

THE SOMERSET DRAGON

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THE SOMERSET
DRAGON

The dragon that appears on the arms of Somerset County Council was inspired by the dragon of the ancient kingdom of Wessex, a monster often described as being red-gold. The mace he carries is a symbol of local government. The arms were granted to the county in 1911.

We thought that it was time our journal received a name and felt that our dragon was both informative and inspirational. It is hoped that our readers feel the same way.

The existing journal numbering has been retained.

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CHARLTON MACKRELL

by Ralph Brocklebank



The parish church of St Mary the Virgin in Charlton Mackrell stands on a ridge overlooking the village, and has an unusual layout with a central tower like a miniature cathedral. On a visit with my brother-in-law Roger Seabury, we found a leaflet describing some of the features in the church, including an elaborate tiled version of the arms of Richard Bagot, Bishop of Bath and Wells from 1845 to 1854 (who had been Bishop of Oxford in 1829) on the chancel floor under the tower, and on one of the pews, the coat of arms of the Percies who were, for a time, patrons of the living. It also stated that the two 18th century chandeliers (possibly Dutch) hanging from the roof of the chancel had been the gift of Mrs Brocklebank of Charlton Mackrell Court in 1928. This was the first time I had known this, although the church was familiar to me from my childhood. The leaflet also explained that when the parish had been merged with the parish of Charlton Adam next door, the Vicarage of the latter had been kept as more practical and the Rectory at Charlton Mackrell had been sold. This is when my newly-widowed grandmother had bought it, then named Charlton Mackrell Court, and it stood, an elegant Gothick styled house, at the foot of the ridge by the church, and I have many memories of visits and holidays spent there.

My grandfather, Ralph Eric Royds Brocklebank, had an unusual hatchment. His father, Thomas, had married Mary Petrena Royds and impaled his arms with Royds to distinguish them from those of his elder brother, as may be seen in a memorial window in the cloisters of Chester Cathedral, but it turned out that his wife was an heraldic heir-ess so that his son could quarter Brocklebank with Royds in his arms. He then married his mother's first cousin, Constance Alington Royds, so could impale his quartered arms with Royds again. In those days large families often spanned a generation; my elder sister was only a few years younger than our youngest uncle and our youngest great-uncle's daughter was younger than we were! Although I have kept the Royds quartering in my arms, my grandfather's hatchment is only a legend, but this is what it might have looked like-



My grandmother later moved to South Petherton (downsizing) but on a number of visits I have failed to locate the house and suspect it may have been demolished. She subsequently moved to Bath, to a house in the middle of the Royal Crescent which is now part of a hotel, where she died. Since moving from Cheshire, she was faithful to Somerset.

THE SMYTH ESCUTCHEONS

By Stephen Tudsbury-Turner



Figs 1 & 2 Smyth impaling Ashburton and Poulett

Hidden away in a storeroom in York are eight splendid wooden escutcheons that formerly hung on the walls of Ashton Court, just outside Bristol. For four hundred years the house had been the ancestral home of the Smyth family but following the death in May 1946 of the Hon. Mrs. Esme Smyth, the last of the family to live at Ashton Court, her heirs decided to dispose of house and contents. Ashton Court itself remained in a state of near dereliction until 1958 when the mansion was bought by the Bristol City Council. On the other hand the contents were disposed of fairly promptly and it was probably then that the escutcheons were acquired by the York Castle Museum.

The firm of John E. Pritchard of Bristol organised the sale over four days in June 1947 and lot 578 in its catalogue lists the 'collection of 16 armorial shields dating from 1430', which were amongst items from the Gallery. They appear to have been sold for the paltry sum of £17.

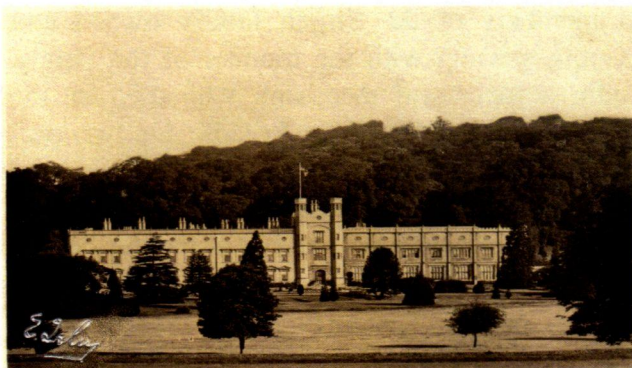


Fig 3 Ashton Court from an old postcard

Judging by the date 1884, which appears at the base of one of the York escutcheons, it would seem that the shields were created to celebrate the marriage of Sir Greville Smyth with his cousin Emily (Way) Edwards, which took place that year and after which the house was substantially redecorated. Given that the catalogue mentions the date 1430 it would also be reasonable to assume that the escutcheons recorded the marriage alliances entered into by the family, starting with the grandfather of John Smyth, the first owner of the property, and finishing with Sir Greville, who as things turned out, was the last male owner.



Figs 4, and 5
Smyth impaling
Whitchurch
and Wilson



Fourteen members of the Smyth family owned and lived at Ashton Court, starting with the founder of the family fortunes, John Smith, a successful merchant, who died in 1555 having been sheriff and twice Mayor of Bristol. On two occasions the male line died out, a fact that resulted in the Smyth baronetcy being granted to the family on three separate instances. Greville himself was the first (and last) baronet of the third creation



Fig 6 Clifton Lodge - the entrance to Ashton Court that was built when the Suspension Bridge was opened in 1864.

There were nine Smyths who quite clearly were qualified to be included for inclusion on the escutcheons and six of these appear on the York shields. These are Smyth impaling Poulett, Ashburnham, Woolnough, Whitchurch, Wilson and Way. One of the Smyths, namely Sir John Smyth (Profligate Jack), the last baronet of the first creation, married two ladies, neither of whose families were armigerous, while Sir John Smyth, the fourth baronet of the second creation never married. Both Sir Johns should thus be commemorated by plain Smyth shields and these York does not possess. Other obvious omissions are Smyth impaling Tewther, Gorges, and Astrey.

If Jarrit Smith was not armigerous before he adopted the name and arms of his brother-in-law Sir John Smyth and if Sir Greville did not want to display more than one plain Smyth shield, then he was clearly short of impaled coats of arms to make up his sixteen – a number perhaps dictated by aesthetic considerations. He appears to have got round this by including extra arms brought in by more senior coats.



Fig 7 Smyth impaling Way

The last two York escutcheons would seem to fall into this category. These are Smyth impaling *argent on a bend azure three garbs or* (probably Fitton) and Smyth impaling *argent a chevron between three billets* (probably Monchensey). These arms appear on a sketch of the achievement of Sir Hugh Smyth (d.1627), who married Elizabeth Gorges, which is to be found in the Bristol Record Office. The first is to be found on the dexter side and could have been brought in with Tewther, the second appears on the sinister (Gorges) side of the achievement.

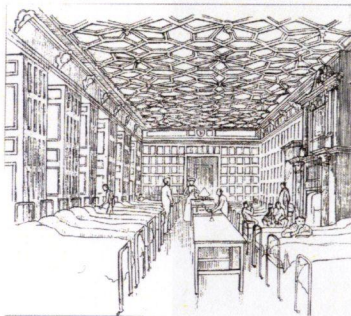


Fig 8 The Long Gallery in 1917 when used as a Red Cross ward. The escutcheons can clearly be seen underneath the cornice.

The Gorges coat of arms with its distinctive whirlpool charge is well known and those of Tewther feature a lion rampant within a bordure. The arms of the Astrey family are to be seen on a monument to the memory of Sir Hugh Smyth, who married Elizabeth Astrey, in Long Ashton Church. They are *barry wavy of six argent and azure on a chief gules three bezants*.



Figs 9 and 10 Smyth impaling Fitton ? and Monchensey ?

It would be pleasant to feel that the missing eight escutcheons will one day surface and it would be an added bonus if at least the existing York eight could be returned – possibly on loan – to Ashton Court, the house for which they were originally created.

MARRIAGE ALLIANCES

John Smyth	=	Joan Parr
Matthew Smyth	=	Jane Tewther
Hugh Smyth Kt	=1604	Dame Eliz Gorges
Thomas Smyth	=1627	Florence Poulett

1st Creation

Sir Hugh Smyth	=1654	Ann Ashburnham
Sir John Smyth	=1692	Elizabeth Astrey
Sir John Smyth	=	Ann Pym

2nd Creation

Jarrit Smith	=	Florence Smyth
Adopted name and arms of brother-in-law		
Sir John Hugh Smyth	=1757	Eliz Woolnough
Thomas Smith	=1767	Jane Whitchurch
Sir Hugh Smyth	=1797	Margaret Wilson
Sir John Smyth	unmarried	

3rd Creation

Greville Smyth	=1884	Emily Way
Bt 1859 (3 rd Creation)		



Fig 11 Sketch of the arms of Sir Hugh Smyth and his wife Elizabeth Gorge

SMYTH ESCUTCHEONS

Gules on a chevron between three cinquefoils pierced argent as many leopards' heads caboshed sable (Smyth) impaling:-

Sable three swords in pile or
(Poulett)

Gules a fess between six mullets argent
(Ashburnham)

Gules three woolsacks argent
(Woolnough?)

Argent on a bend azure three garbs or
(Unknown—possibly Fitton)

Gules three talbots' heads erased or on a chief argent a lion passant sable
(Whitchurch)

Argent a chevron between three billets sable
(Unknown—possibly Monchensey)

Sable a wolf rampant or and in chief three mullets of six points argent
(Wilson)

Quarterly 1 and 4 sable three lucies in pale argent 2 and 3 sable on three bars argent three bends gules
(Way)



Fig 12 Smyth impaling
Woolnough

My thanks are due to Anton Bantock, the historian of the Smyth family, for an informative conversation while this article was in an early stage of preparation. Anton's books on the Smyth family history are available through the website of the Malago Society. The picture of the Long Gallery (Fig 8) appears in his book *Ashton Court*, published in 2004 by Tempus Publishing in the *Images of England* series. I would also like to express my appreciation to Gwendolen Whitaker of the Castle Museum, York, for supplying the photographs of the escutcheons.

NOTES & QUERIES



This rather grubby bookplate turned up recently in a job lot at an antique fair. Judging by the style its date must be late eighteenth or early nineteenth century and the address, Laxton Hall, is a give-away when considering the person for whom the plate was created. But why two shields? There must be a story here. Thoughts and observations would be most welcome.



As far as the mystery button illustrated in Journal 23 is concerned, Stephen Slater points out that the supporters, a unicorn and stag, were those granted to James Scott, Duke of Monmouth, the luckless and illegitimate son of King Charles II.

The Dukes of Buccleuch were of course his direct descendants, but as to why a Duke of Buccleuch should wish to use those supporters on a livery button remains an open question.

THE ARMS OF THE DUCHESS OF CAMBRIDGE



We are now in a position to complete the story of the arms of the Duchess of Cambridge which was started by Alex Maxwell Findlater in issue No. 20 in the Summer of 2011. The Duchess bears the arms of her husband, William Duke of Cambridge impaled with those of her father, Michael Middleton, granted in April 2011.

‘The only detail which I believe is outstanding is the sinister supporter,’ wrote Alex at that time, and this has now been supplied. It is a hind argent unguled and gorged with a coronet or..

The arrival of the supporter occurred in a low-key fashion last November, but as Alex points out such a noiseless entry onto the scene clearly befits the gentle nature of the beast in question. The sinister supporter, one suspects, would not have been so retiring.

AGM 19TH FEBRUARY CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

We spent an entertaining evening at the Grammar House, Langport, in March when Alex Maxwell Findlater regaled us with a selection of skeletons and otherwise from his family's cupboard and a talk was given in April by Stephen Slater on the Royal Household and its officers' accoutrements. In May a select group were given a fascinating insight into the military medals at the Taunton Museum and this was followed by a visit to the Great Hall and the Cathedral in Winchester, ably organised by Philip Hickman, and a tour of Cannington Church in July organised by Alex Maxwell Findlater and preceded by an excellent lunch at the Friendly Spirit Pub.

We enjoyed a fascinating visit to the Poulett Chapel in St George's Church, Hinton St George in September and fifteen members attended our annual dinner at the Great Bow Wharf, Langport in October and listened to Stephen Tudsbury-Turner's illustrated talk on the heraldry as well as the mishaps of the Dudley family and its connections.

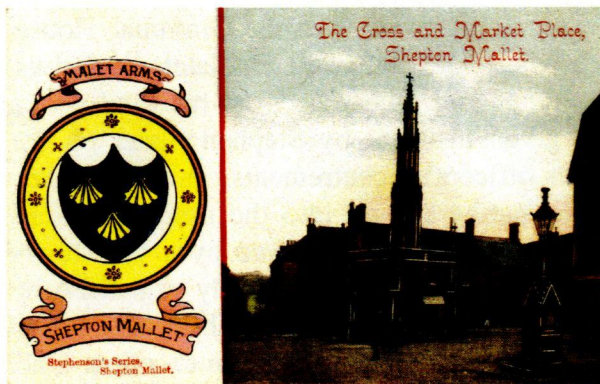
The society's web-site has now been revamped, thanks to the offices of our web-master, Dr Andrew Gray, and as a result we have picked up a new member from far away Doncaster.

Our Journal has appeared twice during the course of the year. The Spring issue, No. 21, under the editorship of Alex Maxwell Findlater, and the Summer and Winter issues, No's 22 and 23, under the editorship of Stephen Tudsbury-Turner.

The committee has decided that the modest library that the society possesses is surplus to requirements. Storage has posed a problem and few members have ever made use of the facility. It is felt that the wishes of the original donor would be best served if the volumes were made available to the membership and we have decided to hold an auction for members in March.

Stop Press: The auction has just been held. Nine members attended and there were 'postal' bids from a further four. £100 was raised—to the delight of our treasurer.

The Heraldry of Edwardian Somerset



The town of Shepton Mallet never has had a coat of arms and so when the firm of Stephenson brought out this attractive picture postcard showing the market place it decided to make use of the arms of the Mallet family, lords of the manor from the eleventh century until the time of King John. Curry Mallet, near Taunton, was the site of the family's castle and was the stronghold of William Mallet, one of the barons appointed to oversee the king's observance of the Magna Carta. The Mallet arms are *azure three escallops or* and, although Stephenson's did not make use of it, the family crest was *a hind's head argent, ducally gorged or*.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Thu 25th April	10 minute Talks by members
Meetings at Monteclefe Cottage. 6.30 for supper. 7.30 for meeting. Please bring food and drink to share	
Wed 22nd May	Visit to Breamore near Fording-bridge, Hants. Details to be announced.
Thurs 11th July	Visit to Malvern. (Great Malvern Priory, Little Malvern Priory, Little Malvern Court.) Times to be announced.



This glorious achievement of thirty-two quarterings was supposed to accompany the agenda for the AGM but never quite made it. Members who are so inclined might care to indulge in a little blazonry practice!

The family were originally of Wardhall and only moved to Dovenby in the 19th century. Burke's Landed Gentry supplies interesting details, but Thomas Dykes a devoted Royalist in the Civil War is my favourite member. After the defeat of his party he concealed himself for a time in a mulberry tree near his house where food was conveyed to him by his wife and daughter. He was ultimately captured and imprisoned in Carisbrooke Castle. When offered his property and liberty if he would recant he replied 'prius frangitur quam flectitur', (Is sooner broken than bent), since adopted as the family motto.

THE SOMERSET HERALDRY SOCIETY

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Secretary	Stephen Tudsbury-Turner
Treasurer	David Hawkings
	Ronald Gadd, MBE
	Dr. Philip Hickman
	Alex Maxwell Findlater
	Hattie Maxwell Findlater

THE SOMERSET DRAGON

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Contributions welcome

Objects

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