THE COAT OF ARMS

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The journal of the Heraldry Society

ENGLISH CATHOLIC HERALDRY UNDER PENALTY, 1559-1778

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April the 12th 1559: the corpse of Sir Rice Mansfield, Kt, was brought from Clerkenwell unto the Blackfriars, with two heralds and the rest of the ceremonies as usual; twenty-four priests and clerks singing before, all in Latin. The friars' church was hung with black and coats of arms [...]. Afterwards his standard, coat, helmet, target, offered up at the high altar [...]. This was the common way of funerals of persons of quality in popish times.[1]

There seems to be an increasing consensus among historians of post-Reformation English Catholicism that the Catholic nobility and gentry were obsessed with heraldry, and, indeed that Catholicism was identified with heraldry. In a pioneering study of the Catholic armorist, Sir Thomas Shirley, Richard Cust, following Lawrence Stone, noted the 'obsession with genealogy' which 'spread through the whole upper gentry class', and particularly the Catholics, 'who were struggling to maintain the respect they had enjoyed in earlier generations'.[2] Thus, in 1575 the Catholic antiquarian and former rebel, William Claxton of Wynyard, County Durham, assisted the heralds in their visitation of the county.[3] More recent work has generalized from Cust's observations, Marshall and Scott writing:

[A]n almost obsessive concern with heraldry, lineage and pedigree, and with traditions of service, is characteristic of the Catholic gentry in this period and perhaps served as psychological compensation for their exclusion from county office-holding, an important source of gentry honour.[4]

Moreover, Gooch suggests that 'the possession of old books and manuscripts was sometimes taken as evidence of popish tendencies', presumably because such books would have been written in Catholic times.[5] A recent work by Cathryn Enis has shown how a Catholic gentleman used heraldry to undermine the position of Catholic noble-

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[1] John Strype, *Annals of the Reformation,* quoted in *The Other Face: Catholic Life under Elizabeth I,* ed. Philip Caraman (London 1961), pp. 10-11. See also G. H. Martin and Anita McConnell, 'Strype, John', *ODNB,* LIII, pp. 123-6.

[2] Richard Cust, 'Catholicism, antiquarianism and gentry honour: the writings of Sir Thomas Shirley', *Midland History* 23 (1998), pp. 40-70.

[3] Lawrence Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558–1642* (Oxford 1965), pp. 23-7; Mervyn James, *Family, Lineage, and Civil Society: A Study of Society, Politics, and Mentality in the Durham Region, 1500–1640* (Oxford 1974), pp. 108-9.

[4] Peter Marshall and Geoffrey Scott, 'Introduction: the Catholic gentry in English society', in *The Catholic Gentry in English Society: The Throckmortons of Coughton from Reformation to Emancipation,* edd. idem (Farnham 2009), p. 12.

[5] Leo Gooch, *A Complete Pattern of Nobility: John Lord Lumley (c. 1534–1609)* (Sunderland 2009), p. 59.

men, whom he regarded as upstarts.[6] As my quotation from the Protestant historian Strype (1643–1737) indicates, in Protestant England an interest in heraldry suggested support for the old Catholic order: the past was popish.

Nevertheless, it would be wrong to conclude that Catholics were exclusively obsessed with heraldry whilst Protestants despised it. The College of Arms remained in existence all through the Reformation and beyond and, in its visitations between 1530 and 1688, it was more active than ever before or since. In a study of the heraldry of 52 houses now owned by the National Trust, only ten were formerly owned by Catholic families; the rest, of course, were Protestants. The publication of such heraldic manuals as John Ferne's *Blazon of Gentry* (1573), Gerard Legh's *Accedence of Armorie* (1591), John Guillim's *Display of Heraldry* (1610), and Edmund Bolton's *Elements of Armories* (1610), the continuation of tournaments at the Tudor and early Stuart courts, Spenser's *Faerie Queene* (1590–1596) in praise of Queen Elizabeth I, and the career of the Protestant hero Sir Philip Sidney (1554–1586) indicate that chivalry and heraldry were shared and contested territory.[7] Indeed Sidney was 'enthusiastic for heraldry', and his funeral was as heraldic as that described by Strype, as Cheesman explains.[8] The Catholic armorist Bolton defined arms as '[s]uch painted, hereditable and armorial marks, as by which gentlemen are known, first *from the ignoble* [my italics] and then one from another'.[9] In other words, heraldry was about rank, not religion. More recently Cust has noted the Elizabethan Protestant gentry's fascination with heraldry.[10] Given the obsession of both Protestant and Catholic gentlemen and noblemen with ancestry, rank, and, therefore, heraldry, what was special about Catholic heraldry? The answer is that heraldry was used to legitimate Catholics' religious allegiance during a time of persecution.[11]

The Elizabethan Settlement in religion reduced Catholics to a persecuted small minority, led not only by their priests but also by their nobility and gentry, who bore their arms as the proofs of their former status as leaders of society and of the antiquity of their families and their religion. During the Reformation, England lurched from Roman Catholicism to Catholicism without the pope under Henry VIII (1509–47), then to Protestantism under Edward VI (1547–53), then back to Roman Catholicism under Mary I (1553–58), and finally back to Protestantism under Elizabeth I (1558–

[6] Cathryn Enis, 'Edward Arden and the Dudley earls of Warwick and Leicester, c. 1572–1583', *British Catholic History* 33/2 (2016), pp. 170-210.

[7] L. G. Pine, *Teach Yourself Heraldry and Genealogy* (London 1975), pp. 22, 72; Thomas Woodcock and John Martin Robinson, *Heraldry in National Trust Houses* (London 2000); Alan Young, *Tudor and Jacobean Tournaments* (London 1987); *The Works of Edmund Spenser*, ed. R. Morris (London 1904); H. R. Woudhuysen, 'Sidney, Sir Philip', *ODNB*, L, pp. 556-8.

[8] Clive Cheesman, 'Some aspects of the "crisis of heraldry"', *CoA*, 3rd series, 6/2 (2010), pp. 65-80, figs. 8 and 9.

[9] Edmund Bolton, *The Elements of Armories* (New York 1971), p. 5.

[10] Richard Cust, 'Heraldry and gentry communities in Shakespeare's England' in *Heraldry and Gentry Communities in Shakespeare's England*, ed. Nigel Ramsay (Donington 2014), pp. 190-203.

[11] A. L. Rowse, *The England of Elizabeth* (London 1959), p. 247; Rowse, *The Elizabethan Renaissance: The Life of the Society* (London 1971), p. 74.

1603). In 1559, the Act of Supremacy replaced papal supremacy within the Church of England with royal supremacy, requiring its acceptance by clergy and temporal officials on pain of deprivation, and the Act of Uniformity replaced the Missal and the other Catholic service books with the Book of Common Prayer, requiring attendance at Sunday services on pain of a fine of one shilling, a good day's wage. All but one of Queen Mary's bishops refused to accept the royal supremacy, and fled or were deprived and imprisoned. Some of the other clergy followed suit, but most, including many who were sympathetic to Catholicism, remained in place. The bulk of the laity, whatever their real sympathies, conformed. A few priests fled to the continent where they trained others, who returned to England to encourage the laity not to conform. The government responded with penal laws, which imposed fines, imprisonment, and exclusion from public office on those 'recusants' who refused conformity.[12]

By the middle of the eighteenth century, Catholics had been reduced to a very small minority—probably less than ten per cent of the total population—largely confined to their strongholds in Lancashire, where Catholics numbered as many as in the rest of the country put together, the Midlands, and the North-East. The Catholic nobility and gentry supported their clergy, provided chapels for their servants and tenants, and bemoaned their exclusion from office, but clung to their heraldry as the outward and visible sign of the antiquity of their families and religion.[13] As Gooch observes:

> These [coats of arms] would have left no-one in any doubt as to the social and territorial importance of the local gentry. Catholic gentlemen derived the additional satisfaction of demonstrating that however marginalised or persecuted they were at present, their claims to antiquity could not be taken from them and that they might well come into their own again.[14]

Although the English Catholic hierarchy had been destroyed, there were English Catholic ecclesiastics in exile, some of whom held high rank that required the use of arms for seals, thrones, and so on, and some of them were the sons of noblemen or gentlemen and, therefore, inherited arms. On the accession of Elizabeth, Thomas Goldwell, a member of the Theatine Order and Bishop of St Asaph, seeing the way the wind was blowing, left for Rome, where he became Theatine Superior, custos of the English Hospice, and vice-gerent of the papal vicar of the diocese of Rome. He was armigerous, and could impale the arms of his see. William Allen, having founded the English College at Douay and converted the English Pilgrim Hospice in Rome into the Venerable English College, was made a cardinal and prefect of the English Mission with authority to grant faculties to missionary priests. He used his ancestral arms—*Argent three conies passant Sable*—but, though he was a younger son, with-

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[12] E. I. Watkin, *Roman Catholicism in England from the Reformation to 1950* (London 1957); John Bossy, *The English Catholic Community, 1570–1850* (London 1975); Edward Norman, *Roman Catholicism in England: from the Elizabethan Settlement to the Second Vatican Council* (Oxford 1985), pp. 1-56; Michael Mullett, *Catholics in Britain and Ireland, 1558–1829* (Basingstoke 1998), pp. 1-26, 70-96.

[13] Watkin, op. cit., pp. 1-151; Bossy, op. cit.; Norman, op. cit., pp. 1-26, 70-96; Pine, op. cit., p. 68.

[14] Gooch, op. cit., p. 50.

out any cadency marks. In the seventeenth century, Philip Howard, the third son of Henry, 15th Earl of Arundel, joined the Dominican Order. In 1675 he was appointed a cardinal, and designated Protector of Great Britain, that is chief adviser on British affairs to the Pope. He used the Howard arms, which are on his tomb in Santa Maria Sopra Minerva in Rome, on a chasuble, ensigned with a cardinal's hat, at St Dominic's Priory, Carisbrook, Isle of Wight, and on a ciborium and a patten at Arundel Castle. During the brief reign of the Catholic King James II (1685–88) bishops were appointed for the English Mission, though as vicars apostolic rather than diocesan bishops, and these prelates continued to function after the Revolution of 1688. All of them needed arms, for seals to authenticate documents, and, as tolerance increased, even to mark their residence, and some of them were the sons of nobles and gentlemen and so inherited arms. These included: John Leyburne, Vicar Apostolic of the London District (1685–1702), the son of John Leyburne of Cunswick Hall, Westmorland (see **Figure 1**); Edward Dicconson, Vicar Apostolic of the Northern District (1741–52), the son of Hugh Dicconson of Wrightington Hall, Lancashire, who bore *Or on a cross quarterly pierced between four hinds' heads erased Vert two cross crosslets fitchée in pale and as many escallops in fess of the field* (see **Plate 9** and **Figure 2**, over) though the bishop used a simplified version—*Or between four hinds' heads erased a cross Vert*—which was carved on his residence at Finch Mill, Appley Bridge, now at St Joseph's, Wrightington, (when he died in 1752 he was not only buried in the parish church of St Wilfrid's, Standish, but also commemorated on the south wall of the chancel by a monument which proclaims his title and displays his arms together with mitre and crozier); Benjamin Petre, Vicar Apostolic of the London District (1734–58), the son of John Petre of Fidlers, Essex; Francis Petre, Vicar Apostolic of the Northern District (1752–75), the son of Joseph Petre at Fidlers and nephew of Benjamin Petre; and John Talbot Stonor, Vicar Apostolic of the Midland District (1715-56), son of John Stonor of Stonor Park, Oxfordshire.[15]

[15] Donald Attwater, 'Coat of arms', *The Catholic Encyclopaedic Dictionary* (London 1931), p. 109; Bruno Bernard Heim, *Heraldry in the Catholic Church: Its Origin, Customs and Laws* (Gerrards Cross 1978); T. F. Mayer, 'Goldwell, Thomas', *ODNB*, XXII, pp. 701-3; Judith Champ, *The English Pilgrimage to Rome: A Dwelling for the Soul* (Leominster 2000), pp. 69-71; Burke, *GA*, p. 408; Michael Francis McCarthy, *Armoria Sedium: A Roll of See Arms used by the Catholic, Anglican and Lutheran Churches* (Darlington 2001), p. 235; Philip Hughes, *The Reformation in England* (London 1963), III, pp. xi, 282-301; Godfrey Anstruther, *The Seminary Priests* (Great Wakering 1968–77), I, pp. 4-5; M. E. Williams, *The Venerable English College, Rome* (London 1979), pp. 4-6; *The Letters and Memorials of William Cardinal Allen*, ed. T. F. Knox (London 1882), pp. 335-6; Mark Thurnham Elvins, *Cardinals and Heraldry* (London 1988), pp. 101-5; *Victoria History of the County of Lancaster*, edd. William Farrer and J. Brownbill (London, 1906), VII, p. 236, which attributes other arms to Cardinal Allen, but does not supply any sources; Basil Hemphill, *The Early Vicars Apostolic of England 1685–1750* (London 1954); Brian Plumb, *Arundel to Zabi: A Biographical Dictionary of the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales (Deceased) 1623–2000* (2nd edn., Wigan 2006), pp. 139, 168, 169, 189; Burke, *GA*, pp. 284, 606, 796, 977; Allan Mitchinson, *Catholicism in Standish: From Persecution to Parish, 1559–1884* (Wigan 2005), p. 57.
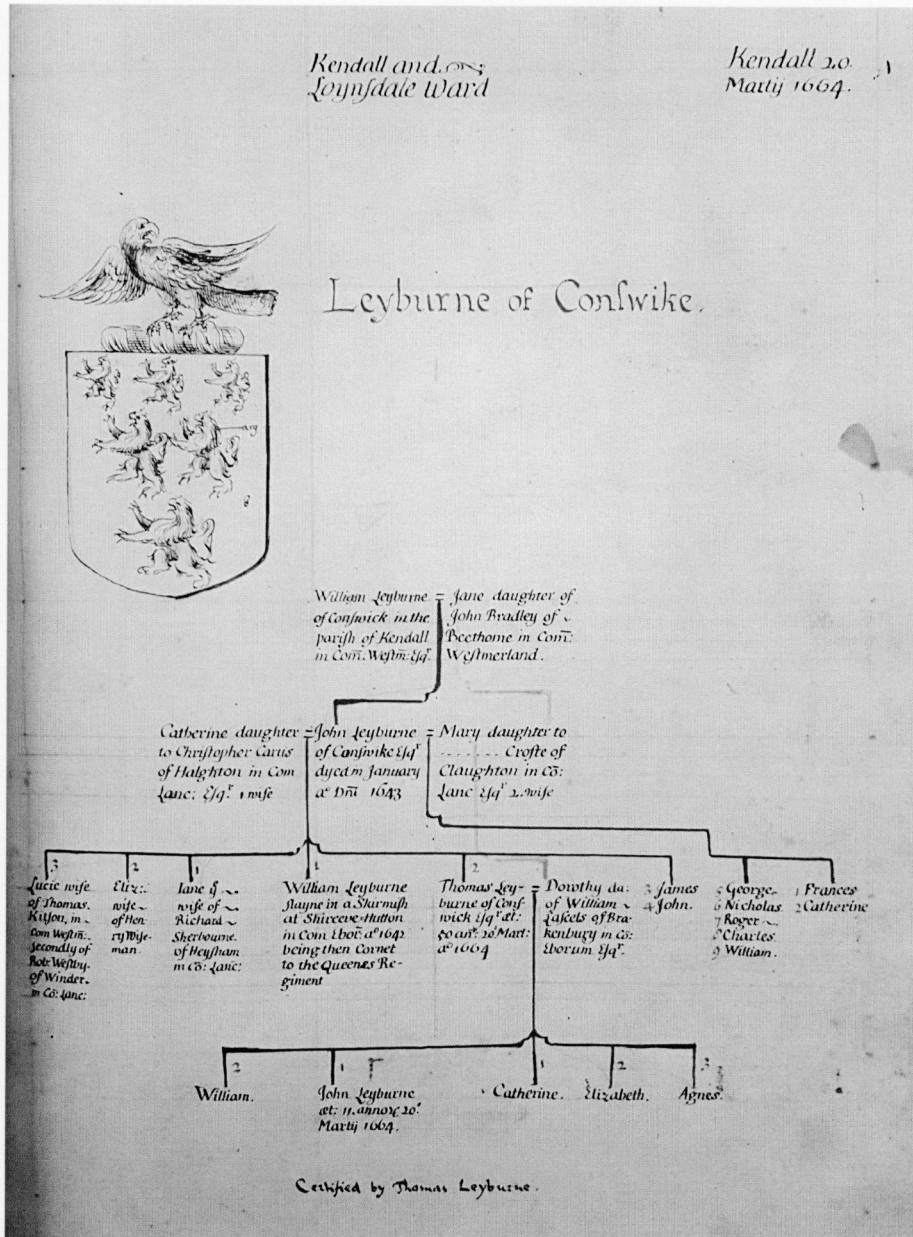
Figure 1: Pedigree of Leyburne of Cunswick Hall, Westmorland, in the 1664-5 Heralds' Visitation of Westmorland and Cumberland. CA record Ms C.39 / 10.

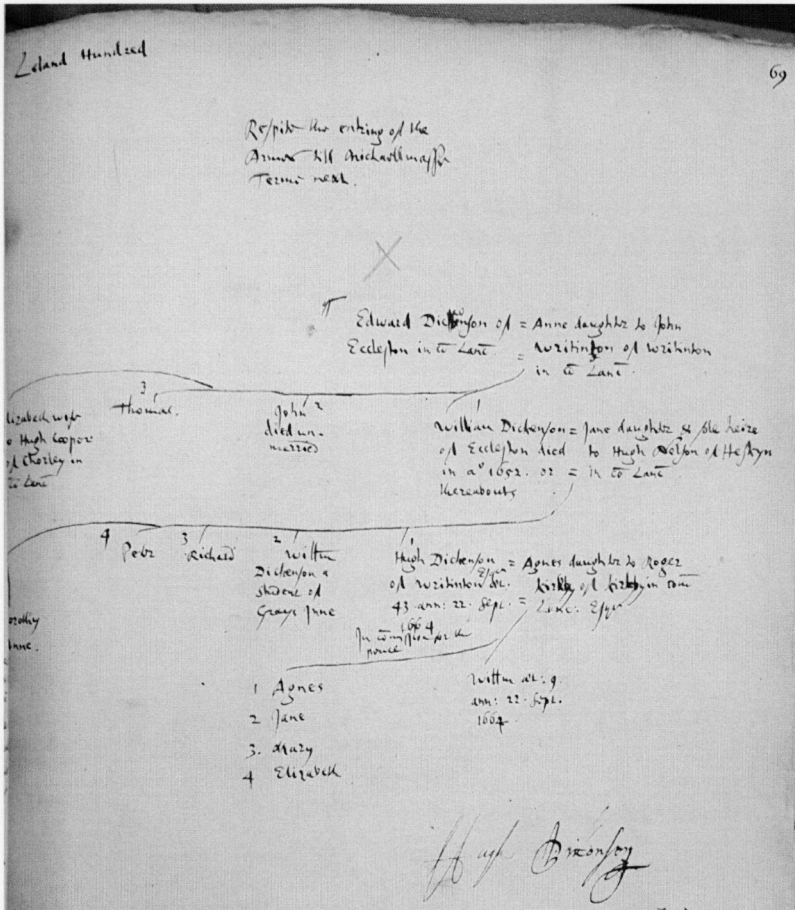By permission of the Kings, Heralds and Pursuivants of Arms

Figure 2: Pedigree of Dicconson of Wrightington Hall, Lanashire, in the Visitation Papers associated with the 1664-5 Heralds' Visitation of Lancashire (detail).

By permission of the Kings, Heralds and Pursuivants of Arms

The Catholic nobility and gentry prided themselves on the antiquity of their lineage set forth in their arms and the antiquity of their religion enshrined in its liturgy. 'Where was your Church before Luther?' was the challenge which Catholic controversialists put to Protestants.[16] As the Marquis of Halifax pointed out in *The Character of a Trimmer* (1688): 'others [some Catholics] by a mistake look upon it [Catholicism] as the better escutcheon, the more ancient religion of the two'.[17] Halifax's metaphor indicates that he recognised the Catholic attachment to heraldry to claim the antiquity of their families and their religion.

[16] S. J. Barnett, '"Where was your church before Luther?" Claims for the antiquity of Protestantism examined', *Church History* 28/1 (1999), pp. 14-41.
[17] *Halifax: Complete Works*, ed. J. P. Kenyon (Harmondsworth 1969), p. 83.

Figure 3: Detail of the entry relating to the Ferrers family of Baddesley Clinton in Sir William Dugdale's *Warwickshire*, vol. 2 p. 973.
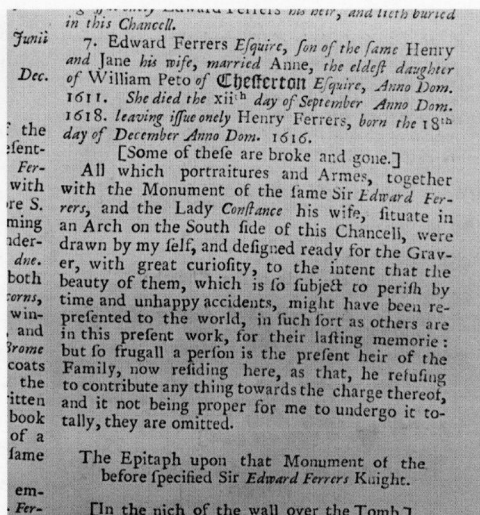
As Catholicism vanished from the parish churches, so did the Catholic nobility and gentry, who retreated to their manor houses, where they set up chapels, served by Catholic priests, for themselves and their dependants. Even though in the eighteenth century fines and imprisonment were rarely inflicted, there were temptations to conform. When the 11th Duke of Norfolk (1746-1815) conformed, he explained:

> I cannot be a good Catholic, I cannot go to Heaven, and if a man is to go to the devil he may as well go thither from the House of Lords as from any other place on earth.[18]

Fortunately for the Catholics, his successors remained loyal to their ancestral religion. Nevertheless, a contemporaneous Catholic writer, Joseph Berrington, pointed out that in 1780 of 177 landed Catholic families ten had either died out or abjured their Faith.[19] These dwindling numbers provided all the more reason for intermarriage within the Catholic cousinage, which possibly led to a further decline in numbers, though also to the consolidation of estates and the collection of heraldic quarters. As the armorist Fox-Davies put it:

> There are few families in this country, outside the Roman Catholic aristocracy (whose marriages are not quite as haphazard as those of other people), who can show that all their sixteen great-great-grandparents were in their own right entitled to bear arms.[20]

This country-house Catholicism was decked out with heraldry, as well as religious symbolism. Thus, the Ferrers of Baddesley Clinton, Warwickshire, over several generations were 'remarkable for their antiquarian and heraldic enthusiasms, most notably Henry Ferrers (died 1630), known as "the Antiquary"' (see **Figure 3**). He filled the house with heraldic overmantels and stained glass. At Gilling Castle, Yorkshire,

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[18] Mark Bence-Jones, *The Catholic Families* (London 1992), p. 45.

[19] See Alexander Lock, 'Catholicism, apostasy and politics in late eighteenth-century England: the case of Sir Thomas Gascoigne and Charles Howard, Earl of Surrey', *Recusant History* 30/2 (2010), pp. 275-98.

[20] Arthur Charles Fox-Davies, *A Complete Guide to Heraldry* (London 1909), p. 619.

forty-five stained glass panels, begun in 1585, display the heraldry of the Fairfax-es, the Stapletons, and the Constables. Lumley Castle was the seat of John Lumley, 1st Baron Lumley (*c.* 1533–1609), whose 'genealogical megalomania' caused King James I to remark 'I didna' ken Adam's other nam[e] was Lumley'. Lord Lumley turned the Castle into 'a dynastic shrine' with armorial carvings above the gateway and in the courtyard. An armorial pedigree traces his descent from a Saxon nobleman, and another from Adam. The inventory of his possessions shows that they were near-ly all marked with his heraldic devices. Myerscough Lodge, Lancashire, the home of the Tyldesleys, has a room panelled with the arms of the family. 'There are few coun-try houses with as much heraldry as Oxburgh Hall, Norfolk, the home of the Paston-Bedingfields: every room contains illuminated pedigrees and escutcheons of arms', as Woodcock and Robinson write. Powis Castle, Montgomeryshire, the seat of the Herberts, has a long gallery of 1592–3 'full of heraldry'. Sizergh Castle, Westmor-land, the home of the Stricklands, has heraldic carvings and stained glass installed by Walter Strickland (d. 1569) and his widow Alice, a daughter of the Tempests of Lanchester, County Durham.[21]

The heraldry of the Catholic nobility and gentry was not confined to their houses but extended into the local community. As patrons of parish churches they had re-sponsibility for the upkeep of the chancels, and in some cases they lavished heraldry on them. Thus, the sixteenth-century but much restored east window of St Michael's, Baddesley Clinton, as well as depicting Sir Edward Ferrers (d. 1535), his wife, and father-in-law in armorial surcoats, displays the arms of the Ferrers on six shields, one with thirty-two quarterings, together with the Catholic insciptions 'Sancte Georgi ora pro nobis' and 'Sancta Katarina ora pro nobis'. As the owners of former chantry chapels within the parish churches they also retained their burial rights. Lord Lumley turned the parish church of Chester-le-Street into a 'pedigree in stone', with effigies representing his ancestors, and he decorated with heraldry the tombs in his family chapel in Cheam parish church. The Bedingfields continued to erect heraldic memo-rials in their former chantry chapel in St John's, Oxburgh. One outstanding result of this right was the heraldic tomb of the Catholic Bishop Edward Dicconson, described above. They also displayed their arms on other buildings in their localities. For ex-ample, in 1706 Sir Nicholas Shireburn built almshouses at Longridge, (now at Hurst Green), Lancashire, with his arms on the pediment.[22]

[21] Peter Davidson, 'Recusant spaces in early modern England' in *Catholic Culture in Early Modern England*, edd. Ronald Corthell, Frances E. Dolan, Christopher Highley and Arthur F. Marotti (Notre Dame 2007), pp. 19-51; Woodcock and Robinson, op. cit., pp. 38-40, 138, 148-49, 157-60; Clare Norman, *Baddesley Clinton* (Swinton 1998); Gooch, op.cit., p. 50, 52; Ann Payne, 'Heraldry and Genealogies' in *Art Collecting and Lineage in the Elizabethan Age: The Lumley Inventory and Pedigree*, ed. Mark Evans (Roxburghe Club 2010), p. 21; Kathryn Barron, 'Lumley, John, 1st Baron Lumley (c. 1535-1609)', *ODNB*, XXXIV, pp. 750-3; Gooch, op. cit., p. 52; Evans, op. cit., folios 1-41; *The Tyldesley Diary*, ed. J. Gillow and A. Hewitson (Manchester 1873), pp. 9-10; Ken Mourin, *Heraldry in Norfolk Churches* (Norwich 2011), V, pp. 135-90. Woodcock and Robinson, op. cit., pp. 38-40, 138, 148-9, 157-60.
[22] Clare Norman, *Baddesley Clinton* (Swinton, 1998). Payne, p. 21; Gooch, *Lumley,* pp. 50, 53; Anon., *The Church of Saint Michael, Baddesley Clinton*; Nigel Llewllyn and Claire Gapper,

Some went abroad to serve in Catholic armies. With the approval of Queen Elizabeth, who wished to demonstrate that she was not in league with the Turks, Sir Thomas Arundell joined the army of the Austrian Habsburgs in their war against the Turks in Hungary. Emperor Rudolf II rewarded his heroism in the capture of Gran (Esztergom) in 1595 by making him a count of the Holy Roman Empire.[23] The Queen declared:

> I would not have my sheep branded with another man's mark; I would not have them to follow the whistle of a strange shepherd.[24]

As a result, Arundell was imprisoned and then banished from court. Nevertheless, under her successor, James I, he was created Baron Arundell of Wardour, his Imperial title was recognized, and he was permitted to display the double-headed Imperial eagle behind his arms.[25]

The Civil Wars gave the Catholics the chance to show their quality. The escape of Charles II after the Battle of Worcester produced some interesting heraldry, after the Restoration in 1660. Colonel William Carlos or Careless, who shared Charles II's adventure in the oak tree was granted arms: *Or issuing from a mount in base vert, an oak tree proper over all on a fess gules three imperial crowns also proper.* Colonel Newman, who the held the gate of Worcester, was granted an augmentation: *an inescutcheon gules charged with a portcullis imperially crowned.* In recognition of Jane Lane's help in Charles's escape the Lane family was granted an augmentation - *a canton of England* - and a crest of *a strawberry-roan horse salient couped at the flanks bridled sable bitted and garnished or supporting between his feet a royal crown.*[26]

The overthrow of the Catholic King James II led to the establishment of a royal court in exile at St Germain in France and then in Rome. After the death of James III (the Old Pretender) in 1766, the Pope refused to recognize his son, Charles III (the Young Pretender) as king. These Pretenders continued to use the old royal arms. As the second son of a king, Prince Henry Benedict, Duke of York and Cardinal Bishop of Frascati, did not use the traditional royal mark of difference, a label of three points Argent with a canton Gules on each of the points, but adopted a crescent Argent. Although a bull of Innocent X forbade ecclesiastics to use coronets of rank, Henry displayed a princely coronet. On the death of Charles III in 1788, Cardinal York assumed the royal arms as Henry IX until his death in 1807. James II's illegitimate son, James Fitzjames, Duke of Berwick, like many other Jacobites, entered the service of the king of France, and commanded the army that put Louis XIV's grandson, Philip of Anjou, on the throne of Spain as Philip V. Philip rewarded Berwick by making

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[*note 22 contd.*]

'The funeral monuments' in Evans, op. cit., pp. 36-38; Mourin, op. cit., V, pp. 125-34; John Callow, 'The last of the Shireburns: the art of death and life in Recusant Lancashire, 1660-1754', *Recusant History* 26/4 (2003), p. 604.

[23] Fox-Davies, op. cit., pp. 413-1.

[24] Elizabeth I, quoted in John Brydall, *Privilegia Magnatum apud Anglos* (1704), p. 4.

[25] Barry Williamson, *The Arundells of Wardour: From Cornwall to Colditz* (Salisbury 2011), pp. 38-49; Burke, *GA*, p. 27.

[26] Fox-Davies, op. cit., p. 589; Burke, *GA*, p. 169; Boutell, rev. JBL, p. 126.

him Duke of Liria and Xerica, and Louis by making him Duke of Fitzjames. He bore his father's arms within *a bordure compony azure charged with a fleur-de-lys or and gules charged with a lion passant guardant or*. James II was joined in exile at St Germain by James Terry or Therry, Athlone Pursuivant, who took with him the seal of the Irish herald's office from Dublin. One of his duties was to issue certificates of nobility and arms to Jacobite nobles who wished to enter military service with the Catholic powers.[27]

Meanwhile, some Catholic women went abroad to join the English convents in exile, and the daughters of noblemen and gentlemen used their arms. Thus Dame Jone [*sic*] Berkeley, OSB, the daughter of Sir John Berkeley of Beverston Castle, Tenbury, Gloucestershire, became first abbess of the Convent of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary at Brussels. For her installation she had a taperholder bearing her family arms impaling the device of the convent.[28]

There was at least one published Catholic heraldic writer, Edmund Mary Bolton or Boulton (born 1574/5, died in or after 1634), who might perhaps be expected to make explicit the Catholic fascination with heraldry, but to get his book published in Protestant England, with a government-controlled press, he had to conceal his Catholicism in his writing. In his *The Elements of Armories* (1610) he suppressed his Catholic name 'Mary' and carefully avoided any explicit reference to Catholicism, but his slip was showing when he referred to a coat of arms in a window in Bristol cathedral 'which the sacrileges committed upon monuments hath not defaced'.[29] He was fined for recusancy in 1628, and, being unable to pay, was imprisoned in the Fleet and then the Marshalsea, where he died.

Sir Thomas Shirley (1590–1654), however, was able to be explicit about his Catholicism in his *The Catholic Armorist* (completed shortly before his death), because it was intended only for circulation in manuscript among his Catholic friends and relations. Earlier, in 1632, he had commissioned a genealogical parchment roll nearly twelve feet wide and nearly thirty feet long. At its head were the arms of the noble families into which the Shirleys had married, and at its foot were their arms of fifty quarterings. Such displays were not uncommon in the period and not confined to Catholics. What was special about Shirley was not only his antiquarian interests — he belonged to a circle of Midland antiquaries of various religious persuasions, includ-

[27] Charles Petrie, *The Jacobite Movement: The First Phase, 1688–1716* (London 1948); Petrie, *The Jacobite Movement: The Last Phase, 1716–1807* (London 1950); Edward M. Kandel, 'The Stuart succession', *CoA* 180 (1997), pp. 134, 136; Mark Elvins, 'English heraldic associations with Rome: the king over the water', *CoA* 102 (1977), p. 148; Elvins, *Cardinals and Heraldry*, pp. 106-7; Stuart Handley, 'Fitzjames, James, duke of Berwick upon Tweed', *ODNB*, XIX, pp. 881-84; Vicary Gibbs, H. A. Doubleday, and Lord Howard de Walden, *The Complete Peerage* (London 1910), pp. 162-67; John Callow, *King in Exile: James II: Warrior, King and Saint, 1689-1701* (Stroud 2004), pp. 229-30; Stephen Slater, *Living Heraldry* (London 2004), p. 98; M. J. Sayer, 'English proofs of nobility and their recognition abroad', *CoA* 133 (1985), p. 122; Marquis of Ruvigny and Raineval, *The Jacobite Peerage, Baronetage, Knightage and Grants of Honour* (Edinburgh, 1904).

[28] C. R. Humphery-Smith, 'Dame Jone's Taperholder', *Her. Gaz.*, n.s. 50 (1993), pp. 1-2.

[29] Bolton, pp. 5, 183. See also 'Bolton (Boulton), Edmund Mary', *ODNB*, VI, pp. 481-4.

ing William Dugdale and William Wyeley, who became Rouge Croix—but his writ-ing.[30] *The Catholic Armorist* explicitly linked heraldry, nobility, and Catholicism. Heraldic achievements were 'little maps' which make known 'all the qualities, of-fices and most famous acts of persons which have been of any consideration in the world'; thus his family's crest of a Saracen's head commemorated their service in the Crusades. Hence, 'arms accompany noble families as the shadow does the body [...] they carry them always about them to put them in mind of virtue at every step'. He called upon the Catholic nobility and gentry to 'put themselves into the ranks for the defence of the faith of Jesus Christ, not by raising arms, but by their learning and patient suffering'.[31]

Towneley Hall, Burnley, Lancashire, is replete with the arms of the Catholic Towneleys, but its special interest is the family portrait of 1601 with its inscription (see **Plate 10**). The Towneley room contains the portrait of John and Mary Towne-ley together with their seven sons and seven daughters, kneeling at prayer before a crucifix (during the Reformation only Catholics would use a crucifix; Protestants regarded it as idolatrous) and below two vines from which hang the shields of arms of the families from which they descended, together with the Towneley arms of twelve quarterings.[32] An inscription at the bottom of the portrait makes explicit the Catholi-cism of the painting by describing the sufferings of John as a recusant, the white or bloodless martyrdom:

> This John about the sixth or seventh year of her Majesty that now is, for professing the Apostolic Catholic Roman faith, was imprisoned first in Chester Castle, then sent to the Marshelsea, then to York Castle, then to the Blockhouse in Hull, then to the Gatehouse in Westminster, then to Manchester, then to Broughton, Oxfordshire, then twice to Ely in Cambridgeshire, and so now seventy-three years old, and blind, is bound to appear and keep within five miles of Towneley, his house, who hath since the statute of '83 paid unto the Exchequer £20 the month and doth still; that there is paid already about £5000. 1601.[33]

'The heraldry at Coughton Court [the home of the Throckmortons] is among the most extensive displays in any English historic house',[34] according to Robinson, and in-cludes an explicitly Catholic heraldic roll that honours a number of the recusant gen-try. In the tower room is the nine feet by seven feet painted cloth *Tabula Eliensis*. It was commissioned by Sir Thomas Throckmorton, who, as Marshall and Scott write, 'seems to represent the recusant tradition in its purest form'.[35] It is a copy of the me-dieval *Tabula* from Ely which represents the cathedral church, and the arms attributed to occupying Norman knights of William the Conqueror, with the pedigrees of the abbots, bishops, and deans of Ely, and of the kings and queens of England. To these the Coughton *Tabula* adds the arms of the gentlemen, including Thomas Throckmor-

[30] Richard Cust, 'Shirley, Sir Thomas', *ODNB*, L, pp. 402-3.

[31] Thomas Shirley, *The Catholic Armorist*, quoted in Cust, 'Shirley', op. cit., pp. 50, 51, 52.

[32] Hubert R. Rigg, *Towneley Hall Art Gallery and Museums* (Burnley 1984); Anon., *Towneley Hall, Burnley* (Burnley 2004).

[33] David Brazendale, *Lancashire's Historic Halls* (Lancaster 2005), p. 131.

[34] Robinson, *Heraldry at Coughton Court* (Coughton Court 1996).

[35] Marshall and Scott, p. 12.

ton, imprisoned for recusancy in the bishop's palace at Ely and at Broughton Castle and Banbury Castle between 1590 and 1596. According to Marshall and Scott, 'the *Tabula* is simultaneously a defiant martyrology and a graphic assertion of fidelity to the Crown and ancient Church'.[36] As Robinson declares, 'it is, then, an unique heraldic record of the Elizabethan Catholic gentry'.[37]

Sir Thomas Tresham (1543–1605) had impeccable Catholic connections. His grandfather, also Sir Thomas, to whose estates he succeeded in 1560, had been Lord Prior of the Order of St John, following its restoration by Queen Mary. The grandson was the ward of Sir Robert Throckmorton of Coughton, whose daughter he married. Nevertheless, he at first conformed, but was received into the Catholic Church by the Jesuit Edmund Campion in 1580. He was, however, a spokesman of Catholic loyalism, declaring that if Spain invaded he would seek a place in the English vanguard 'to witness [...] our religious loyalty and true English valour in defence of her sacred Majesty's person, and noble realm of England'.[38] Despite his protestations of loyalty, he was fined, and suffered periods of imprisonment and house arrest. He studied theology, symbolism, heraldry, and architecture, collecting a large library on these subjects. His books were identified by an heraldic bookplate of twenty-five quarterings. Above all, he expressed his interests in his buildings. Tresham inherited canting arms (see **Figure 4**)— *Per saltire* [in effect four triangles] *sable and argent six trefoils (two and one and one and two) or*—and he became obsessed with the Trinitarian connotations of his name he saw represented in 'tres' being the Latin for 'three' so that 'Tresham' could be read as 'I am three'. This obsession increased after an incident in prison at Ely, when he and two servants were reading proofs of the existence of God, and 'there was, upon a wainscot table at that instant three loud knocks (as if it had been with an iron hammer) given, to the great amazing of me and my two servants'.[39] At Old Bield, Lyvedon, Northamptonshire, he started to build a lodge, left unfinished, cruciform in plan, its proportions symbolic, and carved with biblical inscriptions relating to Christ and the Virgin Mary, emblems of the Passion, and heraldry. He also built Rushton Triangular Lodge, symbolic of his name and of the Trinity. The Lodge is a 'device'or 'impresa' with triangular features, inscriptions, and carvings of trefoils, triangles, religious symbols symbolizing the Trinity, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the Mass, together with coats of arms. If there was a crisis of heraldry in which it gave way to the new symbolism of the 'impresa',Tresham demonstrates that it was possible to embrace the 'device' while holding tight to heraldry.[40]

[36] Ibid.

[37] Robinson, op. cit.; See also Woodcock and Robinson, op.cit., pp. 73-5; J. Lees-Milne, *Coughton Court* (National Trust 1988).

[38] Letter of Thomas Tresham to the Archbishop of Canterury and other Lords of the Privy Council, in *Report on Manuscripts in Various Collections* (London 1904), III, 58.

[39] Ibid., p. xxi.

[40] See Julian Lock, 'Tresham, Sir Thomas', *ODNB*, LV, pp. 315-16; Gyles Isham, *Rushton Triangular Lodge* (London 1970); Mark Girouard, *Rushton Triangular Lodge* (London 2004); Woodcock and Robinson, op. cit., p. 127; Mark Bradshaw, *Lyveden New Bield* (London 2004); Cheesman, op. cit., pp. 65-80.

Figure 4: Arms (with six subsidiary
quarterings) and crest of Tresham, from the
1618-19 Heralds' Visitation of Northamp-
tonshire and Rutland.
CA record Ms C.14 / 144v.

By permission of the Kings, Heralds and Pur-
suivants of Arms
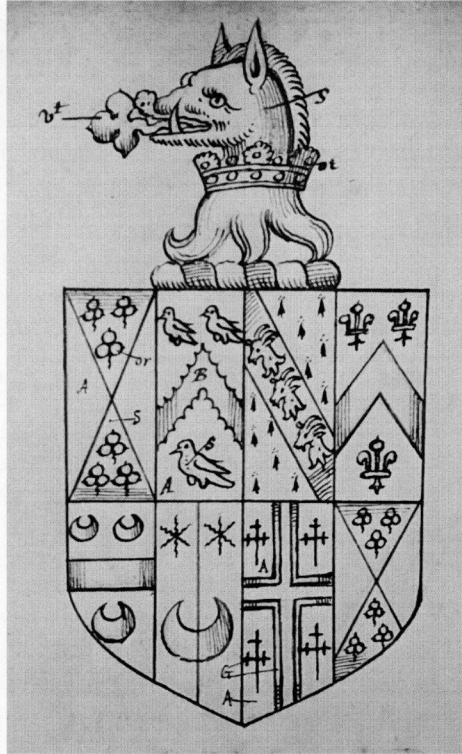
While active persecution declined in the eighteenth century, the Catholic nobility
and gentry consoled themselves for their loss of public office, by turning not only to
field sports and farming, but also to science and antiquarianism, including heraldry.
As Halifax pointed out, 'the laws have made them [Catholics] men of pleasure, by
excluding them from public business [...]'.[41] Whenever Nicholas Blundell of Little
Crosby, Lancashire, had a spare moment, he indulged in a little light heraldry. In his
diary, which covers the first quarter of the eighteenth century, he regularly recorded
putting up escutcheons in the Hall. For Blundell and men like him, heraldry was an
obsession.[42]

Little Crosby—of which the Blundells could boast that '[n]o Protestant has been
known to live in Little Crosby'—was the epitome of the seigneurial Catholicism of
the penal period, its local congregations led by the aristocracy and gentry, and centred
on the manor house with its chapel and priest. Heraldry was at its heart and sustained
the self-belief of its leadership.[43]

[41] *Halifax: Complete Works*, op. cit., p. 83.
[42] *The Great Diurnal of Nicholas Blundell of Little Crosby, Lancashire*, ed. Frank Tyrer (Chester 1968-72), I, pp. 45, 135, 239. 303, II, pp. 47, 231, 272, III, pp. 33, 66, 73, 100, 104, 119, 130, 151.
[43] Odo Blundell, *Old Catholic Lancashire* (London 1915–39), I, p. 48.

The Catholic nobility and gentry cherished their coats of arms, because they signified the antiquity of their families and justified their claims to political office from which they were excluded, whilst men they regarded as parvenus were promoted above them. They, therefore, commissioned heraldic artefacts in their own houses and chapels, and, wherever else they could, in England and abroad. Moreover, they saw the antiquity of their own heraldry as symbolising the antiquity and, therefore, the truth of their religion.[44]

PLATE 9

16.

The PEDIGREE of EDWARD DICCONSON, of

Esq; collected from authentic Family Evidences & continued from the la...

ADVERSO. FORTIOR.

Elizabeth, Wife of Hugh Cooper, of Chorley in the County Palatine of Lancaster.

Hugh Dicconson, of Wrightinton aforesaid; Esq; Eldest Son and Heir, One of the Justices of the Peace for the County Palatine of Lancaster; born at Hoskyn Hall 2d. Feb. 162½. dyed at Wrightinton 5. Jan. 169½. buried at Eccleston. == Agnes, 3d Daur. of Roger Kirkby, of Kirkby in the County Palatine of Lancaster, Esq? She dyed 5th July 1719. at Culcheth & buried at Winwick, both in the said County.

William Dicconson, of Wrightinton, 2nd Heir retired beyond Sea, and dyed at St. Germains en Laye, 13 November 1743.

Roger Dicconson, Esquire. 2d Son was born the 27th February 166⅔6. dyed at Culcheth in the Parish of Winwick 23 July 1742. buried at Winwick. == Elizabeth sole Daur. & Heire of Edward Petre, of Margaretting in the County of Essex Esq; by Mildred his Wife Daur. of Sir Edward Pennant of Bagile in the County of Flint, Kn? & Elizabeth his Wife Daur. of Edward Gifford of Chillington in the County of Stafford, Esq; She dyed the 9th and buried 11. January 1717. at Eccleston.

Hugh Dicconson, born 28th December 1667. dyed at Rome the 16th August 1742, unmarried.

Edward Dicconson, of Wrightinton, Esq; Son and Heir born 3d September 1700 married at Mawley in the County of Worcester 7 February 1722. now living at Wrightinton anno 1767. == Mary 2d Daur. of George Blount Esq; and Sister to Sir Edward Blount, Bart? by Constantia his Wife 4th Daur. of Sir George Cary, Kn? Son of Sir Edward Cary Kn? by Margery Blackburn his Wife. The said Mary dyed at Wrightinton the 17th and buried the 20th October 1746 in Eccleston Church.

Roger Dicconson, eldest Son, born 23d November 1723. dyed at Douay in Flanders 5th August 1744, un married, and there buried.

Edward Dicconson, 2d Son, born at Wigan 11 September 1725 and buried in the Church there the 8. Nov. next following.

Constantia, eldest Daur. born 4th July 1724, married to Charles Jerningham Esq; Lieutenant Colonel in the Queen of Hungary's Service, second surviving Son of Henry Jerningham Esq; 4th Son of Sir Francis Jerningham of Cossey in the County of Norfolk Bar. descended from a very ancient & Knightly Family of the same Surname in England which flourished before the year 1182.

Mary 2 Daur. born at Wrightinton 5th Oct 1726. married to Robert Dillon late of St Mary axe London, Deceased.

Edward Dicconson 4th Son born 19 Nov. 1729. now living a 1767. unmarried.

Edward Dicconson

Part of a pedigree of Dicconson of Wrightington Hall, Lancs., showing Dicconson (with quarterings) impaling Blount. Certified by signature of Edward Dicconson, 1767. CA record Ms 6.D14 / 16.

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PLATE 10

Towneley Hall, Burley: John and Mary Towneley with their family. Oil on panel, 103cm x 90.2cm, 1601.

Reproduced by permission of Towneley Hall Museum and Art Gallery / Bridgeman Images.

See page 99.