gale Glynn

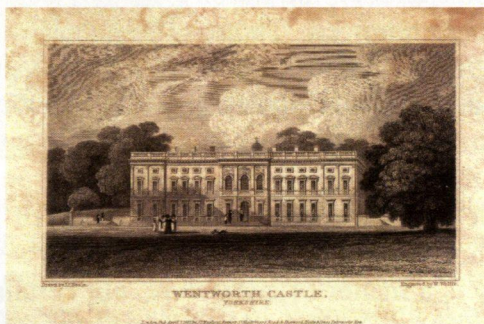


Fig 1

The stylised serenity projected in the image of Wentworth Castle (Fig 1) could hardly be more misleading. The Yorkshire Wentworths were a gifted but unfortunate family whose name is connected

with two great neighbouring houses in Yorkshire, Wentworth Woodhouse and Wentworth Castle. In Journal no. 22 (q.v.) we have seen how the differenced arms of the Suffolk Wentworth branch became submerged in quarterings when there were no further male heirs, even though the name remains as a subsidiary title of the fourth Earl of Lytton. A similar fate also befell this branch.

Undoubtedly the most able and notorious of the Wentworths was Thomas the second Baronet, of Wentworth Woodhouse, who was created Baron Wentworth in 1628, Viscount 1638, and in 1640 Baron Raby with remainder to his younger brothers and their descendants, and Earl of Strafford. His ruthless management of Ireland as Lord-Deputy together with support for the King against Parliament in the Second Bishops' War ensured the sobriquet "Black Tom Tyrant". The Long Parliament called for his impeachment, but at his trial in 1641 he defended himself so ably that his opponents led by Pym resorted to a Bill of Attainder. After his execution, a remorseful Charles I granted the same titles to his son, William, in December that year, but it was not until after the Restoration that the attainder was reversed and William assumed the precedence of his father.

Upon the death of second Earl in 1695 without issue the only title that did not become extinct, the Barony of Raby descended to his first cousin once removed, Thomas Wentworth (1672-1739). Can one imagine the degree of bitter disappointment and outrage that must engulfed a man Jonathan Swift called 'proud as Hell' when the Strafford fortune did not follow the title but was inherited by the third Earl's nephew, Thomas Watson, third son of his sister Anne and her husband, Edward, Earl of Rockingham? Whether this bitter blow affected Lord Raby's subsequent use of heraldry is a matter of conjecture, but certainly rivalry between the cousins existed, as is evinced by his decision to buy land at Stainborough some six miles from Wentworth Woodhouse in 1708 and then to build a magnificent house, subsequently called Wentworth Castle. As plain Thomas Wentworth, he had already caught the eye of William III in 1688 when he was appointed a Cornet in Lord Colchester's Regiment of Horse. He took part in many of the campaigns on the Continent and his progress from soldier to diplomat is documented by his unusually detailed armorial bookplates (see Fig 2) bearing the arms *Sa. a chevron or betw three leopards' faces, crest: a griffin passant, motto: En Dieu Est Tovt*, flanked by supporters *dexter a griffin and sinister a lion*. Above enveloped in mantling is a baron's coronet upon which rests a helm surmounted by the Wentworth crest, *a griffin passant*. The 1698 text states 'The Right Honourable Thomas Wentworth Baron of Raby and Coll-nell of his Maiesties Own Royall Reg<sup>mt</sup> of Dragoons'.

Fig 2



The 1705 version (see Fig 3) bearing the same arms gives a career update: 'His Excellency; The Rt. Hon<sup>ble</sup> Tho: Wentworth Lord Raby, Peer of England, Coll<sup>o</sup>. Of her Mat<sup>ys</sup> Royal Reg<sup>t</sup> of Dragoons, Major General of all her Mat<sup>ys</sup> Forces & her Mat<sup>ys</sup> Ambassador Extra<sup>ry</sup> to y<sup>e</sup> King of Prussia 1705'.





It however has no helm, crest or flowing mantling, thereby emphasising the baron's coronet.

Fig 3

The bookplate of 1712 records his increasing influence, position and his elevation to the earldom the previous year as 'His Excellency The Right Honourable Thomas Earl of Strafford Viscount Wentworth of Wentworth Woodhouse, and of Stainborough, baron of Raby, Newmarch, and Oversley; Her Majesty's Ambassador Extraordinary, and Plenipotentiary to the States General of the United Provinces, and also at the Congress of Utrecht; Colonel of Her Majesty's own Royal Regiment of Dragoons; Lieutenant General of all Her Forces; First Lord of the Admiralty (*sic*) of Great Britain and Ireland; one of y<sup>e</sup> Lords of Her Majesty's most Honourable Privy Council; and Knight of the Most Noble Order of y<sup>e</sup> Garter'. However, as a Tory his career came to an abrupt end with the accession of George I in 1714. As the exiled James III granted him appointments and created him Duke of Strafford in 1721/2 it is hardly surprising that he was fingered in the Atterbury plot of 1722. It was only due to the bravery of his steward in resisting torture that he was not incriminated.

The Earl devoted much of his energy to continuing to build a rival to Wentworth Woodhouse. Not only does the house bear a fine achievement, (see Fig 4), but keystone over the front door shows two young eagles perched on an oak stump from which issues a branch (see Pl. 5) – a risky indication of Jacobite sympathies?



Fig 4

Fig  
5



Fig  
6



Raby's appointment as Ambassador Extraordinary to Berlin, meant he had recourse to the allowance of plate (silver) granted to appointees. Amongst the pieces commissioned is the outstanding Wine Cistern, of 1705/6 (see Fig 8), now at Temple Newsam House, weighing more than 2,500 ounces and measuring over 51ins across the handles. It would have been displayed in the British Embassy in Berlin at a time when diplomats were judged by their splendid entertainments and would have functioned as a tool of diplomacy

It is hardly surprising that heraldic and personal references appear in the state room, including a finely carved marble crest *a griffin passant* beneath an earl's coronet (see Fig 6). TS monograms beneath Garter stars nestle in the capitals of pilasters. Perhaps more unusual is the use of heraldic connectors to downpipes on internal courtyards bearing Wentworth arms within the Garter motto and surmounted by an earl's coronet (see Fig 7).



Fig 7



Fig 8



The engraving of the royal arms (see Fig 9) of Queen Anne is attributable to the maker's son, John Rollos. Interestingly Lord Raby's mother wrote to him (14 May 1706) saying "I writt Last time to you in such haste that I could not tell you how much I admired yr fine Sestern but instead of the Queens Arms I wish yrs had been upon it .... My dearest soul, Yr Moste infenit affectionate Mother'. How Raby too must have wished his arms were within the marshal trophies of the mantling which in some way mirror those on the exterior of the house (Fig 4).



Fig  
9



Fig  
10

Jacob's Peerage of 1766 shows the Wentworth arms quartered with Watson, here shown as *Arg on a chevron engrailed az between three martlets sa as many crescents or.* for the Marquis of Rockingham (see Fig 10) the maternal grandson of the 'Black Tom' who inherited the Wentworth estates from his uncle.

Even well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century Wentworth arms delineated the connection between property and titles in the arms of the Earls of Fitzwilliam who two centuries before inherited Wentworth Woodhouse, the longest house in Europe with it's beautiful gardens and parkland, only for misfortune and envy to play its wrecking hand. Whatever the future holds for these two magnificent Yorkshire houses heraldry remains a vibrant strand in their history.

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Acknowledgement: Particular thanks to James Lomax and Temple Newsam House for permission to reproduce Figs 8 & 9.

## SOMERSET HERALDRY SOCIETY

### Officers

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Hon Librarian	Ronald Gadd, MBE, RD
Hon Members	Alex Maxwell Findlater

### Objects

The aims shall be to promote and encourage the study of heraldry especially in the historic county of Somerset.

### The Heraldry of Edwardian Somerset 1. Taunton

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Contributions welcome.



This attractive Edwardian depiction of the 'arms' of the borough council of Taunton together with a view of the castle was produced by the picture postcard firm of Jarrolds. The 'arms' were in fact an unauthorised device consisting of a cherub above a royal crown, based on a Corporation seal dated 1685. When arms were officially granted in 1934 the royal crown was replaced by a Saxon crown with reference to Ine, King of the West Saxons and founder of Taunton.