

# THE SOMERSET DRAGON

## THE JOURNAL OF THE SOMERSET HERALDRY SOCIETY

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Our lead article in this issue is by Penny Gay, who is making her first appearance in *The Somerset Dragon*. It is splendid to have something from a new contributor and we must hope that others out there will follow her example. Learned articles, snippets of news and heraldic gossip in general - all are welcome.

Seen hanging on the wall of The George Inn, Croscombe, the patent creating Stephen Moore, Viscount Mountcashell, first Earl of Mountcashell in 1781. One wonders how it got there! They do an excellent drop of beer as well.



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# THE ANCESTRY OF ROBERT GAY RESEARCH THROUGH HERALDRY BY PENNY GAY

Robert Gay, an eminent barber surgeon of Hatton Gardens, London was the man after whom Gay Street in Bath was named. Yet, in this famous city, which prides itself on its Georgian architecture, he seems to have received only cursory attention from local historians and researchers, despite the significant role he played at the very start of its development.



John Wood had arrived in Bath in 1727, full of ambitious building plans, but he needed land - and it was Robert Gay, after being safely elected as M.P. for Bath for a second term, who finally leased some of his land in the manor of Walcot to the aspiring young architect and also agreed that he could build on it. Without this settlement, Queen Square, the Circus and the fashionable street that still leads uphill from one to the other might never have existed, except in the fertile imagination of John Wood the Elder.

However, whilst the achievements of John Wood, father and son, are acclaimed by many of the tourists who now flock to The Circus and the Royal Crescent, the modest but essential contribution of Robert Gay towards the realisation of John Wood the Elder's early architectural dreams, seems to have been largely forgotten.

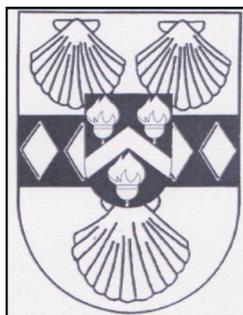
Furthermore, very few theories have been put forward to suggest exactly who this surgeon of Hatton Gardens could have been and, despite a few hints from historians and genealogists of possible family connections with Bath, it appears that no real evidence has ever been found to prove that he could have been related to other men named Gay who had become well-known public figures in the city in the 1600s - Richard Gay of Claverton (Mayor), Richard Gay of Haycombe (early Baptist Minister) and John Gay of Batheaston (clothier).

There could, however, be a logical explanation for this long established air of mystery surrounding the identity of Robert Gay, because recent research has revealed that the key to his identity, the vital clue that would eventually point the way to his ancestry, was not to be found in any obscure ancient document, but in one distinctive piece of evidence that, no doubt unknowingly, he took with him to his grave. Strange to tell, it was the coat of arms engraved on his tombstone that finally confirmed his family roots and established his ancestral link with the city of Bath.

Although there is no trace of his baptism record, Robert Gay would have been born in about 1675, since in 1689 he began an apprenticeship with a George Horsnell, barber surgeon of London. The apprenticeship indenture confirms that his father was a Thomas Gay of Middlesex. In 1699, three years after gaining his freedom, Robert married Mary Saunders in London - and it was through a marriage settlement with Mary's father, William Saunders of Flamstead, Hertfordshire, that he was able to acquire much of the land in the Manor of Walcot, Bath, part of which he later agreed to lease to the architect John Wood.

The marriage to Mary Saunders produced three sons, but only the eldest, Thomas, survived beyond infancy. In 1705, Robert, by then a widower, married Margaret Farmer. They had a son, Edward, who died within a few weeks, but then two daughters who lived to adulthood - Mary and Margaret. It was the younger daughter, Margaret, who inherited her father's estate and oversaw the continuation of the leasing of land in the Manor of Walcot to John Wood the Elder - and then to his son.

Robert Gay died in October 1738 and was buried at St Mary's Church, Wanstead, Essex - and on his gravestone there is an inscription and also a coat of arms: *on a fess between three escallops, five lozenges In pretence a chevron between three lamps flamant Crest, an arm embowed in armour, holding in the hand an arrow.* The shield in pretence belonged to the family of Robert's second wife, Margaret Farmer.



Sadly, it is impossible to guess at the tinctures from an engraving in stone - and it was only because of a special request made by Robert Gay's daughter Margaret that, almost thirty years after her father's burial, the colours of his heraldic shield and crest were finally revealed. Before her death in 1765, with no immediate heirs, Margaret made it known that she would like her father's name and coat of arms to be remembered beyond her own lifetime. Therefore, when the Gay Estate in Somerset was finally transferred in 1767 from Margaret's chief beneficiary, her brother-in-law Sir Benet Garrard, to her second cousin Sir Peter Rivers, it was on condition that he adopted the surname and arms of Gay.

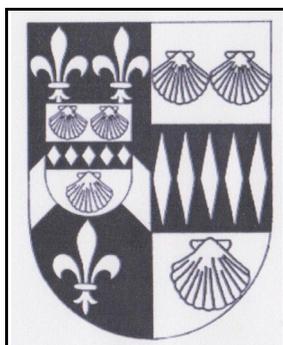
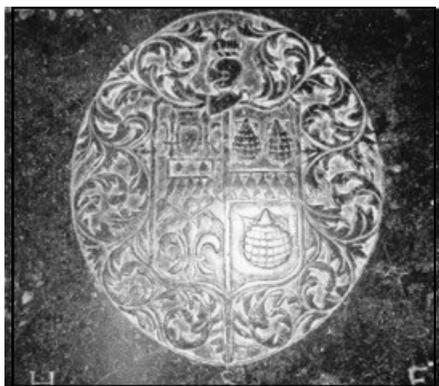
And, sure enough, when *The Baronetage of England* was published in 1771, it included a reference to the newly adopted name and arms of Sir Peter Rivers of Chafford. The Rev. Sir Peter Rivers had indeed taken the surname of Rivers-Gay - and the first and fourth quarters of his shield now displayed the blazonry: *or a fess sable charged with five lozenges argent between three escallops azure*. The crest was described as: *on a wreath an arm embowed in armour proper, holding an arrow*.

Significantly, this led to the discovery that the first and fourth quarters of the shield matched in every detail the arms attributed to the Gay family of Englishcombe in the Harleian Society Publication (1992) of the 1672 *Visitations of Somerset and the City of Bristol*. This 1992 Edition was a transcription of the original pedigree recorded in 1672, but also included annotations based on further research. These can easily be identified because they are in italics and often include a source citation as a footnote. It proved invaluable that the Englishcombe blazon in this Harleian publication was printed in italics and included the footnote: M.I. of John Gay, Englishcombe, 1729.

On the north wall of St Peter's Church, Englishcombe, there is indeed still a large monument in black and white marble, inscribed to the memory of John Gay, who died in 1729 - but sadly, there is now no coat of arms to be seen - only an unadorned empty space below the inscription, where a coloured escutcheon would once have been proudly displayed. However, a survey entitled *The History and Antiquities of the County of Somerset*, published in 1791, confirmed that a coat of arms had once existed and described it as: *or on a fesse sable between three escallop shells azure five lozenges argent impaling a chevron ermine between three fishes haurient argent*.

The impaled arms belonged to the Cater family. John Gay's wife was a Jane Cater. However, the blazonry for John Gay of Englishcombe certainly matched that of Robert Gay, later adopted by Sir Peter Rivers. And since the same John Gay had been included (aged six) in the family tree at the time of the 1672 *Somerset Visitation*, correctly listed as a direct descendant of the earliest known ancestor in the Englishcombe pedigree, this was an encouraging indication that Robert Gay might well have belonged to the same family.

But there was a further significant piece of evidence yet to be found. In the south aisle of Wells Cathedral, behind the choir, there is a ledger stone commemorating William Hughes, Chancellor of the Cathedral 1688 - 1715.



The inscription includes a circular engraving depicting the arms of the Hughes family, with the arms of William's wife, Cecilia Gay, both impaled and in pretence: .... *a fess charged with five lozenges between three escallop shells* .

Again there are no tinctures, but in his book *Wells Cathedral: its monumental inscription and heraldry*, Arthur J. Jewers, using "other sources not generally accessible" annotated the blazon by including the heraldic colours in brackets: .... [*or*], *a fess [sable]*, *lozenges [argent]*, *escallops [azure]*.

So it seemed that Cecilia Gay (1668 - 1708), wife of the Chancellor of Wells Cathedral, had a claim to a coat of arms virtually identical to the one adopted by both John Gay of Englishcombe and Robert Gay of Hatton Gardens.

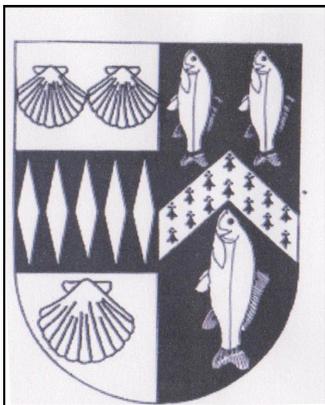
Further research established that Cecilia Gay had been baptised in 1668 at St Giles' Church, Reading. Her father was a John Gay, whose Will recorded that he held a lease to property in Lyncombe and Widcombe - thus confirming that he was undoubtedly the John Gay baptised in Newton St Loe in 1623, son of Richard Gay, later of Lyncombe and Widcombe, and his wife Anne nee Chapman. There could therefore be no doubt that Cecilia was directly descended from the earliest John Gay of Englishcombe listed by the heralds in the 1672 *Visitation of Somerset*.

Furthermore, there was already persuasive evidence to indicate where a Robert Gay, recorded on his apprenticeship record as the son of Thomas, most probably belonged in this family - and to reveal that, almost certainly, Robert Gay was not only a descendant of the Gay family of Englishcombe, but would have been a first cousin of Cecilia Gay. [See Englishcombe Family Tree]

One further point of interest is the similarity between the heraldic arms clearly being claimed by the Gay family of Englishcombe in the early 1700s and those attributed to the Gay family of Goldworthy, Devon - a pedigree first recorded in the 1500s, believed to trace back to the de Gay family who arrived in England at the time of the Norman Conquest and settled in Hampton Gay, Oxfordshire. John Gay, born in Barnstaple in 1685 and famous for writing *The Beggar's Opera*, is known to be a direct descendant of this family, but so far no ancestral thread has been found that might link the Gay families of Devon and Englishcombe into one family tree.

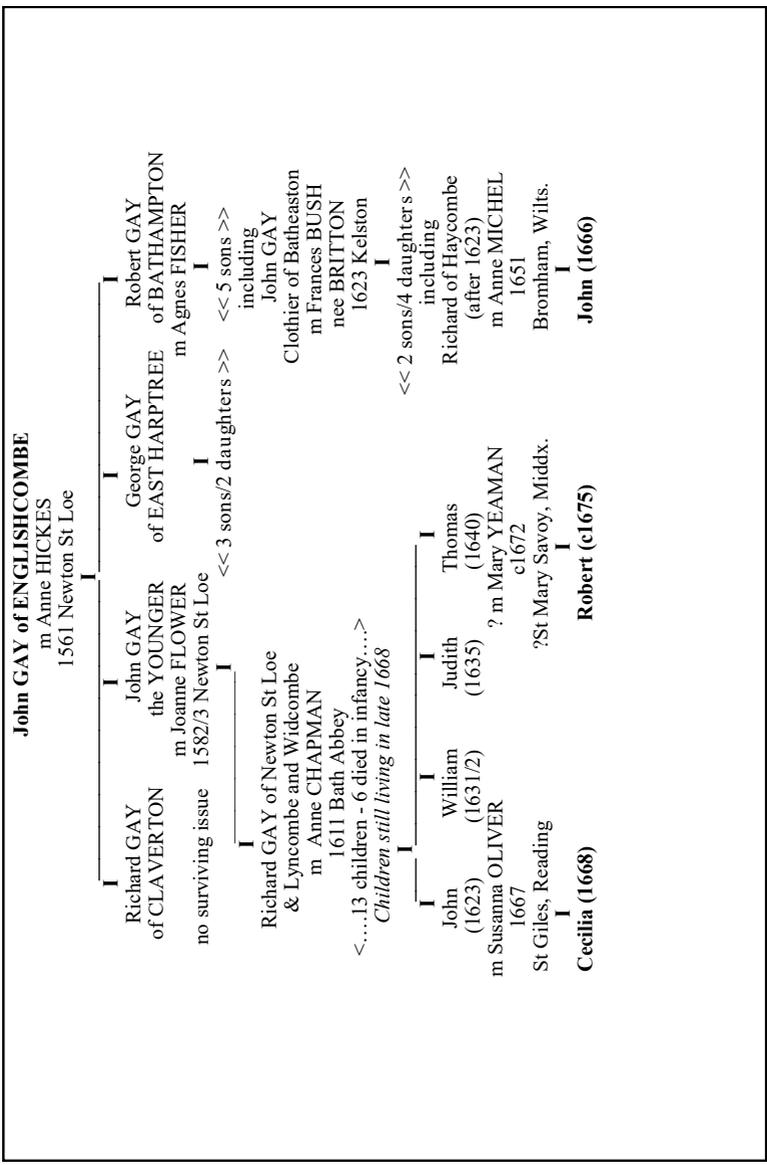
[A full account of this research into the ancestry of Robert Gay was originally published as a two-part article in the *Journals of the Bristol & Avon Family History Society* for June and September 2017. This revised version of the second part, which focuses on heraldic evidence, appears here with the kind agreement of the B&AFHS Journal editor, Dr. Penny Walters. Further information about the possible marriage between Thomas Gay and Mary Yeaman and evidence of their link with Robert GAY, can be found in Part One of the Article in the Bristol & Avon FHS Journal: June 2017, No. 168,

References: *The Baronetage of England*: E. Kimber & R. Johnson, London 1771; Vol. 1, p. 211 The Harleian Society Edition of the 1672 *Somerset and City of Bristol Visitations*: Sir Edward Bysshe, George Drewry Squibb; 1992; extract from the College of Arms *The History and Antiquities of the County of Somerset*: John Collinson & Edmund Rack; Somerset 1791; p. 341 *Wells Cathedral: its monumental inscriptions and heraldry: together with the heraldry of the palace, deanery, and vicar's close: with annotations from wills, registers, etc., and illustrations of arms*: Arthur J. Jewers F.S.A; 1892 London; p. 63



John Gay of Haycombe  
1666-1729  
Gay-Cater Arms  
St Peter's Church  
Englishcombe

Drawings by Roland Symons,  
Heraldic Artist, Bath, Somerset



THE PERCEHAY FAMILY OF RYTON, YORKSHIRE  
CAN ANYONE HELP?  
IF YES THEN PLEASE CONTACT DAVID BREWER



I have been trying to make contact with anyone in the West Country that may be interested in sharing knowledge about the Percehay family. I have already made contact with Tiverton Museum and have been redirected to Exeter Records Office, but any other contacts would be very useful. My research has confirmed the link to "Sir Henry Percehay knight, born at Kitton in the parish of Holcombe Rogus, Sergeant at Law, Baron of the Exchequer, Justice of the Common Pleas" (pages 21,22 & 96 in the book). However, I do not know why one of the family moved so far away from Ryton, or when they went, although a Roger Percehay is at Kitton some time before 1272. The family name seems to end with the above Sir Henry who died around 1380. He had two co-heiresses; a Joan (Jone) married Richard Warr/Warre, and Alice (Alis) who married Nicolas Hele/Heale, so researchers of these families may also be interested.  
[jdavidbrewer@mypostoffice.co.uk](mailto:jdavidbrewer@mypostoffice.co.uk)

## TWO CRADOCK HATCHMENTS AND A WICKED VICAR BY STEPHEN TUDBERY-TURNER



There is always an added frisson to be gained when one comes across, in a hitherto undiscovered church, not just some interesting heraldry, but also a good story.

Such was the case with St Mary's Church in Gaynford, County Durham, visited by the writer this summer. The village is on the edge of the Raby Castle estate and the Vane family are still the lords of the manor. First simply Barons Barnard, they subsequently became Earls of Darlington then for a comparatively short period of time Dukes of Cleveland. Indeed, one of the three hatchments in the church is to the Hon. Frederick Vane, second son of Henry first Earl of Darlington, who married as his second wife Jane, eldest daughter of Arthur Lysaght, and who died in 1801.

The arms are blazoned *azure three sinister gauntlets or, a crescent argent for difference (Vane) impaling argent three spears palewise two and one azure, on a chief azure a lion passant guardant or (Lysaght)*. The crest is *a dexter gauntlet erect holding a spear proper pommel and hilt or*. Given the all black background, Summers wondered whether the hatchment was re-used for the widow, who died in 1813.



The church contains another two hatchments which, like the one already mentioned, hang on the north wall, as well as the royal arms of Queen Anne at the west end and some heraldic tiling in the chancel. The first of these two hatchments is for Elizabeth, daughter of the Rev. Edward Place, Rector of nearby Bedale, who married Sheldon Cradock of Hartforth and who died at Gainford in 1742. The arms are blazoned quarterly 1st and 4th, *argent on a chevron azure three garbs or (Cradock)*, 2nd and 3rd, *argent on a chevron gules three sheldrakes or, on a canton gules a rose argent (Sheldon)* impaling *per pale or and gules a lion passant guardant per pale gules and argent (Place)*.



The second hatchment is for another lady, this time Elizabeth, daughter of Christopher Wilkinson of Thorpe-on-Tees, who married Sheldon Cradock, son of the aforementioned Sheldon, and who died in 1812. The blazon is Cradock and in pretence *azure a fess ermined sable between three unicorns passant argent* (Wilkinson).

The Sheldon Cradocks appear to have been descended from John Cradock, D.D., who became Vicar of Gainford in 1594. Cradock was appointed Archdeacon of Northumberland in 1604 and Chancellor to the Bishop of Durham in 1619. He remained Rector until his death in 1627 but, according to an information sheet displayed in the church, he was a rogue of the first order.

Complaints regarding his conduct were made to the House of Commons, no less, in May 1621 and May 1624 citing bribery and forged excommunications amongst his misdemeanours. To cap it all, on the occasion of the funeral of one Allinson, presumably a wealthy parishioner, he arranged for two men to burgle the late man's house while he conducted the funeral service, knowing full well that the property would be empty.

Cradock was fined five marks for his wickedness but greater retribution was to hand. He died in 1627, poisoned it was suspected by his wife, Margaret, the mother of their eight children. Margaret, however, was acquitted and walked free and John Cradock, seems to have suffered his just deserts.



In 1603, or thereabouts, Cradock built for himself - possibly with his ill-gotten gains - Gainford Hall, a substantial house in the village. The property remained in the hands of his family after his death, but in 1720 William Cradock, the husband of Mary Sheldon and father of our first Sheldon Cradock bought an estate at Hartforth, near Richmond, Yorkshire. Thereafter junior members of the family lived at Gainford and certainly a Marmaduke Cradock died at the Hall at the age of ninety in 1836.

The tiles in the chancel were installed when Joseph Edlestone, vicar from 1863 until 1896, undertook a wholesale restoration of the church in line with the principles of the Oxford Movement. They bear the arms of Trinity College, Cambridge, which was the patron of the living. Edlestone was not only a Fellow of the College but also came from a wealthy West Riding textile family, and was thus able to raise a substantial amount of money to pay for the work by private subscription. One imagines that the college too was persuaded to stump up. Perhaps it paid for the tiles!

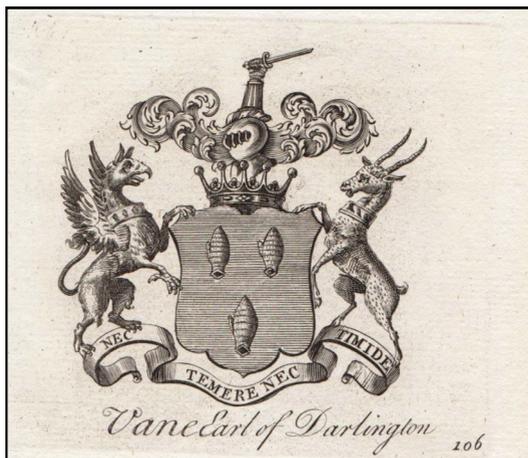
## APOLOGIES



Thanks to those readers who pointed out that we had lost a line in the blazon of the Dawe arms. This should have read *argent on a pile gules a chevron between three crosses crosslets of the first*. Thanks also to those who made suggestions regarding the correct or don't correct problem. The correctors were in the majority.

## VANE EARL OF DARLINGTON

An 18th century engraving to round things off and appropriate given the last article. The earldom was created in 1754 and the third earl became Duke of Cleveland in 1833. Both dukedom and earldom became extinct on the death of the fourth duke in 1891.



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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.

### DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Mon 3rd Sept. Visit to Salisbury Cathedral led by Stephen Slater. Meet in the Refectory at 11.30am.

Three Bath Heraldic Society lectures should be noted.

Sat 15th Sept. Conception The Bath Assembly Heraldic Exhibition 1948

Sat 20th Oct. Capt. Cook's Coat of Arms by David White, Somerset Herald

Sat 18th Nov. The Heraldry of World War One by Roland Symons

Meetings 2.30pm Manvers St. Baptist Church, Bath.