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HERALDS IN THE NEW *DNB*

Part I*

Jackson W. Armstrong

William Bruges (d. 1450), Garter, *by* Adrian Ailes
Nicholas Upton (d. 1457), private herald, *by* Andrew Brown and Craig Walker
John Writhe (d. 1504), Garter, *by* Adrian Ailes
Roger Machado (d. 1510), Norroy and Clarenceux, *by* Adrian Ailes
Thomas Benolt (d. 1534), Clarenceux, *by* Robert Yorke
Sir Thomas Wriothesley (d. 1534), Garter, *by* Robert Yorke
Sir Christopher Barker (d. 1550), Garter, *by* Robert Yorke
Sir David Lyndsay (d. 1555), Lord Lyon, *by* J. K. McGinley
Thomas Hawley (d. 1557), Clarenceux, *by* Ann Payne
Lawrence Dalton (d. 1561), Norroy, *by* Thomas Woodcock
Charles Wriothesley (d. 1562), Windsor herald, *by* Gordon Kipling
Gruffudd Hiraethog (d. 1564), deputy over Wales, *by* D. J. Bowen
William Harvey (d. 1567), Clarenceux, *by* Ann Payne
Sir Gilbert Dethick (d. 1584), Garter, *by* A. R. J. S. Adolph
William Flower (d. 1588), Norroy, *by* J. F. R. Day.

In the volumes of the new *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* various contributors have brought colour and energy to the world of the late medieval and early modern British heralds. Their entries offer brief but vibrant portraits of those men whose careers in the office of arms shaped heraldic practice during a period of rapid growth, experimentation and conflict. This review considers the fifteen entries listed above as a group and in relation to their equivalent entries in the old *DNB*. The only case in which a corresponding old entry does not exist is that of William Bruges (c.1375–1450), the first Garter king of arms. Bruges is an important addition to the new *DNB*, following Hugh Stanford London's biography published posthumously by the Harleian Society in 1970.

Of the fifteen early heralds who made it into the new *DNB*, only five were Garter kings yet, of this third, four (William Bruges, John Writhe, Thomas Wriothesley and Christopher Barker) were among the six earliest lives to be included, in part a reflection of the scarcity of biographical evidence for all but the most prominent heralds in this period. Nicholas Upton is the only exclusively private herald appearing in the *DNB*, never having entered royal service, though Barker too saw significant private service before entering the College of Arms (Barker entry, p. 860). Surprisingly, Sir David Lyndsay is the only early Scottish herald in the dictionary. One wonders how many of the included heralds (especially, perhaps, William Harvey or Hervy and William Flower, two excellent contributions from Ann Payne and J. F. R. Day notwithstanding) would have made the cut if the editors had

* This review article is the first of a series of four which will deal with the heralds in the new *DNB* in chronological batches. The heralds whose entries are treated here are those appointed to their first office before the end of the reign of Henry VIII.

not bound themselves to keep all of the names appearing in the old *DNB*. Even considering the arbitrary decisions forced by the limitations of available space, it would have been appropriate, for reasons of balance and chronological depth, to include other Scottish heralds and, south of the border, perhaps John Smert, the second Garter, and Thomas Holme, Clarenceux king of arms and godfather of Sir Thomas Wriothesley (see old Thomas Wriothesley entry, p. 1062).

All of the early heralds' entries can be commended for including new information not found in the old *DNB*, and for offering fuller and more coherent narratives than their earlier counterparts. While the new biographies are refreshingly full of specifics and detail, some information in the old entries seems to have been deliberately omitted to avoid duplication or to rectify confusion. For example, Adrian Ailes in his new biography of Roger Machado dispensed with some anecdotes (and confused comments about friction with Sir Thomas Wriothesley) in the old entry. For John Writhe, Ailes also amends the erroneous story that the heralds' College took its arms from this Garter. Likewise, Gordon Kipling highlights Charles Wriothesley's legal training in civil law at Trinity Hall, Cambridge, in addition to his common law training at Gray's Inn, the latter alone being noted in the old entry. Pleasingly, in no case have the new entries explicitly stated when the information they offer corrects the old biographies. Rather, they are written as stand-alone pieces without reference to the old *DNB* except where appropriate in the source lists.

These biographies have a lot to say about heralds' functions in the late middle ages and early sixteenth century. Elsewhere, scholars have highlighted heralds' development from masters of ceremony at tournaments in the thirteenth century, to officers with much wider responsibilities by the early fifteenth century. These duties encompassed greater ceremonial roles, such as presiding over prominent funerals, the important armorial and genealogical functions most recognised today, and a significant military and diplomatic role: A.R. Wagner, *Heralds and Heraldry in the Middle Ages* (2nd edn., Oxford, 1956), pp. 33-8; H.S. London, *The Life of William Bruges, the first Garter King of Arms* (Harleian Soc. pubns. 111-2: London 1970), p. 19. The entries considered here do an admirable job of showcasing this latter function of officers of arms. Heraldry provided the foreign service of the late medieval state. Whereas nobles and prelates were regularly commissioned to serve as royal ambassadors and negotiators, armorial officers functioned as the crown's regular diplomatic agents, a responsibility emphasised in the heralds' oaths of office from the fifteenth century (*The Black Book of the Admiralty*, ed. T. Twiss, 4 vols. (Rolls Ser. 55, 1871-76), vol. 1, p. 295). Yet their diplomatic role was much more than low-level message bearing. Many heralds were trusted with highly sensitive tasks. The execution of their responsibilities appears to have depended upon the cultivation of excellent interpersonal skills, tact, and getting right the balance between respectful, assertive communication and meticulous attention to detail in conduct and courtesy in world obsessed with status and hierarchy. They had significant latitude in facilitating communication between kings and emperors over great distances. Robert Yorke shows us how Henry VIII clearly viewed Thomas Benolt, Clarenceux king of arms, a native French-speaker, as 'a safe pair of hands' and trusted him with high-

level diplomacy. Similarly, the king's father had employed Roger Machado, Benolt's predecessor as Clarenceux, on sensitive diplomatic missions to other rulers. Like Benolt, Machado's language skills (he spoke six) were a benefit to his international duties (Machado entry, p. 456; Benolt entry, p. 165). Some heralds, like Thomas Hawley, became specialised in their diplomatic service. Henry VIII regularly employed him on Scottish affairs, a role to which he was well suited having served in the household of Queen Margaret, wife of James IV of Scotland and daughter of Henry VII of England (Hawley entry, p. 972). In contrast, the almost non-diplomatic career of William Flower, illustrates that the heyday of this role was waning by the later sixteenth century.

Related to diplomacy, and a crucial function on its own, was service by heralds as royal agents on the field of battle. Thomas Hawley served in this way at Flodden in 1513, and was captured and held prisoner by the Scots during the battle (Hawley entry, p. 972). Nine decades earlier, Nicholas Upton had served his patron, Thomas Montagu, earl of Salisbury, on campaigns in France (Upton entry). In the 1540s and 1550s Sir Gilbert Dethick and Lawrence Dalton attended the English army in Scotland while, in the France, Sir Christopher Barker went to war in front of the king's banner (Dethick entry, p. 922; Dalton entry, p. 1023; Barker entry 861). Martial service involved not only international but also domestic conflict: Thomas Hawley treated with rebel groups during the Pilgrimage of Grace in 1536, and Sir Gilbert Dethick was sent to demand the surrender of rebels in Kent in 1549 (Hawley entry, p. 972, Dethick entry, p. 922). Moreover, by no means could heralds take for granted their safety off the battlefield. As Clarenceux, Thomas Benolt avoided Cardinal Wolsey's orders for his death occasioned by the herald's unauthorised declaration of war, by taking an alternative route home to the king (Benolt entry, p. 165). Similarly, it may have been a disagreement with Richard III that forced Roger Machado, as Leicester herald, to flee the realm in 1484, after which he adeptly secured the long-standing favour of Richard's successful rival Henry Tudor (Machado entry, p. 455).

Another important responsibility of the heralds highlighted in these biographies was their armorial and genealogical role. The contributors note the armorial books produced by many of these early heralds, and remind us how, at the end of the fifteenth century, there began the regular provincial visitations to record the pedigrees and arms of local landholders. Robert Yorke's entry for Thomas Benolt cites the importance of that Clarenceux king in ensuring the production of the visitation records (Benolt entry, p. 165). The recording of pedigrees in this early period might be combined with travel on military campaigns, as evidenced by Lawrence Dalton's unofficial visitations at Newcastle and Berwick in 1558 (Dalton entry, p. 1023). Ann Payne's entry for William Harvey highlights the further development of the visitation system during Harvey's tenure as Clarenceux (1557-67), at which time the practice of paying individual house calls to local gentlemen was superseded 'by a more judicial system of summoning groups of gentry to appear before [the provincial kings] on specified days' (Harvey entry, p. 678). Additionally, the heralds' proper legal role in this period is noted in several entries. Thomas Hawley gave evidence at the trial

of a fellow herald and, in 1529, Sir Thomas Wriothesley gave evidence at the divorce proceedings of Katherine of Aragon. In the 1540s Sir Christopher Barker gave crucial evidence against Henry Howard, the earl of Surrey, found guilty of treason for quartering the arms of Edward the Confessor with his own (Hawley entry, p. 972; Barker entry, p. 861; Thomas Wriothesley entry, p. 521). Of course, in Scotland Lord Lyon's judicial role is that of judge in Lyon Court, and the entry for Sir David Lyndsay gives three examples of him serving in that capacity.

In terms of information on the development of the English office of arms, the contributors offer a number of examples which illustrate the experimentation and growth of the institution in this period. Instances in which heralds deputed their responsibilities to colleagues are noted, such as by both Machado (as Clarenceux in 1509) and Thomas Benolt (as Clarenceux in 1511) to Thomas Wriothesley as Garter (Machado entry, p. 456; Benolt entry, p. 165). Later, in 1530, Thomas Hawley served as deputy to his senior Benolt and, in 1555, Hawley himself deputed his duties to his junior William Flower (Hawley entry, p. 972; Benolt entry, p. 165; old Flower entry, p. 341). Many of the entries note the role of their subjects in the various squabbles and conflicts that took place among the heralds themselves within the College of Arms. A time of particular tension was the 1530s, when Christopher Barker (as Garter) and Thomas Hawley (as Clarenceux) faced off over their respective authority to grant arms, a dispute which was resolved by an agreement defining the position of Garter in 1539 (Hawley entry, p. 972; Barker entry, p. 861). This theme re-emerges a generation later, when the 1560s saw rivalry between Sir Gilbert Dethick (as Garter) and the provincial kings, including William Harvey (as Clarenceux) and William Flower (as Norroy), a dispute which was adjudicated by the earl marshal through the High Court of Chivalry (Harvey entry, p. 678; Flower entry 179). Money was also a source of conflict. Lawrence Dalton admitted to embezzling his colleagues' funds and, though he was pardoned and offered repayment, the other heralds ostracised him in 1560 claiming that he had the French pox, refusing to eat with him and suggesting that his fees should be reduced by half. Dalton was not alone as other heralds were certainly not beyond accusations of dishonesty in this period (Dalton entry, p. 1023; Barker entry, p. 861).

The detail included in these entries reveals much about the social status of the heralds. While the old entry for Sir Gilbert Dethick (d. 1584) asserts the improbability of his 'mean' family connections to German and Dutch armourers, barbers and shoemakers, the new entry by Anthony Adolph accepts this likelihood without a blink, underlining current understanding of the social ranks from which heralds might originate in this period. William Harvey, whose brother was a London grocer (a fact omitted in his old *DNB* entry), presumably came from a similar background (Harvey entry, p. 677). Equally, William Flower seems to have been the son of a York tailor and corn merchant (Flower entry, p. 179). For social climbers, the office of arms could prove a fast-track into high society. None of these early heralds was more concerned with his own status than Thomas Writhe who, after being made Garter in 1505, changed his name to what he presumably considered to be the more dignified 'Wriothesley' (pronounced 'Wrisley', according to the old *DNB*). He convinced

some of his relatives to join him in the change, and applied the name to his ancestors, notably to his own father and predecessor as Garter whom he also seems to have styled as 'Sir John', though no evidence of John Writhe receiving a knighthood exists (Writhe entry, p. 532; Thomas Wriothesley entry, p. 520). Indeed, among these early heralds, this Thomas seems to have been the first to receive the accolade, though it was conferred upon him not by his own king but rather by Archduke Ferdinand of Austria when the herald conveyed to him the Order of the Garter in 1523 (Thomas Wriothesley entry, p. 521). Thereafter, the next of these heralds to be knighted was Christopher Barker, Garter king of arms, dubbed knight of the Bath at the coronation of Edward VI in 1547 (Barker entry, p. 861). In 1551 Gilbert Dethick was likewise knighted a year after his appointment as Garter (Dethick entry, p. 923). These knight-hoods conferred upon the holders of the senior English heraldic office at mid-century may have been influenced by questions of national dignity; north of the border, in 1542, David Lyndsay had been knighted upon his official appointment to the senior Scottish post of Lord Lyon (Lyndsay entry).

The heralds' income levels are also noted. As Rouge Croix pursuivant in 1525, Charles Wriothesley had an income of £10 (Charles Wriothesley entry, p. 513). In the following decade Thomas Hawley, as Norroy king of arms, was paid twice that amount (Hawley entry, p. 972). As Garter under Henry VII, John Writhe earned £40, roughly equivalent to the annual income that a middling esquire might expect to enjoy, but on top of this he received a gratuity of £80 (old Writhe entry, p. 1062). The heralds seem also to have substituted their substantial fees by other means, building upon their connections in trade and commerce. Writhe was a citizen and draper of London, Barker was a member of the Vintners' company, and Harvey was a member of the Skinners' company (Writhe entry, p. 532; Barker entry, p. 861; Harvey entry, p. 677). Likewise, Aidrian Ailes notes that Roger Machado may have engaged in the fur and fabric trade concurrently with his heraldic career. His possible Iberian origins (highlighted by Ailes in contrast to the French roots mentioned in the old entry) may have facilitated his sideline as an importer of wine from Spain, a business interest which would only have benefited from his appointment as searcher of customs at Southampton (Machado entry, p. 455; old Machado entry, p. 549).

The office of arms was very much a family business, and this can clearly be seen by the close kin connections between the heralds of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. This aspect of family networking parallels similar ties within the urban merchant guilds to which the heralds themselves belonged and made grants of arms. For example William Bruges was the son of a herald and his daughter married John Smert, who succeeded him as Garter (Bruges entry). John Writhe produced both a son (Sir Thomas) and a grandson (Charles) who served as royal heralds. Similarly, Sir Gilbert Dethick spawned a heraldic dynasty of at least two further generations (Writhe, Wriothesley and Dethick entries). Other examples include Sir Christopher Barker's son Justinian, who became Rouge Croix, and William Flower, whose daughter married Robert Glover, Somerset herald (Barker entry, p. 861; Flower entry, p. 179). It seems that these heralds relied on family ties to further their careers, in this period a major indication of the early professionalisation of the office of arms.

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A few of the included heralds are remembered for more than just their armorial roles. D. J. Bowen's entry for Gruffudd Hiraethog (d. 1564) is notably sparse on details of the Welshman's heraldic career, but it certainly improves upon the old entry which took no notice at all of the poet's service as an officer of arms. Gruffudd stands out among his (English) armorial colleagues as a literary man, and it was through his bardic interests in genealogy that he was suited to serve as deputy over Wales to the English kings of arms. The only other member of the English College of Arms who begins to approach Gruffudd in this regard is Charles Wriothesley who, in addition to his 'undistinguished' heraldic career, was a chronicler of the Tudor dynasty (Charles Wriothesley entry, p. 514). However, north of the border, the lone Scottish inclusion, Sir David Lyndsay, stands out much more for his literary achievements than for his role as Lord Lyon. J. K. McGinley gives Lyndsay a slightly earlier birth date than the old *DNB* and offers what is by far the longest biography of those considered here. McGinley notes Lyndsay's inter-related roles: as a courtier to James V and the subsequent regencies, as a herald with significant ceremonial, diplomatic and judicial responsibilities, as a Scots poet and writer (with a premier literary reputation enduring until the mid-eighteenth century) and, through his writing, an advocate of clerical reform. McGinley does an admirable job of balancing these different biographical elements and presenting, in a relatively short space, not just a biographical narrative but a colourful account of Scottish court life and politics.

Like McGinley's piece, the other entries are far from dry. Ann Payne's biography of William Harvey provides a good example of the sort of lively significant anecdote welcomed by the editorial staff of the new edition. She quotes her subject as claiming in 1562 that rather than relinquishing his official books to his rival, then Garter Sir Gilbert Dethick, 'he would stoppe Jakesses with them' (Harvey entry, p. 678). The contributors and editors should be commended for their work on these entries for which, apart from the chronological and national biases noted above, merit no substantial criticism. Though it should be expected that a collection of individual life accounts offers a colourful picture of the office of arms from the perspective of the heralds themselves, what becomes clearer upon reflection is the great potential of the new *Oxford DNB* to serve as an accessible tool for—in the best sense of the term—popular history. No doubt the electronic version, even if only through institutional access, will be a major resource to which the historically curious will turn for decades to come to explore elements of the past, and this is certainly the case for the history of British heraldry conveyed in the fifteen new biographies of the earliest-noted heralds examined here.

Brief Guidance for those wishing to submit Articles

A full version of this guidance can be consulted
at www.theheraldrysociety.com/publications/c_o_a.

1. General editorial policy

The journal seeks to publish on all aspects of heraldry and allied subjects, interpreted broadly. All articles will be considered by members of the editorial committee or other relevant experts before being accepted for publication. Authors are advised to consider whether their submission addresses an interesting or important issue, whether *The Coat of Arms* is the right forum for it, and whether its arguments and conclusions are justified by the evidence offered. Submissions that do not meet these criteria may be returned to their authors with an invitation to resubmit if it is likely that they can be easily reworked into a satisfactory form.

It is hoped that *The Coat of Arms* will be of interest to historians (and others) without a specialist knowledge of heraldry. However, it is a specialist journal and it can be assumed that the readership has prior knowledge of the basics of heraldry and blazon, and is familiar with the standard text books and reference works on these subjects. Submissions will nonetheless be welcome from those who are new to the area, and if they are accepted for publication on the same criteria as other submissions, assistance can be provided where necessary on the technical aspects of heraldic terminology and blazon.

2. Method of submission

The editors request that any article submitted for publication in future be sent both in hard copy and as a computer file in Rich Text Format or Microsoft Word on disk to the editors at PO Box 772, Guildford, Surrey GU3 3SZ. Hard copies should be printed in double spaced lines. Notes (which will be printed as footnotes) should be provided in a separate file, with the references indicated on the hard copy, and not embedded in the text file although many word-processing programmes offer this feature. Illustrations should be sent as high-quality image files or as clear hard copies such as photographic prints or line drawings. Preliminary and subsequent communications can be had with the editors by e-mail at coatofarms@theheraldrysociety.com. Please do not send image files by e-mail.

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