

THE SOMERSET DRAGON

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Opposite are the arms of the Gatto family, Barons of Djar-El-Bniet, as seen in the third quarter of the achievement of the 21st Baron to be found on page 2 of this number of The Somerset Dragon. Above right are the arms of Testaferrata and Dorel, the fifth and sixth quarters.



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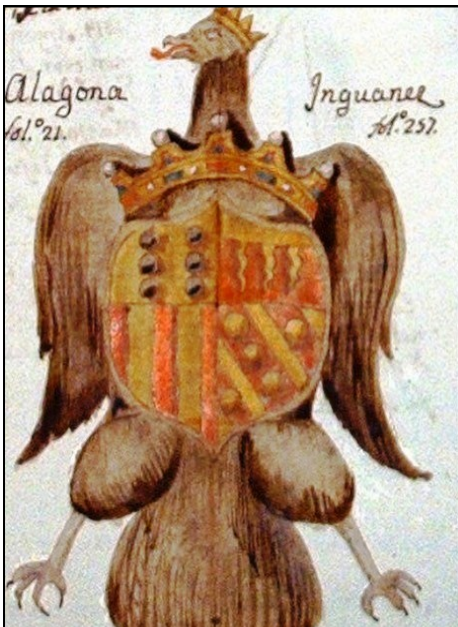
THE MALTESE INHERITANCE BY STEPHEN TUDSBERY-TURNER



Alexander Sceberras D'Amico, 15th Baron of Castel Cicciano in the Maltese peerage, died in October 1880. He had three daughters; Mary, Rosalie and Inez born in 1865, 1867 and 1870 respectively. Mary was her father's heir and she succeeded as the 16th Baroness, a position she was to hold for the next sixty-seven years. This was despite the claims of her father's half-brother, Antonio, who had his eye on the title and the estates that went with it. A month later Mary inherited two other baronies, those of Djar-el-Bniet and Bukara, this time from her great-aunt Maria Theresa, the 19th baroness.

The title Barone di Djar el-Bniet and Bucana ranks as first in the Maltese nobility. The claim to this title has a two-fold origin. One in a very old fief (property granted at the pleasure of a king) called “Djar el-Bniet” (literally translated as House for the Girls) which was granted on the 4 January 1350 by Ludovico, King of Aragon and Sicily, to Francesco Gatto with remainder to his descendants, male or female. The other in another fief called “Bucana” which was granted to Guglielma Murina on the 11 November 1372. The two were united by marriage in 1404. The joint title was not hereditary, but personal to the possessor of the fiefs.

This point was made clear in 1878 when Alessandro Sceberras, nephew of the 19th baroness, claimed the title on the grounds that he was directly descended from Francesco Gatto. The authorities agreed when it came to his descent, but could not accept his claim because he was not the possessor of the two fiefs in question.



After the death without issue in 1760 of Marc-Antonio Inguanez, the 14th baron, the fiefs of Djar el Bniet and Bucana were inherited by a kinsman and invested in the family of D'Amico-Castelletti-Fiott-Farrugia-Inguanez.

Left: The arms of Angeraldo 5th Baron of Diar-El-Bniet, Governor of Malta 1439—1469. .

Mary's original barony, that of Castel Cicciano in the province of Naples, dated from 1560 and was granted by King Philip I of Spain and Sicily. By 1695, this barony came to be held - by marriage - by the Testaferata family, then a century later by the Sceberras. It is arguably the oldest documented hereditary barony in Malta. Interestingly enough although the title forms part of the Maltese Nobility, technically it remained subject to the laws of the country where it originated. This of course no longer existed as Sicily had passed through many hands before becoming part of a united Italy in 1863. Inevitably this led to some confusion when it came to succession - hence Antonio's hopes - but Malta had been controlled by the British since 1814, and the authorities were content to see Maria succeed to her father's inheritance.

The three sisters were clearly sought after by those anxious for a good connection but it was ten years before Maria took the plunge and married an English officer, Alexander McKean of the 6th Inniskilling Dragoons, an ADC to the Governor. Five years later Rosalie followed her sister's example and married another ADC and another Alexander. In her case it was Alexander Chesney, the first adjutant of the Malta Militia on its foundation in 1889, who had fought in the Egyptian Campaign of 1882, when he was mentioned in dispatches, and in the Sudan, 1884-85. Inez married in 1910 at the age of forty. She became the second wife of an English naval captain, and was to die childless in 1952.

Alexander George Chesney was born on April 30th, 1858, and was a member of a distinguished military family. His grandfather, Captain Alexander Chesney, saw service under the Marquess of Hastings in the American War of Independence; and his father was the celebrated soldier and Euphrates Valley explorer, General Francis Rawdon Chesney.

He continued in active service after his marriage and reached the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel in 1900, when he was promoted to command the newly raised 4th Battalion of the Worcestershire Regiment. He was given the Brevet of Colonel in 1904, a month before he retired. On the outbreak of the 1914-18 War he rejoined and, in spite of his age, commanded the 10th Battalion The Worcestershire Regiment in France until 1916, and was mentioned in despatches. He returned to England to command the 1st Garrison Battalion The Middlesex Regiment. On his final retirement from his military duties Chesney settled down in Malta, and in his later years took part in local politics and was elected a Nationalist member of the Maltese Parliament.



The Casa Inganez, Mdina

Alexander George Chesney

There are twenty-nine Maltese peerages and they consist of the three ranks of Marquis, Count and Baron. Somewhat surprisingly there is no distinction of seniority between the grades, precedence being determined solely by the date of creation. This being the case, the Most Noble Maria Sceberras Trigona D'Amico Inguanez, 20th Baroness of Diar-El-Bniet in her own right and 16th Baroness of Castel Cicciano rapidly became the key figure in Maltese society. She represented Malta at the coronations of King Edward VII in 1902, King George V in 1911 and King George VI in 1937, and collected a King George V Jubilee medal in 1935.



On the 26th April 1936 the Governor, Charles Bonham-Carter, wrote in his diary, 'On Saturday we . . . met Baroness Inguanez, the head of the Maltese nobility, a perfectly charming and very beautiful old lady who looks about fifty and is I suppose nearly seventy . . . a very pleasant evening.' By then the baroness was a widow, her husband having died in 1933. The two were childless and on her death in 1947 her heir was her nephew Ian, her sister Rosalie having pre-deceased her.



The new baron had been a major in the British army. Like his father before him he served in the Worcestershire Regiment in the Great War and was awarded the Military Cross and the Belgian Croix de Guerre. He had also served in World War II. He had a brother, who had died in 1938, and two sisters, who moved into the Casa Inguanez, the family's palace in Mdina, with him and acted as his housekeepers as he was unmarried.

Alexander Ian Chesney, now premier noble of Malta, inherited no arms from his father who was not armigerous, but he made up for this deficiency with the magnificent achievement that accompanied his Maltese inheritance and provides us with our first illustration. The arms are *Quarterly of eight, 1 and 8. Az a body of a knight in armour with plumed helmet or (Sceberras), 2. Or two hands clasped ppr on a chief az three six-pointed stars also or (D'Amico), 3. Az ten bezants (Gatto), 4. Gu three waves or (Inguanes), 5. Arg a bull anime gu on a chief az three eight-pointed stars or (Testaferrata), 6. Az a lion maimed or on a chief three pomegranates also or (Dorel), 7. Quarterly i and iv gu a castle or, ii and iii az a winged lion rampant or (Castelletti)*. There are two splendid dragon supporters and a crest, a crowned eagle with wings displayed.

The quarters relate to the three baronies under consideration. The Sceberras family (1 and 8) acquired the barony of Castel Cicciano in the early eighteenth century through the marriage of Michele Sceberras with Clara Testaferrata (5), who inherited the title from her father Fabrizio. The Testaferrata family had been in possession of this feudal title from the year 1560. The Dorel arms (6) were acquired c.1777 when Pasquale Sceberras married Lucrezia Dorel.

The fief of Diar-El-Bniet was conferred on Francesco Gatto (3) in 1350, and it was his descendant Imperia who inherited it in 1442 and who married Antonio Inguanes (4), or Desguanecks as the name was formerly spelt. The D'Amico (2) family was of Sicilian origin and had links with many of the principal Maltese houses. The records tell us that in 1760 on the death of the 14th baron the title and estates passed to a distant D'Amico kinsman.

Maybe the various branches of the D'Amico clan did not always get on as well as they ought to have done. Charles Bonham-Carter noted on the 9th April 1937: 'Dinner was a great success and every one played up, the only contretemps was that Baroness Inguanetz cut Baron de Piro d'Amico dead in the morning room. She really is a naughty old woman and I must tackle her about it. If she cannot leave her private enmities behind in my house, she shall not come here again.'

The Castelletti quartering (7), itself quartered, joined the pack in 1760 and relates to the marriage of Pietro D'Amico-Castelletti to a descendant of Alessandro Inguanetz. The family was a significant one in Malta and its magnificent palace in Rabat (now an up-market restaurant!) dates from the seventeenth century.



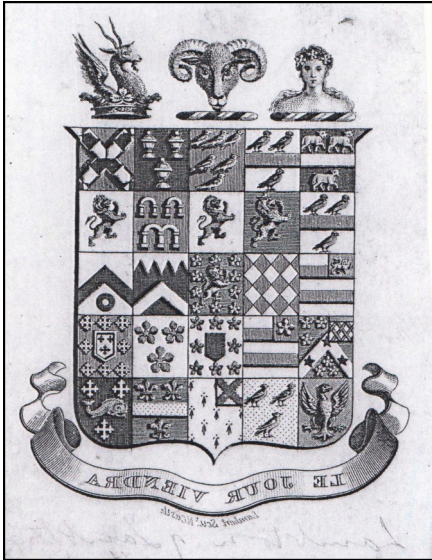
Chesney never married and his heir was the elder of his two sisters. On her death in 1981 the titles, estates and two palaces passed to her Maltese cousins, who had waited just over a century for their triumph. In many ways it was to be short-lived for in 1969, succession by fief was abolished by the Maltese government and since 1975, a general duty was imposed in the republic not to recognize any title of nobility. Be that as it may. Governments come and governments go and it is only fair to point out that the Maltese Committee of Privileges (the assembly of recognised title holders of Maltese nobility) lists the current holders of all three baronies.

SPOTTED IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM



This splendid Chinese porcelain coffee pot dates from the Ch'ing dynasty (c.1745) and bears the arms of Clifford. It is from a service said to have been commissioned by Hugh 4th Lord Clifford of Chudleigh (1726-83) but the crescent for difference suggests that it might have been his younger brother Edward - unless of course it was a present from Lord Clifford to his brother.

THE CASE OF THE CURIOUS QUARTERS
BY STEPHEN SLATER
PART 2 NUMBER 12

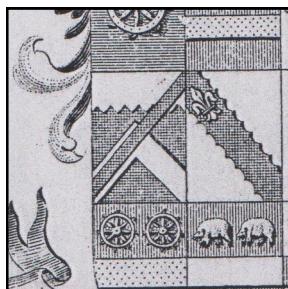


The Lambton bookplate that we discussed in issue number 42 excites me for several reasons, not only because of the Carus/Curwen quarter that featured in my last article

In the December issue of the Somerset Dragon we considered the number 16 quarter. This time we move to quarter number 12 on the plate. *Sable a chevron and chief indented argent* are the arms of another North Country family, Thornton of Wilton Castle, Northumberland. In my bookplate album the Lambton plate sits opposite one for a member of the equally ancient Salvin family of Croxdale. The latter place being little over ten miles from Lambton Castle. It is not surprising therefore to find several quarters common to both plates.



Sure enough, on the Salvin plate quarter No. 11 bears the Thornton arms, but with an important difference; slashing right across the chief and chevron is a bend (bendlet) sinister gules. Most readers will know that the dread mark, often denoting illegitimacy (although no rule about its use exists in English heraldry).



This got me looking at the pedigrees of the Thorntons, Lambtons and Salvins. It did not take me long to find the common link.

The Thorntons looked to Roger de Thornton, a fourteenth century Newcastle merchant, as the founder of their fortunes. Roger's wealth was not ignored by the local aristocracy, so it was that Roger's son, also Roger, married Elizabeth, only daughter of John sixth Lord Greystock and had by her two daughters, his co-heirs. One daughter was childless while the other, Elizabeth Thornton, married George third Lord Lumley.

After Elizabeth's mother died, her father Roger (the second) took a mistress and by her he had four 'base born' sons. Unfortunately the eldest of the boys, Giles Thornton, became embroiled in a dispute over the Thornton lands with his brother-in-law Lord Lumley and, as a result, the two men settled their differences in the moat of Windsor Castle. In the ensuing brawl Giles Thornton was hit over the head by Lumley and died of his wounds!

Of the four illegitimate Thornton boys, it was the third son, John Thornton whose line prospered, but during the Civil War they were loyal to the king and suffered much for it. Furthermore I believe that they were devout Catholics so it is not surprising to hear that nearly a century later John Thornton of Netherwitton was a staunch Jacobite and for his part in the 1715 uprising was convicted of high treason, but reprieved a year later

John Thornton had several sons, the eldest, Thomas, had two daughters, his co-heiresses. One died unmarried but the other, Catherine Thornton, married William Salvin of Croxdale, hence the appearance of the differenced Thornton arms in the Lambton plate.

It is pleasant to record that a later Thornton heiress, Margaret, married Walter Trevelyan and that their descendants still live at Netherwitton.

So there you have it - the undifferenced arms correctly descended to the Lambtons, while that with the bend sinister went eventually to the Salvins.

AGM 6TH MARCH 2019

The AGM at The Malt House was attended by eight members and a lively time was had by all. We started with a splendid cottage pie lunch that was followed by the business. Good wishes were expressed for our chairman, Mary Rose Rogers, who has been under the weather recently. The secretary updated members as to the state of the society (see below) and the treasurer informed everyone that at long last our bank account had been switched from Barclays to the TSB and that the society's funds were in a very healthy state and ensured her popularity by assuring members that there was no reason for us to consider raising our subscriptions.

There are currently 27 members of whom roughly half are reading members. Those wishing to attend talks are advised of the programme of the Bath Heraldic Society, whose meetings are in Bath and are held on Saturdays. We have occasional visits to places of local heraldic interest and members are informed of these by email as they are usually organised at fairly short notice. Our Annual Lunch at the Fountain Inn, Wells, continues to be a popular get-together and the Somerset Dragon comes out three times a year - April, August and December.

After the meeting closed members were entertained by three 'ten minute talks'. Stephen Slater's subject was 'A Touch of Military Glory', delivered in his usual light-hearted fashion with an assortment of medals to pass round and provoke comment; Michael Furlong told us about the original location and fate of 'The Heraldic Stained Glass Windows from Hallen Church' and backed up his explanation with a selection of excellent photographs; and Stephen Tudsbery-Turner illustrated his talk on 'Some Marquesses and their Livery Buttons' with examples from his own collection.

For the benefit of those not present. If you have not already done so please send your subs (£10 for single members, £15 for doubles) to Mrs Carol Haines, Soundings, Water Lane, Curry Rivel, Langport, TA10 OHJ.

THE COAT OF ARMS OF THE BOROUGH OF SPANDAU

We started this issue of The Somerset Dragon with some continental heraldry and we end with another specimen, the coat of arms of the German borough of Spandau.



Spandau is the westernmost of the twelve boroughs of Berlin, situated at the confluence of the Havel and Spree rivers. It is the smallest borough by population, but the fourth largest by land area. It is known for its parks and waterways, plus the charming Spandau old town, with its half-timbered houses and, we are told, lively cafe society. The citadel is a 15th century fortress that hosts open-air

r concerts, is home to a history museum, and has a bat colony in its cellar.

The arms are based on the oldest seal of the city that dates from the last part of the 13th century. The arms show a city with in front of the gate the arms of the Counts of Brandenburg, a red eagle. In the base of the shield the Spree and Havel rivers that flow around Spandau are seen. The present arms show the eagle of Brandenburg in the gate and above the gate the crest of the Brandenburger Counts used since 1306. The linden leaves on the black wings were added to the crest by the Counts of Brandenburg after the acquisition of Bohemia and are taken from the Kings of Bohemia.

THE SOMERSET HERALDRY SOCIETY

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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.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Saturday 27th April Home and Away: The Heraldry of the Mercantile Companies Trading Overseas. Michael Furlong. Bath Heraldic Society at Manvers Street Baptist Church, Bath. Time—2.30pm.

DON'T FORGET TO PAY YOUR SUB! SEE PAGE 14