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VISITATION INSTRUCTIONS 1634

Peter O'Donoghue

Ms I.B. 5 is a pocket book in the archives of the College of Arms dating from the first half of the seventeenth century. It is in one uniform hand, on paper, and measures approximately 121 x 75 mm. It is bound in leather, with on each cover a central fleuron stamp within a gilt fillet; it could once be closed with clasps, now gone.

The notebook was one of a number of seventeenth-century pocket books acquired by the College of Arms at the sale of the library of John Brand in 1807.¹ John Brand (1744-1806) was a noted antiquary and topographer, who was elected a member of the Society of Antiquaries in 1778, and elected resident secretary to the Society in 1784, a position he held until his death. His publications included *Observations on Popular Antiquities* (1777), and *The History of Newcastle* (1789). He amassed during his lifetime an extensive collection of books and manuscripts. The auction of his library in 1807 lasted thirty-seven days, and raised over £17,000.² The manuscript given the reference I.B. 5 was described at that time as '[Number] 48 Arms of Bedfordshire', and the price paid was 4 shillings. It is labelled on the front paste-down as John Holland no. 67, which must indicate an earlier owner, or a provenance recorded by Brand on acquisition.

The present interest of the volume for this short article is the fact that it contains, on fos. 31v-32v, a short set of instructions to heralds conducting a visitation. These are transcribed below in an appendix. To understand their context better, it is useful to consider the other contents of the book. They are varied, and include the following: pedigrees of families taken at the 1633-5 visitation of London; descriptions in French of the current Knights of the Garter, down to the Earl of Morton, installed 21 April 1634; sketches of a plot of land in Walbrook Street, City of London; miscellaneous church notes and pedigrees, seemingly relating to the Essex visitation of 1634.

The volume also contains lists of moneys laid out, and received, in relation to visitations. The first set of accounts would seem to list expenses incurred in advance of the visitation season: the costs of engrossing the 'deputation' or document empowering deputies to the Kings of Arms; and of writing to the sheriffs of Bedfordshire and Essex.³

¹ CA Chapter Book 7 fo. 165. The list of volumes acquired from the Brand sale by Windsor and York on behalf of the College was entered at Chapter on 8 August 1807.

² R. H. Sweet, 'Brand, John (1744-1806)', *Oxford DNB*.

³ CA Ms I.B. 5 fo. 33: 'Inp. For the eng^r of o^r deputacon for wax ribban & boxes 0 8 10.'

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Figure 1, and facing page, Figure 2: views of College of Arms Ms I.B.5

Later in the volume, accounts for the visitation of Essex include references to dining and accommodation costs, and to the expenses of ink and paper. The places are mentioned in relation to these sums, which should make possible a reconstruction of the itinerary of the visitation. The accounts of monies received during the visitations of Bedfordshire and Essex, given in this volume, show that, of those entered, most paid either £1.7.6, or £1.17.6, perhaps depending on their status.⁴

The volume is thus arranged in a broadly chronological manner, reflecting its function as a note book. The earliest entries relate to the visitation of London, begun in 1633. The Garter festivities of April 1634 are followed by preparations for the summer visitation season, when travelling was easiest. Accounts for Essex seem to precede those for Bedfordshire.

The question of the original owner of this manuscript notebook can be best approached by considering the programme of visitations to which it refers. Sir John Borough, Norroy and Garter designate, and Sir Richard St George, Clarenceux, were

⁴ Accounts are found in this volume immediately after the instructions on fos. 33-33v, and also on 40v-42, 58-63v, 65-67.



granted a commission dated 25 December 1633 to visit the whole kingdom. It was under this commission that fourteen counties were visited by deputies to the Kings of Arms, before the death of Sir Richard St George on 17 May 1635. These were Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Derbyshire, Essex, Hampshire, Herefordshire, Hertfordshire, Lincolnshire, London, Middlesex, Oxfordshire, Sussex, and Worcestershire. The deputies for some of these visitations, responsible for carrying out the actual work, are known. Essex and Bedfordshire were visited by George Owen, York Herald, and Henry Lilly, Rouge Rose Pursuivant; the deputy for London was Sir Henry St George, Richmond Herald.⁵

A comparison of the records of the visitations of this period suggests that the hand of this notebook is also found in College of Arms manuscripts relating to the visitations of Bedford (CA record Ms C31); Essex (C21); Hereford (C25); London (C24); and Worcester (C30). The deputies for the 1634 visitation of Hereford are not known; those for Worcestershire were again Owen and Lilly.⁶ A list of moneys received in the present notebook includes a reference to 'M' Owen', and we therefore conclude that this is probably the notebook of Henry Lilly.

Henry Lilly was appointed Rose Rouge Pursuivant on 4 January 1634, presumably with the specific intention that he provide support to the more senior George Owen, York, for the coming active visitation season. The position was that of a pursuivant extraordinary, not connoting membership of the College of Arms or much official authority; but indicating that the holder was beginning a career at the College which might well lead to an appointment as one of the Crown's heralds. Lilly was indeed appointed Rouge Dragon Pursuivant in 1638 but died shortly after. He was a heraldic artist and member of the Painter-Stainers' Company, and would seem

⁵ For details of the visitations see A. R. Wagner, *The Records and Collections of the College of Arms* (London 1952), Appendix pp. 73-4. See also Godfrey and Wagner, CA, for details of the careers of the heralds mentioned.

⁶ Wagner, *Records and Collections*, Appendix p. 74.



Figure 3: view of College of Arms Ms I.B.5

to have had an active practice at the College in this role. A manuscript in the College's archives from this period lists heraldic artwork commissions in chronological order, with the artist indicated and the officers in waiting or on official duty for the month signing. Here a number of entries are annotated 'Lily' or 'R.Rose'.⁷

The phrase 'o[ur] marshalls' suggests that these instructions were issued in writing or at a meeting, by the Kings of Arms Borough and St George. Analyses of the earlier visitations and their conduct have been based largely upon the visitation commissions granted to Kings of Arms, and the patents appointing deputies. More directly comparable are the 'Instructions to be observed in the visitation of Northamptonshire and Rutland 1681', and Dugdale's account from about the same period, of how he goes about making a visitation.⁸ These much later sets of instructions or accounts of how to proceed, include requirements to enter the pedigrees of poor gentlemen without charge, and in this they echo the instructions of 1634. In other respects however they are quite different: they concern themselves with the practicalities of what is to be recorded, and how. Detailed studies of these later visitation procedures have been published.⁹

The particular interest of the present set of instructions, in contrast, is their concern with how the visitation procedure may be perceived, and how those carrying it out may direct that perception by their own behaviour. The 'reputation of the Office' and the 'Credite of the Commission' are to be maintained and enhanced; the

⁷ CA Ms PWB ①, *passim*.

⁸ Both were published by A. R. Wagner in his *Heralds and Heraldry in the Middle Ages* (2nd edn., Oxford 1956), Appendix E, pp. 147-9; and pp. 3-5. The process of visitation is discussed in Wagner, *Records and Collections*, Appendix, pp. 55-65.

⁹ See Adrian Ailes, 'Elias Ashmole's "Heraldicall Visitacion" of Berkshire 1665-6', unpublished D.Phil. thesis, Oxford University, 2008, *passim*; T. C. Wales and C. P. Hartley (edd.), *The Visitation of London begun in 1687* (Harl. Soc. pubns. new series 16-17. London

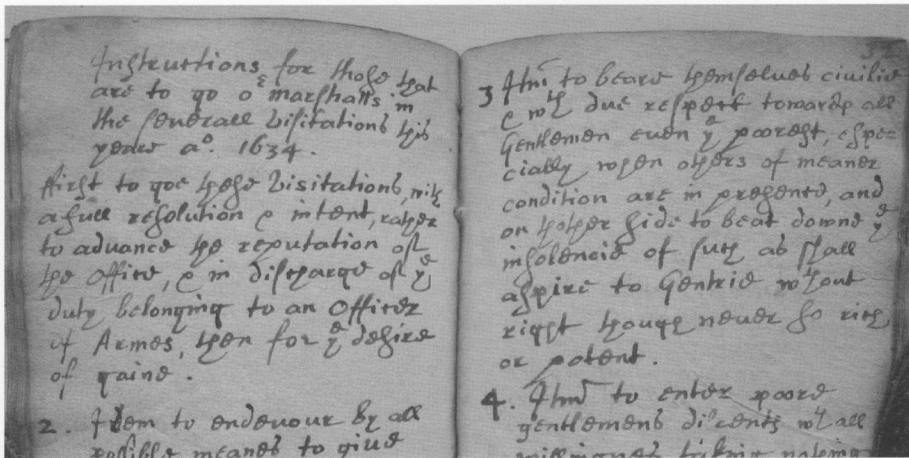


Figure 4: College of Arms Ms I.B.5, fos. 31v-32r (detail)

instructions provide guidance as to how these aims might be achieved. Where fees are waived for poor gentry, this is to be done 'in the view of others.'

We gain then a sense of what we may call the 'public relations' dimension to the visitation activities of this period. The heralds are to use the visitation to promote the Office; they are to emphasize the legal powers enjoyed under the visitation commission; and they are to make it plain that visitations are a standard part of their activities, which previous generations of gentry have participated in with enthusiasm. The instructions also provide us with an insight into anxieties that beset the visitation procedure at this time and later. Heralds, it is feared, are perceived as interested in financial gain, and in their fees; along with the Court of Chivalry they are also associated in the minds of the populace with the illegitimate exercise of power by Charles I.

Appendix: College of Arms Ms I.B.5 fos. 31v-32v

[fo. 31v]

Instructions for those that are to go o' marshalls in the severall visitations this yeare a°. 1634.

ffirst to goe these visitations, with a full resolution & intent, rather to aduance the reputation of the Office, & in discharge of y^e duty belonging to an Officer of Armes, then for y^e desire of gaine.

2. Item to endeouour by all possible meanes to giue Gentlemen that content as they may be induced to beleue that it is not their money, wee looke after but to do them & their posteritie right in the preseruacion of their discentes, matches,

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alliances, and issue; And this in a way not unuall, but often hereto fore practised both in auntient and later times euen generally ouer the whole kingdome.

[fo. 32r]

- 3 Itm' to beare themselves ciuilie & wth due respect towards all Gentlemen euen y^e poorest, especially when others of meaner condition are in presence, and on th'other side to beat downe y^e insolencis of such as shall aspire to Gentrie wthout right though neuer so rich or potent.
4. Itm' to enter poore gentlemens discents wth all willingnes taking nothing for the same, but doing them all grace in the view of others.
- 5 Itm' for the rest to enter y^e discents onely taking y^e auntient & accostomed ffees, not suffering Clarkes or Painters to exact upon them.
6. Itm' aboue all things to keepe up the Credite of the Commission, being under y^e great seale not suffering any one though neuer so great to vilifie or debase y^e same: wthout due reprehension in fitt & graue language.

[fo. 32v]

7. Itm' in taking of discents, not to exceed 4. or 5. degrees; or as many as may probable be wthin the memorie of man or cognisaunce of the Country.
8. Itm' to make nor admitt of no Pedegrees but testified authentically under the hands of two or three officers of Armes whereof Garter to be one, according to the Duke of Norffolks order & yf you meet wth any otherwise made or testified to admonish the pties to procure fuller testimonie.